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## PANEL TITLE: FACEBOOK'S FUTURES

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'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.' These words are from Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg's letter to prospective investors, and a blueprint for the next steps of Facebook's business strategy. The social media giant is 10 years old and connects over billion people across the globe. A significant amount of research is done about individual practices with Facebook. Far less is written about Facebook's imaginary of connectivity: the strategies and tactics to connect the remaining world and provide internet access as 'a human right'.

This panel asks what will the future of Facebook and our online connectivity become; or more precisely what are the conceptual notions that emerge from Facebook's future imaginaries. We see Facebook's new product developments as an attempt to govern the future. We follow here Ben Anderson (2010: 778, 793) according to whom futures are anticipated and acted on through the assembling of '*styles*, consisting of statements that disclose and relate to the form of the future; *practices*, consisting of acts that make specific futures present; and *logics*, consisting of interventions in the here and now on the basis of futures.'

We set to explore the style, practices and logics behind Facebook's attempts to connect to people and concepts currently outside their reach. These efforts include internal research on humanist design principles; inventing mobile business models and infrastructures; building data storage spaces to different parts of the world; investing to emerging technologies such as drones; and building an initiative called [internet.org](http://internet.org) which would provide internet access to all over the world. These investments for the

future oscillate between materiality and phenomenality of media and can be economic, affective, social, technological and cultural.

Given the dominant position of Facebook in our current media ecosystem, these ideals likely reflect the crafting of a future digital global media landscape. These are new forms of media that will potentially 'determine our situation' (Kittler 1999), change the way we think (Hayles 2013) or at least, as Mark Hansen (2014, 37) puts it, demand us to build relationship with them. Thus, these technologies to connect the remaining world are not merely technological innovations but also connect to wider cultural, ideological and economic contexts. These new technologies shape the world and our understanding of it.

The papers of this panel approach Facebook's Futures from empirical and theoretical perspectives. On one hand the papers look at current and future software developments from e.g. Buy-button to interent.org app. On the other the papers focus on material products such as mobile phones, tablets and even drones that provide access to the site. These empirical examples lead to questions of agency and value - key concepts of Facebook's futures discussed in each of the papers.

N.N. takes the mobile career of Facebook as an opportunity to critique their image of themselves as a "public good." Facebook now refers to "people" not "users," even as the worldwide expansion of their network becomes increasingly technology-agnostic. The worldwide expansion of Facebook has been paired with a revival of optimism about mobile industries. This move is mostly understood as a bridge between desktop and mobile environments. However, many users know only Facebook, not "the Internet." "Mobility" as it is understood in sociology typically refers to the ability of individuals to exercise agency on social structure. By relying exclusively on an insular Facebook network Facebook's mobile imaginary threatens to quash actual mobility, particularly among working-class individuals worldwide.

N.N2's paper examines Facebook's most recent product developments that extend from Buy-button to marketing tool Atlas and eventually to the Facebook drone. They argue that these different product developments need to be understood in the context of affective capitalism: on one hand they are designed to capture Facebook users and transform them into value on the other they are designed so that we do not use the interent to access Facebook but we use Facebook to access the internet.

N.N3's paper approaches the IPO of Facebook and the way financial markets continue to speculate on the value of the company based up its estimation of the way it will be able to monetize the activity of Facebook users on and through mobile media platforms such as smartphones, tablets, and phablets. Drawing from Marxist value theory and discussing the theories of informational capitalism N.N3. argues that in order to understand the relationship between affect and value in informational capitalism, it is imperative to emphasize the different mobilities afforded by media forms themselves.

N.N4's paper examines Internet.org. Internet.org, an initiative by Facebook and number of other technology companies, provides free access to selected websites -- like Facebook or Wikipedia -- rather than unrestricted access to the Internet. According to

N.N4., Internet.org marks a point of synthesise between algorithmic modes of attention and the traditions of broadcasting. Users have to access the Internet through the Internet.org that provides access to 38 pre-selected sites in total that can be browsed for free. Anything else incurs data charges. The app, then, functions similar to a broadcaster programming channels or a schedule, but its an experience mediated through a app likely mining user behaviour to adjust the free experience.

