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Disconnect.Me
User Engagement and Facebook

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Kymmenessä vuodessa Facebook on onnistunut sitouttamaan 1.2 miljardia käyttäjää. Artikkeliväitöskirja Disconnect.Me – Käyttäjien sitoutuminen ja Facebook tarkastelee Facebookia näiden käyttäjien menettämisen näkökulmasta. Artikkeleissa tutkimuskohteena ovat muun muassa Facebookin käytön lopettaminen, käyttäjätilin tuhoavat mediataideteokset, muistoprofiilit ja Facebook-trollit. Menetelmällisesti tutkielma nojautuu erilaisiin mediateoreettisiin näkökulmiin painottuen erityisesti affektiteoriaan, software-tutkimukseen, biopolitiikkaan ja kriittiseen uuden median tutkimukseen. Kirjan keskeinen väite on, että tutkimalla käyttäjien menettämistä empiirisenä ilmiönä, tulevaisuuden uhkana sekä teoreettisena käsitteenä on mahdollista ymmärtää, miten käyttäjät sekä sitoutuvat että sitoutetaan osaksi sosiaalisen median toimintatapoja ja liiketoimintamalleja. Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että käyttäjien sitoutuminen on suhde, joka edeltää käyttäjien osallistumista; tässä suhteessa olennaista on, mitä sosiaalisen median alusta voi tehdä käyttäjälle ei niinkään se, mitä käyttäjät itse sosiaalisessa mediassa tekevät. Uudistamalla lakkaamatta alustaansa ja käyttöliittymäänsä Facebook pyrkiikin sitouttamaan uusia käyttäjiä ja samalla pysäyttämään vanhojen käyttäjien menettämisen. Facebookin alusta tekee käyttäjien sitoutumisesta paitsi sosiaalista myös teknistä ja affektiivista. Sitoutumalla käyttäjä asettuu algoritmisen kontrollin pariin, jossa koneelliset prosessit paitsi määrittelevät ja luokittelevat käyttäjänsä datan keruun tarpeisiin myös tekevät käyttäjistä affektiivisia; käyttäjien toiminta ja sisällöntuotanto houkuttelee toisia käyttäjiä sitoutumaan ja osallistumaan Facebookin toimintaan. Kirjan keskeisenä teemana on käyttäjien sitoutumisen ja sitouttamisen merkityksellisyys paitsi käyttäjille myös Facebookille sekä huomio, että tämän suhteen katkeaminen avaa tutkimuksellisesti digitaalisen mediakulttuurin uusia raja-alueita.

Asiasanat: Facebook, käyttäjä, sosiaalinen media, käyttöliittymä, kulttuuri, digitaalinen talous, affekti, kontrolli, mediateoria

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In the beginning of its 10th year of existence Facebook has engaged and connected 1.2 billion monthly active users. This article-based dissertation Disconnect.Me – User Engagement and Facebook approaches this engagement from the opposite direction: disconnection. The research articles focus on social media specific phenomena including leaving Facebook, tactical media works such as Web 2.0 SuicideMachine, memorializing dead Facebook users and Facebook trolling. The media theoretical framework for this study is built around affect theory, software studies, biopolitics as well as different critical studies of new media. The argument is that disconnection is a necessary condition of social media connectivity and exploring social media through disconnection – as an empirical phenomenon, future potential and theoretical notion – helps us to understand how users are engaged with social media, its uses and subsequent business models. The results of the study indicate that engagement is a relation that precedes user participation, a notion often used to conceptualize social media. Furthermore, this engagement turns the focus from users' actions towards the platform and how the platform actively controls users and their behavior. Facebook aims to engage new users and maintain the old ones by renewing its platform and user interface. User engagement with the platform is thus social but also technical and affective. When engaged, the user is positioned to algorithmic connectivity where machinc processes mine user data. This data is but sold also used to affect and engage other users. In the heart of this study is the notion that our networked engagements matter and disconnection can bring us to the current limits of network culture.

Keywords: Facebook, user, social media, user interface, culture, digital economy, affect, control, media theory

Disconnect.Me –User Engagement and Facebook is an article-based dissertation. All of the five articles presented in this doctoral dissertation are either published in academic peer-reviewed publications or accepted for publication and forthcoming as indicated below. Please cite the original place of publication when referring.

Article 1
"Digital Suicide and the Biopolitics of Leaving Facebook." *Transformations Journal* No. 20, 2011. http://www.transformationsjournal.org/journal/issue_20/article_02.shtml

Article 2
"Exploring Augmented Reality. On Users and Rewiring the Senses." *CTRL-Z: New Media Philosophy* No. 2, 2012.
http://www.ctrl-z.net.au/articles/issue-2/karppi-exploring-augmented-reality/

Article 3
"Happy Accidents. Facebook and the Value of Affects." Forthcoming in *Networked Affect* by Ken Hillis, Susanna Paasonen & Michael Petit (eds.). MIT Press, 2014.

Article 4
"'Change name to No One. Like people's status' Facebook Trolling and Managing Online Personas." *The Fibreculture Journal* Issue 22, 2013.

Article 5
"Death Proof: On the Biopolitics and Noopolitics of Memorializing Dead Facebook Users." *Culture Machine* Vol 14, 2013.
http://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/article/download/513/528

Contents

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February 26, 2014
Turku

Ready to Lead, Ready to Follow, Never Quit
Navy SEALs

I Sign Up

The things that connect us:

> **Doorbells, airplanes, bridges, these are things people use to get together so they can open up and connect about ideas and music and other things that people share. Dance floors, basketball, a great nation. A great nation is something people build so they can have a place where they belong. The universe. It is vast and dark and makes us wonder if we are alone. So maybe the reason we make all of these things is to remind ourselves that we are not.**[1]

The fragment above is from the first TV commercial by the social media giant *Facebook*. Basically it exemplifies their mission statement: "to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected" (Facebook A). On Facebook we are not alone, is a very powerful statement by the company itself. It implies that the site is profoundly social, shared and experienced together. Evidently, this statement is also backed up with impressive user statistics. In the beginning of its 10th year of existence Facebook has 1.2 billion monthly active users, 757 million daily active users and 945 million monthly active users who use Facebook mobile products.[2] In recent years Facebook and other social media sites such as *Twitter* and previously *MySpace* have intensified our connectivity to the internet and beyond along with amplifying the developments of the so-called network culture. Using social media has become a part of our daily lives. In social media we communicate with each other. We are connected both locally and globally. We share things. We share photos, links and geospatial information. These shared things are not just aural, textual and/or visual objects, but have affective value. They are things that are 'liked,' 'recommended' and 'favorited.' Social media users participate in many ways, but even more importantly, they engage with these sites. In other words, social media sites do not only enable social relations between humans, but also create affective attachments *to* the sites themselves.

In a few years this ecosystem of connective media has become a normalized state dominated by a few large and a number of small players (Cf. van Dijck 2013a, 4, 21). At the time of writing, Facebook is the most valuable player. Mark Zuckerberg founded Facebook

1 Transcribed from the audio track of The Things that Connect Us video: https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=3802752155040
2 Statistics by Facebook (Facebook B 2013; Facebook C 2013).

with a few of his colleagues in 2004. *Thefacebook*, as it was called then, was an online networking service for Harvard university students. Since the beginning Facebook profiles were based on real users with real identities. In a year Facebook began to expand: first to other U.S. universities then to the U.K. and the rest of the western world. Due to this expansion and increasing openness to heterogeneous users Facebook began to grow rapidly. At the end of 2006 Facebook had 12 million users, at the end of 2007 they already had 58 million users. At the same time the site and its interface were constantly evolving. The Facebook Application Program Interface (API) allowed third party developers to build applications and connect them to the platform. The user interface went through different transformations and new features such as the Like button were introduced. New features to manage user information and the endlessly growing databases were constantly required. At the end of 2009 the site had reached 360 million users. In 2011 Facebook reached 845 million users. The massive amount of active users indicated that Facebook was profitable and had massive commercial potential. Consequently, in May 2012 Facebook held its initial public offering. In October 2012 it announced that a billion people were active on Facebook.[3] (Facebook C; Facebook B.)

FACEBOOK TIMELINE

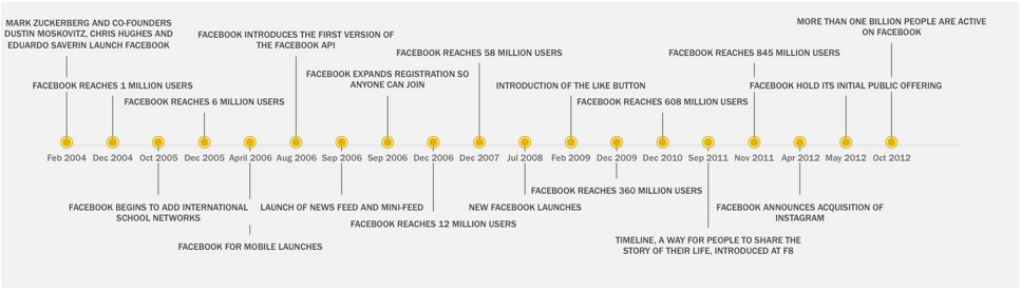

Illustration 1. Facebook timeline

Facebook is founded on what José van Dijck (2013a, 4) has described as the culture of connectivity: a culture where "engineers found ways to code information into algorithms that helped brand a particular form of online sociality and make it profitable in online markets – serving a global market of social networking and user-generated content." In this ecosystem the role of the individual user seems to be diminutive. A user is literally one among a billion, important merely as a part of a whole. However, the importance of the role of one user increases at the very moment it becomes a position of resistance, opposition, a challenge. What if a user wants to leave Facebook? What if a user does not want to participate in social media? Is the user able to break technologically-mediated social relationships? What in fact is the role of the user when the relationships of engagement become fragile?

Disconnect.Me – User Engagement and Facebook began as my doctoral dissertation project in 2010, and was concluded at the beginning of 2014.[4] It was written at the time when Facebook had

3 Illustration 1 Facebook Timeline (illustration mine) describes Facebook's important moments. The user statistics are retrieved from Facebook (Facebook B; Facebook C).
4 The title *Disconnect.Me* is a reference to a domain name for a software application called Disconnect, which tries to prevent Facebook and other social media sites from mining user data. The software as such is

become tremendously popular and it emerges in a cultural context where people are using a vast array of social media and communications technologies as part of their everyday lives and practices. It was written at the time when Facebook became a major technologically-mediated infrastructure of how we interact, share and participate. The focus of this dissertation is, however, not on user participation, but on user engagement. This emphasis changes the question setting fundamentally. Ask not what you can do on/for Facebook; ask what Facebook can do to/for you. Accordingly in *Disconnect.Me* I address the means and methods through/by which users engage with Facebook. The analysis conducted in this dissertation deals with heterogeneous subjects ranging from different Facebook users to user interfaces, algorithms and protocols, trolls and death in Facebook to name but a few examples. Through these analyses I argue that our relationships and engagements are currently being redefined by networked technologies in myriad ways.

"We prioritize product development investments that we believe will create engaging interactions between our users, developers and marketers," Facebook (Facebook D, 9) states in their Facebook 2012 Annual Report. User engagement here is a notion that describes different user relations in social media. Being engaged is a relation of connecting and sharing, discovering and learning, expressing oneself; it is a state of staying connected everywhere (Ibid. 5-6). To rephrase, user engagement relates to the pervasiveness and ubiquity of social media in our everyday lives. It is a deeper connection than mere user participation. Mark Deuze (2011) has provocatively suggested recently that we need to consider this relation as media life. Media life is a state where

> **media cannot be conceived of as separate to us, to the extent that we live in media, rather than *with* media. There are extensive social and cultural repercussions occurring primarily due to the way media are becoming invisible, as media are so pervasive and ubiquitous that people in general do not even register the presence of media in their lives. (Ibid., 143.)**

Living in media means that everything is connected. Everything from social relationships to innovations and tastes become defined by likes and recommendations in engagements with social media.

User engagement is a relation. It is a relation that is defined by a plethora of different agencies operating alongside the human user in social media platforms and taking place both on the audiovisual interface and under the hood, coded in the software, inscribed in protocols, rules and regulations that control user's behaviors.[5] Consider algorithms. Algorithms select information and make that information visible for social media users. Algorithms are generative rules, "virtuals that generate a whole variety of actuals" (Lash 2007, 71). We do not see the algo-

not a subject of this research. For more information on the software see http://www.disconnect.me

5 We could describe these agents and agencies as 'non-human'. The notion of 'non-human' in this context refers to the philosophical and political discussions which challenge the idea of matter being passive, raw or for example given and instead try to see matter as vibrant agency with a capability to affect and be affected. In these discussions matter matters in itself, not only as a part of social system or other embodied human perspective. (See Bennett 2010.) In addition it is noted that there are also other users than the human user operating on Facebook and social media sites. Artificial agents such as bots have the capability to conduct human-like operations and interactions and blur the lines between different users (Mavridis 2011).

rithm in operation, but we might see their results as choices and limitations given to us. If the algorithm works well, we receive suggestions regarding things that we are interested in already, or things that we might have become interested in eventually. Algorithmic control is only one of the examples of the conditions under which user profiles become more or less determined through social media.

In this dissertation I postulate that user engagement is a relation of power that becomes expressed through disconnection. Disconnection, people abandonning Facebook, is a threat to the company's existence; when Facebook became a publicly traded company it openly admitted that its challenge is to keep growing and in that way to maintain the existing user base (Facebook E). Unsurprisngly, the popular press seems to be fascinated with reports of different internet user groups, such as adolescents leaving the site and finding alternative social media platforms and exploring new ways of connecting with each other (Matthews 2014; Kiss 2013). Even provocative predictions of the death of Facebook due to disconnection have gained public attention (Garside 2014). I am not taking a stance whether or not these reports are valid or accurate. Rather I argue that by exploring disconnection one can understand how Facebook in particular engages its users. This perspective also concerns on what grounds our current networked connectivity in general. Thus, disconnection for me is a concept that goes beyond leaving Facebook as empirical phenomena. It is a relation that is potential and calls for multiple media theoretical explorations. Firstly, I discuss the power of users to disconnect from social media sites. Through technologies of user engagement the platform responds to the potential threat of people leaving the site in many ways. User engagement means that leaving the site is made difficult either technically (one has to request the deletion of their user profile through an online form) or affectively (the loss of social contacts is made visible). Quitting is often considered social suicide; the one who disconnects or is disconnected becomes devoid of their social networks. Secondly, I discuss the power of social media sites to disconnect their users. Disconnection is a threat or a limit to user participation. Some modes of user participation are disallowed; through actions that violate the rules and regulations of using social media sites users become disconnected, banned and evicted from the platform. From this perspective social media is not a free playground. User engagement always submits to a particular form of control, where certain user models are affirmed and others diminished. Importantly, these user models are not only regulatory, but coded culturally and technologically within the operations of the platform. Thirdly, I discuss the ways in which users are disconnected in order to become subjectified within Facebook. Connected users are both distracted and attracted by social media in many ways. Every Facebook message interrupts us with a beep or a pop-up window on our screen. Mobile phones indicate that a new friend request has been sent. Moreover, users are constantly being disconnected from the data they produce and reconnected back to it in the practices of data mining and targeted advertising for example.

Disconnect.Me begins from a user who has connected, signed up.[6] This is the most important delimitation for this work. My premise is that the question of user engagement already presumes a connection of some kind. User engagement is a reciprocal process, managed, produced and handled by the users themselves and the platform they are connected to. User engagement calls attention to how 'a user' engages with Facebook instead of merely being on Facebook. The

6 In this dissertation users who have never connected or never will are delimited outside the research. In fact non-users are a methodological challenge for this study, because they are a group whose relation cannot be explained through a platform-oriented approach since this relation does not exist. Consequently, the question of non-users is so vast that it would need a study of its own.

user is a human agent, but its place and role is constantly negotiated and produced by social media sites technologically, culturally and politically. With this assertion *Disconnect.Me* provides a description of a social media user who, instead of being a rational human individual, is a subject to become defined through different affective, cognitive and non-cognitive, rational and irrational relations. This is not to argue that the user has become a powerless operator that is merely exploited by these sites.[7] While I exemplify the artificial and material nature of the user as a particular assemblage affected by a multiplicity of agencies, I do not consider that position as fixed or determinate. Firstly, we have never lived outside or without technology, but rather we have always been configured with it as noted by Mark Coté (2010) for example. Secondly, as users we have agency as well and our actions have an effect on the formation of these technologies. Thus, while what users do may well bring in money for social media businesses, these uses also potentially affirm new modes of being, new ways of usage and new connections.

The form of this dissertation is an edited collection of published peer-reviewed articles supplemented with a larger thematic introduction to user engagement. The composition of the dissertation was chosen for pragmatic, but also conceptual reasons. In 2010 when this project was initiated it was unclear what would happen to the social media sites that dominated the market at the time. In 2009 MySpace had begun its steep decline and subsequently almost vanished. Facebook was growing its critical user mass and expanding globally but its IPO was just a rumor. As we now know, social media has gone through significant changes during these four years. These changes have involved updates on the interface and the modus operandi of social media platforms in general, but also the role of social media in society, the economy and culture has changed. Social media has, at least allegedly, become a key player behind revolutions (Arab Spring) and protests (Occupy WallStreet). Moreover, social media companies have become significant employers and they have changed overall marketing strategies. In the midst of these cultural, economic and social changes the role of the user has always remained important.

Despite its importance the role of the user has been relatively one-sided. A generalized view of users as active participants emerges within the discourses of Web 2.0 dating in the early 2000s (O'Reilly 2005; Bruns 2008). In these discourses users' various actions and relationships were mediated through social media sites and transformed into business practices. Correspondingly, research into social media often begins by giving users agency and focusing on what users do both alone and together in socially-networked services (Markham and Baym 2009). Conversely, if research does not give users agency they see users as targets of exploitation via data mining and automated control in social media sites (Cf. Andrejevic 2009). To challenge the binarity of these positions my dissertation changes the emphasis to user engagement as an attachment that involves both sides. Focusing on the user engagement and understanding it as a particular attachment to Facebook, *Disconnect.Me* sets out to bridge some of the current knowledge gaps between the theories and technologies of user participation.

Theoretically *Disconnect.Me* is inspired by the philosophy of becoming presented by Gilles Deleuze (2004) where the idea is to understand how things find their form through different assemblages and agents, and how difference is a productive force that makes virtuals actualize.

7 While the idea that users both use social media and are used by social media has a significant role in this dissertation and the emphasis often is in the so-called dark side of network culture, I do not address user engagement as a mere relation of exploitation. Value is not merely extracted from users, but sites like Facebook and other similar sites evidently also produce value for users. Hence, I am not proposing moral judgments on or trying to determine user engagement and Facebook with the terms of positive and negative, good and bad.

Correspondingly, user engagement is seen as a relation, an attachment, a process. It is not fixed. This position echoes a range of approaches from the affect-based philosophy of Brian Massumi (2002; see also 2011) and its formulations of how things operate behind the fields of meaning, signification and rationality, to new media focused understandings by Tiziana Terranova (2004) who explores how the relations of power and control operate within the dynamics of the network culture. Furthermore, this work finds connections to Richard Grusin's (2010) notion of premediation; a media-specific way to anticipate future events and produce responses accordingly; Tony Sampson's (2012) discussions of networks as contagious and affective assemblages where the human user is one node among others; and José van Dijck's (2013a) critical approach on the history of social media as culture of connectivity.

Instead of developing a philosophy or ontology of user engagement this dissertation suggests a movement towards practical approaches, which may reveal the ontological system, but also shed light on the ongoing cultural politics behind the research subjects. In my opinion, media studies as a discipline is never merely about adapting concepts or philosophical frameworks to empirical material, but about understanding that material and tracing different remixes of human and non-human operators: seeing how things are connected and which connections define them. By focusing on processes, instead of structures, my approach goes to the core and identifies concepts that occur at the moment when theory and practice meet. As Terranova (2004, 1) describes this means trying "to think *simultaneously* the singular and the multiple, the common and the unique." It means seeing user engagement in the context of political, economic and cultural meshwork instead of presenting it as a fixed position.

