



Platforms, privacy and dis/empowerment by design

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Contents

1. Media and communication studies | digital media
2. Online platforms | sharing economy
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4. Projects

Introduction: media & comm. studies

- **Media and Communication Studies (MCS)**
 - Separate field in social sciences since 1930s
 - Investigating human and social communication on different levels (society-wide, in organisations, etc.) and which can happen through media as well as from person to person without tangible media
- **Two main streams**
 - Communication sciences
 - Origin: social sciences and information science; US; 1930s
 - Media studies
 - Origin: humanities and linguistics; UK; 1970s
- People and society increasingly rely on (digital) media, computers and ICT systems for communication and information sharing
 - Vital to investigate new forms of **mediated communication** from interdisciplinary perspective e.g. computer-mediated communication

Introduction: media & comm. studies

- In transitional digital media ecosystem people can become simultaneously empowered as well as disempowered by **socio-technical systems**
 - *With* people instead of *about* people
- Lievrouw & Livingstone (2002): dependent on interrelationship between:
 1. **Technology** (artefact)= how media systems are being designed (i.e. what they enable)
 2. **People** (practices) = how people within their context design and use media and technologies (i.e. are able to do)
 3. **Society** (social arrangements) = how mediated communication is organised socially, economically, politically and legally (i.e. understanding contingency)

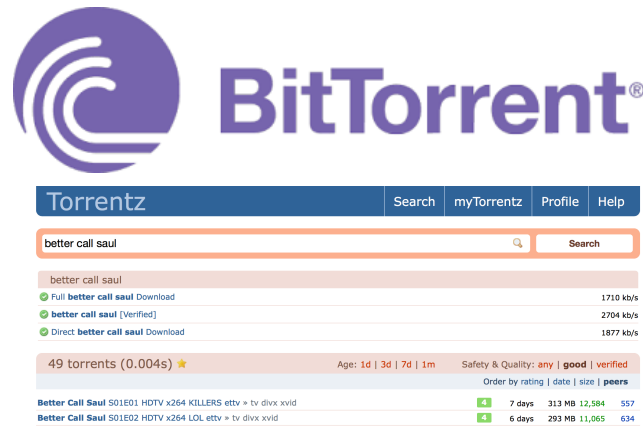
Technology



Compression technique MPEG-4 Part 14 (standardisation)



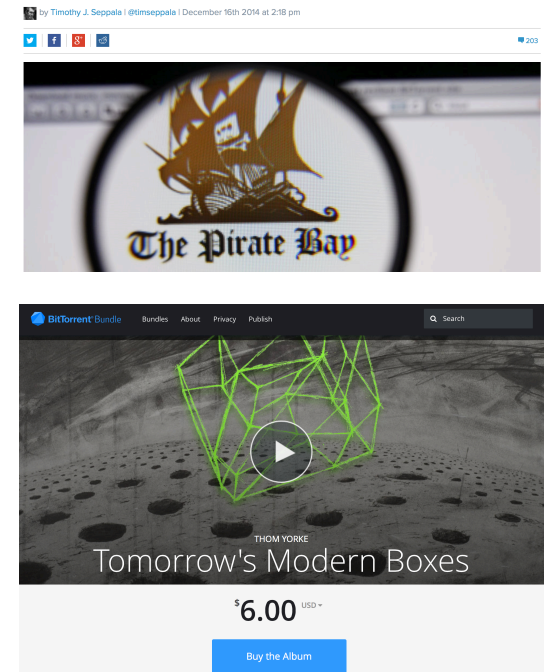
People



Torrent Protocol BitTorrent... that happened to be handy for sharing large movie/audio files...

Society

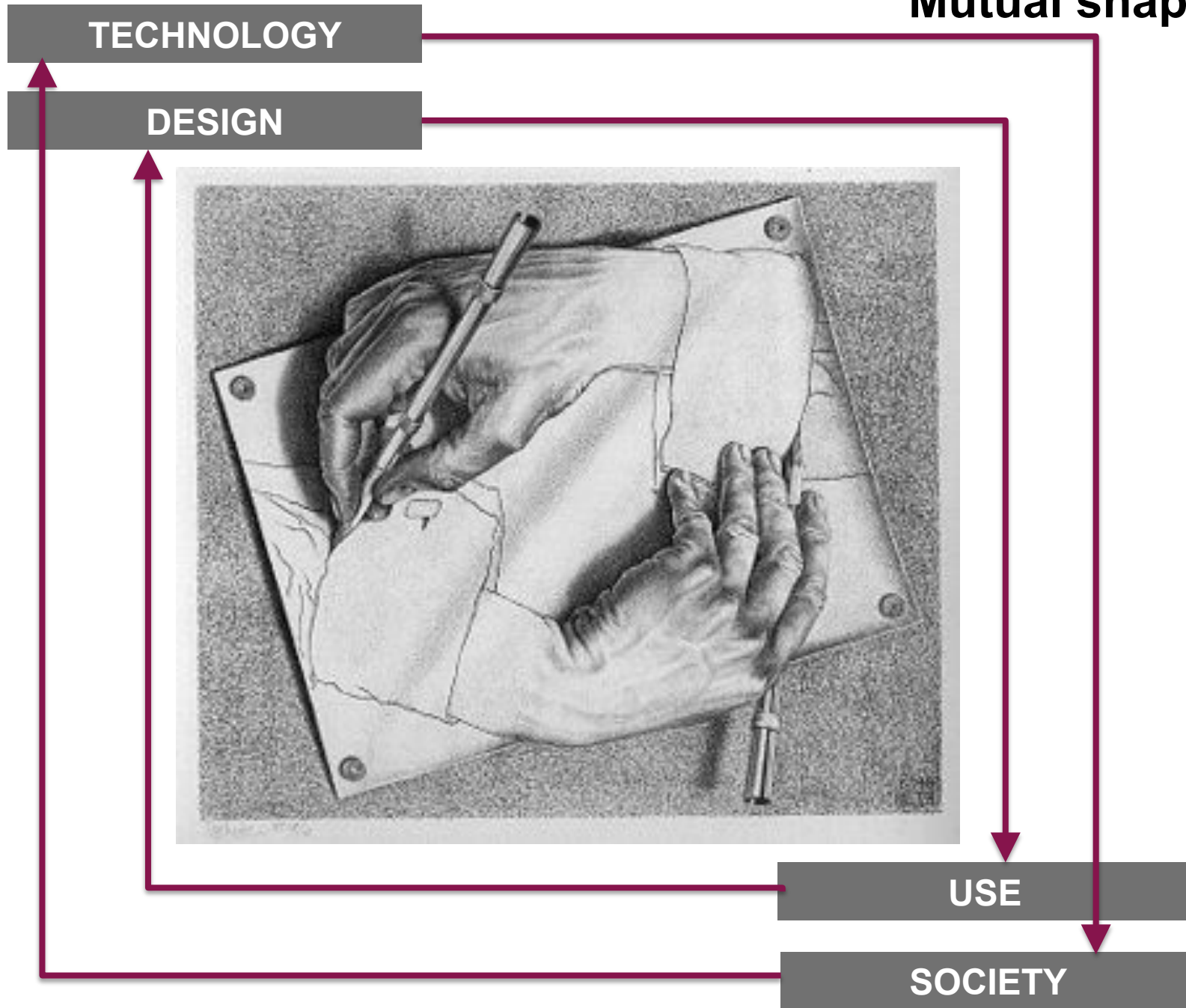
The Pirate Bay shutdown: the whole story (so far)



Which led to diverse arrangements in relation to legal and social environment

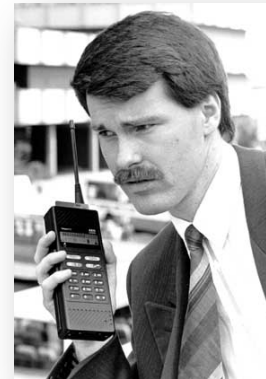
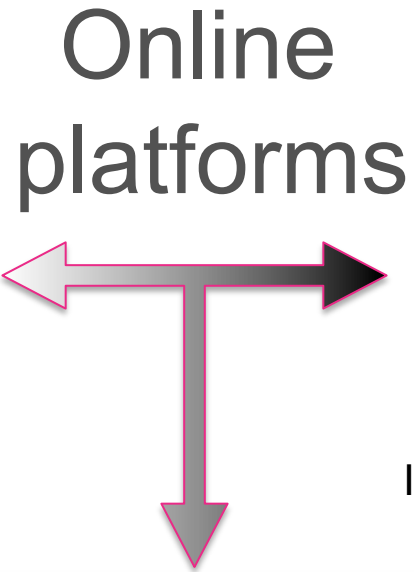


Mutual shaping





Mass media as **curator**
(broadcasting)



Interpersonal media as **facilitator**
(telecom)



*Talking about mediated communication...
a birthday party nowadays*



Mass self-communication = folding of curator & facilitator
(**online platforms** e.g. social media, sharing economy apps)



Online platforms: proliferation

■ Industry

- General purpose platforms
 - E.g. Facebook, Twitter, Apple iOS, Google Android
- Specific apps/platforms in different sectors in society
 - Transportation (e.g. Uber, Lyft)
 - Hospitality (e.g. AirBnB, HomeAway)
 - Education (e.g. MOOCs Coursera, edX)
 - News (e.g. The Huffington Post, BuzzFeed)
 - Health (e.g. PatientsLikeMe, 23andMe)
 - Labour (e.g. Taskrabbit, Gigwalk)
 - ...