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## 1. FACEBOOK'S MOBILE GAMBIT: WHEN MOBILITY IS IMMOBILITY

Mobile media are used “on the go” during everyday life. Americans go to sleep with a cell phone beside them, check it first thing in the morning, and receive constant push notifications. Individuals are mainly aware of being connected to the Internet, rather than seeing that connection as mobile or broadband. Smart phones are owned by more than 50% of the American adult population and are increasingly a primary mode of accessing the Internet. Mobile devices such as smartphones are “becoming more like a personal computer” (Ling, 2012, p. 12) in their power and capabilities.

Facebook has shifted attention towards mobile to keep up with these changing user practices, device usage, and monetization strategies (Goggin, 2014). While Facebook is guarded about publishing official statistics on growth of specific mobile platforms, a loophole allowed growth to be estimated between December, 2011 and November, 2012. Android apps increased from 66 million monthly average users (MAU) to 192.8 MAU, iPhone apps went from 91 to 147 MAU during the same period. Nearly half of Facebook's advertising revenue comes from mobile, also reflecting a longstanding industry perception that mobile is the next logical progression for media. Facebook is not just the most popular social network service used on mobile devices, but host to a significant portion of activities on mobile devices overall.

The mobile career of Facebook is an opportunity to critique their image of themselves as a “public good” by drawing on internal discourse around mobility. Facebook now refers to “people” not “users,” even as the worldwide expansion of their network becomes increasingly technology-agnostic. The worldwide expansion of Facebook has been paired with a revival of optimism about mobile industries. This move is mostly understood as a bridge between desktop and mobile environments. However, many users know only Facebook, not “the Internet.” “Mobility” as it is understood in mainstream sociology typically refers to the ability of individuals to exercise agency on social structure. The “mobilities turn” in sociology (Sheller & Urry, 2006) opened discussion up to globalized infrastructures that often encompass transportation and communication. Using these frameworks I examine how relying exclusively on an insular Facebook network Facebook’s mobile imaginary threatens to quash actual mobility, particularly among working-class individuals worldwide.

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## 2. FACEBOOK AND TECHNOLOGIES OF CAPTURE

‘We prioritize product development investments that we believe will create engaging interactions between our users, developers and marketers,’ Facebook states in their *Facebook 2012 Annual Report*. In this paper I discuss Facebook’s different product developments as technologies of capture. I am interested in how Facebook’s product developments are seen to engage both the users and their actions in the various processes of value production on the platform. Some of these product developments are already in use such as the *Like-button* used to express a relation to particular content, some of them are in beta-test mode such as the *Buy-button* used to make online purchases, and some of them like the targeted advertising tool *Atlas* or the *Facebook drone* are ideas under development and merely reported by media outlets.

I begin the paper by framing what I mean with user engagement (Cf. O’Brien & Toms 2008) and how it differs from more common concept of user participation. I argue that engagement precedes participation. It is a more passive user relation, which does not rely on rational agency or activity. Thus I propose that Facebook’s ‘engaging interactions’ should be understood in the etymological sense of the word ‘engagement’ as a ‘security for payment’. In specific, I discuss Facebook’s engagement based business model (Cf. Jenkins et al. 2003) within the framework of affective capitalism (Parikka 2013). Following this position, Like-button, Buy-button, Atlas and the drone are technologies of capture that transform our relationships, location information and/or

behavioral patterns into data that can be sold and exploited. The engaging interactions Facebook offers are always supplemented with interpassivity (Žižek 1998) where the human subject is passive and the object is active. To re-phrase, in addition to social media users there is a non-human audience of hardware, software and algorithms that is listening and responding to the actions happening on these platforms and transforming them into value. These technologies are affected by the user and capable of affecting the user.