Structurally this dissertation is a network in itself. It is composed of a longer thematic introduction (Chapters 2 – 5), which introduces the main themes, defines the purposes of this research, explicates the theoretical and methodological frameworks, presents the research articles with their connections and findings and discusses the findings and conclusions of this research. The corpus of this work is in the research articles. They can be read individually, but together they form a cohesive understanding of how disconnection as an actual phenomenon and as a theoretical notion operates in social media. Read together the analysis of disconnections can be used in drawing conclusions about user engagement and Facebook as pointed out throughout this introduction. In the chapter 2, titled *Log in*, I introduce the analytical framework of disconnection and my research questions. In chapter 3, *Tools and Settings*, I present a short literature review and then proceed to explain the methodological apparatus of this research, which is built around the notion of remix. Rather than a strict method, remix for me is a principle according to which I have worked in writing the articles and found ways in arriving to overall conclusions. In this chapter I also introduce the empirical materials that are analyzed and used in this research. At the end of the chapter I provide an outline of the research articles and present how the articles have answered the specific research questions. Chapter 4, *Engage*, begins by explaining how the articles collectively respond to my general research questions and evolves into a contextual and thematic discussion around those answers. In this chapter I present an understanding of user engagement. Since chapter 4 draws together and extends the analysis and arguments made in the reseach articles, it is recommended that the articles are read before moving to chapter 4. Chapter 5, *Update Status*, concludes this thematic introduction. It draws general conclusions and opens up new directions for research. As mentioned the argumentum of this dissertation is built around the research articles placed under the title *Log out* at the end of this dissertation. Log out here does not refer to a conclusion or an end, but rather it suggests that the discussions developed in the course of writing this dissertation can be found either

from this edited collection or independently in the context of the different publications where they simultaneously appear and connect to other discussions. While a longer discussion of the articles is found in chapter 3.3., here I want to briefly refer to their main themes. The first article "Digital Suicide and the Biopolitics of Leaving Facebook" explores how users quit Facebook. The second article "Exploring Augmented Reality. On Users and Rewiring the Senses" considers augmented reality as a mode of artificial disconnection. The third article "Happy Accidents. Facebook and the Value of Affects" explores how Facebook is a system of affect production and how automated processes turn users into points of affection instead of active participators. The fourth article "'Change name to No One. Like people's status' Facebook Trolling and Managing Online Personas" considers why particular users, trolls in this case, are disconnected from Facebook and how user engagement is a process of algorithmic control. The fifth and final article "Death Proof: On the Biopolitics and Noopolitics of Memorializing Dead Facebook Users" considers what happens to Facebook users after their terminal disconnect: death. It argues that once signed up we remain engaged forever.

II Log In

In this chapter I will introduce the field of research problems and my research questions that emerge from this field. The chapter begins with a specific framing of the field of research problems related to our current culture of connectivity manifested especially in the operations of Facebook. In this dissertation this field and the subsequent research questions are contemplated through an analytical framework of 'disconnection', which is presented at the end of this chapter. A case in point is that 'disconnection' is both a theoretical concept and a phenomena appearing in the empirical material.

2.1 The Field of research problems

While social media users and their relationships have been studied extensively, only little attention has been given to the opposite: users who do not want to engage with social media, users who have been banned from social media, users who through their activities have become 'unwanted.' In some cases disconnection is seen as a threat to user engagement (Facebook E), a political or tactical maneuver against the dominant network culture (Galloway and Thacker 2007, 135-136; Raley 2009, 25) a privileged choice of elitism (Portwood-Stacers 2012) or an act of governmental oppression (Howard, Agarwal and Hussain 2011).[8] Coinciding with these approaches, the intention of this dissertation is to highlight disconnection in its different forms and explore user engagement and Facebook more thoroughly. Adopting disconnection as an analytical framework is a tactical choice for this study. Its premise is that when social media sites are faced with disconnection the practices and boundaries of the platform are rendered visible; that such moments of rupture in user engagement enable the reconfiguration of theories related to the user and technologies of user engagement.

Evidently, connections are everywhere on and in Facebook. Social relationships are established through technically-mediated connections. Communication presumes a connection. Computers that provide access to Facebook need to be connected to a network. In general: if users are connected to each other on Facebook, they also need to be connected to the platform

8 Different approaches to disconnection are discussed in more detail in chapter 2.3.

even though the connection may be rendered almost invisible through notification systems and mobile applications and other similar applications. These connections are appropriated in social media business models; to be profitable means to affirm different connections. However connections are not sufficient in themselves. They also need to engage users. Here connectivity becomes an issue of user engagement. Connections and engagements are two sides of the same coin. For me connectivity is a relation of connecting and engagement is the qualitative nature of this relation. When users are connected to Facebook they engage with Facebook (and vice versa). However, they are not only engaged with that particular connection, but also with the wider shaping of our culture that demands or craves users engagements. As also José van Dijck (2012, 2) maintains, "Connectivity has become the material and metaphorical wiring of our culture, a culture in which technologies shape and are shaped not only by economic and legal frames, but also by users and content."

If connections are the material and metaphorical wirings of our culture then disconnection holds the position of the problematic. What happens if connections fail technologically, culturally or socially? What happens if users choose not to connect? What happens if users are not engaged? Accordingly, disconnection is a question of power. On the one hand we are told that relations of power are constantly constructed and performed anew in the network culture and in the diverse connections users engage each other within these networks.[9] Yet, in order for these power relations to emerge, the user needs to be connected to the network in the first place. This is empowerment through capture and capture through empowerment.[10]

The problem of disconnection for Facebook is a problem of retaining power. If the users become disengaged and leave the site Facebook will eventually lose its power and fade away. Thus, while often concealed, forgotten or faded into the background, disconnection exists as a threat or a potentiality, depending on the perspective. On the one hand disconnection relates to what Michel Foucault (2004) calls biopower; an introduction of diverse technologies and techniques used to manage and simultaneously control both individual users and users as a mass. This is the political sphere of Deuze's (2011) "media life"; the state where media has become so inseparable from us that we do not live with media, but in it. It is a sphere where media forms an environment for life in its many manifestations to take place. Media here is a "form of emergent causality" (Coté 2010; see also Hansen 2006, 298-300) that has a specific infrastructure where the possibilities for our creativity and sociability are conditioned without us even actively being aware of its intrusion. On the other hand, disconnection is connected to the notion of ontopower; "a power that makes things happen: that moves a futurity felt in the present, into a presence in the future," as Massumi (2012) puts it. Both of these modes of power connect to the strategies of preemption: reacting to disconnection when it exists as a mere potentiality. Disconnection is a future problem that demands current answers. Consequently disconnection even without becoming actualized has the power to produce different outcomes; more and better connections in a technical sense but also more engaging technologies in a socio-cultural sense. Disconnection

9 Perhaps the strongest example of this line of thought is in actor-network theory, which proposes that power emerges from users actions within a network and thus pre-existing power structures become challenged (Cf. Latour 2005).

10 The fact that this is artificiality taking place in social media sites does not lead us to the conclusion that the users are either merely captured and exploited by the sites, or that the sites empower users in novel ways (Cf. van Dijck 2012, 6). Instead it indicates the possibility of both. On one hand the infrastructure is performative by nature and allows users to interact and perform different actions (Beer 2009, 997). On the other hand the users are empowered as long as they belong to the network and belonging to a network means adhering to its rules and regulations at least to some extent.

becomes a vehicle of Facebook's platform politics.[11]

From my perspective Facebook's platform politics are based on preemptive strategies; strategies that aim at reacting to threats when they exist as mere potentialities. Connections are constantly established to remove the possibility of a disconnection from occurring.[12] Conversely, also different actors and agencies are constantly being removed, blocked and disconnected from the network in order to keep it operating and the network is built to resist and evade these unwanted agencies.[13] Disconnection is a potential threat. Its nature as a potentiality reminds us of a famous phrase by Donald Rumsfeld (2002) who, while serving as the United States Secretary of Defense in February 2002, tried to define different kinds of threats; "There are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say, we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns – the ones we do not know we do not know."[14]

What is of special interest here is the interplay of these categories. To be prepared for the unknown unknowns, a threat that we are aware of only via a gut feeling, Facebook begins by producing a reality where the threat is neutralized even before it emerges, or so that it would not emerge.[15] The responses to unknown unknowns take place in the dimensions of the known

11 As Tarleton Gillespie (2010, 349) notes 'platform' is a handy notion in the context of social media research because it is simultaneously "specific enough to mean something and vague enough to work across multiple venues for multiple audiences." According to Gillespie 'platform' intersects four broad categories: computational, architectural, figurative and political. Quoting him (Ibid., 350) at length is in order here: "All four of these semantic areas are relevant to why 'platform' has emerged in reference to online content-hosting intermediaries and, just as important, what value both its specificity and its flexibility offer them. All point to a common set of connotations: a 'raised level surface' designed to facilitate some activity that will subsequently take place. It is anticipatory, but not causal. It implies a neutrality with regards to the activity, though less so as the term gets specifically matched to specific functions (like a subway platform), and even less so in the political variation. A computing platform can be agnostic about what you might want to do with it, but either neutral (cross-platform) or very much not neutral (platform-dependent), according to which provider's application you would like to use."

12 Here a constitutive reference would be the work of Paul Baran in the 1960s in developing the distributed network model and especially the prevailing as well as contested myth that the network model is built in the context of nuclear war in order to build a network that cannot be destroyed (and hence to remove disconnection from the horizon of possibilities). (See Baran 1964; Sampson 2007; Karppi 2012)

13 Consider for example malware, trolls, hackers, bugs, botnets and other unwanted operators of network culture and how the network is designed in response to these agencies. See Parikka and Sampson 2009; Guins 2009; Parikka 2007.)

14 With this statement Rumsfeld was of course talking about the absence of evidence linking the government of Iraq with the supply of weapons of mass destruction to terrorist groups and finding justification to preemptive strategies. These categories have been subsequently adapted to cultural theory by authors like Richard Grusin (2010) and Brian Massumi (2012). Grusin (2010, 71) points out that Slavoj Žižek has added these categories with a fourth category of the "unknown knowns." For Žižek (2004) this is a category inspired by Lacanian and Freudian interpretations of unconsciousness involving things such as memories but Grusin (2010, 71) suggests that it could be used in understanding the operations of technologies that are often hidden or even concealed. Grusin suggests that our daily practices are filled with mediated practices which we are not aware of. In fact I will use the category of the known unknowns in a very similar way in the following chapters. I feel that I do not need the fourth category as we actually know that these technologies exist and operate behind our daily practices: what we do not know is how they operate and to what extent our daily habits of using media are filled with these operations.

15 The operations of preemption could be described also within other conceptual frameworks. One such framework could be Michel de Certeau's (1988, xix) division between strategies and tactics. While the former represents the overall objectives and goals the latter indicates specific ways in which different goals are achieved in momentary situations. Tactics operate in futurity turning and manipulating events into

knowns and the known unknowns. An example of the former could be Facebook's Statement of Rights and Responsibilities (Facebook H): the list of things users are allowed to do on Facebook and the pronounced boundaries of these actions. An example of the latter would be the complex technological protocols that monitor and ensure that the rules are being followed by enabling some actions and preventing others.

What users can do on Facebook is to a great extent produced according to what Nigel Thrift (2005, 212) calls spaces of anticipation. Spaces of anticipation place bodies and objects into "'correct' positionings and juxtapositionings, which allow things to arrive and become known." A case in point is when we are already positioned or juxtapositioned in a particular way as users of social media. The environments where we are and the modes of being that we subscribe to "become accepted as the only way to be because, each and every day, they show up more or less as expected" (Ibid., 212). What emerges from these positionings in social media sites can be anything from political propaganda and particular economic consumer models to new forms of resistance. However, I argue that the problem is not only in these specific connections, but in the overall principle of connectivity. As Richard Grusin (2010, 128) argues: "Social networks exist for the purpose of premediating connectivity, by promoting an anticipation that a connection will be made." Reasserting the overall ideology of connectivity is simultaneously a reassertion of user engagement: its proposition is that everything from oppression to resistance, creation to destruction takes place within the system and never outside it.[16]

2.2 Research questions

In this dissertation user engagement and Facebook are problematized through the empirical and conceptual framework of disconnection. It is further developed into two main research questions:

RQ 1. How are users connected to and engaged with the choices offered by social media sites such as Facebook?

RQ 2. How are these engagements used to anticipate the scope of choices available for users?

The term 'choice' has a particular emphasis in my research questions. Facebook (Facebook A) calls on its users to participate; it grants the user "with the power to share" and thus "make the

opportunities that can weaken or strengthen strategies. Correspondingly, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (2005, 34) talk about the distinction between the molar and the molecular. Molar aggregates are rather stable categories aiming at remaining the same or intact. Molecular aggregates on the other hand are in a constant movement reacting to events and renewing their compositions. Molar can be broken into molecular and molecules can form molar constellations. Thus, they should not be considered as dualist oppositions but more as different kinds of reaction and interaction taking place constantly.

16 The climax of such connectivity is in concepts such as ubiquitous computing and pervasive media. In this political climate disconnection is dissipated anomaly that challenges everything since it indicates a possibility that should not exist: the freedom to choose not to engage or not to participate at all.

world more open and connected." In this mission statement the user is offered the position of an active participator with the implication that the power of the site is in the hands of the users and their choices. Raiford Guins (2009, 21) proposes that this freedom of choice is not a real choice, but rather a mode of action administered and managed through new media technologies. He follows Deleuze (2006, 322) who pairs choice with control in the modern apparatuses of power. Deleuze's argument is that the subject does not need to be confined in order to be controlled; control is not a discipline. Instead, Deleuze (1995; 2006) proposes a model where the means of control are multiplied to the extent that the subject experiences an infinite freedom of choices while in fact all these choices are perfectly controlled.[17] For Guins (2009, 21) new media technologies work with the same logic of enabling different choices and simultaneously demarcating others. Moving the emphasis to the 'choices offered' and the 'scope of choices' implies that the one who chooses is more of an irrational subject that 'becomes' in encounter with the choice mechanisms implemented and established by social media sites than a rational subject actively making decisions based on cognitive evaluations. This un-nuanced critique of rationality again does not place the user in the position of a passive subject, but is intended to explicate that on Facebook there are affective involvements constantly taking place that cannot be rationally explained. Paraphrasing Coté (2010) if rational thought occurs it occurs "in this assemblage of human and technics imbued with and typically predisposed by sub-perceptual affect."[18]

Accordingly, user engagement is a conglomerate of operations on different levels. Paraphrasing van Dijck (2012, 5) social media sites mediate social practices and "affect people's daily interactions and reciprocal relationships" in platform-specific ways; on the one hand social media sites run "coded protocols that appear to 'mediate' people's social activities, while in fact *steering* social traffic". On the other hand the user interface regulates which of the processes are visible and what takes place "hidden behind the screen's features."[19] According to Guins (2009, 15-23) there is a double-pull where control mechanisms are embedded in media technologies, but simultaneously control is discursively placed in the hands of the users themselves as a choice and responsibility of using these technologies in a certain way.

The case studies, presented in this dissertation in the form of research articles are each subdivided into their own particular research questions, but also to more general research questions that answer RQ1 and RQ2 with an emphasis on one or the other. These general questions with emphases are:

Article 1. How do users quit Facebook? (RQ1 & RQ2)

Article 2. How does the choice to connect with new media technologies change users' engagements and perceptions of the surrounding environment? (RQ2 & RQ1)

Article 3. How are Facebook users' connections and disconnections used to produce value? (RQ1 & RQ2)

17 "Control is not discipline. You do not confine people with a highway. But by making highways, you multiply the means of control. I am not saying this is the only aim of highways, but people can travel infinitely and 'freely' without being confined while being perfectly controlled. That is our future." (Deleuze 2007, 322.)
18 This theme will be developed throughout the discussions presented in this dissertation.
19 The protocols need not to be coded in the software, but can also be affirmed codes of conduct and modes of action taking place in social media sites (Cf. Galloway 2004, 7).

Article 4. Why are some modes of user participation forbidden on Facebook? (RQ2 & RQ1)

Article 5. What is the role of abandoned user profiles on Facebook? (RQ2 & RQ1)

As the form of these questions indicates, the research articles in this dissertation are formed around the notion of disconnection as a problem specific to both user engagement and Facebook. Furthermore, disconnection here is both a problem that needs to be answered and a particular angle of the approach.

2.3 Disconnection as an analytical framework

In the research articles of this dissertation 'disconnection' is a framework used to study what is often conceived as problematic, or even the opposite of connections, connectivity, engagement and participation in social media. Studying Facebook through disconnections is both a tactical and a pragmatic choice, which challenges the culture of connectivity from within. On the one hand disconnection questions the taken-for-granted ideals of connectivity, networking and the forms of human sociality taking place in these interactions. On the other hand disconnection shows explicitly and concretely how connections, connectivity and user engagement are built through material and affective technologies.

Disconnection challenges the principles of the network culture. To implement disconnection as an analytical framework is to bring the negative, the accidental, and the problematic to the fore. Paul Virilio (1993, 211) emphasizes the accompanying technological discussion with such perspectives: "It is urgent that we rethink the accepted philosophical wisdom according to which the accident is relative and contingent and substance absolute and necessary." Instead of viewing accidents as surprising failures that "unexpectedly befall" the machine, system or a mechanism, Virilio argues that accidental is a design principle behind systems and machines.[20] The accidental is implied in technology, but simultaneously obscured almost to the point that it dissipates. Following this train of thought disconnection is a problem that is answered throughout design and technology, culture and politics.

Relatively little, however, has been written about disconnections, social media refusal, users who want to disconnect from social media or do not feel engaged with these sites. Among the few are Laura Portwood-Stacer's (2012) "Media refusal and conspicuous non-consumption: The performative and political dimensions of Facebook abstention" where she studies the discourses of users who choose not to use Facebook and conceptualizes this disconnection as performative resistance. Portwood-Stacer points out that users disconnect for different reasons; they feel overwhelmed by the technology, they dislike the content, they dislike the updates, they do not feel that they fit user profiles, or just simply want to resist social media sites. Similarly Robert W. Gehl's (2013b) "'Why I Left Facebook.' Stubbornly Refusing to Not Exist Even After Opting Out of Mark Zuckerberg's Social Graph" tries to give voice to the people opting out and argues

20 Cars are designed to avoid and survive road accidents. Ships are designed to avoid sinking and so on. (See Virilio1993.)

that we can learn about the exploitative nature of social media by researching those who do not participate. José van Dijck (2013a) ends her book *The Culture of Connectivity* by elaborating on the reasons why users want to disconnect and why disconnection is often seen as problematic.

While the aforementioned studies are centered on disconnected users there are also studies that focus on disconnection itself as a political performance. Geoff Cox's "Virtual Suicide as Decisive Political Act" (2012) discusses how tactical media projects such as the *Web 2.0 Suicide Machine* offer virtual suicide as resistance to social media sites' intolerable conditions of service and fixed user profiles they imply. A similar view is shared by Tatiana Bazziachelli (2013, 205-218) who elaborates on how projects such as the Web 2.0 Suicide Machine expose social media business models under observation. These projects are also considered in Anna Munster's (2011) article "From a Biopolitical 'Will to Life' to a Noopolitical Ethos of Death in the Aesthetics of Digital Code" where digital life is challenged by the transversal lines of digital death and disconnection. In a broader continuation of the theme of resistance to the network culture, Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker (2007, 135-137) have proposed that we need tactics of nonexistence; ways to exist in the network culture that cannot be predicted, calculated and exploited. In addition, more literate takes on the politics of disconnection have also begun to appear. Phillip N. Howard et al. (2011) in "When Do States Disconnect Their Digital Networks?" and Ulrik Franke (2012) in "Disconnecting digital networks: A moral appraisal" discuss disconnection as a political action to oppress social movements and/or isolate an entire country from the internet.

In summary, the abovementioned discussions show that disconnection is an important feature of our culture of connectivity and that it has various different manifestations and that it opens various different perspectives to social media. While I do not necessarily share all the views or ways in which disconnection is approached in these articles, they nevertheless manage to indicate that disconnection is more than a mere switch-off. It is a mode of power, a political act, and a technical solution.

To switch to a more theoretical register, disconnection will not be adapted here in the framework of dialectics or binary opposites. Connections are always coupled, at least potentially, with disconnection. Disconnections belong to connections, they differentiate them. I am leaning here towards an approach that Gilles Deleuze (2004) has described as "difference-in-itself." Deleuze argues that the problem with difference is that in the history of philosophy it is too often understood through concepts of identity, opposition, analogy, and resemblance. For Deleuze putting things into binary opposites means comparing them to each other. [21] This difference as a product of comparison is measured according to sameness between these objects. Difference-in-itself is not, however, a secondary characteristic, but needs to be considered as what it is. Difference-in-itself is not grounded in anything else (sameness, identity, analogy etc.). Instead, as Cliff Stagoll (2005, 73) argues "difference is *internal* to a thing or event, implicit in its being that particular." Disconnection then is actually not so much a negation of connection, but itself a reassembling of different sorts of connections and operationalities. What follows is that disconnection is seen as an internal difference in each connection; it is disconnection that makes the connection interesting. Thus, through disconnection it is possible to think how this connection here and now is important in addition to thinking about being connected in general.