■ Policy

- EU Commission communication: COM(2016) 288 'Online Platforms and the Digital Single Market: Opportunities and Challenges for Europe'
 - Based on public consultation on regulatory environment for platforms, online intermediaries, data and cloud computing and collaborative economy: 1,036 replies (+ 10,599 individual contributions) (Sep 2015 – Jan 2016)
- National consultations on platforms, e.g. UK

Online platforms: mutual shaping

- Politics of platforms (Gillespie)
 - Platforms **position** themselves carefully to users, clients, advertisers and policy makers, **making strategic claims** for what they do and do not do, and how their place in society should be understood
 - Use of **tropes** (related to public benefit) that elide possible tensions between constituencies
 - social (cohesion) | sharing | collaborative | co-creation | participation | transparency | neutrality | employment | environment | collectivity | ...
 - Platforms becoming **curators of public discourse and values**
 - Research on the roles they aim to play, and the terms by which they hope to be judged



"Dear Airbnb, I'm happy to hear that you paid your taxes this year. I did too! Isn't it awesome? (However) I've crunched some numbers and I have some bad news for you. (...) I doubt that your hotel tax can keep the libraries open more than a minute or two later."

Martha Kenney (Facebook post)
Slate.com, 22 Oct 2015

Online platforms: underpinnig mechanisms (Poell & van Dijck)

- **Datafication** (Mayer-Schonberger & Cukier, 2013)
 - Platforms enable the transformation of social action into online quantified data, thus allowing for tracking and predictive analysis
 - E.g. Google books, Internet-of-Things
 - Acquisitions
 - Microsoft: € 5.5 billion Nokia vs € 23 billion LinkedIn (€53/user) = is about data
 - Many others (Facebook, Google etc.)

Online platforms: health



- Fuzzy borders
- Double-edged logic as bait for max. data input
- Open input vs proprietary processing/output (Strava)
- Mixing for-profit & not-for-profit
- Part of larger ecosystem (integrating services)

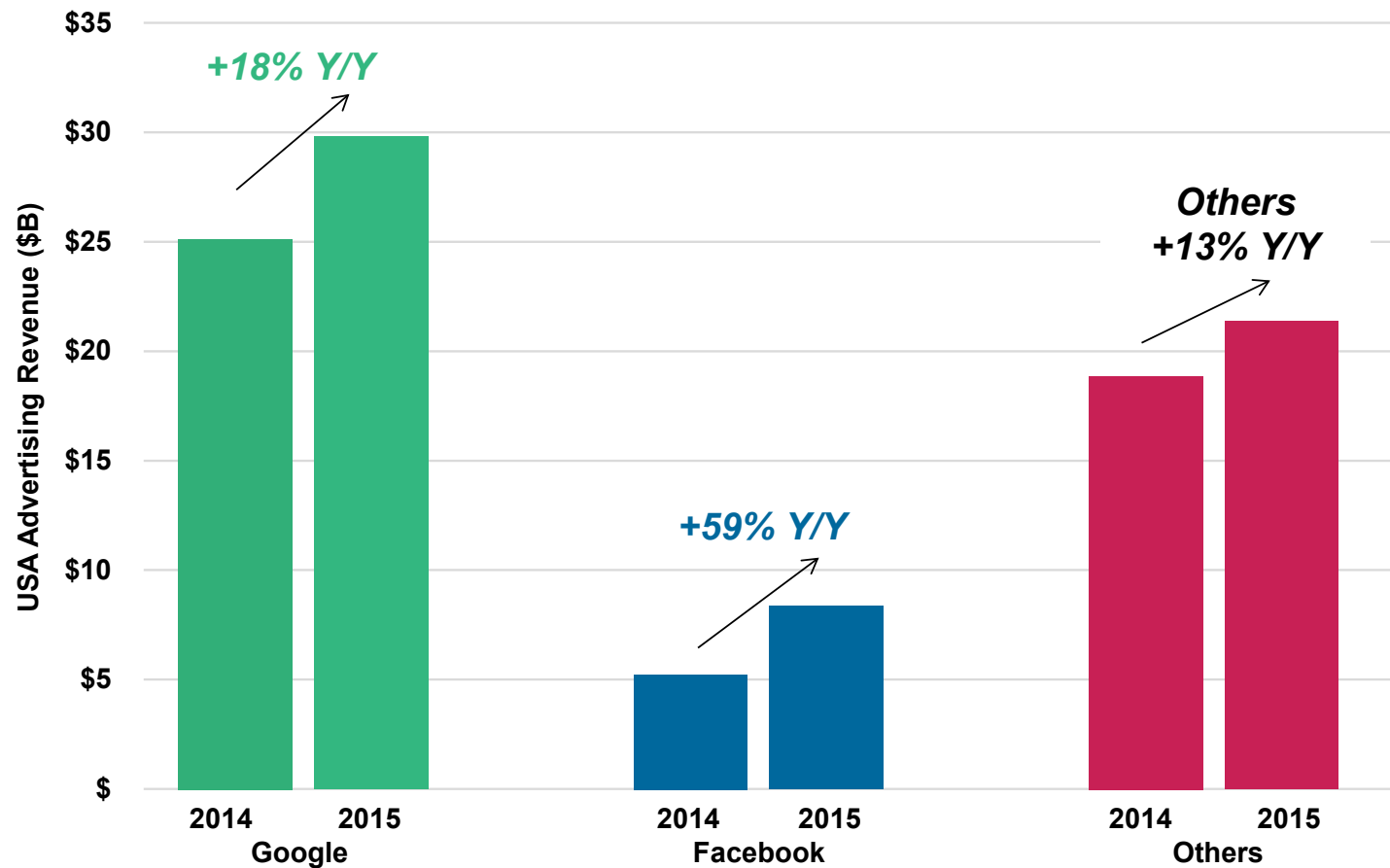
Online platforms: underpinnig mechanisms (Poell & van Dijck)

- **Commodification** (Marxist perspective)
 - Transformation of objects, activities, and ideas into tradable commodities on online platforms
 - Political economy: use value becomes exchange value

Advertising online platforms

Google + Facebook =
76% (& Rising) Share of Internet Advertising Growth, USA

Advertising Revenue and Growth Rates (%) of Google vs. Facebook vs. Other, USA, 2014 – 2015



Online platforms: underpinnig mechanisms (Poell & van Dijck)

