



SOCIAL NETWORKS

The students from the Goldberg-Gymnasium Sindelfingen read the article
“ Ich bin dann mal off”
by Thorsten Schmitz
that was published in the Süddeutsche Zeitung in January 2012.

On the basis of this article the students reflected on the purpose and the benefit of using social networks. Below are some of their critiques and statements.

I. Critique by Aliscia

The article about Facebook, written by Thorsten Schmitz is very critical about using Facebook and about the people behind it.

Drawing on examples of a few people who actually deleted their account the reader gets closer with the matter of Facebook and its consequences. By means of statistics and especially by personal experiences the reader immediately thinks about the cons of Facebook.

There are many incidents, most of the Facebook-users might know. But there are also some facts, the user might not know or tries hard to push aside like the laxly handling of the users' data by Facebook.

The article is written in a very understandable language. It is about matters that are not often or not willingly talked about, but most of the users might/should have thought about them yet.

The personal experiences with Facebook that are mentioned in the article and the way it is written creates a mood that animates to read the whole article, even though it is a long one. The reader (and Facebook-user) can identify with the people who deleted their account and so the reader knows that there might be a few people thinking also about the bad effects of Facebook. But the article – and in my opinion that is the point why it is a very good one – is not written in an accusing way against the user. It is not this “hey, you should not spend so much time on Facebook!”. It is more like “hey, I also have been on Facebook and I figured out that ... “. So this article is more like some good advice for Facebook addicts and not an arraignment and this is what makes people think about Facebook.

II. Statement by Wiebke

In some points, I agree to the author's opinion. I think that it is incredible how much time some people spend on chatting on Facebook. And there are some people –even some of my own Facebook-friends- who keep on posting senseless things nobody cares about. This can be very annoying.

But I think that most of the Facebook-criticism is way too rough. Nobody is forced to create an account and if you don't like Facebook, you have the possibility to stay away from it. Even if you do own an account, you don't have to be online all the time.

I think it is ridiculous to talk about Facebook as a stupid thing which keeps you away from your real friends. You can meet them of course in “real life” but you can talk to them on Facebook too, for example late in the evenings. Another pretty good thing about social



networks is, that it gives you the possibility to stay in touch with old friends and with people from all over the world you've met for example at MUNs or on holiday.

It's paradoxical that some people say they want to free themselves from Facebook and that there is the question "How will life be without Facebook?" because I think that life with and without Facebook shouldn't be different. Facebook isn't a dangerous drug you have to keep away from; it's a good thing to communicate with people who live far away or to talk to somebody for a few minutes if you're busy.

I think it would be possible for me to live without Facebook, but I don't want to do it because I'd like to stay in contact with friends in Luxembourg, Romania, Hungary and in the whole of Germany.

If you're online for many hours daily, I think that's a problem. But that isn't a fault of Facebook; it's your own fault because you use it the wrong way. You always have the possibility to go online, send some messages and then, after a few minutes, log out again. If you know how to deal with social networks, they can be a very good thing.

III. Social networks by Larissa

In my opinion social networks have two sides. They give me the possibility to stay in contact with all my friends and moreover with people I've met on vacation or somewhere else. This way I can talk to them although they may live at the other end of the world. Well, I could also send them a letter or phone them but social networks are easier and cost nothing.

Furthermore I can stay in contact with students, I can exchange information and ask questions. In addition to this you can plan an event, share it with your friends and on one look you can see who will come to your party and who will not. So you do not have to phone everybody and you can prevent stress.

But there is also a negative side. I admit that social networks for example Facebook can make you dependent. People can create fake profiles so that other users will get a wrong idea of the person. Another point is that if you've once uploaded a picture, it will exist forever on the internet. Cyber-mobbing is also a problem a social network has to deal with and it is really hard to stop this.

All in all I do not want to miss social networks. If you know how to use for example Facebook in a positive way and if you are aware of the dangers and obsession, why should I not use it then. I think that people should not only see the negative sides of a social network there are also a lot of positive ones.

IV. „Ich bin dann mal off!“by Kristin

The article by Thorsten Schmitz about Facebook is very interesting. "People can be happy without any social networks", is one of the main messages in this article.

After the last holidays when all pupils were back at school, I found myself in a similar situation. The others asked me about my holidays. Later on they said: "I haven't heard anything from you. What happened?", I was surprised. What should have happened? I was just not online during that time and for most of the others it was unbelievable.



I think the article brings a problem up. On the one hand I admire these people for signing off. Life is as good as before, of course. In my opinion it is very important to write articles about stories like these, because people must be aware of the problems Facebook could cause.

But on the other hand, I wouldn't sign off either. Facebook is dangerous, but also very practical. You can keep in touch with people all over the world. It is for free and fast. These are good reasons for using Facebook. Also for school, you can communicate with your classmates.

I think everyone who uses social networks should be aware of the dangers and problems and should really think about it. But everyone is responsible for his or her actions in these social networks. If people used it just for very important issues, it wouldn't be that dangerous for him/her. No one has to post all those photos, that is voluntary.

People should use social networks with responsibility and with common sense.

V. Facebook by Clara

The newspaper article focused mainly on Facebook's negative aspects. It pointed out that Facebook records its users' data, even after deregistration, and that it pulls people out of real life by trying to make them stay online as long as possible in order to earn more money with advertisement.

Personally, I don't think that Facebook is as bad as described by the journalist. It has a lot of enormous advantages, such as the ability to communicate easily, quickly and for free with friends and family from all over the world. Also, as long as you get straight that there's the possibility that the already mentioned concern could become a problem to you, it's easy to avoid it. For example, you can manage your privacy settings, control what gets shared and limit the audience for posts you shared. Of course this doesn't help if someone is extremely open-hearted, but I think in this case it's a problem caused by the user and not by Facebook. It's the same with the criticism of pulling people out of reality: Facebook doesn't force you to stay online for hours, it's the user who decides how long he wants to stay. But I think you've got to have a certain age to be able to control your security settings as well as the amount of time you spend online. Therefore I think it would be useful to find a way to ensure that the minimum age for joining Facebook gets observed so that the legal Facebook age can be kept under surveillance.