The verb 'to disconnect' has a myriad of implications. Firstly, it implies a kind of presumed being that is being connected to something, somehow, someway, somewhere. Secondly, 'to dis-

21 As such difference-in-itself for instance contradicts the order of the Hegelian dialectics of thesis, antithesis and synthesis.

connect' indicates an act, or a reaction, or a choice. Thirdly, it refers to change, a different difference, for better or worse and is as such a process of becoming. In short, disconnection does much more than just detach or delete. It enables and affirms a different connectivity (Massumi 2002, 25).

Furthermore, the word *disconnect* consists of two different denominators dis- and connect. According to Collins Dictionary dis- is a prefix

> **1 indicating reversal: disconnect; disembark**
>
> **2 indicating negation, lack, or deprivation: dissimilar; distrust; disgrace**
>
> **3 indicating removal or release: disembowel; disburden**
>
> **4 expressing intensive force: dissever**
>
> **ETYMOLOGY from Latin dis- apart; in some cases, via Old French des-. In compound words of Latin origin, dis- becomes dif- before f and di- before some consonants**

According to the same dictionary *connect* is a verb that indicates a "link, affix, ally, associate, attach, cohere, combine, couple, fasten, join, relate, unite." If the word 'disconnect' is approached from right to left the prefix begins to determinate the root of the word. Connection is accompanied with disconnection that changes its nature. It is worth noting that even linguistically dis- is not an antonymic prefix. It is a negative prefix, but does not denominate the opposite.

What are the consequences of not understanding connections and disconnections as opposites? Or how does this analytical framework function? According to Deleuze (2000, 280) "It is at the level of interference of many practices that things happen, beings, images, concepts, all the kinds of events." Disconnection interferes with daily routines and operations of connective social media. Through disconnection it is possible see how the offline and online are brought together, remixed and contemplated. It is a perspective that puts neither online nor offline in the position of transcendental. Disconnection as an analytical framework shows, rather, how these two domains are bridged.

Even the title of this dissertation, *Diconnect.Me,* was chosen to indicate this bridge. It follows the logic of a domain name system that consists of two labels, which are concatenated and delimited by a dot. This name is a hierarchical system where the right-most label indicates the top-level domain. The right-most label is 'me'. According to the DNS hierarchy 'Disconnect' is in this system subordinate to 'me.' It is me who disconnects or becomes disconnected.

It is well known that the network culture has traditionally been about the user, the 'You' if you will. Correspondingly, social media sites have shown an extensive interest in 'you', the things and information 'you' share, the connections 'you' have. Facebook addresses you directly, promises you the power to share and connect. You are placed in groups and categories of sameness and identity. You belong to a certain university network or like the same things others do. For Facebook you are meaningful as a part of a bigger whole. Disconnection however turns the focus from 'you' to 'me'. Disconnect is the difference-in-itself that makes 'me' singular. It is my relation to and with Facebook that is at risk.

Disconnection as an analytical framework turns the focus from the connections users have in Facebook to the nature of these connections and the ways they are managed, maintained and established. Disconnection always "enables a different connectivity, a different difference, in parallel" (Massumi 2002, 25). Disconnection does not erase or remove, but rather changes, alters and transforms. Disconnection is the point where the connections of each individual user become important and meaningful, but it is also a point where the overall connectivity as artificial construct and politicized mode of being becomes apparent. In other words, through disconnection we are able to consider what user engagement is and how and what we are in fact engaged with as Facebook users.

III TOOLS & SETTINGS

In this chapter I will provide a brief thematic literature review of the main theoretical debates that inform the discussions presented in this work. I will also present the methodological apparatus for this work. In the literature review part of my intention is to build and establish a research position that is composed of different empirical studies that try to contextualize Facebook and social media in general. I also present different theoretical and conceptual frameworks that draw on media studies and affect theory and new media philosophy. Then I will move on to discussing the methodological choices, delimitations and limitations of this work. The methodological corpus for this work is developed around the concept of remix. Remix as a methodology involves playing, sampling and listening to the material; connecting things and disconnecting them to make the material resonate. As described previously, this dissertation is composed of five research articles, which all have diverse research materials and different theoretical angles. For the purposes of this thematic introduction these articles are also remixed together to build conclusions for chapter 4.

3.1 People you May know: Literature review

In recent years we have witnessed the rise of social media as technological, social and cultural phenomena. This rise has corresponded with an expansion of research literature that has concentrated on social media from interdisciplinary positions ranging from digital humanities to social sciences, art and technology studies. The important role of Facebook is also reflected in the majority of these discussions. In this chapter my intention is not to present an overall understanding of contemporary social media research or even contemporary Facebook studies. Instead, I want to establish my research position in accordance with other research positions and relevant fields of research. The topology of this chapter is formed around referential categories of the known knowns, known unknowns and unknown unknowns. They are used here as nodes whose theoretical linkages are followed and around which the research literature is discussed.

Known knowns

In a perspicacious article on Facebook abstention Laura Portwood-Stacer (2012) focuses on users who *consciously* choose *not* to engage with social media sites (Ibid., 6). She explicates the reasons why users opt out from Facebook. The reasons for refusal range, for example, from platform specific problems such as frustration with the site's interface or privacy policy to questions of being more productive when social media does not demand that much time (Ibid., 8-9). According to Portwood-Stacer (Ibid., 14-15) disconnection is a political performance through personal practices, but also a way to express social affordances – that the terrestrial social network is so strong that the user does not need to participate in online social networks. Pointing in the same direction, but from an opposite angle, van Dijck (2013a, 51) notes that users feel that their terrestrial social networks are so strongly connected to the ones maintained in Facebook that opting out is socially very difficult:

> **Once a member, the social push to stay connected is insidious, especially for young people, because *not* being on Facebook means not being invited to parties, not getting updated on important events, in short, being disconnected from a presumably appealing dynamic of public life.**

Both Portwood-Stacers and van Dijck begin from understanding disconnection as well as engagements to social media sites from the viewpoints of the user. In other words, they approach disconnection as a field of the known knowns. This is a field that research-wise deals with things that users themselves find interesting or worth noticing, things that the users themselves have consciously elaborated on or will elaborate on in the process of answering questions.

This field of the known knowns is strongly connected to "user-centric" approaches to the network culture and social media (Cf. Langlois 2013). Consider the very first footnote of Anette Markham's and Nancy Baym's (2009) book *Internet Inquiry: Conversations about Method* where they propose that

> **"Internet" is often spelled with a capital 'I'. In keeping with current trends in internet studies, we prefer the lower case "i". Capitalizing suggests that "internet" is a proper noun and implies either that it is a being, like Nancy or Annette, or that it is a specific place, like Madison or Lawrence. Both metaphors lead to granting the internet agency and power that are better granted to those who develop and use it. (Ibid., 9 footnote 1)**

Grammatical correctness aside, not spelling the internet with a capital "I" is a political statement intended to highlight the perspective of humans as users and developers of the internet and simultaneously theoretically delimiting approaches that e.g. consider the internet as a cyberspace or give focus to its technological agency.

This is a position that is indebted to the highlighted role of social media users (as we understand 'them' today) beginning from the burst of the dot-com bubble in 2001. The dot-com bubble was caused by the expansion of web-related businesses, which aimed at growing their user base; even if it produced substantial annual losses. 'Get Big Fast' was the main business ideology.

In the height of the boom these companies entered stock markets without any revenue or profit. Soon the economy crashed and many of these companies folded. Coining the idea of Web 2.0 Tim O'Reilly (2005) analyzed big web businesses that had survived the dot-com crash. What he found was that the survivors had not only gathered a large user base, but also "embraced the power of the web to harness collective intelligence." *Amazon* was redefining the web bookstore business by implementing user participation within its interface. Users produced content such as book reviews. Their activity was monitored and transformed into better search results. *eBay* was an online auction site that provided a web-based platform for buyers and sellers. *Google* provided *PangeRank*, an algorithm that managed to provide better search results for users. *Wikipedia* was an online dictionary created by users for users. In addition, activities such as blogging, keeping an online journal of sorts, had replaced or at least changed the use of personal home pages. Based on these experiences Web 2.0 emerged as a concept that outlined the principles for technology that would be built around users to better enable their sociality and collaboration. (O'Reilly 2005.)

As Axel Bruns (2008, 3) notes Web 2.0 was not revolutionary, but more of a gradual shift in focus. Nevertheless, the consequences of this shift were notable. Henry Jenkins' (2006) was one of the first to describe this change from the user perspective. 'Participatory culture' was a concept that for Jenkins contrasted the notions of passive media spectatorship and introduced new forms of participation and collaboration. Emerging alongside media convergence, participatory culture described how users were in new ways engaged with media consumption processes. Transmedia storytelling introduced narratives that operated across media channels. The vibrant fan communities participated by writing fan fiction that emerged from where other cultural products such as movies ended. Users were taken and encouraged to generate content for a video game and so on. New forms of participation and collaboration were emerging. For Jenkins the occurrences of participatory culture indicated a huge potential for users to be unleashed. He (Ibid., 245) even suggested that instead of personal media we could talk about communal media: "media that become part of our lives as members of communities, whether experienced face-to-face at the most level or over the Net."

Jenkins' ideas corresponded with a boom in user-centric approaches to new media. One of the peaks of this boom took place, in what now occupies the status of a cliché to say the very least, when *the Time* magazine in 2006 chose "You" as the person of the year. With "You" they referred to the vast and ever-growing group of web users who contributed to user-generated content across different web platforms from Wikipedia to YouTube and so on. The centrality of user production penetrated through the network culture from arts to businesses and leisure to work.

This user model indicated a change in the industrial models of production where the chain of actors was traditionally divided into three distinct operators: producers, distributors and consumers. Web 2.0 blurred the lines between these three actors and brought along hybrid user/producer/consumer models. These user subjects not only utilized existing resources, but also produced new resources while participating. (Bruns 2008, 9, 21.) A number of authors from Yochai Benkler (2006), to Jenkins (2006) and Bruns (2008) saw the change in the models of production as a positive move. The most optimistic writers noted that the network culture was a potential platform for "individual freedom," "democratic participation," and "a medium to foster more critical and self-reflexive culture" (Benkler 2006, 2). More discreet notions were also put forward that emphasized the fact that this new user model is an alternative to for example the mechanisms of industrial production of content, knowledge and information. They indicate

that a change in the modes of production is possible through new technologically-mediated means (Bruns 2008, 387).

More critical views also emerged that saw participatory culture as an aligned political project that aimed at advocating the potential of users, participation and collaboration and transforming these drives into a new mechanism of production and consumption within the established context of (digital) capitalism and post-industrial society. Tiziana Terranova (2000) aims her criticism at the notion of free labor in the network culture. According to Terranova (Ibid., 48) "the sustainability of the Internet as a medium depends on massive amounts of labor," and yet this labor is not comparable to employment. Terranova's notion is based on the assumption that the voluntary work that previously had a significant role in developing, distributing and evaluating the core technologies of the internet, was in the heightened dot-com boom exploited extensively by different companies and turned into profit without compensation. She (Ibid., 48) notes that "Of the incredible amount of labor that sustains the Internet as a whole (from mailing list traffic to Web sites to infrastructural questions), we can guess that a substantial amount of it is still 'free labor'."

This same idea of harnessing users to work through free collaboration and participation was adapted and accelerated by social media and Web 2.0 companies. The users were no longer contributing to the development of the material infrastructure of the internet, but instead they were producing "immaterial products such as information, knowledge, ideas, images, relationships and affects" (Hardt & Negri 2006, 65) within that infrastructure. Users were tuning into the speeds and needs of participatory culture as neuro-workers (Berardi 2009, 98-105). They were engaging with the processes of free labor more thoroughly than ever; their personal data was given to social media sites to exploit, they became affectively involved in the various processes and procedures of these sites voluntarily (See also Coté and Pybus 2007).

For some the views that saw free labor as a means to exploit users were misplaced. According to Jenkins, Ford and Green (2013, 56-57) the critics of 'free labor' do not give enough value to users' own understanding of the situation they are in. They note that free labor critics tend to see users as targets of exploitation and do not note that the users are often aware of the fact that economic value is generated from their actions. "Instead, it seems audiences are increasingly savvy about the value created through their attention and engagement: some are seeking ways to extract something from commercial media producers and distributors in return to their participation" (Ibid., 57). These discourses have a strong inbuilt demand for the research to stick to the field of the known knowns and to neglect the material or exploitative structures of social media platforms.

Jenkins (2013) continues to uphold the same ethos by suggesting that even the research of 'participatory culture' or Web 2.0 still focuses too strongly on the broadcast properties instead of users themselves. Even the concepts used to describe Web 2.0 are according to Jenkins (2013) too biased. 'User-generated content' for example leans too heavily on the relationship between the user and the platform instead of focusing on social relationships "within and between communities of media contributors." Moreover the circulation, remixing and reproducing of 'stuff' has a significant role in social media and terms like 'product' (Bruns 2008, 2) or 'content' focuses too much on the outcome instead of the process of participation (Jenkins 2013). The most misplaced concept for Jenkins et al (Jenkins, Ford and Green 2013, 17-19) is 'viral' as a model of how things spread in the network culture. The problem is that the discourses of virality see users as irrational subjects through which the content self-organizes and spreads autonomously instead of giving the power of

the spreading to people and focusing on the social motives of how "people actively asses a media text, deciding who to share it with and how to pass it along" (Ibid., 20).

Known unknowns

Without a doubt the user-centric model Jenkins (2013) and Markham and Baym (2009) suggest works very well when one wants to do research on the 'known knowns' of social media. It explains things that users themselves find interesting or worth noticing, things that the users themselves have consciously elaborated on or will elaborate on in the process of answering questions. However, if the understanding of what is user engagement on Facebook is based on users' own understanding and capability of putting this understanding into words, then the power of these models is also their limitation. Let me return to the examples presented at the beginning of the previous chapter to highlight this point. In that example I pointed out that Portwood-Stacers (2012, 14-15) and van Dijck (2013a, 51) discuss the possibility of leaving Facebook from a user perspective and especially from a perspective where leaving the site would affect the user's offline social relationships. Now Facebook is far from being a neutral agent in this process. Facebook in fact emphasizes that if one leaves Facebook, offline social relationships will also be negatively affected. When a user wants to deactivate their user account Facebook shows pictures of one's Facebook friends and throws in a sentimental request to not to disconnect because "Your 305 friends will no longer be able to keep in touch with you."[22] It would in fact seem that the platform has a significant role in preventing the users from disconnecting. This is the field of the known unknowns, the field where we know that the platform affects us but we might not be sure how this is practically achieved.

The overtly emphasized focus on users has been previously criticized from this angle. Mirko Tobias Schäfer (2011, 51) introduces an important notion that participatory culture is not only about users but "co-constituted by the material aspects of computer technology, software, and the Internet." In a similar tone Ganaele Langlois (2013) notes that user participation cannot be understood solely by looking at users' practices of participation, but should be examined through the networked conditions that enables it. In other words, in social media we are not connected to people only but other things as well (Cf. Sihvonen 2001, 216). These critiques are important because they shift the focus to the platform itself.

To reemphasize, the question here is not so much about focusing on the uses of the platform or its technical aspects, but to think how the platform operates as a "diagram of power" regulating user interactions (Cf. Deleuze 1988b, 34; Winthrop-Young 2011, 57). The platform is more than its technical composition. It is a "'raised level surface' designed to facilitate some activity that will subsequently take place" as Tarleton Gillespie (2010, 350) maintains. Langlois (2013, 99-100) makes a similar argument worth quoting at length here:

> **The common feature of all participatory media platforms is that they not only allow users to express themselves by enabling content transmission, but also establish the customized networked condi-**

22 Leaving Facebook and the strategies of premediation are discussed more extensively in Article 1 in this issue.

tions within which something can become culturally meaningful and shareable. The platform acts as a manager that enables, directs, and channels specific flows of communication as well as specific logics of transformation of data into culturally recognizable and valuable signs and symbols. Thus, it is useful to think about participatory media platforms as conduits for governance, that is, as the conduits that actualize technocultural assemblages, and therefore manage a field of communicational processes, practices, and expectations through specific articulations between hardware, software, and users.

In short, platforms are systems that enable and manage different things. They are socio-technological diagrams that have the power to filter "which cultural discourses and non-discursive practices emerge" (Parikka 2007, 18).

Alexander Galloway's *the Protocol* (2004) is one of the most prominent examples of how platforms facilitate different activities in practice. With the notion of protocol he shows how different things are adapted to a given network (the Internet for example) and made to work according to certain rules and regulations (Ibid, 42). Protocols are governed and programmed sets of technical, physical and political rules that control and guide the network architecture and simultaneously build the horizon of potentialities for user participation (Ibid., 241-244). Protocols operate in the intricate field of control and freedom in the network culture making some things possible and preventing others. While the platform has agency in defining the conditions within which users participate, the relationship is not deterministic. As Wendy Chun (2006, 3) points out "The forms of control the Internet enables are not complete, and the freedom we experience stems from these controls; the forms of freedom the Internet enables stem from our vulnerabilities, from the fact that we do not entirely control our own actions." While the emphasis may be on the conditions the platform enables the relation it builds with its users is always reciprocal and as such fragile.

The question of what the platform enables us to do and what kinds of relations it builds with the user is inseparable from the questions of power and politics. Rather than asking how social media technologies empower citizens (or users) to find new roles and places in participatory democracy (Papacharissi 2010), the question is how and why our social media platforms are organized the way they are. I am thinking here in the terms of Tiziana Terranova (2004), Jussi Parikka (2007) and Raiford Guins (2009) who move the focus from governmental politics into governmentality of a wider set of power relations including e.g. media, software and networks that influence people. The perspective is thus turned from civic participation or governmental agencies towards social media sites as contemporary and concurrent exercisers and negotiators of power relations. In other words, power is not anymore exercised and distributed only through the so-called representative agencies such as political parties or workers unions (Foucault and Deleuze 1977, 212), but inbuilt in our daily cultural technologies and conventions.[23] Social

23 While my focus is not on the traditional political agencies this does not mean that they do not have a role in disconnection. The government of Egypt, for example, managed to shut down the country's internet traffic January 2011 in order to control ongoing protests, and according to Ronald Deibert (2002, 147) in China internet service providers must "make their connections through one of four state-controlled corporations" in order to connect to the global internet and thus subject themselves to restrictions and control. The internet infrastructure, then, allows both connections and disconnections.

media is not a tool for practicing politics only, but it is immanently political in itself.

I am turning here towards discussing the political implications of Facebook as a platform through Michel Foucault's (2004) notion of biopolitics. As is well known, biopolitics for Foucault is a system of power where life becomes regulated and controlled through governmental actions. The right to take life becomes intertwined with the power to make live and let die. What is important in his revitalized discussion about the relationship between life and politics is the emphasis on the technical ways to manage this relationship. To be more precise, Foucault points out that when biopolitical control extends towards production, reproduction and the health of the population it is accompanied by 'technologies of the social', which enable the conditions for this control to take place (Lazzaratto 2009, 112).[24]

It is possible to draw parallels between the notion of technologies of the social and the platform-centric approaches to social media. In both approaches social media is seen as a technology that conditions users' daily activities. To be clear, life here needs to be taken in its banality as different daily practices and routines instead of its more biological or abstract definitions. There is of course a remarkable amount of research done on why people use Facebook and how Facebook and other social media sites effect on our day-to-day routines. Daniel Miller's (2011) ethnographic work on Facebook raises an important issue regarding the mundane role of Facebook. It discusses how people use social media both in their daily practices and as a communal tool. An implication of this research is that these sites can become the basis of real communities where users associate with each other (See also Gruzd, Wellman and Takhteyev 2011). These network specific communities and their relations have been explored in different empirical research studies ranging from teens' social media use (boyd and Marwick 2011; Marwick and boyd 2011) to endowing digital activism (Coleman 2013) to organization of networked terrorism (Seib and Janbek 2011). As maintained by Nancy Baym (2010) they imply that public and private boundaries are renegotiated when social relationships are established and maintained through digital media.

What we can conclude from these discussions is that the role of Facebook is becoming increasingly important in different walks of life. In reference to this Mark Deuze (2011) makes an important argument that maybe we should no longer look at how media is used for different purposes, but how life itself is lived in media. With this argument he points out that when (social) media becomes an ubiquitous and mundane part of our lives it also begins to condition the possibilities for our creativity and sociability without us even actively being aware of its intrusion. Here we return to the problem of biopolitics.