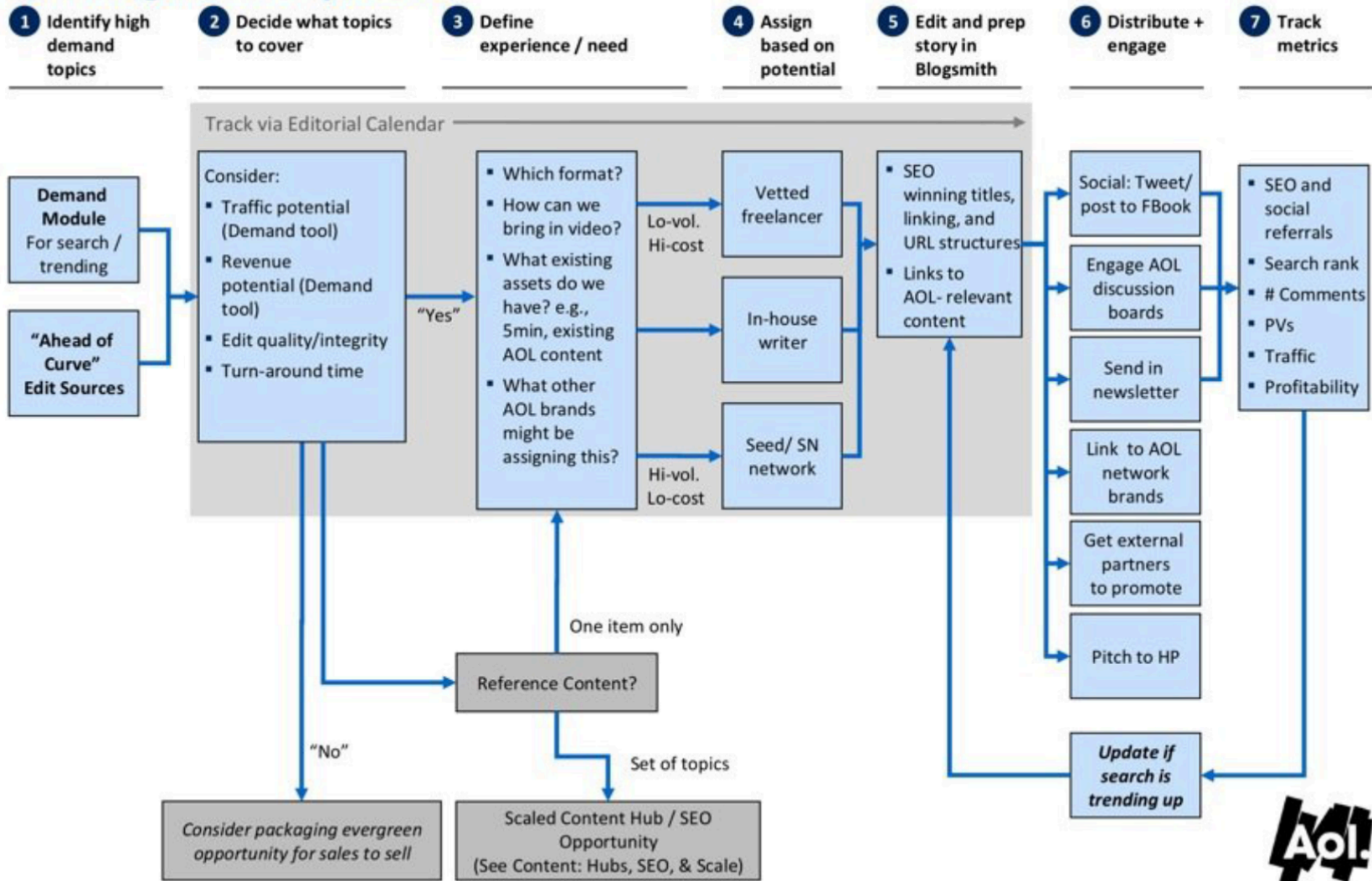
■ Selection

- Ability of platforms to **trigger and filter** users' creative and communicative contributions through algorithms, while users, through their interaction with these coded environments, may in turn **influence flow of communication and information** activated by these platforms
- Expert-based, human-driven selection is replaced by user-based, algorithm-driven selection
 - Cf. Filter bubble (Eli Pariser)

Online platforms: publishing

I CONTENT: DAY-TO-DAY

Content generation process



Online platforms: underpinnig mechanisms (Poell & van Dijck)

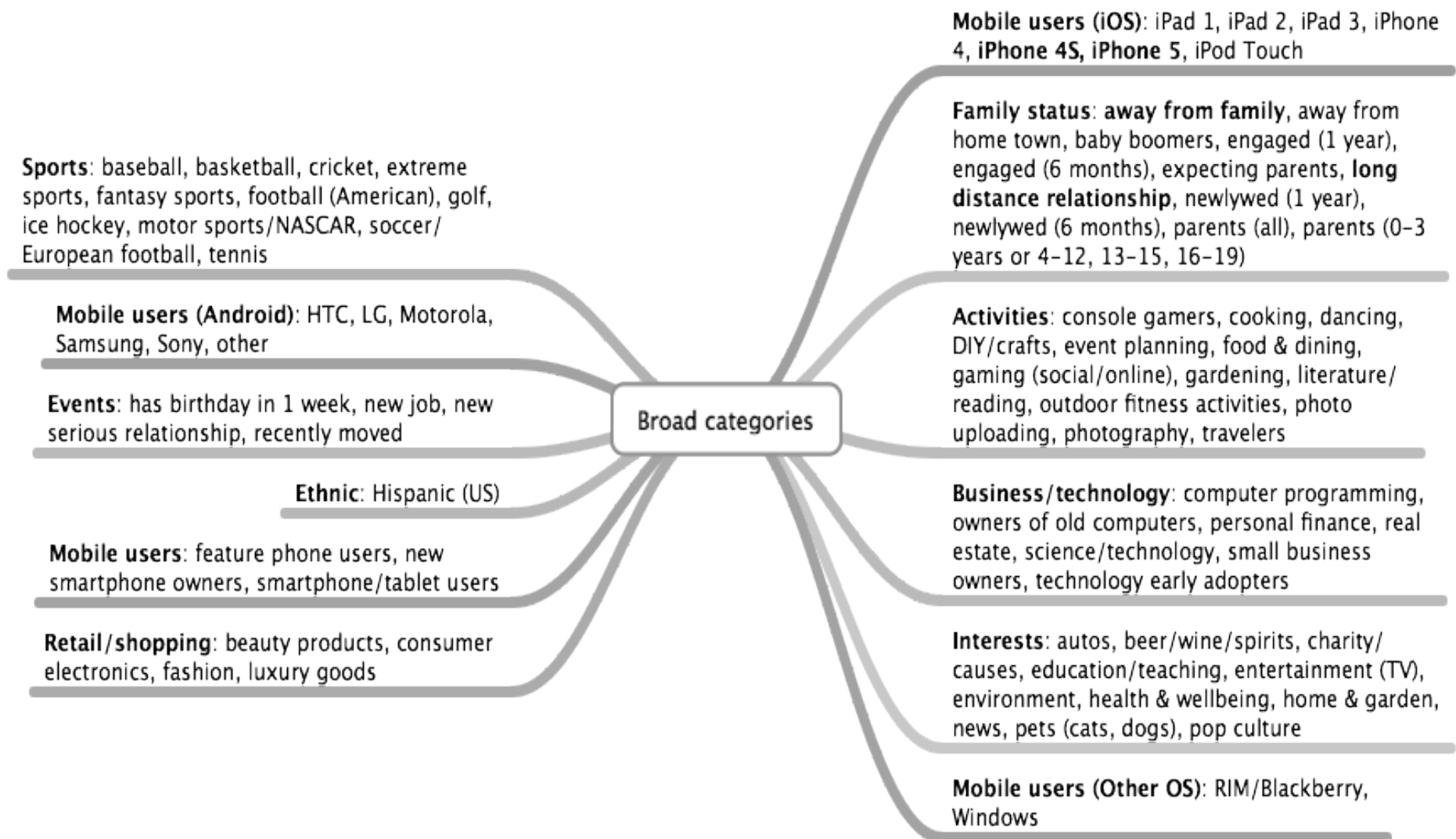
■ **Connection**

- Online platforms enable users to **build their own networks** around specific (personal) interests, as well as automatically **pursue connections** between users, information, advertisements, and services, by systematically gathering and continuously analysing user data

■ From 'social media' to '**connective media**' (van Dijck)

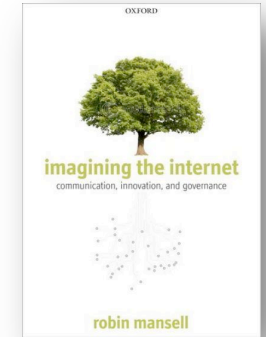
- **Human connectedness** is gradually replaced by **automated connectivity**
 - E.g. birthday notifications in Facebook News Feed coerces interactivity and erodes value
- The 'social' in 'social media' encompasses connectedness and connectivity
 - Commercial online platforms tend to stress the first and minimise the second meaning

Online platforms: general purpose



Heyman, Rob & Pierson, Jo (2013) **Blending mass self-communication with advertising in Facebook and LinkedIn: challenges for social media and user empowerment**, in International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics, 9 (3), 229-245.

User (dis)empowerment



- Internet age
 - *'In the critical tradition [as opposed to the administrative-instrumental tradition] attention is drawn to the **potential of innovations in technologies** to be associated with **people's empowerment and their disempowerment**, depending on the extent to which they are able to master or control the innovation process'* (Mansell, 2012: 37)
- Empowerment
 - Concept charged with meaning (and often misused), with **long tradition** in social welfare and civil society literature, but also in science, business and policy fields
 - User empowerment = *The process of strengthening individuals, by which they get a **grip on their situation and environment**, through the acquisition of more **control**, sharpening their **critical awareness** and the stimulation of **participation*** (Zimmerman and Rappaport, 1988)

User (dis)empowerment

- Disempowerment ~ **vulnerability?**
 - External side: **exposure**
 - Technological characteristics of online platforms require/prescribe **curation** of (social) interactions via **four mechanisms**, supported by **discourse of public values**
 - Internal side: **coping**
 - ‘User empowerment is dependent on **knowledge of how mechanisms operate** and **from what premise**, as well as on the **skills** to change them.’ (José van Dijck, 2013: 171)
- User dis/empowerment related to values:
 - **Privacy/ surveillance/ data protection**
 - Safety/security
 - Accuracy/validity
 - Publicness/public values: *inclusion & literacy; freedom of speech; equality (non-discrimination); (cultural) diversity; transparency; fairness; labour rights; pluralism; accountability;...*



SAW THAT COMING

Cops are asking Ancestry.com and 23andMe for their customers' DNA

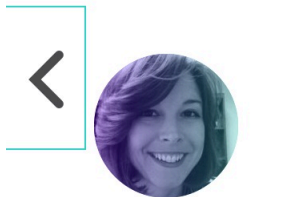
by Kashmir Hill

Gabriella Peñuela

October 16, 2015 7 a.m.