In addition to the exploitation and commodification of user data taking place on the platform, an area explored and articulated by researchers such as Jose van Dijck, Mirko Tobias Schaefer and Caroling Gerlitz and Anne Helmond (2013), I track Facebook's move to become a financial operator in the online and offline world. The first manifestation is the Buy-button used to make online purchases within the Facebook platform. The second step is 'e-money' through which Facebook is considering a move from advertisement-based revenues towards becoming a more substantial economic operator and challenging the banking industry. The third step is the Internet.org accompanied with the Facebook drone and an attempt to provide access to the internet via Facebook rather than vice versa. Based on these examples, in the concluding part of this paper I speculate with a future where Facebook's product developments move the company from capturing users and user participation into a more comprehensive capture of our affective worlds.

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### **3. REMEDIATIONS OF LABOUR IN INFORMATIONAL CAPITAL: THE CASE OF FACEBOOK**

This manuscript takes as its point of departure the argument that the Marxist value theory is an inappropriate analytical framework for understanding the production of value in social media forms and practices and for illuminating the distinctive contours of “informational capitalism”. I argue that although the refusal of the labour theory of value is correct, it is insufficient to their stated goals of being able to theorize the articulation between the “immaterial labour” or value embodied in user-generated content created within social media platforms, on the one hand, and the valuation of “immaterial wealth” of social media companies in global financial works, on the other.

My argument begins with consideration of Marx’s argument about valorization and labour process in *Capital*, Vol. I. However, my intent is not to establish my authentic Marxist bona fides in order to enter into the debate concerning the concept of immaterial labour. Rather, I want to interrogate Marx’s idea of “remediation of labour” in the capitalist workplace, upon which Marx bases his understanding of what Antonio Negri calls the “becoming abstract of labor”. I will argue that one possible way out of the conundrum of Marxist orthodoxy is to pay attention to the practices of communication as work that are productive of affect and sociality, and thus value, in terms of the socio-technical affordances of specific media forms. My argument will unfold in two distinct moments of analysis. First, deploying the insights of “new media materialism”, I argue that informational capitalism is based upon medium-specific technics of affect through which communicative practices are “remediated” and thus constitutive of value and capital. Facebook and other social media platforms must be understood as a complex assemblage of several different media forms (writing, printing, telephony, photography, etc) that remediate the socius of communication in very distinctive ways. Second, I argue that one of the analytical flaws shared by almost all participants in the immaterial labor debate thus far is a curious lacuna with regard to spatio-temporal dimensions of media forms, their afforded practices, and thus their regimes of value production. To this end, the work of Henri Lefebvre on the spatiality of capitalism is critical in exploring the limitations of the Smythian idea of the “audience commodity”, which is very much rooted in the bounded temporalities and places of broadcast television. These two analytical moments will come together in a consideration of the IPO of Facebook and the way financial markets continue to speculate on the “value” of the company based up its estimation of the way it will be able to “monetize” the activity of Facebook users on and through mobile media platforms such as smartphones, tablets, and “phablets”. Arvidsson and Colleoni argue that “value is ever more defined according the ability to mobilize affective attention and engagement”. I agree, but in order to understand the

relationship between affect and value in informational capitalism, it is imperative to emphasize the different mobilities afforded by media forms themselves.

#### **4. FACEBOOK-STASIS THE INTERNET: THE INTERNET.ORG AND ASSEMBLING ATTENTION THROUGH INTERNET INFRASTRUCTURE**

Facebook has begun to expanding its influence by engineering the construction of the Internet itself. With 1.4 billion of the total 2.9 billion Internet users on Facebook, growth has to come in part by growing the size of the Internet. Its non-profit Internet.org has started providing affordable access albeit to a very different kind of network than what is commonly called the Internet. Internet.org provides free access to selected websites -- like Facebook or Wikipedia -- rather than unrestricted access to the Internet (Savov, 2015). Their efforts illustrate one future of the Internet articulated by corporations and non-profits. Their efforts amount to building a rhetoric and infrastructure that will reshape the nature of digital connectivity and interactivity. This presentation reflects on the virtuals of the contemporary Internet and the role of Facebook as the archetype of a New Broadcaster -- one seemingly able to manage and construct flows of attention similar to television networks of the past through their algorithmic flows and personalization.