In order to point out an important political engagement of life lived on Facebook I want to refer to Foucault's (2004, 244) notion that biopolitics is often connected to economic questions of life as productivity. From a biopolitical perspective it is possible to argue that individual users and their different participations are important for the platform only if they can become productive and if this productivity can be regulated and measured. The questions of productivity relate to how Facebook monetizes its users. Schäfer (2011) explains that user participation such as sharing things and producing content is an explicit way to produce value. Explicit participation is complemented with implicit processes where the behavior patterns, interests and consumption habits of users are turned into valuable data. Similar points have been raised by van Dijck (2009) and Mark Andrejevic (2009) who both imply that the data gathered from

24 For instance, the responsibility to control re-production is placed in the hands of individuals through birth-control technologies such as the e-pill.

user participation and the mechanism developed for this purpose have become central to social media business models. This might be an even more important source of value for social media businesses than the value gained from explicit participation.

Foucault (2004, 246) maintains that biopolitics is not "a matter of taking the individual at the level of individuality but, on the contrary, of using the overall mechanism and acting in such a way as to achieve states of equilibration or regularity." Arguably the platform-centric approach sees user participation no longer as a question of how "people actively asses a media text, deciding who to share it with and how to pass it along" as Jenkins, Ford and Green (2013, 20) suggest, but rather as a question of how the platform captures these different interactions, guides them and transforms them into productive events. From biopolitical and platform-centric perspectives Facebook's infrastructural developments need to be interpreted as a technology of the social which, to paraphrase Foucault (2004, 249) "brings together the mass effects characteristic of a population, which tries to control the series of random events that can occur in a living mass, a technology which tries to predict the probability of those events (by modifying it, if necessary), or at least to compensate for their effects. " Here the domain of the known unknowns takes place. Protocols such as the Open Graph and algorithms such as the EdgeRank guide the things we do on Facebook. They enable us to do certain things and prevent us from doing others. We know their names, but their operations are somewhat uncharted, hidden even concealed. The reason for something being a known unknown may relate to mathematical complexity, an incomprehensible amount of data (or so called big data) or corporate secrets for example. The platform-centric approaches can shed light on these "operations or practices of mediation" surrounded by "obstructive greyness" (Fuller and Goffey 2012, 12-13) that the user-centric approaches cannot penetrate.

Unknown unknowns

To recap, I have elaborated on two different configurations of Facebook research. The first begins from users and the second begins from the platform. User-centric approaches try to explain why users participate and how users participate on Facebook. Platform-specific approaches try to explain the conditions within which different modes of user participation are enabled and others are disabled. Distinctive to these approaches as well as the works elaborated on here is that they do not focus on user engagement directly. In fact, the discussions on social media as a whole seem to be devoid of a proper discussion regarding the nature of user engagement. A great amount has been written about Facebook users, user participation, the platforms and networked conditions where users operate, but the nature of these relations seems to be unquestioned or taken as given. What is important for my discussions is that user engagement per se does not explain anything; rather it is a specific relation that needs to be explained.[25]

With user engagement I am trying to outline a picture of a user as a subject who, when using Facebook or other social media sites, enters into relations that can be rational but also irrational,

25 Bruno Latour et al. (Latour, Jensen, et al. 2012) following Gabriel Tarde notes that we should not begin from the idea that the social is a pre-existing category that can be used to analyze a certain aggregate, but instead social is what becomes when the group is aggregated. Thus, the word social itself does not explain anything. The social as such does not even exist.

pre-rational, contagious and spreadable.[26] It is the user who uses Facebook, but is also used by Facebook. Through engagement the user becomes one with Facebook, rather than a user that is merely there.

I propose that one way to theoretically frame such an understanding can be achieved through discussions of affect and affectivity. It is well known that affect theory in cultural studies has since the 1990s become an important framework to understand the forces of encounter or passages between bodies that are not fully reducible to things like meaning, semiotics, or rational and cognitive processes. Affect theory, as Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (2010, 5-8) point out, is far from a consistent branch of theory: affect theory is divided into two different main trends invoked in two separate essays in 1995, one by Brian Massumi ("The Autonomy of Affect") and one by Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank ("Shame in the Cybernetic Fold").[27] The former is grounded in Deleuze's post-structuralist conception of the affect while the latter was inspired by a reading of Silvan Tomkins (1962) interpretation of differential affects.

The followers of the Tomkins line consider affects as bodily emotions that emerge as bodily responses to triggering objects without meaning or association to the source as such (Leys 2011, 438); affects connect us to other objects and place us in the circuit of feeling and response through which the outside world is experienced (Hemmings 2005, 552). Massumi and his followers in contrast understand affects as passages between different states that are neither personal nor emotional. Affects precede emotions. Affects are intensities that do not belong to the body, but take place during moments of affection:

> **When you affect something, you are at the same time opening yourself up to being affected in turn, and in a slightly different way than you might have been the moment before. You have made a transition, however slight. You have stepped over a threshold. Affect is this passing of a threshold, seen from the point of view of the change in capacity. (Massumi, interview by Zournazi N.D.)**

Affects for Massumi, in contrast to Tomkins, work at an abstract level of becoming that need not to be reduced to human psychology. In fact, the question is no longer about the human body and its emotions at all, but affectivity takes place literally between *any body*, human and non-human alike. This any body is an assemblage of force relations and the power of being affected determines how such assemblages may take place (Deleuze 1988a). Networks such as Facebook come in between resonating bodies as mediators (Paasonen 2011, 258) producing and directing the flow of these affects.

There are a number of discussions that apply affect theory to digital media, new media and social media. Tony Sampson (2012) argues that affectivity is a grounding feature of all forms of sociality taking place in and outside social media. Ken Hillis (2009) argues that 'digital affectivity' offers new ways of life and experiences of the sensible. Luciana Parisi and Terranova (2001) see affectation by and through digital media as a means of unleashing the potentials of the perceiving body. This train of thought is carried on by Susanna Paasonen (2011) who argues that the affective grab of online pornography relates to the affective dynamics that guides our attention, resonates with our bodies and connects people, images and media technologies together.

26 A Facebook specific discussion of user engagement is developed in chapter 4.
27 Depending on the point of view, affect theory can be discussed either from two different angles of approach, or in at least eight different contradictory contexts (Seigworth & Gregg 2010, 5-8).

Paasonen's notion of the affective grab which guides users' attention and connects people with media technologies is an important one because it expresses user engagement as a relation that is neither given nor objective, but thoroughly political. It is comparable to the field that Maurizio Lazzarato has described as noopolitics. Noopolitics for Lazzarato (2006) supplements biopolitics. The question is no longer how masses are controlled but how the individual becomes a part of the mass. The noopolitics regime of influence is the users' brain and its ability to affect others and become affected. Noopolitics relies on media's capability to capture people's attention and modulate their memory.[28]

Following Lazzarato, Robert W. Gehl (2013a) has recently argued rather provocatively that the key battles of social media are nowadays being fought about the regimes of noopolitics. For Gehl Facebook and other social media sites want to control what users think and they do this through a noopolitical architecture that allow users to think in a certain way. While noopolitics can easily be interpreted, rather obviously, as a technology of mind control, it rather refers to the media technological capabilities of forming public opinions, collective intelligences and mass behavior (See also Terranova 2007, 140). In this vein Gehl exemplifies that Facebook's core functions such as *Likes* and *Recommendations* are effective technologies of spreading messages, but also that they guide our attention and maneuver us to think, desire and want certain things instead of others. In this framework user participation is no longer a relation that maintains user engagement. In fact, it is the exact opposite; when users are engaged they are activated to participate in certain ways.

Facebook's ability to control users to such an extent is based on infrastructure that is affective.[29] As explained by Grusin (2010, 79) these affective infrastructures work from above and from below. On the one hand, as the platform-specific approach suggests, users are controlled by Facebook "from above" through a socio-technological platform where everything the user does takes place within certain material conditions. On the other hand, as maintained by user-centric approaches, Facebook enables "particular forms of human action, particular collective expressions or formations of human affect 'from below'" (Ibid., 79).

Another name for these categories of 'above' and 'below' could be 'molar' and 'molecular'. For Deleuze and Guattari (1984, 279-281) molar is a category for established structures and molecular describes operations on a pre-cognitive level where things interact to produce effects. Sampson (2012, 5) uses the same categories to describe two different contagious forces of relational encounters. Molar forces are organizational forces that are used to control behavior. In Facebook they are the visible categories of being social, of belonging to a certain user group or a network. Molecular forces then again operate below or within these categories. One cannot categorize these forces because they are precognitive affective forces, which often by surprise invite us to participate, act or think. They are the forces of affect.

These forces are not separate from each other but more like a two different sides of a same coin. This for me is the question of user engagement. User engagement in this framework operates from the middle. It is a relation through which the above and below are brought together.

28 Lazzarato (2006, 180) sees our current everyday media technologies from the telephone to cinema and internet emerging as a response to new needs of subjection and subjectivation at a distance.
29 It is important to note that while the Massumian tradition sees the affect as a "formless, unstructured, non-signifying force or 'intensity'" (Leys 2011, 442) it does not mean that the affect is incontrollable. On the contrary, the affect can be produced through a specific infrastructure as well as put into production of economic results (Massumi 2002, 45). However one should also note that the production of affect does not drain the autonomy of the affect, its capability to produce unexpected results (Massumi 2002).

Through user engagement we are potentially affected by the platform or by the users. Trough user engagement we choose to build a molar identity. Without user engagement we are not activated (to participate), nor do we affect others or become affected.

If user-centric approaches deal with the known knowns and platform centric approaches deal with the known unknowns then the discussion of user engagement adds the level of unknown unknowns to the discussion. It is a relation that makes us operate through affects. Not rationally, but by gut feeling. It is a relation of technological unconsciousness (Thrift 2002) where, rather than participating, we are passively imprisoned in cycles of participation through technological anticipation of our habits and production of our needs and desires.

We need disconnection at all the aforementioned levels of the known knowns, known unknowns and unknown unknowns to understand user engagement. If Facebook is the concrete assemblage of power then disconnection is an abstract diagram that could expose how different user relations are managed and maintained (See Deleuze 1988b, 36). Disconnection sheds light on the "relations between forces, a map of destiny, or intensity, which...acts as a non-unifying immanent cause which is coextensive with the whole social field […] and these relations take place 'not above', but within the very tissue of the assemblages they produce" (Ibid., 37). What is gained through an approach that concentrates on anomalies, on disconnection is a novel perspective to power relations that often operates behind the visible, the common and the normalized. When perceived through disconnection, it is possible to see why certain Facebook user models are preferred and why some are not; who is allowed to do what and why; what is the place of the user and why are they positioned like they are.

3.2 remix: Methodological considerations

As explained in the previous chapters the analytical framework for this study is built around disconnection. A premise for this study is that disconnection has the capability to render the practices and boundaries of Facebook user engagement visible. To recap: disconnection is not the opposite of the culture of connectivity, rather it is a novel connection. It is a connection that is imminent to all connections intrinsically and also a connection to something else, something different. To find what these connections are means to be able to connect and disconnect, to be connected and become disconnected. In the spirit of connecting and disconnecting this chapter is built around four different sections connected to remix as a 'methodology': the notion of remix, actors and agencies in remix, remix and the matters of concern and remixing materials. Asterism (⁂) is used to indicate a minor break in the text.

This is to imply that the sections are not self-contained sub-chapters, but rather variations within the methodological apparatus and thus should be interpreted together.

In this dissertation I have approached my research setting through a 'methodology' that has been recently described using the notion of *remix*. It is well known that remix has been in the frame of media studies for some time now. It is a concept that has been used to illustrate different cultural practices that are built around processes of combining different things and building new meanings through these assemblages from hip hop music to video art and assembling texts. While traditionally taken as a cultural product or a way to create these products, authors like Paul D. Miller (2004) and more recently Anette Markham (2013) have been adopting it as a spe-

cific approach to research. To be clear, remix is not a well-established methodology or an exact research method. Remix is an experimental and multidisciplinary tool that tries to trace digital networks with their own means and terms. It suggests that through playing with different elements new material and expressive assemblages can be formed (Cf. Karppi and Sotamaa 2012).

According to Markham (2013, 71)

> **Remix is an inherent part of digital culture. As we surf, we create momentary meaning structures, mini-remixes that get remixed again and again, every time we surf similarly, with different outcomes. Our own actions yield these remixes at one level, yet these remixes are influenced by many other factors.**

Markham suggests that remix as a tool of research and as a cultural practice belongs to digital culture and social media. It is not an external view imposed on the research material or a way of forcing social media users into any particular model. Instead, it stems from the everyday practices of our social media use.

Giving remix an inherent position in digital culture does not mean that remix has no history outside the digital realm. On the contrary, Miller whose book *Rhythm Science* (2004) is one of the first issues on the subject, finds inspiration for his 'remix method' from the Victorian era biologist Paul Kammerer who explored "the ideas of synchronicity: the ways in which things, actions, and events converge in time" (Ibid., 19). Furthermore, remix of sorts has been used as a practice in art from avant-garde to postmodernism as well as in the DJ culture from the 1970s. In fact it could be claimed, like Lawrence Lessig (2008, 82) does, that remix has been with us in one form or another prior to the digitalization of our culture; digital technology however has made the processes of remixing and sharing remixed products easier and led to its expansion as ways of doing and as various cultural products.

Therefore Markham's (2013, 71) argument that remix is an inherent part of digital media culture needs to be interpreted as a call for new research methods to be found that take the nature of the research subject into account. It is an implicit critique of methodologies and methods developed to research human-to-human communication, which is adopted for internet research, thereby neglecting the role of the medium itself. A premise of this critique is that these approaches do not succeed very well in understanding the myriad of engagements social media has in our everyday lives also outside the realms of human interaction. Richard Rogers (2009, 7, 29) especially has demanded that we need to start developing new methods for digital research subjects; that is for example how digitally native objects are handled by devices and how these processes affect our user experiences. The claim is that methodologies that are not developed for the context of the digital do not succeed in specific articulations on how "technology not only in social networking sites, but also in other online social spaces functions architecturally, suggesting particular uses or highlighting technological affordances" (Papacharissi 2009, 216).

Markham (2013, 68) exemplifies four different complications that the analysis of our current social media situation is faced with;

> **1. Boundaries between self and other are often unclear, particularly when information develops a social life of its own, beyond one's immediate circumstances.**

> **2. Boundaries of situations and identification of contexts are often unclear as dramas play out in settings and times far removed from the origin of interaction.**

> **3. Agency is not the sole property of individual entities, but a temporal performative element that emerges in the dynamic interplay of people and their technologies of communication.**

> **4. Performativity can be linked not only to individuals, but actions of the devices, interfaces, and networks of information through which dramas occur and meaning is negotiated.**

These complications point out in unison that social media does not only connect people, but involves a myriad of things taking place that do not involve the user, are not visible to the user or will not affect the user. Also Markham (Ibid., 67) argues that many traditional methods that begin with "identifying discrete situational boundaries, individuals, or other objects […] are far less useful than they may have once seemed." In other words the methodological challenge has been to grasp how the user's engagement with social media is always in some ways technologically mediated; it involves different agencies of human, non-human or to phrase it more mildly the 'so-called human' (Kittler 2010, 36) or the 'not-quite-human operators' (See Bennett 2010, 94).

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The so-called human and the not-quite-human operators have a significant role in this dissertation. This role is also reflected in the positioning of the user in my two main research questions. The first (RQ1) proposes that users are connected to and engaged with choices, functions and operations that are Facebook-specific and the second (RQ2) proposes that these engagements have a particular agency since they are able to anticipate and condition the scope of choices users come across in different ways. These questions are raised from a situation where our environment as well as our culture has become filtered and layered with a plethora of digital technologies. It is a situation where even "people are becoming more technological in a way that is at the heart of how we live and breathe and think in everyday," as Miller (2004, 16) puts it.

Remix has an explanatory power over this technologically layered environment. According to Markham (2013, 65) remix offers a

> **lens through which we may be able to better grapple with the complexity of social contexts characterized by ubiquitous Internet, always-connected mobile devices, dense global communications networks, fragments of information flow, and temporal and ad hoc community formations**

For research purposes remix allows the recontextualization and re-arrangement of the components of these layered media environments from within (Miller 2004, 20). Remixing deals

with different agents and agencies; it places them at the same ontological level. As Markham (2013, 71) maintains

> **Thinking about digital culture through the lens of remix offers powerful means of resisting the focus on individuals and objects in order to get closer to the flows and connection points between various elements of the media ecology system, where meaning and assemblages and imaginaries are negotiated in relation and (inter) action.**

The connection between media ecology and remix as a research methodology needs to be highlighted. There are different takes on media ecology and for me also Markham's reference to the media ecology system needs to be read in a particular context.

The premise for media ecology, from Marshall McLuhan (1964) to Matthew Fuller (2007) bears at least one resemblance; media is a specific environment where users act and operate. The McLuhanesque approach considers media as a complex multilayered environment on the one hand and, on the other hand, as an extension of the human ability to communicate and interact (See also Bogost 2010). Especially in the vein of McLuhan, media ecology is often accused of media determinism: that the role of changes in individuals, society and culture is caused or determined by media technology (Zimmer 2005, 7). This problem has been tackled with concepts such as soft and hard media determinism where the former indicates a relationship where media influence social changes together with other actors and the latter sees media as a single cause for these changes (Marx and Smith 1994, xii-xiii). Moreover, the problem with McLuhanesque media theory is, as noted by Coté (2010), that it presents media "as an externality with a prosthetic effect on the human." By doing so it locks itself to the human perspective and does this at the expense of losing the perspective of other actors and agencies working together in mediated environments.

The approach that considers many actors and many agencies is adopted in particular by Fuller (2007), who emphasizes the material interactions of media and sees media already in itself as an assemblage of different human and non-human actors. The quintessential difference between soft media determinism and Fullers media ecology relates to how humans are considered in these contexts. While soft determinism "begins by reminding us that the history of technology is a history of human actions" (Marx and Smith 1994, xiii) the Fullerian approach grants less agency to humans and sees them as parts of the processes connected to the development of technology history. As Jussi Parikka (2007, 16) argues "there are no humans using technologies and giving birth to them, nor are there any technologies determining humans, but constant relational processes of interaction, of self-organization." This sort of an approach that emphasizes the co-constitution of any human social activity and technological agency offers an alternative to the technological determinists (whether or not McLuhan is one) as well as to social constructionism: instead of predefined sets of agencies, preferences, intentions and capacities, such formations emerge in social situations that are anyway a mix, a remix, a heterogeneous set of things technical and non-technical.

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Remix as a methodology pushes the individual user aside, or better sees the user as a connection, process or relationship inscribed in the socio-technological network. It notes that the user is

a human subject, a material appearance, a coded position, a production of different assemblages also cultural, but not reducible to any single being (Cf. Miller 2004, 5). In this approach the explanatory power and agency is taken from users and invested into different engagements with these sites. From these engagements the remix methodology builds various open and temporary assemblages where the human user may or may not have a necessary role. This position has pragmatic consequences that appear as delimitations regarding the direct role of the human user as research subject; practically it means that *Disconnect.Me* does not contain user interviews, no direct ethnographic research is conducted on users and not much space is given for users' actual interests, intentions and preferences. Consequently, the social media user, while still remaining in the locus of the research, will be reconfigured from a different perspective. The user is a conceptual notion rather than a real person. It is a notion that takes place and finds its forms in social media platforms and the various discourse networks where users are connected.

Jenkins, Ford and Green (2013, 56-57) point out that this kind of methodological positioning is not without flaws or problems. They argue that emphasizing the meaning of the platform means neglecting the role of the user's intentions and conscious actions. The social for Jenkins et al. is always first a human sociality, human participation and human communication whether mediated by a certain platform or not. But how can there be 'a user' without the platform, i.e. the user cannot have intentions and actions independent of the platform, ergo, it must be emphasized. While my view on social media users is very different in that it views them as parts of techno-cultural assemblages, the Jenkins' et al. critique still has its significance. Firstly, Disconnect.Me and the remix method does not explain why users in their own opinion choose to connect or disconnect. Secondly, the exact content created or generated by users on Facebook is not explored as such through this methodology. Similarly, issues such as privacy are not approached directly, but seen as a side product of the user's engagements.