TWEET

SHARE



TWITTER

FACEBOOK

When companies like Ancestry.com and 23andMe first invited people to send in their DNA for genealogy tracing and medical diagnostic tests, privacy advocates [warned](#) about the creation of giant genetic databases that might one day be used against participants by law enforcement. DNA, after all, can be a key to solving crimes. It “has serious information about you and your family,” genetic privacy advocate Jeremy Gruber told me back [in 2010](#) when such services were just getting popular.

Fusion on TV

TV

THE KIDS ARE NOT ALRIGHT
Video: 70 percent of children behind bars in America have mental health issues

*“(...) it means that people who submitted genetic samples for **reasons of health, curiosity, or to advance science** could now end up in a **genetic line-up of criminal suspects**. (...) the fact that your signing up for 23andMe or Ancestry.com means that you and all of your current and future family members could become genetic criminal suspects is not something most users probably have in mind when trying to find out where their ancestors came from.”*

Kashmir Hill, Fusion.net, 16 Oct 2015



Technology: digital media



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGagbyOu79I>

Dis/empowerment: privacy

- Project findings

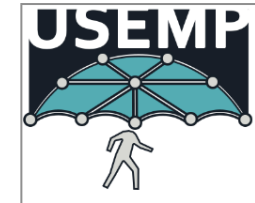
- **Exposure**

- Belgian DPA *Commission for Protection of Privacy & Facebook*
Bilateral contract CPP; Belgium; 2015

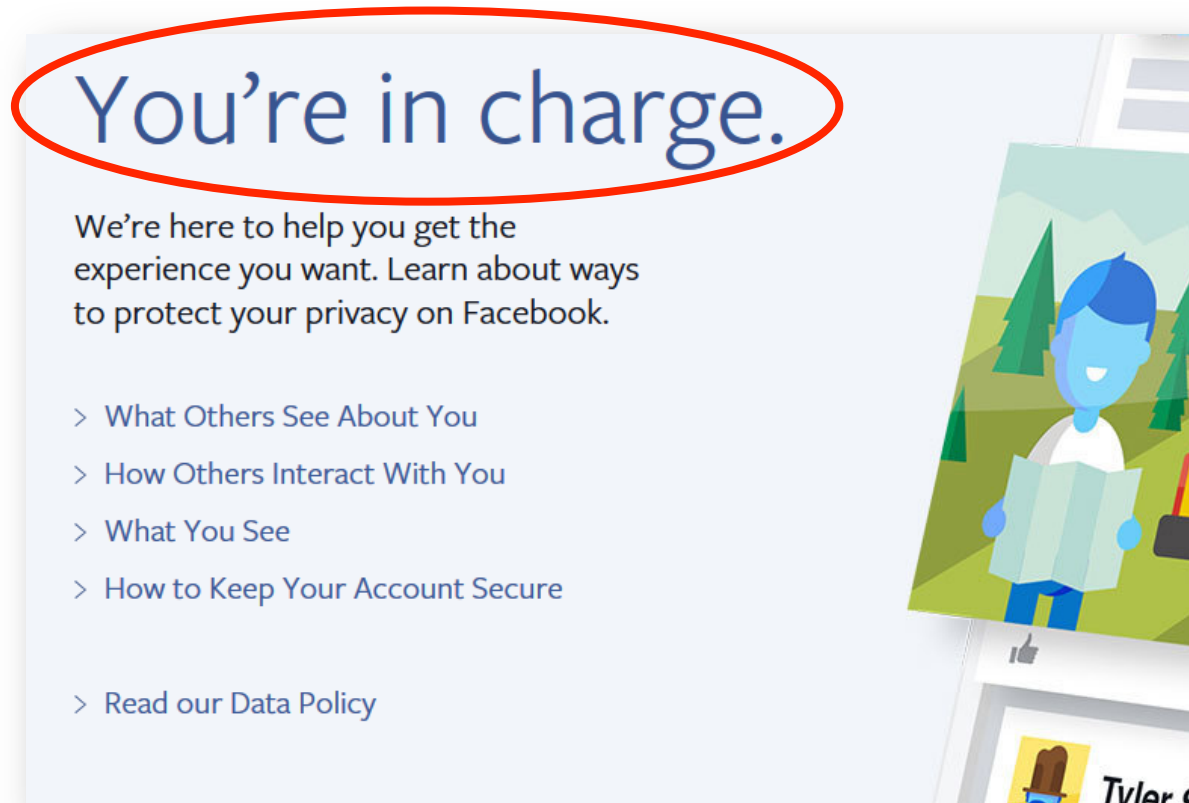


- **Coping**

- USEMP: *User empowerment for Enhanced Online Management*
FP7-STREP; EU; 2013-2016
 - EMSOC: *User Empowerment in a Social Media Culture*
IWT-SBO; Flanders/Belgium; 2010-2014



Privacy: exposure | CPP



- Dec 2014: Facebook announces revisions (Jan 30th 2015)
 - Statement of Rights and Responsibilities (SRR)
 - Data Use Policy (DUP)
- Jan 2015: CPP (Belgian DPA) requests study
- Feb 2015: first public draft
- Mar 2015: technical update
- Aug 2015: final version

Outcome

- Report: ***‘From social media service to advertising network: a critical analysis of Facebook’s revised Policies and Terms’***
 - Social, legal and technical research on Facebook’s new Data Use Policy (2015)
 - iMinds: Vrije Universiteit Brussel (SMIT) + KULeuven (CITIP & COSIC)
 - Version 1.3 (August 25, 2015): <http://bit.ly/1HD3mwr>

- Structure

- Horizontal and vertical expansion of data ecosystem
 - How FB ‘combines’ and ‘shares’ data about its users
- Unfair contract terms
 - Excessive linking; ‘free’ service; warranty; liability; indemnity; unilateral change; forum clause; applicable law; termination
- Further use of user-generated content
 - IP license; ‘sponsored stories’ and ‘social ads’
- Privacy settings and terms of use
 - Consent; location data; fingerprinting; data subject rights
 - **Tracking through social plug-ins**

disempowerment






German court Fines Facebook \$109,000 Over Intellectual Property Clause



Information received

- URLs of visited webpages
- Other information (IP, browser, OS, ...)
- List of uniquely identifying cookies sent to FB

	Cookie	Contains ¹	Logged-in	Logged-out	Deactivated ²	Non-user
	datr	Browser ID	Sent	Sent	Sent	Sent ³
	c_user	Facebook ID	Sent	Not sent	Not sent	N/A ⁵
	fr	Encrypted Facebook ID and Browser ID	Sent	Sent	Sent	N/A

*Facebook's tracking through social plug-ins: technical report
prepared for the Belgian Privacy Commission
Güneş, Acar, et al. (25 March 2015)*

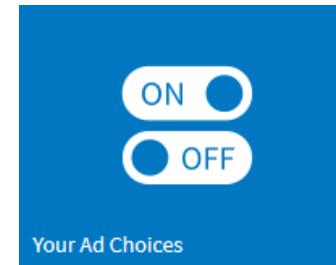
'Opt-out'

If you don't want Facebook or other participating companies to collect or use information based on your activity on websites, devices, or apps off Facebook for the purpose of showing you ads, you can opt out through the Digital Advertising Alliance in the USA, Digital Advertising Alliance of Canada in Canada or the European Digital Advertising Alliance in Europe. You can also opt out using your mobile device settings.



Your Online Choices

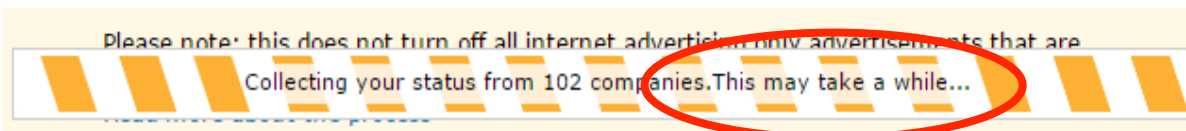
a guide to online behavioural advertising



Your ad choices

The companies listed below are some of the providers who work with website providers to collect and use information to provide online behavioural advertising.