Internet.org's exemplifies a new kind of technological imaginary constructing the Internet. These visions of technology into code played a vital role in the development of the network. Kelty (2008) described the processes as recursivity whereby imaginaries of technology become literally encoded in new iterations of the networks. The hackers that Kelty followed, however, are only one of a few technical cultures building the Internet. The Internet develops through the sustained conflicts and collaborations between these groups and their refined code (2010). Crawford (2007) -- building on Frieden (2002) -- describes three key groups building the Internet: Bellheads, Netheads and Internet Engineers. Bellheads approach and deploy Internet service provision drawing on the traditions of telecommunications service provision and in contrast to the computer science principles of Internet Engineers and the more radical ideals of hackers or Netheads. More groups have become discernible in the construction of today's Internet. The Californian Ideology (Barbrook & Cameron, 2001; Turner, 2006) -- a mixture of counter-culture and free market libertarianism -- drives a new generation of Venture Capital firms. Andreesen and Horowitz, Founders Fund and other Venture Capitalist invests disruptively, treating start-up as social experiments in trusting the decentralized networking of the Internet deeper into new areas and directions (Frank, 2015). Netheads seemingly have split with the funded venture capitalist pursuing the disruptive promise of the Internet, where other Netheads have turned to foundations and non-profits pursue the democratic promise of an open Internet (S. P. Crawford, 2015). The New America Foundation, Open Media or even the Creative Commons depend on alliances between free software hackers, media activists and a liberal legal tradition to fund the construction of new community-oriented networks. Finally, convergence has

also forced broadcaster to treat the Internet as their distribution network. Over-the-top services, in their frantic competition, invest in caching and peering agreements that alter the flows of Internet traffic. These groups attempt to create the Internet as a kind of new broadcast system -- akin to the Integrated Services Digital Networks -- that a future transfigured, but the influence of the broadcaster preserved Systems (Mansell, 1993; Noam, 1987).

Facebook and its Internet.org exemplifies this new kind of broadcaster in its careful construction of perception and attention. These new broadcasters offer new solutions to what Crary called an “ongoing crisis of attentiveness” whereby “the changing configurations of capitalism continually push attention and distraction to new limits and thresholds, with an endless sequence of new products, sources of stimulation, and streams of information, and then respond with new methods of managing and regulating perception ...” (1999, p. 13). Attention is assembled, the product of often technologies and habitual media practices (K. Crawford, 2009; Terranova, 2012; Wise, 2011). Where Raymond Williams (1974) focused on the flow of television to explain how an audience could be glued to the screen, critical studies of [the New Broadcasters] have to attend to the ways they imagine and construct Internet architecture as what Oswald and Packer (2011) referred to as Flow 2.0. Such research focus on the how the assemblage regulates the flows of information similar to hot and cool media of Marshall McLuhan (1964) as well as govern interactivity similar to the democratic gaze that Fred Turner (2013) described in the Family of Man exhibits. Where Tania Bucher (2012) emphasized the Facebook NewsFeed as an important aggregate of attention -- clearly a kind of new flow that depends on a habit of scrolling past the advertisements -- the efforts of Internet.org require an investigation into how free data and infrastructural prioritization assemble attention.

Internet.org marks a point of synthesize between algorithmic modes of attention and the traditions of broadcasting. Users have to access the Internet through the Internet.org that provides access to 38 pre-selected sites in total that can be browsed for free. Anything else incurs data charges. The app, then, functions similar to a broadcaster programming channels or a schedule, but its an experience mediated through a app likely mining user behaviour to adjust the free experience. Algorithms manipulate the communicative experience to produce affects of frustration and gratification that subtly manage the attention and usage habits of this new generation of Internet users. The case of Internet.org demonstrates the need and opportunity for an algorithmic media studies.