Remix methodology can, however, be used to explain the processes by which the content is produced and distributed; how the content, its quality aside, becomes affective and binds users to the platform. Miller (2004, 24) notes that sampling as a mode or remixing is about making connections and listening to the material, giving it a voice of its own through connecting. Thus, using remix as a method does not answer essential questions of what, but instead of how; how things are, how they operate and, possibly, why they are the way they are. Also Markham (2013, 72) points to the same idea:

> **Remix is a way of following the overflow, being willing to flatten the social by considering all elements to be equal, without trying to identify individuals or contexts or distinguish the local from the global. The outcome of one's activities – if considered as an act of making an argument – influences one's process, in that it matters less where one begins or ends, because patterns and possibilities always emerge. It also shifts one from matters of fact to matters of concern.**

Shifting from matters of fact to matters of concern plays an important role in my research. This idea springs from Bruno Latour's (2004, 241) critique of science for either reducing the world to objects that determine our being, or seeing these objects only as historical products of human investment. These are the levels of matters of fact that do not, for Latour (Ibid., 246), "detect how many participants are gathered in a thing to make it exist and to maintain its

existence." Instead of reducing things to matters of fact, he suggests that we need to assemble and add in order to understand things. This means for example thinking about Facebook as a mediator of different relations where the user is merely one of them (See Ibid., 248). As a consequence, to understand the human user we need to supplement our analysis with an understanding of the technological platform. The user does not become a user without engagement, *ex nihilo,* but with the platform in a reciprocal constraint.[30]

Furthermore, the dimension of matters of concern relates to the interplay between known knowns, known unknowns, and unknown unknowns behind the emergence of social media user profiles. The research begins from the notion that all interfaces engage with politics of production in one way or the other (Cf. Raley 2006). Since there are things that are unknown, and things that remain unknown because researchers cannot have access to them, for instance, reasons of corporate secrets, the research often operates at the level of matters of concern instead of matters of fact. This dimension does not jeopardize the value of the research. Instead, this type of research produces different kinds of theoretical observations, different possible scenarios, or assemblages that operate behind what are often conceived as 'facts' or, to put this even more bluntly, produce these facts.

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This dissertation is based on five different case studies, appearing here as published articles. In the next chapter I will explain what has been done in each of the articles individually, what kind of data was collected and how it was analyzed. Before going into the actual case studies, I need to refer to the definitional parameters of this study. In the research articles I focus on research data that is gathered from different material, textual and audiovisual manifestations of disconnection. On the one hand this arrangement of research materials reflects Kittler's (1999) idea of cultural reality being formed in the context of (material) discourse networks. On the other hand it tries to emphasize a shift of focus from human beings and human interaction to a more material and networked level of different techno-social processes (Cf. Fuller 2007).

The research of disconnection, user engagement and Facebook presupposes the ability to put together different materials, texts, theories and discussions and to see what connects and what does not. As noted by Markham (2013, 70) "The key to the power of remix is that it doesn't matter where the elements are drawn from as long as the resulting product has resonance for the audience."[31] I have followed this argument in each of the articles where I have both studied things that connect and disconnect, but I have also methodologically connected and disconnected different materials to study the interplay or lack thereof between them. I began from a suggestion by Bruno Latour et al. (Latour, Jensen, et al. 2012) that working with digital materials is a process of navigation. A postulate is that beginning from a simple node, a

30 Such an approach has been recently successfully developed by for example Langlois (2013), Gerlitz and Helmond (2013) and Gehl (2012).

31 As an interesting side note, both Lev Manovich and Lawrence Lessig highlight the counteractive role of remix. Manovich (2007) argues that remixing things is often seen as violating copyrights and considered stealing. On other hand Lessig (2008, 83) maintains that remixing can liberate us from obstacles such as economic inequality as cultural producers. In their own way these examples point out that remix operates somewhere on the boundary between the legal and the illegal, the possible and the impossible. From this one could draw conclusions that remix as a research method is also capable of breaking these boundaries and thus telling us something about the unknown unknowns.

user profile for example, it is possible to explore a huge network of other nodes and agents.[32] Remix builds a hypothesis and produces analysis through sampling, borrowing and re-sampling things. It draws different elements from different places in order to produce and analyze a "set of articulations between heterogeneous elements and processes" as Ganaele Langlois (2013, 97) points out. She indicates that these sets can contain necessary and unnecessary connections that form the conditions for a particular assemblage to exist. Thus, anything from audiovisual material to codes, mathematical algorithms to information clusters, user behaviors to changes in regulations can be remixed together in order to produce results. "Remix is about working in the liminal space to create a particular way of connecting the familiar with the unfamiliar, or the original elements and the remixed," as Markham (2013, 70) maintains.

Furthermore, in this dissertation Facebook has been approached as a kind of remix in itself. It is a differentiation between what is possible in principle and which of these possibilities are really actualized; "a dynamic result of the empirical and historical relations among empirical elements" (De Paoli and Kerr 2010). In other words, Facebook has not been taken as a static arrangement in itself, but as a temporal formation and a process of assembling (Bucher 2012a, 3). Van Dijck explains that connectedness and sharing should not only be conceived as something that takes place inside Facebook. Indeed, there is constant shift whereby Facebook tries to connect to and with things that are outside. Consider Facebook's complex API integration system. Through APIs third party developers are able to connect different things from applications to websites to Facebook. (van Dijck 2013a, 48.) Thus, the data in the research articles is not gathered only from what takes place in Facebook, but also from other connections it holds. Examples thereof include different kinds of art projects, tactical media projects and software applications that are closely connected to Facebook, but do not belong to if defined strictly or taken individually.

3.3 REFLECTIONS: RESEARCH ARTICLES

In general the research materials gathered for this dissertation are divided into seven categories. The research materials include social media related (1) texts such as official documents from social media sites, documents that describe rules, regulations and policies, documents that describe investor relations, help desk advice, FAQ texts, developer documents, blog posts, journalistic texts and interviews and even descriptions of particular memes and trolls; (2) different social media software related applications such as tactical media projects and art projects, consumer smart phone applications, social media interfaces; (3) technological applications such as devices used to access social media sites; (4) videos; (5) references to social media in news media; (6) technical specifications of the particular platform in addition to descriptions of algorithms and their functions; and (7) research articles and reports related to social media. These materials are divided into different articles and approaches from interdisciplinary perspectives, which will be described more closely in the following passages as well as outlined in Illustration 2

32. Latour et al. argue that we do not need an aggregate or a whole to explain an individual. Individuals and networks do not exist in a different ontological level, but can be understood through each other. "This network is not a second level added to that of the individual, but exactly the same level differently deployed. […] The main point is that this definition is entirely reversible: a network is fully defined by its actors." (Latour Jensen, et al. 2012, 593.)

Article no.	Name	Disconnection	Theoretical Framework	Material
1.	Digital Suicide and the Biopolitics of Leaving Facebook	How quitting Facebook takes place?	Biopolitcs, tactical media	Facebook Help Center, Tactical art-works: sep-pukoo.com & sucidemachine.org
2.	Exploring Augmented Reality. On Users and Rewiring the Senses	How digital environments trigger our senses? How are we disconnected from 'natural perception' and connected to something else?	Umwelt-theory, Caillois' theory of distracted perception	Layar Browser, Layar FAQ, Layar developer material, Layar commercial videos
3.	Happy Accidents. Facebook and the Value of Affects	How is value extracted from users in order to produce more value?	Affect theory (Massumi), non-human theory	Facebook Open Graph documents for users and developers. Open Graph promotional material. Facebook blog posts. Facebook developer material i.e. technical information about protocols
4.	"'Change name to No One. Like people's status' Facebook Trolling and Managing Online Personas"	What kind of users does Facebook not allow?	Politics of Algorithms, Tarde's sociology	Facebook Rules and Regulations, reported events of trolling
5.	Death Proof: On the Biopolitics and Noopolitics of Memorializing Dead Facebook Users	What happens to users when they die? I.e. disconnection between the terrestrial and online self	Biopolitics, noopolitics	Facebook Help Center, Facebook Rules and Regulations, Facebook Blog posts.

Illustration 2. Articles

In the following section I will present the research agenda of the articles. In addition, I will briefly discuss the materials used and analysis conducted.

Article 1

Article 1 *Digital Suicide and the Biopolitics of Leaving Facebook* researches Facebook's policies of leaving the platform or deactivating or deleting user accounts. Article 1 was written when digital suicide had become at least a minor trend and a few tactical media projects had been developed to aid users in this process. I was interested in how the user quits Facebook. I began this research quite literarily by finding out how I could disconnect myself from Facebook. Unsurprisingly, perhaps the option to delete the user account could not be found from my Facebook settings. Instead there was a feature called deactivation available. For research purposes I clicked the link and ended up at a confirmation page that enquired whether I was sure that I wanted to deactivate Facebook and indicated that 'My Friends would miss me' if I did. In order to understand what happens when one deactivates a Facebook account, I went through the Facebook Help Desk pages, where I also found out that deleting the account can be done by filling in a form.

By searching for advice on what happens to personal data when one quits Facebook, I found tactical media projects such as Web 2.0 Suicidemachine, which offers ways to quit Facebook. By investigating how Web 2.0 Suicidemachine works my focus was turned towards how deeply our lives are entangled with social media sites and how this life becomes intertwined with different policies and technologies that limit the scope of what we can and cannot do on and with Facebook. Moreover, these tactical media projects were confronted by legal demands from Facebook. They implied that disconnection was not an issue of play but also of politics.

From these standpoints Article 1 delivers a critical analysis of leaving Facebook and its entanglements to Foucauldian biopolitics as well as different premediations that anticipate disconnection. It illustrates how life, technology and politics connect in the ubiquitous webs of the network culture. It elaborates on two separate art projects *Seppukoo.com* and Web 2.0 Suicidemachine, that made digital suicide a performance of disconnecting oneself from the social networking services. Moreover, this article explores how biopolitical models of capitalism are embedded in the very material structures and practices of exploiting the users of social networks. This article answers the question of *how users quit Facebook* by analyzing three platform-specific ways of quitting (leaving, deactivating and deleting) and two different ways of quitting using tactical media software. Firstly, the findings indicate that Facebook indeed anticipates that users will consider quitting at some stage. Facebook responds to this threat by building ways in which, instead of removing the user completely, it establishes a mechanism for an easy return to the site, and more importantly keeps the users and their data at least to some extent engaged with the site. Secondly, the findings indicate that user engagement is a relation for Facebook that is both technical and affective. Quitting can be technically regulated by limiting the scope of choices as to how one can disconnect. Furthermore, by exploiting existing emotional and affective engagements that the users have on the site, the scope of choices is limited even further towards modes of quitting that are the least detrimental to Facebook.

Article 1 appears in a special issue on Slow Media in the Transformations Journal 2011.

Article 2

Article 2 *Exploring Augmented Reality. On Users and Rewiring the Senses* also appears here in the order of writing. Article 2 differs from the other articles since it does not deal with Facebook directly, but focuses on user engagement instead. It brings to the fore the idea of material understanding of social media networks and how they condition our ways of being. This article was initiated when the first few augmented reality software programs had become available for iOS. I started playing with these applications primarily with the *Layar Reality Browser.* I wanted to explore what kind of understanding of user and user experience is inscribed in these applications and how these understandings are connected to current philosophical discussions about how media captures our senses.

Article 2 presents an overview of augmented reality in relation to subjectivity, perception and systems of desire and consumption. While augmented reality does not represent our everyday social media services directly, it nevertheless is among applications that are considered (at least by new media businesses) as the potential next step of where social media is going. More importantly, while in many respects at an embryonic stage, this article holds several theoretical ideas that are further developed both in this introduction and Articles 3,4 and 5 to illustrate user engagement as an affective relationship that can be produced and maintained in platform-specific ways. Augmented reality for me implies a strict break with theories that understand social media as a tool or means of communication. It transfers the perspective towards a media ecological understanding of user engagement. As such, what becomes more important is the mode of engagement; the experience produced through the media instead of its instrumental nature or technological formation (Raley 2010, 302-303).

The question *how the choice to connect with new media technologies changes users' engagements and perceptions of the surrounding environment* is analyzed by focusing on the Layar Reality Browser. The findings indicate that in augmented reality our senses and affection becomes technologically guided (or captured) by software through simple hotspots. We navigate in a world where our attention becomes controlled and manipulated by a digital interface that in many cases is programmed according to the demands of consumer culture. Interestingly, the findings indicate that disconnections are needed and produced in order for the scope of choices to become limited and defined by media technologies. The provocative proposition is that in augmented reality this happens very literally by building a technologically-mediated state of mental disturbance under which the user becomes subjugated to their digital environment.

Article 2 is published on Ctrl-Z: New Media Philosophy 2012.

Article 3

Article 3. *Happy Accidents. Facebook and the Value of Affect* began to find form around Facebook's launch of the Timeline and the related Open Graph protocol in December 2011. It began as a closer reading of Mark Zuckerberg's announcement at the F8 event. On the one hand I was interested in the discursive framings surrounding a protocol that would connect and collect data from everywhere ranging from Facebook users to the uses of external software such as the

music player *Spotify*. On the other hand I was interested in the ways in which this data is used to produce even more interactions. For the analysis I perused different texts and announcements where the Timeline and Open Graph were introduced.

The findings of Article 3 indicate that with "improvements" as "serendipity" and "frictionless sharing," Facebook is moving from an emphasis on quantification of data towards building and controlling intensities of affects. Facebook Timeline exemplifies how social and economic forces now push us to accept digital environments that effectively reduce users to passive content and data providers. Users' information is shared by the platform automatically and autonomously without any intentional involvement on their part.

The answer to the question *How are Facebook users' connections and disconnections used for producing value* begins by stripping the agency away from the Facebook user. The Timeline and the Open Graph protocol are Facebook's ways of transforming users into producers of affective information flows. The user does not need to share stuff voluntarily on Facebook. The platform is capable of doing that automatically. A corollary of this article is that user engagement does not always need to be voluntary, conscious and active, but that passivity can also be turned into activity and content-production through protocols and platform-specific functions. When discussed through a non-subjective autonomy of affect as proposed by Massumi (2002), we begin to see how both users' attention, but also the lack thereof, are valuable to Facebook. As a consequence, Timeline entails a new, affective direction in Facebook's history that cannot be reduced to a mere "refreshing" of Facebook's graphical user interface. Instead, we are witnessing a comprehensive transformation in how social networks function as cultural, political and economic media environments with and without users.

Article 3 was written as a response to Facebook's launch of their Timeline user interface and the Open Graph protocol behind it. It was in this article where affective relations really started gaining a foothold. Simultaneously, disconnection started to emerge as a position of affective interference that could be directed through infrastructural changes. At the same time this article begun to illustrate how data mining corresponds with affect mining and how the production of affects is becoming a key value variable in social media.

This article is forthcoming in 2014 in a collection edited by Ken Hillis, Susanna Paasonen and Michael Petti and titled *Networked Affect* (MIT Press).

Article 4

Article 4 "Change name to No One. Like people's status" Facebook Trolling and Managing Online Personas continues the themes developed in Article 3. With an implicit reference to Article 1 it looks at users that are disconnected from the platform by the platform and seeks an understanding of *why some modes of user participation are forbidden on Facebook?*

I provide a materially 'close reading' of trolls and trolling on Facebook. Empirically the article focuses on both the actual operations and actions of trolling and how trolls are or are not defined by Facebook's various discourse networks from FAQs to Risk Factor documents and surrounding newspaper articles. These empirical cases are discussed especially in the context of affect theory and Gabriel Tarde's social theory. These theoretical thresholds are used to address the operations of human and non-human actors involved in user participation, which Facebook

trolling is part of.

Article 4. starts from affectation and connects it to the politics of disconnection. In this article I argue that the ambivalence of trolls, their ´whoeverness´ , is a starting point for research, not only on trolls and trolling, but also on Facebook's policies and practices of user participation and user engagement. The premise for this article is that while trolls and trolling are excluded from the Facebook vocabulary, they emerge alongside Facebook's user engagement and models of user agency built around it. The findings indicate that Facebook excludes trolls for two reasons. On the one hand because trolls are able to corrupt Facebook algorithms and thus provide content that cannot be commoditized as sellable data and on the other they endanger the reliability of Facebook data in the eyes of investors and business partners. Furthermore, the findings point out that user engagement, despite being a relation that Facebook wants to control and maintain, is an engagement that can be negotiated by users themselves through different connection strategies and actions. Thus, even though Facebook tries to anticipate what users do and endeavors to build systems that allow these actions to take place safely, they are unable to build a totalizing system which governs and controls all the possible user involvements. User engagement always includes the potential for resistance.

This article was initiated after Article 3, but was the last to be completed in 2013, when it found its focus on Facebook trolls and trolling through the Fibreculture Journal 2013 special issue.

Article 5

Following a biopolitical tendency of managing life Article 5, *Death Proof: On the Biopolitics and Noopolitics of Memorializing Dead Facebook Users,* is the concluding article of this dissertation. Instead of suicide it approaches the physical death of users as a final disconnection. It asks *what the role of abandoned user profiles is for Facebook?* and discusses the problem of the dead Facebook users in the context of platform politics in particular. The research material for Article 5 was gathered from Facebook's documents and written policies regarding dead users, but also from different reported cases of how the dead user profiles created complications. Through the material I provide a close reading of the different texts where Facebook's policies of the dead are inaugurated. In addition, I go through different texts and instructions for people who are interested in what to do with the Facebook user accounts of their deceased friends.

The findings indicate that dead users are conceived problematic for Facebook for three reasons. Firstly, they become useless for the platform since they do not participate. Secondly, they may corrupt Facebook algorithms by appearing for instance on suggested friends lists, and thirdly, they become a means of RIP trolling by providing a platform of distraction for other users. I argue that Facebook offers two different policies to control the dead that are connected to two different political stances. Firstly, removing dead users from the platform is considered a biopolitical move that aims to keep the platform at a standstill. Secondly, Facebook wants the user profiles of the dead to be turned into memorialized user accounts. These memorialized user accounts are, I argue, tools of noopolitics. They transform the dead into points where sharing memories, things and comments may take place. The analysis of this noopolitical dimension implies that for Facebook the user is not so much an agent, but a point where affectation of oth-

er users emerges. Thus, Article 5 challenges a conclusion of Article 1, namely that social media sites have no use for passive users. It shows how any user profile can be turned into an affective point of navigation without the involvement of the user themselves. Affectivity here, as well as in Article 4, was identified as something that existed beyond users while traversing through them.

Article 5 was published in *Culture Machine* Platform Politics special issue in 2013.

These articles read together argue for a shift from the Boolean idea of disconnection as an on/off mechanism to a more complex understanding of disconnection as difference-in-itself constantly reconfiguring user relations. Simultaneously, the articles affirm views that consider multiple agencies operating on Facebook and social media in general instead of focusing merely on human users. User engagement is in the nexus of these agencies. It is the basis upon which social media sites build their business models as well as the prerequisite for models that demand user participation, user-generated content or other modes of user interaction.

IV Engage

My research questions function in a circular formation: users are engaged with the choices offered by Facebook and the scope of choices available is constantly anticipated according to those engagements. User engagement is potentially both a virtuous circle and a vicious circle. The more users are engaged the better the platform is able to anticipate new modes of engagement and the better the scope of choices is the more engaged the users will become. This feedback loop indicates that there is not much space left for anything outside of these engagements. Taking this into consideration, I will begin this chapter by providing some answers to my main research questions. These answers sew up the different threads from the findings of the articles that construct the corpus of this dissertation. Furthermore, this chapter provides a summary of the topics discussed in the articles with linkages to previous debates and openings to further avenues for investigation. To be clear, the aim of this chapter is neither to recap the results, nor to repeat the analysis of the articles. Instead, this chapter provides an overall understanding of user engagement and Facebook brought forth by the framework of disconnection. Importantly, after answering the research questions, the focus is no longer on disconnection, but more on what it uncovers. This discussion is built around the notion of user engagement. In other words, while the research articles discuss specific topics loosely related to the notion of disconnection, the aim of this discussion part of the dissertation is to give a broader and more general overview of user engagement and Facebook.

4.1 Questions and Answers

In my research articles disconnection is approached from two different angles. These approaches can be divided into topics that deal with disconnections *of* user engagement and disconnections *within* user engagement. The first approach focuses on users who quit Facebook (Article 1), users who die and are consequently disconnected from Facebook (Article 5) and users who are banned from Facebook (Article 4). The key issue in these discussions is to think in relation to user engagement. To be even more precise, all of these approaches express user engagement as a relation that is "exterior to its terms" as Deleuze (2006, 41) would put it. This means that user engagement is not reducible to either of its terms: never the user or Facebook alone, but always the user AND Facebook together. User engagement as a relation is somewhere in the middle. It exists as such. Furthermore, as Deleuze points out, this relation may change without its terms changing. Thus, disconnection when used as an analytical framework means allowing this relation to express itself and the nature of its terms.