Please use the buttons below to control your online behavioural advertising preferences. You can turn off or turn on all companies or alternatively set your preferences for individual ones. By clicking on the expand button you can find out more about the company itself as well as its behavioural advertising status on the web browser that you are using. If you are having any problems please visit our [help page](#).



Some Companies Failed: The tool was unable to connect to some companies. This may be because there are technical problems with the service or your internet connection is very busy. We have automatically logged this failure and will contact the company if the problem persists.

- Turn on all companies
- Turn off all companies
- Retry all failed

CPP actions

- Recommendation 04/2015
 - Facebook
 - Website operators
 - Internet users
- Litigation
 - Trib. Brussels 9 Nov 2015 (injunction)
 - Ordinary procedure (users & non-users)
- Common Statement (by EU DPAs)
- Blocking by Facebook
- Next steps: appeal by FB
 - Debates 1 June 2016
 - Judgement 29 June 2016: Facebook wins
- Ordinary procedure
 - Court case still ongoing
 - Judgement: 2017



Privacy: coping | USEMP

Radboud University Nijmegen



 **iMinds**
CONNECT.INNOVATE.CREATE

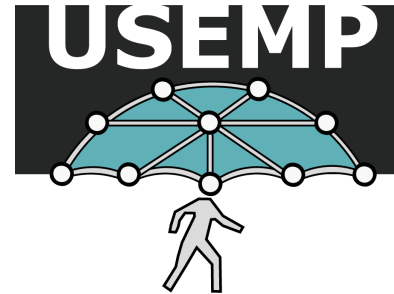
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THE CENTRE FOR
RESEARCH & TECHNOLOGY
HELAS

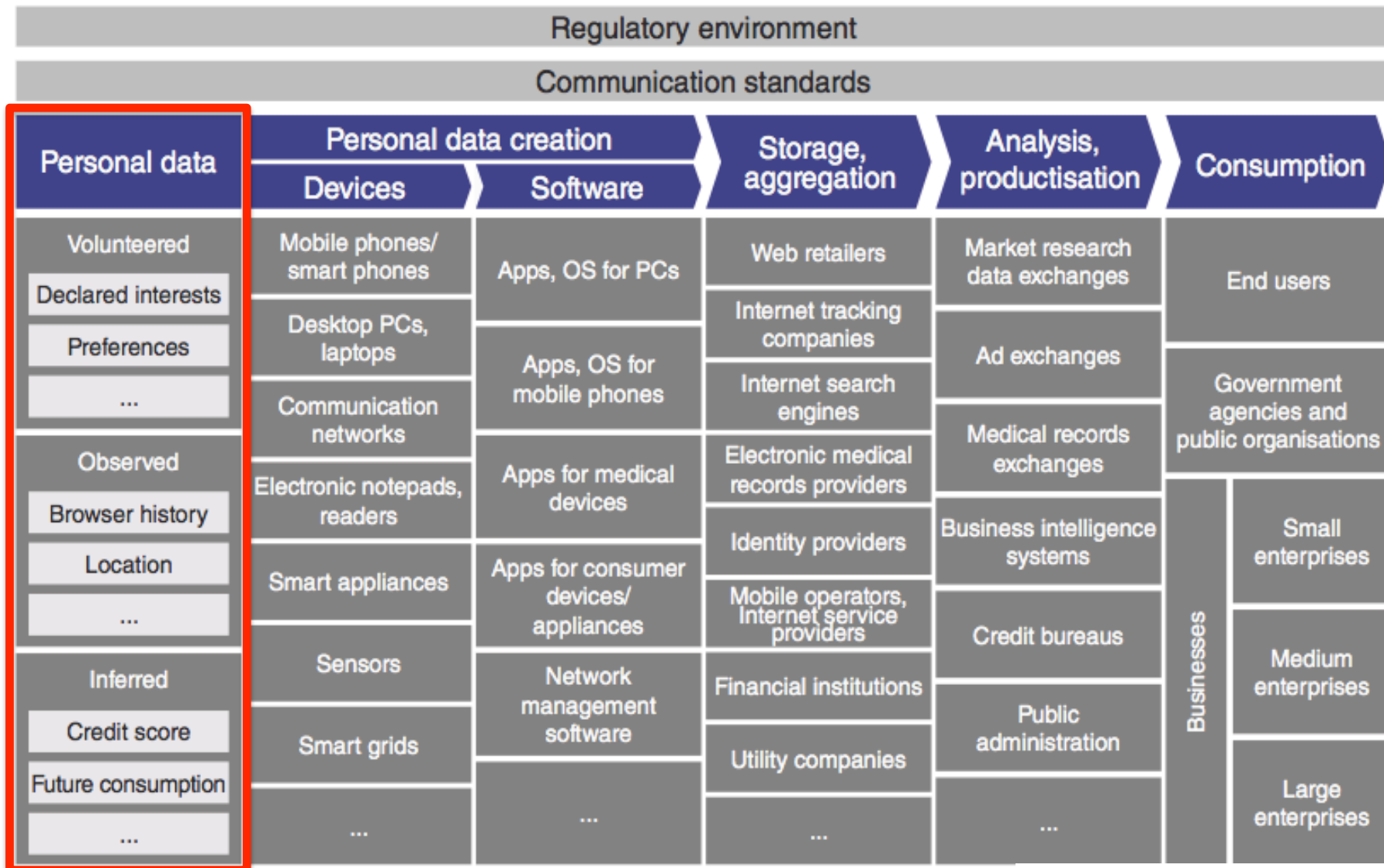
**velti**

HWCommunications



- User Empowerment for Enhanced Online Management
 - European project
 - FP7-STREP (CAPS) 2013-2016
 - <http://www.usemp-project.eu>
- Goal = **reducing** apparent power **unbalance** between social network's data processing and means of control, and those made available to users

FIGURE 4: THE PERSONAL DATA ECOSYSTEM: A COMPLEX WEB FROM DATA CREATION TO DATA CONSUMPTION



(World Economic Forum, 2011)

	User Name	Email	Real Name	Home Address	Online Groups	Profile for Public	Profile for Friends	Online Friends	Content/Sentiment	Place of social activity & time	Social Geo Tags	Profile Photo	Image Location metadata	Image People Tags	Facial Biometrics	Current Employer/Company	Education/Work History	Department/Role	Accuracy	Ease
Age	C								92										R	Y
																			Y	Y
																			Y	R
																			R	Y
																			Y	G
																				Y
Current Employer/Company																				Y
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Department/Role																				Y
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Online Friends																				Y
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																				Y
Online Groups																				Y
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Place of Social Activity and Time																				Y
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Work Email																				Y
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Work Address																				Y
																				Y

(Creese, Goldsmith, Nurse & Phillips, 2012)