In this light the answer to my first research question *How are users connected to and engaged with the choices offered by social media sites such as Facebook?* is composed of a breakdown of different user engagement relations. Firstly, my articles point out that user engagement is a technical relation and secondly that it is an affective relation. Technical in this context is composed of both hardware and software.[33] It constitutes a network of different actors from devices to software interfaces and the operations of coding and programming. Facebook has become ubiquitous with our (networked) environments to the extent that not being engaged is extremely difficult. In fact, we do not need to be on Facebook to be engaged. Our websites are filled with API's that are connected to Facebook, our televisions and even our cars have Facebook integration available. Our environment is so thoroughly penetrated by Facebook that user engagement becomes a naturalized state of being and not-being connected or disconnecting becomes the anomaly. In this scheme not participating becomes a conscious choice, a way of resisting and separating oneself from others.

Furthermore, it is at the very moment of disconnection where the non-cognitive, non-conscious field of user engagement becomes expressed. User engagement here is an affective relation produced, governed and maintained by its variable technical conditions. When we sign up for the first time, Facebook builds an affective bond with us. This bond can be refined into emotional, cognitive and even intellectual responses. In these responses user engagement is maintained through pointing out that leaving Facebook will destroy our social relations both online and offline. Affective relations are also kept up through a suggestion that we will miss something interesting if we are not connected. We are affected by the many streams and feeds of information that is constantly thrown at us. Facebook captures our attention, activates us to do things and think thoughts. On many occasions we are activated to do these things and think these thoughts on Facebook, with Facebook.

My second approach focuses on disconnections within user engagement. In the articles this approach considers disconnection as an issue of affects, value, attention, capture and forming Facebook-specific user subjects (See especially Articles 2 and 3). In these articles I formulate an idea of user engagement that is not reducible to user participation. This does not mean that I consider the user's personal and rational participation as an unimportant investment to the formation of Facebook and other social media sites. Instead, I am outlining how users are formed within their engagements prior to participation. Primacy is thus given to the non-conscious often irrational engagements through which users are affected and become affective.

I argue that the relationships we have on Facebook are observed, studied and used to build new relationships. Among these relationships user engagement is the proto-relation around which everything circulates. User engagement explains why and how users do not disconnect even though they "are aware of the fact that Facebook actively steers their online experience of friendship and converts their social capital into economic capital" (van Dijck 2013a, 52). User engagement as a mode of programmed connectivity makes the event of giving up privacy, giving up data or letting the platform be in control enjoyable. It also dissipates disconnection behind other choices and makes it a choice that is unwanted or unrewarded.

My second research question *How are these engagements used to anticipate the scope of choices available*

33 With the notion of technical I am following Galloway (2012, 59-60) who together with Wendy Chun (2004, 43-44) and Friedrich Kittler (1995) criticizes the historical tendency to consider software as an immaterial flow of data distinguished from the operations of hardware. Software and hardware are technical firstly because together they are operable in reciprocal relations and secondly in a more general manner because they enable and constrain user's actions in specific ways.

for users? is answered through elaborating on the inner dynamics of user engagement. When engaged we are connected to a particular scope of choices. This scope of choices defines how we construct our online identities (trough categories of sex, work, age for example), how we interact with other users and even what we can do or not to do on Facebook. At a more general level the scope of choices demarcates user engagement: who is allowed to connect and what kind of connections can be made. The scope of choices can involve, among others, matters related to potential modes of communication and the actions of sharing and re-sharing content to shaping our browsing habits or manipulating how we move the mouse cursor on the screen.

User engagements are used to anticipate and define the scope of choices according to three categories that follow the lines of the known knowns, known unknowns and unknown unknowns. Firstly, the scope of choices is designed and anticipated according to the category of known knowns. To design the scope of choices in order to prevent disconnection and affirm user engagement, Facebook needs to design interfaces and devices that are engaging in several ways. This design is based on user data. It is based on the things users knowingly do on Facebook and on the purposes they use it for. It is based on information that is gathered from explicit and implicit participation. It is based on information that is constantly mined from the users. These implicitly shared things are known knowns, not for users themselves necessarily, but for Facebook, who owns the rights to access this data as well as the mechanisms used to sort this data.

While the known knowns contribute to the principles of how the design is built the actual architecture of user engagement is largely based on the known unknowns. This is a field we know of, but of which the actual operations remain 'hidden' or even concealed behind the Facebook interface and our user experience. The field of known unknowns is based on different protocols and algorithmic calculations. Protocols are behavioral, procedural or technical forms that make connections possible and algorithms are logical arithmetical or computational procedures that, if correctly applied, can be used to resolve different problems. The known unknowns not only collect user data but constantly use it to build and maintain user engagement. The things that become visible for us, the scope of our choices, adapt to what we do and to what other users like us (if simply defined through identity categories) do.

The technical and affective relations in user engagement are reciprocal. We as users are constantly affected by Facebook, but our actions also affect the platform. Its algorithms mine the things we do and based on these calculations emphasize the affectivity of our Facebook experience. Facebook, as technical system, is able to predict and anticipate things based on its data and it is this data that forms the principles according to which user engagement is designed. This system of anticipation and premediation extends to the unknown unknowns as a field of an undetermined future, a field where disconnection as a potentiality lurks and threatens user engagement. It is the foundation on which user engagement is designed. It tries to affect us not at a rational level, but via a gut-feeling. It makes us act before we think. In fact, it makes us act rather than think because thinking might lead us to choose disconnection instead of engagement. Moreover, to keep the uncertain future at a distance, Facebook tries to premediate the potential scenarios where user engagement is broken. These scenarios are adapted to the scope of choices where disconnection becomes dissipated behind other choices, behind ubiquitous connections and behind the promise of whatever that may lead users to remain engaged.

In the remaining chapters I move from the articles to a more general discussion of user engagement and Facebook. I will begin with explaining user engagement as a business model and a design principle. I explain how user engagement is a technical relation composed of hardware and software. Then I move towards analyzing user engagement as a relation through

which users become affected. The affective relation in particular allows me to explain how user engagement is a relation that is oriented towards the future. It is a relation that is produced by the threat of disconnection as a potentiality. Thus, what is important is the way user engagement is premediated (Grusin 2010) in different relations through which we become positioned in particular spaces of anticipation (Thrift 2005) and how our connectivity becomes engineered (van Dijck 2013a) in Facebook-specific ways.

4.2 Are you engaged?

> **In a further bid to monetise the social networking site, Facebook is to start charging users who want to log off and be left in peace for five minutes. Starting next week, users that want to log out of Facebook to escape the relentless stream of oversharing by people they barely know will have to enter their credit card details and accept a £10 charge. Alternatively, they can buy three logouts for £25. Simply closing your browser window will trigger an alarm and a concerned, slightly aggressive, phone call from site founder Mark Zuckerberg. Facebook says the move will help users transition to an 'always on' interaction with the site. "Facebook is all about connection," said a spokesman. "We want to teach users that disconnecting and stepping away from your friends venting about mildly inconvenient events in their life is a bad thing, so we will punish you financially. Ideally we would punish you physically, but apparently there are laws about doing that. For now." (The Poke 2013.)**

This news extract that claims that Facebook will start charging its users for logging out is of course an example of Facebook-related parody. Nevertheless, it manages to make two important points. Firstly, staying constantly connected is an important part of the Facebook user engagement 'ideology'. Social media sites are ubiquitously present in our daily lives and especially Facebook has become a normalized part of our ecosystem (van Dijck 2013a, 155). While we might question the ways they handle privacy issues and whether the improvements of these sites are user-friendly, we no longer question their existence. Secondly, we need to consider more closely how these engagements are maintained through different practices. The choice not to connect or to disconnect exists and yet "Opting out connective media is hardly an option," as José van Dijck (2013a, 174) appropriately observes. The difficulty to opt out from Facebook is consistent with Heather O'Brien and Elaine Toms' (2008, 938) argument that "Successful technologies are not just usable; they *engage* users." In fact without engagement there would be no users, no relation with the site whatsoever. With sites like MySpace and *Friendster* we have witnessed user disengagement, where the link between the user, the world and the platform has been cut off, where user engagement is broken and consequently the market price devaluated and eventually the platform deserted by users, investors, developers and business partners (Gehl 2012).

Facebook 2012 Annual Report (Facebook D) transparently states the importance of user

engagement: "If we fail to retain existing users or add new users, or if our users decrease their level of engagement with Facebook, our revenue, financial results, and business may be significantly harmed." The importance of user engagement for Facebook's business model is thoroughly discussed in the Risk Factor section of the same document:

> **The size of our user base and our users' level of engagement are critical to our success. We had 1.06 billion monthly active users (MAUs) as of December 31, 2012. Our financial performance has been and will continue to be significantly determined by our success in adding, retaining, and engaging active users. We anticipate that our active user growth rate will decline over time as the size of our active user base increases, and as we achieve higher market penetration rates. To the extent our active user growth rate slows, our business performance will become increasingly dependent on our ability to increase levels of user engagement and monetization. If people do not perceive our products to be useful, reliable, and trustworthy, we may not be able to attract or retain users or otherwise maintain or increase the frequency and duration of their engagement. A number of other social networking companies that achieved early popularity have since seen their active user bases or levels of engagement decline, in some cases precipitously. There is no guarantee that we will not experience a similar erosion of our active user base or engagement levels.**

Facebook is not the only company that puts the emphasis on user engagement. User engagement is currently being modeled, measured and monetized by both social and traditional media industries alike (Jenkins, Ford and Green 2013, 60). To describe these emerging engagement-based business models Jenkins et al. (Ibid., 116) have compared them to the appointment-based models of the U.S. television industry. The main difference according to Jenkins et al. is that the appointment-based models are centralized while the engagement-based models are decentralized. In the former content is created and distributed primarily through one channel at one particular time and in the latter the content is distributed through multiple means and viewers are actively involved with the content as re-distributors and recommenders. The engagement-based business models rely on the idea that engaged users will interact more with the content and thus through their engagements make it more valuable. What is important here is that these new business models indicate an important shift in how user relation is seen and negotiated: the user participation-centric discussions of Web 2.0 are being replaced with discourses of user engagement.[34]

Are you engaged? What does it mean to be engaged? Facebook's defines user engagement, at least for investors and stakeholders, by measuring monthly active users and daily active users. According to Facebook 2012 Annual Report (Facebook D, 37) a daily active user is a "registered Facebook user who logged in and visited Facebook through our website or a mobile device, or took an action to share content or activity with his or her Facebook friends or connections via a

34 Symptomatically while Facebook is the social media site among social media sites and a direct descendant of Web 2.0 world, the notion of "user participation" is never mentioned in Facebook 2012 Annual Report (Facebook D) whereas "user engagement" is mentioned 27 times.

third-party website that is integrated with Facebook, on a given day." Measuring user engagement through daily active users connects engagement to user participation. The sharing of content or activity with Facebook friends as well as other assignments and activities performed by users on Facebook could be considered as participation. In this scheme engagement would be subjugated to participation. It would be a relation that is established and maintained in these activities and while these activities take place. However, Facebook's user engagement metrics also implies that engagement is a process that takes place before participation or before using the site. According to Facebook metrics the mere visiting of the site counts as engagement. Visiting the site does not equal participation but precedes it. Visiting the site implies an attachment, but not yet how that attachment will be embodied in participation.

User engagement is listed among factors that affect Facebook's performance and the number of visits plays a crucial role. In their annual report (Facebook D, 41) Facebook notes that "Changes in user engagement as measured by metrics such as frequency of visitation will also affect our revenue and financial performance". It is important to emphasize that what gets mentioned here is the "frequency of visitation" instead of, for example, the number of interactions or other metrics of participation. The more one visits the site the more opportunities Facebook (Ibid.) gets to "display advertising and to deliver relevant commercial content to users." User engagement is not so much a question of how versatile the use of Facebook is, but how much time is spent on Facebook and how well the site is able to attract users to return to the site continuously – to see the ads or other relevant content delivered by the site over and over again. From this point of view it is no wonder that Facebook's (Ibid., 41) "product development investments are focused on increasing user engagement over time" and not on increasing mere user participation. This means building systems through which we become more and more involved with Facebook at every level. It means life becoming thoroughly penetrated by Facebook. If Facebook (Ibid., 14) is "unable to maintain and increase" their "user base and user engagement", their "revenue and financial results may be adversely affected."

There is a suggestion that the growth in user engagement will be achieved through making Facebook ubiquitous. As also Portwood-Stacers (2012, 7) points out

> **Facebook's networked structure means that both its social and financial value is bound up in the number of people it can claim as members. Its business model is premised upon ubiquity to the point of naturalization – it seeks to become thoroughly integrated into the fabric of everyday life for as many people as possible, to the extent that they cannot imagine life without it and thus do not think to question its presence in their lives.**

We constantly see Facebook gaining a stronger foothold in our environment through integration with different devices. Facebook has moved from personal computers to mobile devices, television receivers, video game console, and GPS navigators. It seems that Facebook will be integrated with every conceivable device and gadget sooner or later. Mercedes Benz, the German car manufacturer, recently integrated Facebook with their latest car model. Moreover Facebook is integrated with different web sites, services and technologies. Research done by the web monitoring service Pingdom, points out that 24.3 percent of the top 10,000 websites have some kind of official Facebook interaction. Basically this means that users are engaged with Facebook through these integrations even though they may not think they are using Facebook

at that very moment.[35] Importantly, this expansion or colonization happens within Facebook. Facebook remediates (See Bolter and Grusin 1999) traditional media such as movies television and newspapers within its own system. One can read newspapers without leaving the Facebook interface. One can listen to music on Facebook and see what music other people are listening to. One can chat on Facebook and use it in mobile devices to replace SMS messages.

In short, to enable user engagement Facebook colonizes our networked environment. The proposition of the expansion of material devices, ubiquitous computing and pervasive media[36] is that in order for users to be engaged they need not go anywhere or to do anything special. They are connected anywhere and everywhere. The social media is with them, in their pocket, in their car, in the devices they carry with them. Facebook becoming ubiquitous in and through material devices points towards a situation where we are engaged almost without a choice.[37] When Facebook fertilizes our everyday environment, being on Facebook, being engaged all the time, becomes a naturalized state of being and disconnection as a choice dissipates.

4.3 You Are not Engaged – Yet

On Facebook the Like-button is used to express engagement or an affective relation to something. If a user likes a Facebook page (which can represent a band, a person, a company etc.) they can show it by clicking the Like-button. If they agree with a status update or want to express that it appeals to them in some way they may press the Like-button. Even if an external Facebook site has the Like-button integrated, the user can click on it to express their sentiment and simultaneously connect the site with their own Facebook profile.

In his article on *The New Inguiry* Gehl (2013c) makes a connection between the Like-button and the Liking studies in the 1990s. This link is worth mentioning since it builds the basis for an understanding of how user engagement is a relation that activates us.[38] In 1994 David Walker and Tony Dubitsky (1994) made two propositions on how liking might contribute to advertising effectiveness. Firstly liking is a rational response; "if consumers like the advertising, they are more likely to notice and to pay attention – and more likely to assimilate and respond to the message." Secondly, liking is connected to affective responses. Walker and Dubitsky (Ibid.) talk about "affect transfer" in an emotional context and point out that "if viewers experience

35 Pingdom (2012) explains that the research was done by analyzing the html-code of the 10 000 websites ranked by Alexa – the web information company. While the research method is not explained in sufficient detail to evaluate the exact validity of this research one can nevertheless draw some rough conclusions that Facebook is being widely integrated with different websites and services.
36 For a general introduction to ubiquitous computing see Ekman 2013.
37 One of the culminations of Facebook's mission statement to "make the world more open and connected" was in 2011 when it was revealed that Facebook was also tracking non-users who had merely visited the main site. When the user accessed Facebook.com a cookie was installed to their computer. This cookie was then able to track Facebook users and non-users who visited pages that had Facebook integrations such as the Like-button or other Facebook plug-ins installed. According to Facebook this was not intentional, but caused by a bug in the programming and has now been removed. http://www.firstpost.com/tech/facebook-finally-admits-to-tracking-non-users-133684.html
38 For discussion of the history of the Like-button and Liking studies see Gehl's (2013c) essay on The New Inquiry. For a discussion of the Like economy see Gerlitz and Helmond (2013).

positive feelings toward the advertising, they will associate those feelings with the advertiser or the advertised brand." The implications can be used in enumerating the core features of user engagement. What is important here is the overall understanding of how user engagement is the relation through which we become affected and through which we begin to operate.

The Like-button does what according to Alexander Galloway (2012, 32) all media does: it evokes "liminal transition moments in which the outside is evoked in order that the inside may take place." Facebook evokes these transitions and user engagement is the relation through which these transitions take place. Thus, being engaged is not only a relation where our surroundings are occupied by Facebook, but a relation where Facebook captivates us, activates us and gets us going. In short: user engagement is an affective relation.

The suggestion that user engagement is an affective relation connects it to the notable field of affect theory. Through this approach user engagement is seen as a relation where humans are affected by various "events prior to and independent of their cognitive impact or interpretation" (Grusin 2010, 79). The theories of how this happens however varies according to the perspective; for Tomkins (1962) affects activate us by triggering our psychobiological mechanism; for Deleuze (1988a) affect is the force of becoming operational in human and non-human relations; for Grosz (2008, 77) affects are inhuman forces that the human adopts in order to become other; for Massumi (2002) affects are autonomous intensities that precede emotions and become them only after being captured by the subject. My intention here is not to contribute to an overall understanding of affect theory. Instead, I describe how the actual process of becoming affected could be produced, maintained and governed through user engagement. Thus, instead of finding an explanation to what affects in fact are, one should rather follow Fuller and Goffey (2009, 143) who propose that "it is important to talk about whether things work, not whether or not they are right." Indeed, in many cases we do not even know why we become affected by Facebook, but we feel it.

Fuller and Goffey (2009, 143) turn the focus to things that have been traditionally considered as 'unscientific' such as hypnosis, trickery, deception and manipulation. The main idea is that regardless whether we can "explain" or "justify" the "power" of these things they have a power to "produce a reality" and make us operate in certain ways and that in itself is a sufficient reason why they should be studied. Accordingly, my argument is that Facebook produces its reality through user engagement which relies on affective relations and relationships which carry a sensation of being related. Appropriately, Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook E, 67) the Facebook CEO notes that "Relationships are how we discover new ideas, understand our world and ultimately derive long-term happiness." In this context affective does not equal emotional. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (Hardt and Negri 2004, 108) explain that "Unlike emotions, which are mental phenomena, affects refer equally to body and mind. In fact, affects such as joy and sadness reveal the present state of life in the entire organism, expressing a certain state of the body along with a certain mode of thinking." Accordingly, user engagement is a binding relation to the platform through which our mind and body equally affects others and is affected. Through user engagement we are affected by the site and this relation turns into a relationship where we feel excitement, satisfaction or passion among others. However, what is even more important is the capability of the site to arouse our mind and body to act: in short, through engagement we become the user, the participatory subject of social media.

With user engagement I am tracing the ways in which Facebook produces affects and establishes affective relationships. My proposition is that while affect on the one hand is something that is indefinable, not reducible to words, but felt in experiences, pre-cognitive rather

than cognitive (Massumi 2002), user engagement on the other hand is a process that can be programmed and designed in the uses of the platform itself. User engagement thus defines the conditions under which we become affected, but also where affects with their networked relations are produced. Mark Coté and Jennifer Pybus (2007, 101) have suggested that social media sites could be analyzed as "architectures of participation" where the modes of participation are built within social media sites and that they, for example, intensify personalized experiences and facilitate discrete capital relations. Similarly, user engagement relies on particular 'architectures of engagement' that can be designed and produced. Here I am in fact quite literally following a proposition by Tim O'Reilly (2006) in the context of Web 2.0 that we should not "treat software as an artifact, but as a process of engagement with […] users."

Architectures of engagement are materially constructed environments that enable user engagement as an affective relationship. O'Brien and Toms (2008, 947-948) note that user engagement can be designed according to four different stages: the point of engagement, engagement, disengagement and reengagement. The point of engagement appeals to the needs and desires of becoming engaged (which of course can as well be produced). These appeals can be sensual, emotional and spatiotemporal; to initiate the engagement the application needs to capture the users' attention, satisfy a need, evoke an interest, or deliver a desired experience. Once engagement has been initiated it is something that is sustained. It involves graphics that keep the attention and interest, or evoke realism. The application must be rich content-wise to keep users interested. It needs to be able to build positive affects; fun, enjoyment, or physiological arousal. Moreover, engagement can be sustained if the user feels that they are connected to something interesting, even in ways they lose their awareness of time and space. On the other hand, if the application is enhanced with social interaction, users need to be able to feel that they are using it with others. Disengaging user engagement is grounded in the negative affect; uncertainty, information overload, frustration with technology, boredom or guilt. Engagement can become disengaging if it consumes too much time, distracts and interrupts activities taking place in the physical environment. This can be done so that disconnecting causes positive affects: feelings of success and accomplishment when we stop using the system altogether and become devoid of its affective and cognitive stimulation. (Ibid., 947-948.)

What is furthermore important here is O'Brien and Toms' (Ibid., 940) notion that users' do not need to use the site for "a specific purpose or desirable outcome in order to have an engaging experience." What this means is that users do not have to participate to feel engaged even though they are engaged when participating. In order to elaborate on these points further, Facebook's user interface can be considered as an architecture of engagement. The user interface "draws us in, that attracts and holds our attention" (Chapman 1997 quoted in O'Brien and Toms 2008, 938). Robert W. Gehl (2012, 112-113) notes that the Facebook user interface is a key factor in the success of the site. Facebook's ability to attract more users and engage them relates to the fact that Facebook is easy for the users to implement. It is a polished system abstracted from an excess of features. The basic functions are achieved through clicks, likes and recommendations. Content such as status updates, photos, locations created, shared and recommended by Facebook friends are constantly visible in the interface through the *News Feed* stream. *The Ticker* window shows what the user's friends are doing, what status updates they are commenting on and what music they are listening to. *Facebook Messages* notify the user constantly with a pop-up window within the interface about new interactions through emails or chat messages. The interface does not only juxtapose human signs and machine signals (Andersen and Pold 2011, 9), nor is a mere artifact, but it constantly builds new processes of engagement.

As Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylinska (2012, 158) maintain "far from functioning as a mere tool for communicating, sharing things and making the 'real' world more democratic, Facebook could be understood more accurately as a dynamic environment that actively shapes the spatiotemporal continuum of which we are part." Facebook provides a sensation of "belonging to something," of "being somewhere" (Cf. Guattari 2009, 158) and yet the artificiality of its processes fades away.[39]

4.4 Engaging connectivity

On a general note, Facebook becoming ubiquitous is an attempt to prevent disconnection already before it takes place. The most efficient way to prevent disconnection is when users are still engaged with Facebook. What I am postulating here is that user engagement is not only a relation of what is happening right now but deeply connected and oriented towards a future where disengagement and disconnection also exist amongst other possibilities.

The mode of future orientation that I am talking about here stems from Richard Grusin's (2010) discussions of affect and mediality after 9/11. As Grusin (Ibid., 77) notes, what is at stake in our current media landscape is not only how the traditional big media operators have informed publics about threats and catastrophes, but also how informal media such as social networks, blogs and the internet have become important operators in mediating different events and affecting the public opinion. For Grusin these media technologies mobilize people to act, but are also in turn impacted by their actions (Ibid.,77-78). To conceptually grasp these new movements Grusin develops the notion of *premediation.* According to Grusin (2011)

> **Premediation deploys multiple modes of mediation and remediation in shaping the affectivity of the public, in preparing people for some field of possible future actions, in producing a mood or structure of feeling that makes possible certain kinds of actions, thoughts, speech, affectivities, feelings, or moods, mediations that might not have seemed possible before or that might have fallen flat or died on the vine or not produced echoes and reverberations in the public or media sphere.**

Premediation describes how different media try to anticipate "the future not as it emerges immediately into the present but before it ever happens" and make sure that "when the future comes it has already been remediated" (Grusin 2010, 12). Premediation happens with a double logic where on the one hand the future is already produced before it happens, and on the other hand, at the very moment when the future emerges into the present it becomes captured by media technologies. While the former is achieved through producing content that anticipates future events the latter happens through the expansions of different media technologies that try to limit the scope of events taking place only inside controlled time-space. (Ibid., 2010, passim.)

Grusin's notion of premediation describes a political and cultural climate beginning from

39 See Article 2 in this regard.

9/11 and moving towards the current state of affairs where preemptive strikes have become accepted foreign policy measures and reactions to different threats that have not yet actualized. As also described by Brian Massumi (2012; 2007), a preemptive strike does not need a clear and present danger for justification, but is used in eliminating a threat that inhabits the future.[40] To preempt a threat is to respond rapidly to what has not yet emerged. Massumi (Ibid.) notes that threat and pre-emption indicate a time-loop where "the future comes back to the present to trigger a reaction that jolts the present back to the future, along a different path of action than would have eventuated otherwise." According to Mark Andrejevic (2011, 614) pre-emption is not only about destroying or preventing through opposition, but about setting goals that are both pre-emptive and productive; on the one hand to pre-empt means to minimize negative impacts and, on the other hand, to maximize emotional investment and engagement.

Premediation is pre-emption's media-specific strategy. The question is no longer only about war or foreign politics. In Facebook we are not affected while engaged randomly nor does the Facebook user interface appeal to us for mere aesthetic reasons (of purity, of abstractedness, of simplicity). "Facebook's mission is to make the world more open and connected," (Facebook A) could be interpreted as a strategy of premediation. Connectivity forms a transversal trajectory between ubiquitous networks built by user engagement and user engagement built by ubiquitous networks. In other words, when we are engaged we connect and when we connect we simultaneously engage.

The same statement regarding connectivity is repeated in the Facebook Investor Relations (Facebook F) homepage, with a specification of the target audience and the purpose of the site; "People use Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them." A similar ethos continues in Zuckerberg's (Facebook E, 67) letter to prospective investors: "There is a huge need and a huge opportunity to get everyone in the world connected, to give everyone a voice and to help transform society for the future. The scale of the technology and infrastructure that must be built is unprecedented, and we believe this is the most important problem we can focus on." While connectivity evidently deals with people and their relations, Zuckerberg significantly shifts the attention from users to Facebook's connective technologies and infrastructures as if to emphasize that when Facebook is connective enough social relations will follow and societies will transform.

Thus, for Facebook enabling connectivity per se seems to be an absolute value. Grusin (2010, 128) offers a similar notion;

> **Social networks exist for the purpose of premediating connectivity, by promoting an anticipation that a connection will be made – that somebody will comment on your blog or your Facebook profile or respond to your Tweet, that you will hear the distinctive ringtone of one of your favorites, that your computer or your networked phone will alert you that you have new mail or that you have been texted. These anticipated connections, however, are not determined or specified in any particular way. It is connectivity itself that one anticipates, not necessarily a specific connection.**

40 As phrased by the former president of the United States George W. Bush (Quoted in Massumi 2012) "If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long. We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path to action."

Facebook's emphasis on enabling connectivity suggests that the overall capability to connect is more important than the nature or the quality of the connections. Its technology and infrastructure is fine-tuned to enable connectivity and to boost and extend existing connections. Its inbuilt features introduce other Facebook users, people you might know, and suggestions to connect with them. Its protocols help to connect websites and other programs from *Netflix* to *Spotify* to one's own profile. The content visible in the Facebook News Feed is connective; one can like, recommend or share it and thus enable further connections. Through its many features, Facebook is an affective network that can "speed up" and "intensify" different "affective contagions" (Sampson 2012, 164). What is important is the continuous connectivity through which users become deeply engaged with the site.

However, while the technology of overall connectivity might be Facebook's biggest asset, it might also be its biggest challenge, or even a threat. The point is that the overall connectivity allows all kinds of connections to be made. These connections may be engaging, but they may also be disengaging. Not only positive affects spread through Facebook. By enabling connectivity, Facebook simultaneously enables different kinds of "connection strategies" (Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe 2010, 888-889). According to Ellison et al (Ibid.) these connection strategies include e.g. different ways in which users experiment with their identities or are involved in different kinds of relationships with different friends online. Facebook has a vast array of different users; some users are active in creating content while others are more passive lurkers or listeners whose participation does not bear a voice as such, but is noted in actively logging in and following the contributions of other users (Crawford 2012, 81). Furthermore, there are also connection strategies that may cause disengagement. Online trolls bully people through connective technologies. Malware spreads through links that are automatically shared after users click them.

What is important here to note is that, if user engagement is built around affects and connections that spread the affects then user engagement always has the potential to be unexpected, surprising and unpredictable. As Massumi (2002) notes, affects always retain autonomy up to a certain point. While the system of user engagement is based on producing affects, what is produced as a side product is the threat of the uncontrollable and unmanageable. This needs to be pre-empted as much as possible. For this reason enabling connectivity needs to be coupled with "engineering connectivity" (See van Dijck 2013a, 69). Through engineering connectivity user engagement is connected to the regime of control. Firstly, engineering connectivity here implies different means through which connectivity is managed by the platform. The known unknowns, the field of protocols, algorithms and other systems of command and control, some visible and others operating under the hood of the user interface, do not only connect, but they connect in specific ways. Secondly, engineering connectivity means building a system that allows the technologies of the site to grab users, sometimes unintentionally and perhaps even involuntarily, through affective engagements. As noted by Coté and Pybus (2007, 90, 96) affective engagements bring users and networked relations together and help "forge relationships […] through new subjectivities and networked relations that have the potential to interpolate users for the various lifestyles and identities that are being produced on on-going basis." Through engaging architectures Facebook positions its users in what Nigel Thrift (2005, 212-214) refers to as a notion of "spaces of anticipation." Spaces of anticipation place people in a certain position and prepare them for a certain future, specific affects and specific engagements. Thus, the forging dynamics of the affect make user engagement an issue of network politics. Users are always engaged *with* something; with a technology, with an economic model; with certain people;

with a space of anticipation where some choices are enabled that make some connections less "encouraged by the protocols and reward systems built inside the game" (Grusin 2010, 46) than others.

4.5 Becoming well connected

User engagement is not only about getting and staying connected but also about becoming well connected. Van Dijck (2013a, 51) notes that "The principal benefits for the users are, first, to *get and stay connected* and, second, *to become (well connected).*" Becoming well connected for van Dijck means being in the nexus of things. Being well connected is a state where the user is aware of the important things shared and communicated through the platform. Being well connected on Facebook means that the user's social life is affected to such an extent that leaving Facebook would cause a diminution in the user's social relationships, both online and offline. (Ibid.)

For me becoming well connected however has a different emphasis. Becoming well connected means deeper or more thorough user engagement. The point here is that while Facebook wants to emphasize general connectivity it needs a framework according to which it can be controlled. How do we get well connected? By accepting the scope of choices Facebook offers us. This scope of choices exists for example as identity categories used for self-expression, self-promotion and self-communication.[41] For instance, when one creates a Facebook user profile one needs to choose different markers of identity such as age, gender, nationality and also seemingly more arbitrary categories such as job history, medical history and relationship status. By making these selections the user voluntarily makes them a part of a certain identity cluster. Through these clusters the user when acting, or speaking, always simultaneously represents a certain identity position (Galloway 2012, 137). This information is then used for commercial purposes for example. The instructions for Facebook advertisers make this particularly visible: Ads can be targeted to identity categories such as "location, age, gender and." Moreover, categories of 'precise interests' and 'broad interests' can be used to gain a more specific audience. Broad interests refer to general interests and the lifestyle of the user and precise interests refer to people who have expressed a specific interest in a certain topic. (Facebook G.)

The example above describes how Facebook uses molar categories to collect data. These categories are the well-established rather fixed categories which work through analogical comparison with other users (See Sampson 2012, 5). There is however data collected from the molecular actions. That is actions that are sparked through affective encounters of using Facebook. As Gerlitz and Helmond (2013) have pointed out Facebook has built an infrastructure that is highly traceable. Every click, like and share contribute in collection of user data. There is a vast array of things Facebook is able to trace. Sauvik Das and Adam Kramer (2013) for example analyze Facebook data of status updates that are written but deleted before sending. By collecting this behavioral data Facebook is able to trace user's identity that is composed of both molar and molecular interactions.

Being well connected means being a contributor of personal data on both levels, molar

41 Van Dijck (2013b) has recently discussed how the Facebook Timeline is an interface that combines self-expression, self-promotion and self-communication.

and molecular. The question is not only about what you share, but what your engagements tell others about you. Following Mirko Tobias Schäfer (2011, 51) the ways in which users contribute data to the platform could also be described by by using explicit and implicit participation categories. Explicit participation includes different content- providing activities such as sharing photos, participating in discussions, or liking things. Implicit participation, in contrast, means benefiting from explicit participation. In different acts of participation from communication to other forms of Facebook-mediated interaction, users share data about their activities and preferences implicitly.[42] Their movements are tracked and monitored. User engagement makes Facebook accessible, but simultaneously it makes users and their data accessible to Facebook. As crystallized by van Dijck (2009, 47) "Besides uploading content, users also willingly and unknowingly provide important information about their profile and behaviour to site owners and metadata aggregators."

The user is differentiated into two different entities. The one exists in social media, communicates with friends, and likes things and so on. The other is simultaneously included in collections of data and information that exists in databases and can form new interactions with other pieces of information. It would be easy to come to the conclusion that our scope of choices is defined according to the needs and preferences of data mining. We of course know that many social media sites turn a profit by using this data (Cf. van Dijck 2009). However, I am more interested in the ways in which this data is used to bind users more thoroughly to the platform. That is how the division of users and their data is brought together in architectures of engagement.

The point is, as explicated by Langlois (2013, 99-100), that when users are engaged with Facebook they become connected to a participatory media platforms that

> **not only allow users to express themselves by enabling content transmission but also establish the customized networked conditions within which something can become culturally meaningful and shareable. The platform acts as a manager that enables, directs, and channels specific flows of communication as well as specific**

42 The discussions about privacy focus on what Facebook knows about us, what should it be able to know and how is this knowledge exploited. Utilizing the disengagement caused by privacy issues a series of software applications such as Disconnect, Collusion, Priv3, Ghostery and Facebook Blocker were programmed and designed to block social media sites from tracking the user around the web and auto-submitting data for social media sites. Collusion for example is an application that shows "websites that secretly track you" and Disconnect promises to make "the web more private, less cluttered, faster, and safer" by disabling technically the possibility for "Facebook, Google, or Twitter to follow you around the web." They respond to the loss of privacy or the uncertainty of what happens to things after they are produced in social media. In the context of Facebook this disengagement culminated in Fall 2011 when Arnold Roosendaal (2011) demonstrated that Facebook's Like-button does not only record and represent the user's preferences, but that it is also a tool for tracking the user's movements on the web – even without clicking. Following Roosendaal two technology bloggers Nik Cubrilovic and Dave Winer explicated how this tracking takes place and how even logging out from a Facebook user account might not in fact stop the site from gathering the user's browsing information: "logging out of Facebook only de-authorizes your browser from the web application, a number of cookies (including your account number) are still sent along to all requests to facebook.com. Even if you are logged out, Facebook still knows and can track every page you visit." These cases exemplify the discernment of Chun's (2006, 46) notion that we interact with the interface not the data, and that the things we do with the interfaces compensates or even conceals the fact that we cannot do much ourselves with the data that we constantly give out.

logics of transformation of data into culturally recognizable and valuable signs and symbols.

When users become engaged with Facebook they are simultaneously forced into interacting with the system and engaged with choices offered by the site in a particular way. "Users may navigate and control software interfaces, but this control compensates for, if not screens, the lack of control they have over their data's path," as Wendy Chun (2006, 46) points out.[43] This lack of control is further manifested in the algorithmic manipulation of what we get to see and what the scopes of choices we are offered are.

I am not so much interested here in what the particular scope of choices is, but in the principles according to which these choices are produced (data) and the methodologies through which the choices become expressed (algorithms). The proposition is that our scope of choices changes constantly. One operator behind this change is algorithmic control whereby our connections, now and in the future and also what happens if the connections are made, are calculated in advance. Based on these calculations we are given different options to choose from.

Algorithmic relationships are what Taina Bucher (2012a) calls "programmed sociality." Similarly, van Dijck (2013a, 41) argues that social media platforms use an "intricate scheme of coding and branding strategies" to build social relationships in a certain way.[44] Paraphrasing van Dijck (Ibid., 51) connections on Facebook are not only the result of human-based interaction, but also programmed sociality: relations suggested and modulated by algorithms. Part of the obstructive grayness of social media sites is the way they present themselves as neutral platforms where users have equal opportunities for participation while in fact their cultural expressions on feeds and streams go through complex processes of algorithmic selection and manipulation. Van Dijck (Ibid., 69) maintains that "The algorithm underpinning the Like button, for instance, measures people's desire for things or affinity to ideas." This measurement can then be used to generate potential consumer trends and audiences. Similarly, Facebook streams such as the News Feed control the things we see. In fact as explained by Bucher (2012b, 1167) 'weight', 'affinity' and 'time decay' are three factors Facebook's EdgeRank algorithm uses to control content visibility on News Feed. The affinity score measures how connected a particular user is to the edge (i.e. other user). Connections are measured according to the frequency of communication and its means; using Facebook Chat has a different affinity score than posting stuff on the Wall for example. The weight score is measured according to the type of communication; likes having a different value than comments. The third category, the time decay, is maybe the the most vague in short it seems to indicate Facebook's evaluation of how long the post should be visible. (Bucher 2012b, passim.)

What we see here is that affectivity can be algorithmically produced according to certain principles. Even though Facebook claims that it operates through serendipity, the serendipity is itself programmed and engineered by algorithms. By producing affective associative chains Facebook invites users to click like, click to see more, and click to share. The clicking scheme is a scheme of fast responses. Your response to the content is registered when you click to see more, this scheme is not interested whether you prefer the article after you have read it. The only thing that matters is that it has affected you and generated a response and as such generated a repet-

43 Chun criticizes here especially Lev Manovich who in the very early stage of Web 2.0 argued that the user interacted directly with the data by navigating new media spaces (Manovich 2001, 253-259).
44 See also Gillespie (2010).

itive pattern that is potentially imitated more by other users of the network when circulated by the platform. The more we connect, the better the algorithmic control works. It connects what is outside inside our own Facebook feed. It connects the inside of our personal lives to outside databases and server farms. It connects our data to clusters of information. It connects our preferences to other user's preferences. It connects our consumption habits to brand strategies. Even though some of these connections are more transparent than others, they are always filtered and translated through a myriad of socio-technological agencies.

To recap and rephrase, as pre-emptive mechanisms algorithms limit the scope of users' choices. The novelty in this new mode of control is that it is based on both molarity and molecularity. To recap the user contributes their personal data to molar identity categories. These data clusters can be anything from music preferences of 32-year-old Finnish males to the most visited locations of college students in the Turku area. Algorithms collect this information and make it visible for the user, for example, in ads that are targeted to a certain molar category and the individual as a representative of that category, rather than as an actual person.

Molecularity in contrast is the mode of control where users' actual relationships (affinity scores) and behavior patterns are mined and used as boundaries for the scope of choices. This is molecular control: users own actions and relationships define the scope of choices they are given. You see content from people Facebook thinks you are the most interested in. This is both a benefit and a vicious circle; you interact the most with the persons you interact the most with.

User engagement is based on the individual and their presumed and calculated desires, needs and motivations. Through user engagement what is personal becomes the power to be connected and especially to be engaged. This is a very different from the you-centered approach of user participation, which makes 'you' the one in charge. User engagement addresses me personally, me as an agent. I am affected by social media. I create these relationships. Algorithms respond to my choices. It is my Timeline, my Friends, my Likes, my Recommendations that matter. User engagement is my personal engagement with these sites. Yet, what is personal is not my own anymore. It has been given to Facebook.

4.6 Non-human user ENGAGEMENTS

If we are to believe Robert W. Gehl (2013a) the question of user engagement is no less than a question of the capability of social media sites and their business partners to determine how we think:

> **a whole host of industries and institutions have turned to Facebook, Google, and Twitter to shape our thoughts as we express them via likes, Tweets, +1s, and comments. These entities want to be *on* our minds as we think about the world and as we constitute ourselves via our social media production. They monitor our thoughts we express them in social media architectures and then they build messages that resonate with our thoughts. Then, they repeat the messages, over and over again via various channels, until the idea is natural. They want, in other words, noopower, power over minds, power over thoughts, and they see social media as a key means to that end.**[45]

Gehl's (2013a) makes this argument when discussing the noopolitics of social media. According to him when a technology becomes so ubiquitous that using it becomes an everyday routine and when a number of our daily tasks are conducted through that technology, it will begin to resonate with our mind and body in novel ways. This argument is quite straightforward in its ideas of thought control, but his intention, at least according to my interpretation, is not to repeat the old-fashioned ideas of mass media brainwashing of innocent audiences. In essence, Gehl wants to show through an analysis of social media interfaces that they are powerful tools of molding our relations to the world: firstly interfaces track and monitor the thoughts users share and secondly they attempt to build messages that resonate with our thoughts and repeat them until they get through.[46]

If user engagement is indeed a relation where our scope of choices is defined according to algorithmic control, it is important to note that algorithms can be affected too. Different connection strategies produce different kinds of results for the algorithms to calculate. Thus, while the discussions around algorithms are often rather deterministic one needs to point out that they are also fragile. The algorithms are unable to understand whether a comment is meant to be serious, ironic or used for trolling. Engagement may gain weight and affinity for different reasons that may not provide valid results for the algorithmic-based predictions.[47] On the one hand different connection strategies are important for Facebook because they build the affinity score and enable more personal content to be shown to the user. On the other hand they may corrupt the data patterns and provide invalid information of consumption habits for instance.