Figure 1. The Data-Reachability Matrix



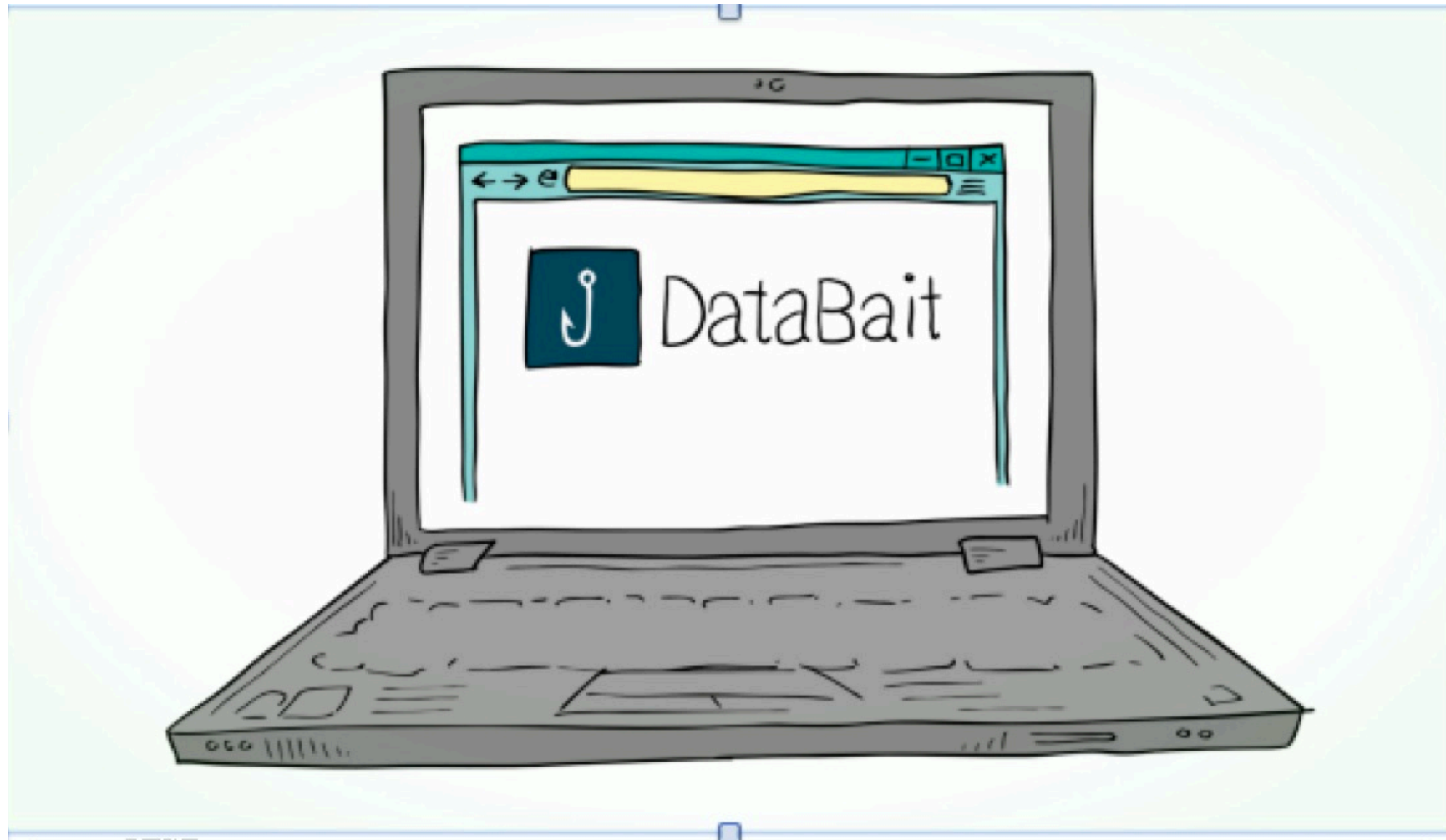
Privacy: coping

- To give users more insights in **data inferences**?
 - How can we develop systems that prescribes social and legal requirements of more **profile transparency** (data protection by design)?



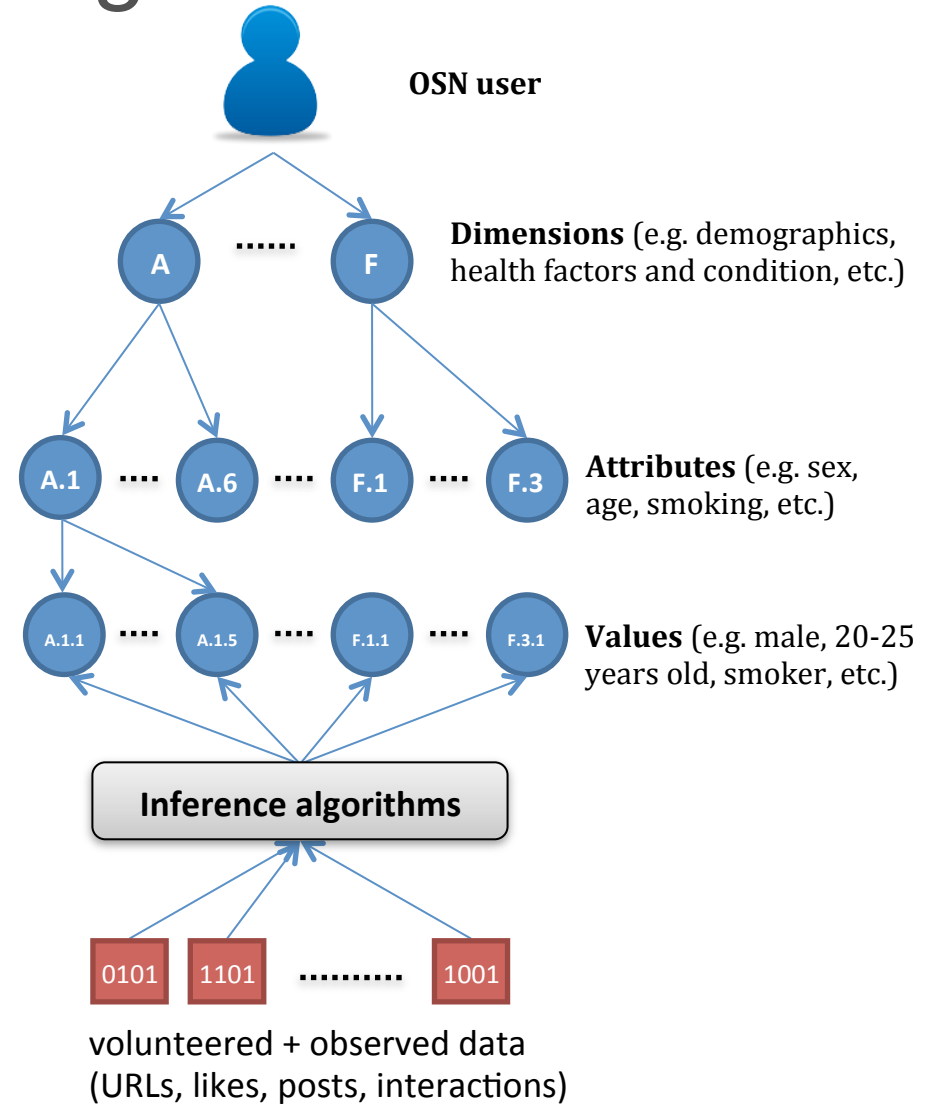
- Raising awareness about and act on disclosure of (personal) data => **disclosure scores** in different privacy dimensions
- User research: Dec 2015 – Sep 2016
 - Two **living lab panels**
 - 100 households in Belgium (iMinds)
 - 100 households in Sweden (LTU)

Databait



Databait privacy scoring framework

#	Name	Description	Threats-Sensitivity	Value (for advertisers)
A	Demographics	Personal data, such as Gender, Age, Nationality, Ethnic background, etc.	Discrimination in a variety of settings. The most frequently used type of information.	High
B	Psychological Traits	Defined by psychologists (extraversion, openness, etc.)	Discrimination, e.g. in personnel selection	Low
C	Sexual Profile	Relationship status, preferences, habits	Discrimination, e.g. in workplace, education, housing	High
D	Political Attitudes	Supported politicians, parties and stance	Discrimination, e.g. in workplace or personnel selection	High
E	Religious Beliefs	Religion (if any) and beliefs	Discrimination, e.g. in the sale or rental of housing, job selection, workplace.	Moderate
F	Health Factors & Condition	Habits (e.g. smoking, drinking), medical conditions, disabilities, health factors (exercise)	Discrimination, e.g. health insurance denial or discriminatory pricing.	High
G	Location	Characteristic locations of the individual and history of previous locations	Discrimination, e.g. house insurance, stalking	High
H	Consumer Profile	Preferred products and brands	Ad targeting and discrimination in online price-setting	High

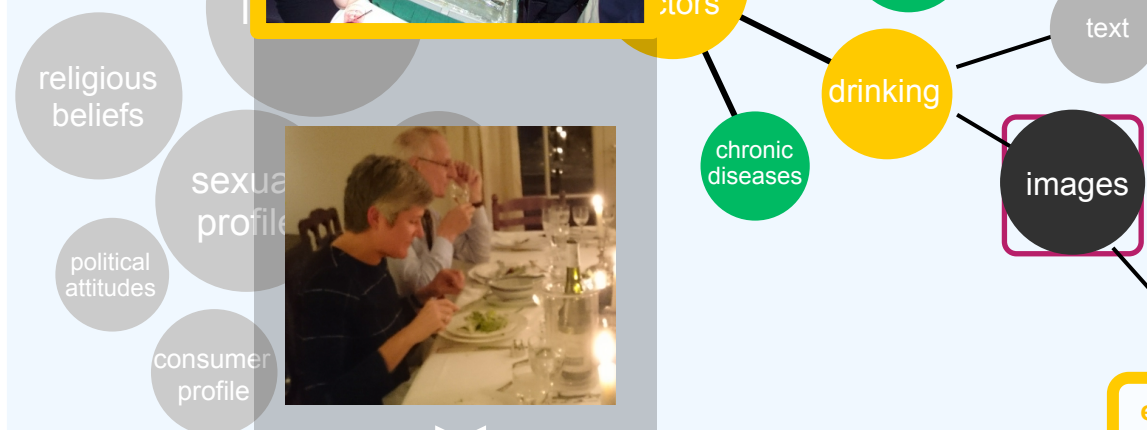


An overview of your online privacy profile
 The information presented on this page represents our interpretation of your 'privacy profile'. This profile is generated based on your social network activity and shared images and is divided into a number of different categories.

The meaning of the bubble visualisation

The 'bubble' visualisation is designed to show you the level of exposure of the different categories of your privacy profile.
 The size and colour of the bubble indicates the level of exposure.
 Large bubbles indicate a more exposed category. Red bubbles are more exposed than green bubbles. Clicking on the bubbles provides more detailed information about that category.

[More](#)



explore more image leaks?

Privacy vulnerability: **coping** | EMSOC

- ‘User Empowerment in a Social Media Culture’ (EMSOC) focus group interviews
 - Privacy management, attitudes and awareness of Facebook users
 - Secondary school (age 16-18) in Flanders/Belgium and Facebook account used > once a week
 - 6 FG, total 77 respondents (5 schools); 4 FG different ex ante situations

Privacy vulnerability: coping

- **FB omnipresent** and efficient for entertainment, communication, planning and schoolwork in everyday life
~ **reluctance to leave + possible deletion work**
 - *“And I am like 'wow, I have so much ridiculous stuff' so I started removing it all. I thought 'oh no, you really have to open each page and than click that you no longer like something.' I really spend a whole weekend, a Saturday, three hours on it to dislike stuff. This must be the most ridiculous thing ever.”* (Stan, 19, smartphone, F5.3)
- **Aware of privacy risks:** FB (and the internet) perceived as privacy invasive by default (fatalistic)
 - *“I feel quite suspicious about internet in general. I am perfectly aware that people, if they want to, can find information about me. That is why I try to take care, not that it will matter much but at least you get that feeling a little.”* (Bart, 18, PC, F5.2)
- ~ **tradeoff fallacy** (Turow, Hennessy & Draper, 2015)

THE TRADEOFF FALLACY

How Marketers Are Misrepresenting American Consumers And Opening Them Up to Exploitation

“Our findings... support a new explanation: a majority of Americans are resigned to giving up their data—and that is why many appear to be engaged in tradeoffs.”
(See page 3)

Joseph Turow
Annenberg School for Communication
University of Pennsylvania

Michael Hennessy
Annenberg Public Policy Center
University of Pennsylvania

Nora Draper
Department of Communication
University of New Hampshire

A Report from the Annenberg School for Communication
University of Pennsylvania

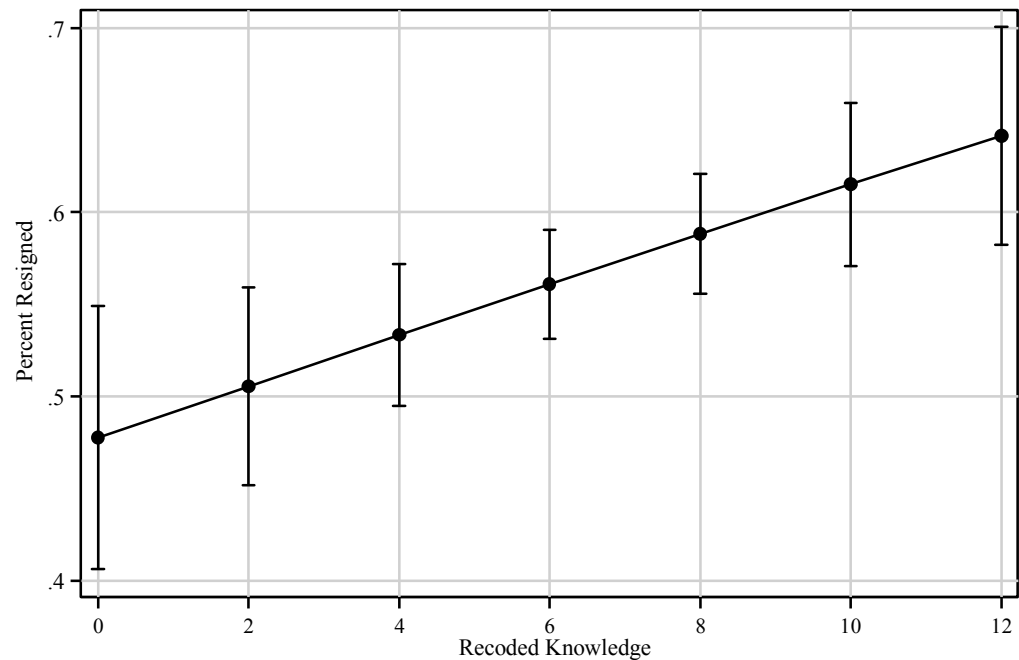
June 2015

Table 4: Americans' Responses to the Resignation Attitude Statements (N=1,506)

	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Neither*	DK (%)
I want to have control over what marketers can learn about me online. (84% agree)	61	23	8	7	1	1
I've come to accept that I have little control over what marketers can learn about me online. (65% agree)	31	34	16	18	1	1

*"Neither" was a volunteered answer.

Figure 2: Resignation and Knowledge
(N = 1,506; brackets define 95% confidence intervals)



Significant Positive Slope



Figure: Advertising recognition test

Privacy vulnerability: coping

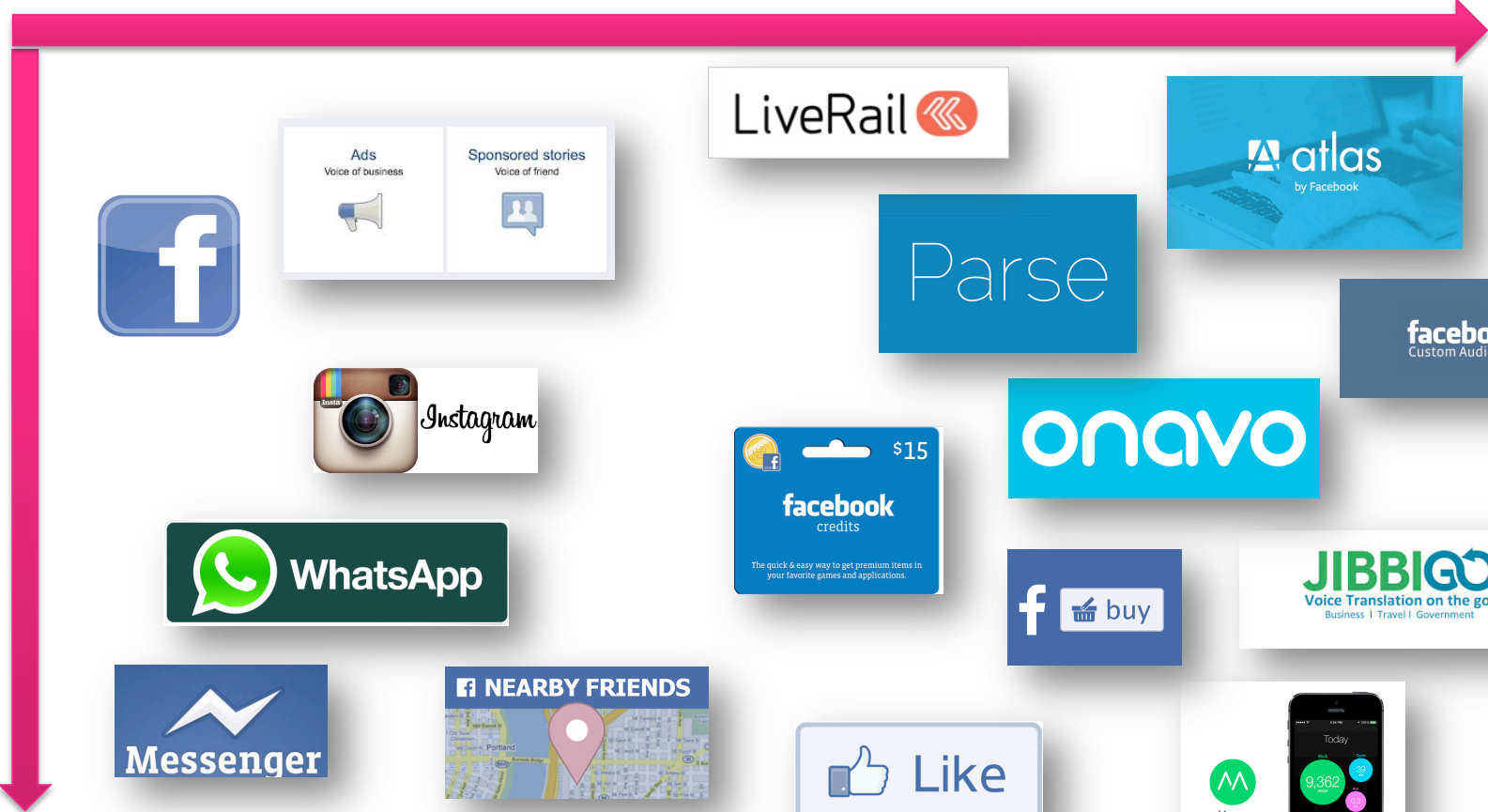
- Advertising **necessary nuisance** (better than paid services)
 - Deemed more irritating if it **obstructed their experience** (e.g. NewsFeed), with little critical consideration towards underlying targeting mechanisms
 - Sponsored stories: little reflection about stories on their friends' feeds, more concerned of **possible annoyance** of their friends than misuse of their likes
- Advertisers (and 'trackers') seen as strangers seemed to be able to access their information which felt **creepy**
 - Only 36% able to **discern advertising** from other elements
 - **Unable to think about usage of this information**, even after receiving course about Facebook advertising
 - **Difficulty of locating particular settings** and most respondents would never visit institutional privacy settings during a routine Facebook visit
 - Need for easier to find and easier to use **tools** to protect privacy and to increase transparency