45 Gehl (2013a) refers here to the concepts of noopower and noopolitics developed by Maurizio Lazzaratto (2006) in order to understand, how control works in the regimes of the brain. It thus supplements Foucault's (2004) discussions of biopolitics and the control over bodies. For more on the discussion of noopolitics see also Article 5 in this issue.
46 While sounding like brainwashing this is the standard application of targeted marketing beginning from the 1970s. What has changed due to social media is the amount of information used to target the ads and the technical choices to do so.
47 See Article 4 in this issue.

The challenge for the site is to react simultaneously to both of these sides: producing the former and pre-empting the latter.

Since algorithms can be negatively affected by user participation how about building user engagement without the possibility to participate? Trebor Scholz (2010, 243-244) points in this direction by arguing that as Facebook users we

> **become encultured and we affect or infect an entire group of friends. We are marketing our lifestyle to each other – the books we read, the restaurants we go to, the films we watch, the people whom we admire, the music we listen to, the news we think is important, and even the artworks that we appreciate. It is in this sense that we are not merely "on" Facebook but that we are becoming Facebook.**

On one hand Scholtz affirms Gehl's approach that our thoughts become molded in these social networks. On the other hand he comes up with an interesting notion: we are not on Facebook but becoming Facebook instead. The platform is taking over.

Consider simple click-jacking; a (malicious) user shares a link with a lucrative image on Facebook. It captures the user's attention and they click the link. Each time a user clicks the link it is simultaneously shared on the user's own News Feed. Importantly, both the lucrative image and the act of sharing/liking/recommending are repeated in the News Feed. Thus not only is the image lucrative but this lucrativeness is emphasized by the visible user action, sharing as a social act. Other users cannot see the difference between the link that is shared voluntarily and the link shared without volition. They cannot see the difference between things shared by the user and things shared by the platform since the platform operates through the user. The user's attention is captured and new clicks are potentially endlessly produced.

One may also consider what the OpenGraph protocol establishes. If the user connects their Spotify account to Facebook through the OpenGraph protocol, Facebook begins to automatically track and share the music the user is listening to. The user is engaged with Facebook and participates without actually using the site. In a similar tone in the Fall of 2011 Arnold Roosendaal (2011) demonstrated that Facebook's Like-button does not only record and represent users' preferences, but that it is also a tool for tracking users' movements in the web – even if the users do not click the Like-button. Following Roosendaal two technology bloggers Nik Cubrilovic and Dave Winer (2011) explicated how this tracking takes place and how even logging out from the Facebook user account might not in fact stop the site from gathering the user's browsing information: "logging out of Facebook only de-authorizes your browser from the web application, a number of cookies (including your account number) are still sent along to all requests to facebook.com. Even if you are logged out, Facebook still knows and can track every page you visit."[48] Basically these examples point out that user engagement is more than user participation and more than user involvement, because the engaging architectures seem to have the ability to self-organize and automate different processes that were formerly seen as originating from users, their intentions and social contacts.

48 To block these unwanted engagements different software applications such as *Disconnect*, *Collusion*, *Priv3*, *Ghostery* and *Facebook Blocker* were programmed and designed. Basically the idea behind these applications was to prevent social media sites from tracking the user around the web and auto-submitting user data for social media sites.

User engagement is indeed a relation that is not necessarily based on voluntary human participation. It can also be a relation of non-human participation. This is the final stage of user engagement where the user has merged with Facebook. It might not be an imaginary state of being. On the contrary, it may take place immediately when the user logs in. Users become a possession of Facebook quite literally. A good example here is the "People You May Know Algorithm." As explained by Florin Raţju (2008) in the Facebook Blog

> **People You May Know looks at, among other things, your current friend list and their friends, your education info and your work info. If you are already friends on Facebook with some people from your last job, for example, you may find some more of your former coworkers (assuming they are visible to you in search) among the "People You May Know' suggestions.**

The PYMK algorithm indicates new contacts and makes finding friends automatic. However, on a deeper lever it indicates that the power which discourses of user participation so eagerly want to grant to those who develop and use social media is losing its meaning. It exemplifies how the platform is able to transform any user into an affective point of contact autonomously and automatically. You do not have to find users they are being found for you. Also the converse happens; your own profile is transformed into a point of affectation. You can be found, or you can become an advertiser of a product that you have 'liked' without knowing. You and your behavior online can be simulated through the big data that is gathered about you and other users. As an actively participating user you are no longer needed because the data can be activated and simulate your presence.[49]

To sum up, this mode of user participation takes place by-itself without any necessary involvement on behalf of the user at the very moment the user signs in.[50] User engagement is an affective bind that on the one hand activates users to do things, but on the other hand maintains the illusion that users are somehow personally needed and in charge of their relations. The reality is, however, that through algorithms Facebook does not only enable the choice to participate but also denies the possibility to *not* participate (Cf. Galloway 2012, 137). It is engagement where the human users are, as Geoffrey Winthrop-Young (2011, 65) puts it, "at best along for the ride."

49 Consider the *_LIVESON* application developed for Twitter. –LIVESON is a new post mortem application that will simulate user's tweets after the user has died. The application is supposed to analyze user's main Twitter feed, learn about their likes, tastes and syntax. After the user dies the application takes control of their Twitter profile; 'When your heart stops beating, you'll keep tweeting.' Being a user is a non-cognitive, even automated, relation. It is an affective relation comprised through a vast array of heterogeneous agencies human and non-human alike. For more information about the application see their website http://liveson.org/.

50 Even dead users are meaningful users for Facebook while they do not interact. See Article 5 in this regard.

V Update Status

On January 15, 2013 Facebook launched a feature called *the Graph Search*. The Graph Search was intended to be the next game changer by altering the logic of search engines that work with simple keywords. In the promotional video the graph search is not merely used to search for 'trail running' but to search for 'my friends who like trail running.'[51] Moreover it is used to search 'Bands my friends listen to,' or 'Friends who work at my company and like to ski.' It is used to find places where Facebook friends have been to or photos of them from their early years. Instead of objects or individuals Graph Search explores user engagements. It harnesses the connections made on Facebook; not only the stuff that is generated or shared but also things that are liked and recommended. It does not operate through categories, but through relations. Its power and novelty is to turn the things that make us tick and click visible – something that can be found.

The notion of user engagement helps us to consider what makes Facebook a particular manifestation of social media. To take with credibility the concept of 'social' in social media, one must begin from the user as a process of composition in and of these affective networks. This is not a novel position as such. Already at the turn of the 20th Century Gabriel Tarde (1903) suggested, in opposing Emile Durkheim's views or organic sociology, that *the social is not given, it is made* (See Sampson 2012, 21). This push to understand social media and the network culture through Tarde is currently gaining a foothold in the field of media theory especially in the works of Sampson (2012), Terranova (2007) and Latour and Lépinay (Latour and Lépinay 2009; see also Latour, Jensen, et al. 2012). Importantly, with the help of Tarde the notion of social becomes an issue of fields other than sociology. The social no longer operates at the level of individual and collective participation. Rather, social relations are micro-relational forces, movements form one body to another. Thus, they do not account only for human individuals but for all other relations as well. Similarly, the more we move away from the user-centric approaches the more social media begins to appear as a dynamic infrastructure where the human user is a specific point of contact, a node in a contagious network, rather than the prime mover, a developer and creator of networks and their social relations. Hence, another famous idea from Tarde (2012, 28): "*everything is a society.*" While a reference to Tarde opens up a vast area of unexplored modes of sociality and a field of new research subjects, the key thing here in the context of user engagement is the constitutive role of affects and subjectivity. Lisa Blackman (2007, 576) notes

51 The video is a part of the site where Facebook introduces the Graph Search and can be retrieved here https://www.facebook.com/about/graphsearch

that understanding subjectivity through Tarde is "not a matter of studying individual psychology, characterized by the abstracted, self-contained individual, but rather an 'inter-psychology' […] which recognized that subjects were open to affecting and being affected." The emphasis on affectivity means that subjects are themselves constructed and reconstructed and the idea of a stable a priori subjectivity does not exist (Borch 2007, 562). Instead, subjectivity emerges in relations such as user engagement.

The first contribution of this dissertation is the inclusion of the notion of *disconnection* both as a theoretical concept and an empirical element of discussions about social media. I argue that disconnection, while often hidden and given the role of an anomaly, in fact belongs to social media, not as a negation, but as a potentiality for different, novel connections in parallel. My dissertation points out that embracing disconnection in theory and in practice allows us to gain a better understanding of how we are connected to and engaged with social media sites. Disconnection takes various forms and can be seen as a platform-specific feature as discussed through the case-based Facebook examples. Disconnection is also a more general principle from which social media sites shelter themselves by producing more engaging architectures.

The second contribution of this work is the subsequent critical analysis of *user engagement* derived from the above-mentioned framework of disconnection. While social media research often focuses on user participation, I argue that more attention should be given to user engagement as a relation that enables and maintains user participation. This argument is based on the notion that user engagement is not an abstract relation, but a relation that can be designed, produced and maintained. This argument is developed through an analytical breakdown of different Facebook-specific manifestations of user engagement, but it can also be extended to a more generalized discussion about the current state of our network culture. User engagement is designed and established at the levels of software and hardware, which are composed of engaging architectures. Facebook's ubiquitous existence in our daily lives is its extremist embodiment: it makes user engagement a naturalized state of being. However user engagement is not only a technical, but also an ongoing affective relation. Affective user engagement involves dynamics that are pre-cognitive, non-conscious even irrational rather than conscious or rational. User engagement is a relation that activates users, even empowers them. User engagement is an affective grab, a capture of a dynamic process through which we potentially become users.

The third contribution of this work is the exposition of the specificity of *Facebook* as a social media platform. With different examples and approaches I have described how Facebook forms a reciprocal relation with its users. This is to say that we should not merely talk about using Facebook or about Facebook using its users, but understand this process as a complex chain of events that reiterates and reinforces itself through particular feedback loops manifested in and within user engagement. To illustrate this reciprocal constraint I have used the notion of disconnection to describe Facebook's various options of user engagement and their governing strategies.

Arguably, our current notions of social media as participatory culture are indebted to the idea of *homo economicus,* a user "who would exclusively and methodically pursue his egoistical interest -- having abstracted from every feeling, faith or partisanship" by participating and creating content. In contrast the idea of the engaged user as affective and affected body relates to economic psychology where relations are "first sentimental" and second "escorted by an invisible cortege of associates, friends and coreligionists whose thought has weighed on them […] and has finally won out, most often to the detriment of their strictly individual interests" (Tarde 2007, 631). However, based on the analysis provided throughout this dissertation, two clarifica-

tions need to be made. Firstly, sentimental does not equal emotional, but rather affective. User engagement is an affective attachment to hardware and software and this relation takes place at levels that are often pre-cognitive and pre-rational. Secondly, my analysis indicates that in contrast to Tarde, the detriment of individual interests should not be read as a creation of a more altruistic subject. Rather, it means trading the individual interests for better user engagement and through that engagement granting the social media site the power to engineer, program and anticipate what you are interested in. Evidently, when users connect to social media their interests are computationally revealed by the data they leave behind and subsequently used by the platform architecture to show better search results, more individual content and more accurately targeted ads. User engagement is a relation where big data becomes merged with personal data and is tailored for each individual personally.

I am advocating a framework where user-centric theories of social media are supplemented and occasionally even substituted with platform-specific network-based theories. Here the user is positioned in different spaces of anticipation where networked conditions established and controlled by the platform are managed and maintained through the affective relation of user engagement.[52] The social media user is produced through a relational process of composition that takes place in the nexus of social media platforms. Social media is also not an extension of man, a tool for human communication, but an assemblage composed of technical and expressive material, as well as cultural and social layers. Moreover, this nexus is comprised of the matrix of human and non-human agencies and their operations. Five concrete examples of these nexuses and the matrix are provided through the disconnection-oriented and case-based approaches in my research articles.

Firstly, being engaged means that the user is given choices and choosing something over another equates to being rewarded or penalized. In this model user engagement is maintained and disconnection pre-empted by complicating the processes of leaving social media sites. For example, the complete deletion of one's Facebook profile is made deliberately complicated. Facebook recommends rather that the users should merely deactivate their account. This process leaves the user data untouched. Moreover, it grants the user the opportunity to return as if they had never left. The connections and the content are re-established as soon as the user decides to log in. To rephrase, instead of giving an authentic choice to leave the site, user engagement is maintained by emphasizing the illusion of leaving. The different choices given to stop using the site conceal the authentic choice "to choose the choice between choosing and not choosing" and emphasizing choosing "this or that" within the boundaries of the system instead (Badiou 2000, 11). The scope of choices, including the choice to disconnect, is limited by the boundaries of the system and its particular terms. The choice that connects the user outside (of Facebook) is disappearing.

Secondly the choice to engage with these technologies means also the choice to engage with the outside differently. When we choose to connect to a social media platform we also agree that the technology can define our scope of choices. As such social media is always a sort of augmented reality. It renegotiates our relationship with the world and simultaneously through these engagements we become subjectified. Becoming engaged is a relation that potentially changes the way we are, think and act.

52 For this reason, to exemplify the technological construction of the user instead of human, I have depersonalized the user and insisted throughout this dissertation on retaining the word user instead of individual and furthermore I have favored the pronoun 'they' instead of the pronoun 'she' or 'he.'

Thirdly, user engagement relies on the affect and understanding of social media sites as affective networks. The more affected the user is, the more engaged he or she will be. Through interface developments such as the Timeline Facebook builds an infrastructure that produces and captures affects and guides and spreads them through different feeds and streams. Hence, this 'affective turn' does not place the focus from the materiality of these networks on the psychology of the users, but instead builds associations between them.

Fourthly, while users can choose different connection strategies, social media sites try to predict what users want, do and need. The prediction and production of these needs relates to the politics of algorithms. The relationship, the quality and quantity of the engagement, defines the content the user gets from Facebook. However, there are connection strategies that break these engagements. Facebook does not allow users to connect with false names or behave in a disturbing manner. In order to keep the data valid and the algorithms undisturbed the platform battles against trolls, malicious users and other network vigilantes. Here user engagement is both a bond and a conflict. User engagement is not a relation that can be completely determined by the platform when a human subject is involved. Being human means being to some extent always unpredictable. Similarly, the relation is never a fixed entity but a process that can be changed and transformed. In other words, engaged users sometimes choose to do what they want despite the attempts to control their actions through implemented choice mechanisms. Consequently, the only way for the platform to respond to these unwanted users is to disconnect them.

Fifthly, we have recently seen developments where the user's own actions become replaced by feeds that create user-related content autonomously. Take dead user profiles. While the death of a social media user means a final disconnect with the online and the offline the remaining user profile of the deceased can become a Facebook-specific point of navigation or node of connection in forming sociality – these profiles gather mourners and get people together to share and express their sentiments. Even though the user may feel they are making all selections and choices in social media these profiles indicate how little the user is in control of the things happening, content being shared and interactions generated in and through their profile. In social media the user is automated.

One could pessimistically argue that choosing to connect to social media means choosing to be engaged with a novel mechanism of tracking, monitoring and control.[53] Sampson for exam-

53 In the last stages of finalizing this manuscript the notions of tracking, monitoring and controlling people who use social media sites actualized when information about NSA's program called Prism was published by major news sites such as *The Guardian* (Greenwald & MacAskill 2013). The information about this "internal government computer system used to facilitate the government's statutorily authorised collection of foreign intelligence information from electronic communication service providers under court supervision" tells us that social media sites can and have been extensively used to track and monitor users (US Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, quoted in Zetter 2013). The implications and consequence of these revelations are huge and as such provide material for different studies to come. For this study at hand, the questions of privacy are issues that have been touched on, but rather than governmental politics the emphasis has been on the economic side of using user information in varying ways. However, it is interesting that these revelations seem to have very little impact on user engagement. On one hand one could speculate that when we chose to connect to a social media site we already knew that tracking and monitoring is inbuilt feature of these systems. Tracking and monitoring users has been premediated so extensively that when the information came it hardly was a surprise. On the other hand one could also say that this event merely confirms that there really is no exit from social media sites and the connections they impose upon us.

ple maintains that the user becomes a prisoner of a control regime that relies on affectation and suggestibility (Sampson 2012, 166). It is different from older control mechanisms in that user engagement operates with the logic of seduction and incitement instead of oppression, repression or suppression (See Fuller and Goffey 2009, 147). It is a regime where affective and non-cognitive connections instead of cognitive or rational or intentional or motivational reasons become emphasized (Sampson 2012, 164; See also Thrift 2005). Social media continuously introduces a vast array of technologies that exploit users' suggestibility in order to guide them in different directions and manipulate their behavior. Here the disconnection between the online and offline has become redundant;

> **Today the end user is always online,** *even when he is asleep.* **Marketing surveillance systems increasingly know who users are, where they are, and what they are doing, and where they might be going. Online web analytics, for example, trace mouse moves, clicks, and keystrokes, which assume a high percentage of correlation between cursor movements and user attention. Similarly, the data mined from all kinds of transactions are fed into databases, and the extracted patterns are used to bring about future intentions by ways of suggestions:** *Customers who bought this also bought this…Explore similar items.* **(Sampson 2012, 164)**

The Graph Search in particular harnesses the power of imitation and repetition behind human behavior. While Facebook has previously rather discreetly suggested that friends can be used as a database for finding interesting stuff, the Graph Search does it openly. Things that are considered private such as likes, tastes and preferences are now turned into searchable things that spread across the platform more efficiently. The idea of user participation is changed from active involvement towards becoming and being a medium of affectation (Ibid., 2012, 28). Here user engagement is related to the rather blunt production of monetary value. It is presumed that everything we do has monetary value as information and hence as a commodity in the digital economy.

To end this dissertation on a more positive note I want to challenge and diversify the concept of value implied in user engagement. The value of user engagement in the economic context is hard to quantify and measure, but easy to evaluate; without user engagement there will be no Facebook. However, value can be found on Facebook that is not economic or defined by the circulation of capital, while often associated with them. One should not overlook Zuckerberg's (Facebook E) claim that "we [Facebook] don't build services to make money; we make money to build better services" with a mere raise of an eyebrow. User engagement is valuable not only to social media sites, but also to users themselves. The semantic web is replaced with a web of sentiments. In this web of sentiments the user holds a central position, not as an actor, but as a node through which all other relations open up and become suggestible. There is no relation that is irrelevant, no action that does not have meaning, no affect that is left alone circulating in the platform without value. The acts of disconnecting, the numerous fake profiles, trolls, misbehaving users, algorithmic failures, bots and other challenging entities acting across social media sites are valuable in this sense. They are events of user engagement in their own right. They have their own connection strategies. If the power of social media is drawn from the overall potential of the affect it always carries within the seeds of resistance. While affects can

be produced, even guided to some extent as my analysis points out, one cannot control the affect entirely. The affirmative side of an affect is that it engages us with new connections, more connections, and different connections. Affects potentially challenge dominant ideologies or establish new ones.

User engagement strips the power from Facebook users as conscious and rational agents, but at the same time it gives this power back by placing the user into an affective relation with the platform. This relation, this engagement connects us together, opens us up to new ideas and even connects us to things we did not expect to be connected to. We can try to be rational, even political in using these sites consciously and yet there is a whole unexplored dimension of things happening which we do not know of or which we react to using a mere gut-feeling. By leading and following us social media is learning and defining the value of human life in its various mundane forms and seemingly irrelevant behavioral patterns. These traces of human life, our different engagements, anticipate a future where instead of disconnecting we become more deeply and more affectively involved with these sites. Our engagements matter.

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All it says is "Disappear Here" and even though it's probably an ad for some resort, it still freaks me out a little and I step on the gas really hard and the car screeches as I leave the light.

Bret Easton Ellis, Less than Zero

Log Out: Research Articles

Article 1

"Digital Suicide and the Biopolitics of Leaving Facebook." *Transformations Journal* 2011 No. 20.

Article 2

"Exploring Augmented Reality. On Users and Rewiring the Senses." *CTRL-Z: New Media Philosophy* 2/2012.

Article 3

"Happy Accidents. Facebook and the Value of Affects." In *Networked Affect* by Hillis, Petit & Paasonen. MIT Press, forthcoming in 2014.

Article 4

"'Change name to No One. Like people's status' Facebook Trolling and Managing Online Personas." *The Fibreculture Journal* 2013, issue 22.

Article 5

"Death Proof: On the Biopolitics and Noopolitics of Memorializing Dead Facebook Users." *Culture Machine* 2013, Vol. 14.