Disempowerment by design

- Online platforms ~ disempowerment and privacy
- Disempowerment: linked to two-dimensional process
 - Two interacting (mutually reinforcing) **axes**
 - **Vertical penetration** = increasing reliance on online platforms and data in everyday social life (~ domestication)
 - **Horizontal expansion** = extends when data of vertical penetration are harnessed and re-used for secondary purposes (eg. increase revenue, surveillance)
 - => **Disempowerment** ~ organisation's vertical penetration sufficiently powerful to leverage user acceptance for its horizontal expansion
 - E.g. Facebook's new DUP: integration of data from 'family' of apps, operation across all access devices, (lack of) settings for sponsored stories, and deep integration of location information
 - E.g. rise of messaging platforms (FB Whatsapp, FB Instagram, FB Messenger, Snapchat, WeChat, LINE, KaKaoTalk,...)

Data seepage: Facebook

Socio-economic structures



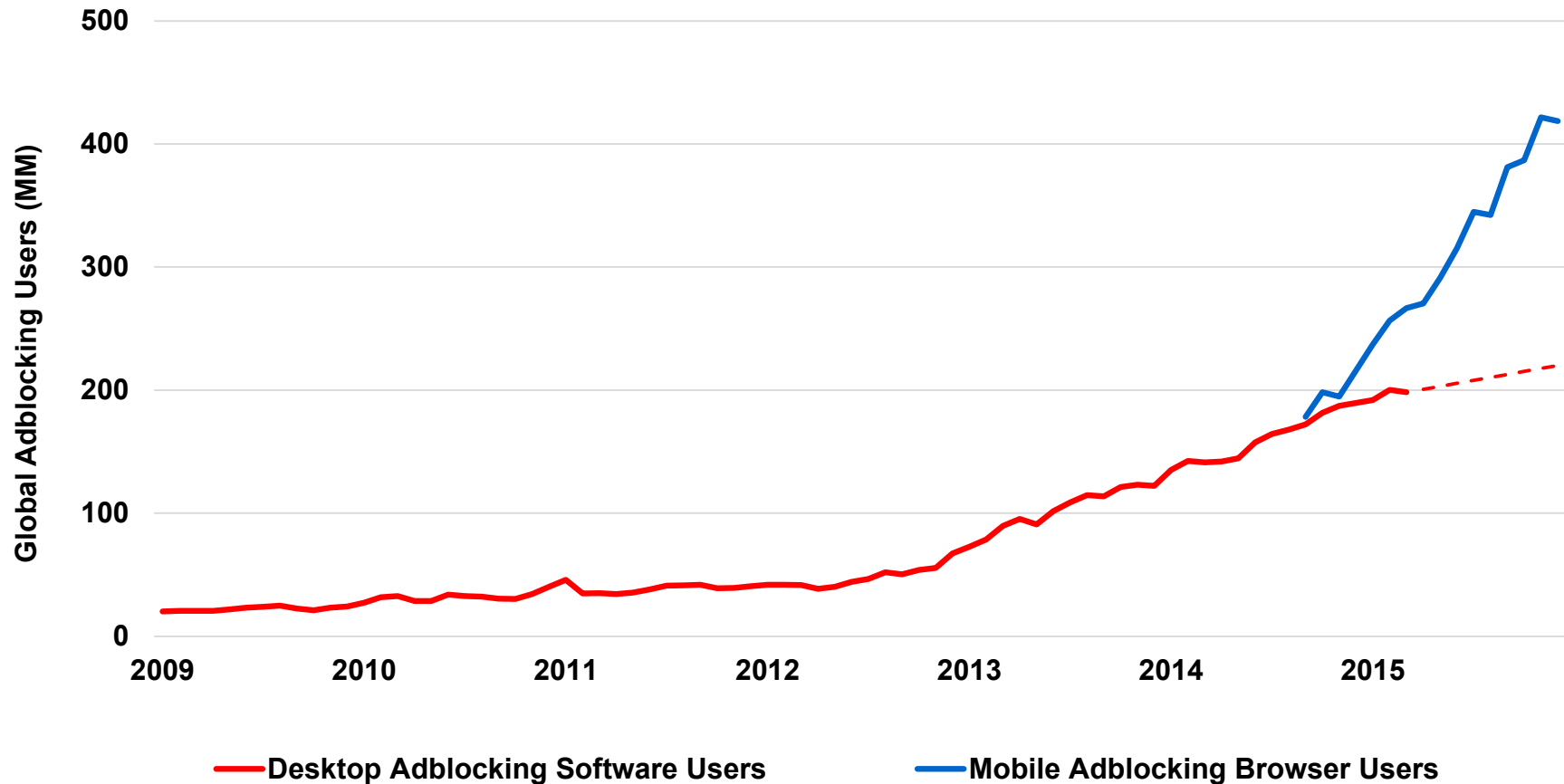
Techno-cultural constructs

Outlook

- Mutual articulation ~ interdisciplinary (MCS) perspective
 - **Technology** – artefact
 - Privacy Enhancing Technologies / Privacy engineering / Locating in value network
 - **Society** – social arrangements
 - Governance (e.g. internet governance) / regulation & enforcement (e.g. GDPR)
 - **People** – practices
 - Collective action: civil society; activists
 - Users: awareness / attitudes / behaviour / data literacy
- Aim
 - Safeguarding the **balance** between strengthening the **empowerment** - or mitigating disempowerment - of users while at the same time unburdening the users with respect to their responsibility (**responsibilisation**) (~ accountability)

Adblocking @ ~220MM Desktop Users (+16% Y/Y)...~420MM+ Mobile (+94%)...
 Majority in China / India / Indonesia = Call-to-Arms to Create Better Ads, per PageFair

Global Adblocking Users on Web (Mobile + Desktop), 4/09 – 3/16



Books: reading list

- **van Dijck, José (2013) *The culture of connectivity: a critical history of social media*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 228.**
- Mansell, Robin (2012) *Imagining the Internet: communication, innovation, and governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 289.
- Feenberg, Andrew (1999) *Questioning technology*. London: Routledge, 243.
- Gillespie, Tarleton, Boczkowski, Pablo J. & Foot, Kirsten A. (Eds.) (2014) *Media technologies: essays on communication, materiality, and society*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 325.
- **Gillespie, Tarleton (2010) 'The politics of platforms', in *New Media & Society*, 12(3), 347–364.**
- Berker, Thomas, Hartmann, Maren, Punie, Yves & Ward, Katie (2005) *Domestication of media and technology*. Berkshire: Open University Press, 255.
- Oudshoorn, Nelly & Pinch, T. J. (2003) *How users matter: the co-construction of users and technologies*. Cambridge, Mass. ; London: MIT Press, vii, 340.
- Pasquale, Frank (2015) *The Black Box Society: The Secret Algorithms That Control Money and Information*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 320.
- **Hildebrandt, Mireille (2015) *Smart Technologies and the End(s) of Law: Novel Entanglements of Law and Technology*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 296.**
- Verbeek, Peter-Paul (2005) *What Things Do: Philosophical Reflections on Technology, Agency, and Design*, University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 264.
- **Couldry, Nick (2012) *Media, society, world: social theory and digital media practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 242.**
- Cohen, Julie (2012) *Configuring the Networked Self: Law, Code, and the Play of Everyday Practice*, Yale University Press, 352.
- **Turow, J. (2011) *The daily you: How the new advertising industry is defining your identity and your worth*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 256.**
- Couldry, Nick & Turow, Joseph (2014) *Advertising, Big Data, and the Clearance of the Public Realm: Marketers' New Approaches to the Content Subsidy*, in *International Journal of Communication* 8 (2014), 1710–1726.

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