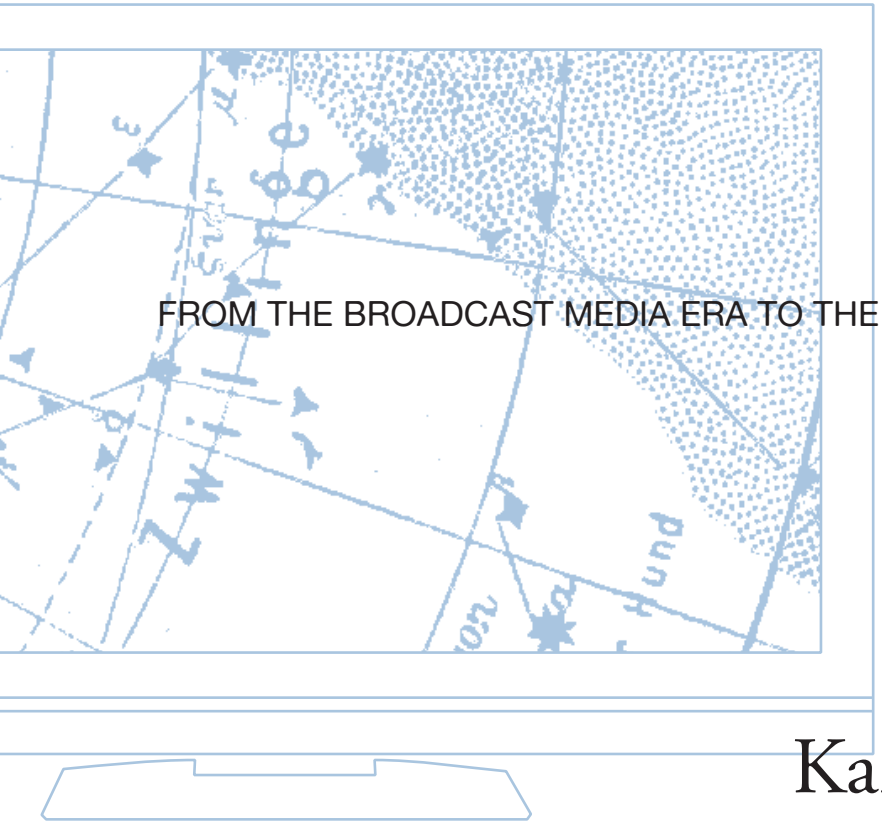
The Paradox of Liveness



FROM THE BROADCAST MEDIA ERA TO THE SOCIAL MEDIA ERA

Karin van Es

Design: Asher Boersma
Cover printed by Martijn van de Griendt, Boekdrukatelier het Y, Amsterdam
ISBN 978-94-6103-039-9

The Paradox of Liveness

From the Broadcast Media Era to the Social Media Era

Van het televisietijdperk naar het socialemediatijdperk
(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Utrecht op gezag van de rector magnificus, prof. dr. G.J. van der Zwaan, ingevolge het besluit van het college voor promoties in het openbaar te verdedigen op vrijdag 16 mei 2014 des middags te 12.45 uur

door

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

> And if you're *glad* when you hit somebody's marble [when you aim], then you sort of secretly didn't expect too much to do it. So there'd have to be some luck in it, there'd have to be slightly quite a lot of *ac*cident in it.
> - J.D. Salinger in *Seymour: An Introduction* (1959)

Completing my dissertation certainly included luck, but in the form of a lot of encouraging colleagues, friends and family rather than a lot of accident. First and foremost I would like to thank my promotors Sonja de Leeuw and Eggo Müller for their wisdom, in offering me a job in Television Studies I didn't even think to apply for, and for their continued support throughout the years. I particularly owe a deep debt of gratitude to Eggo for master-minding an encouraging and stimulating 'space of participation' for this project. Furthermore, I am grateful to my co-promotor Judith Keilbach for sparking my interest in the topic of the dissertation and for being a great latte macchiato sparring partner ever since.

My gratitude extends also to Nick Couldry, who not only wrote the book that inspired my thinking on liveness, but who was willing to meet and discuss the ideas that ensued from this engagement. And to William Uricchio and Nanna Verhoeff, two of the sharpest minds I know, who generously took the time to discuss my first draft. They were instrumental in helping me thicken my arguments.

Furthermore I couldn't have done without my frolleagues Bram Hendrawan and Klaas de Zwaan, two talented chefs, who I have had the good fortune of having around to exchange silly ambitions, PhD frustrations, coffee and food.

A big thank-you to my colleagues in the New Media Studies team: Ann-Sophie Lehmann, Joost Raessens, Mirko Tobias Schäfer, Imar de Vries, Marianne van den Boomen, Sybille Lammes, René Glas, Koen Leurs, Tom van de Wetering, Indira Reynaert, Sanne Koevoets, Isabella van Elferen and Michiel de Lange, who have been collegial and stimulating to work with. A special shout-out to Ann-Sophie, for all her support and guidance. And to Mirko, who has greatly inspired my thinking about and passion for new media studies. It has been an honor co-teaching 'GTNM' with him and I am happy to be able to continue our collaboration at Utrecht Data School. Thanks also to all the teaching assistants working for GTNM these past

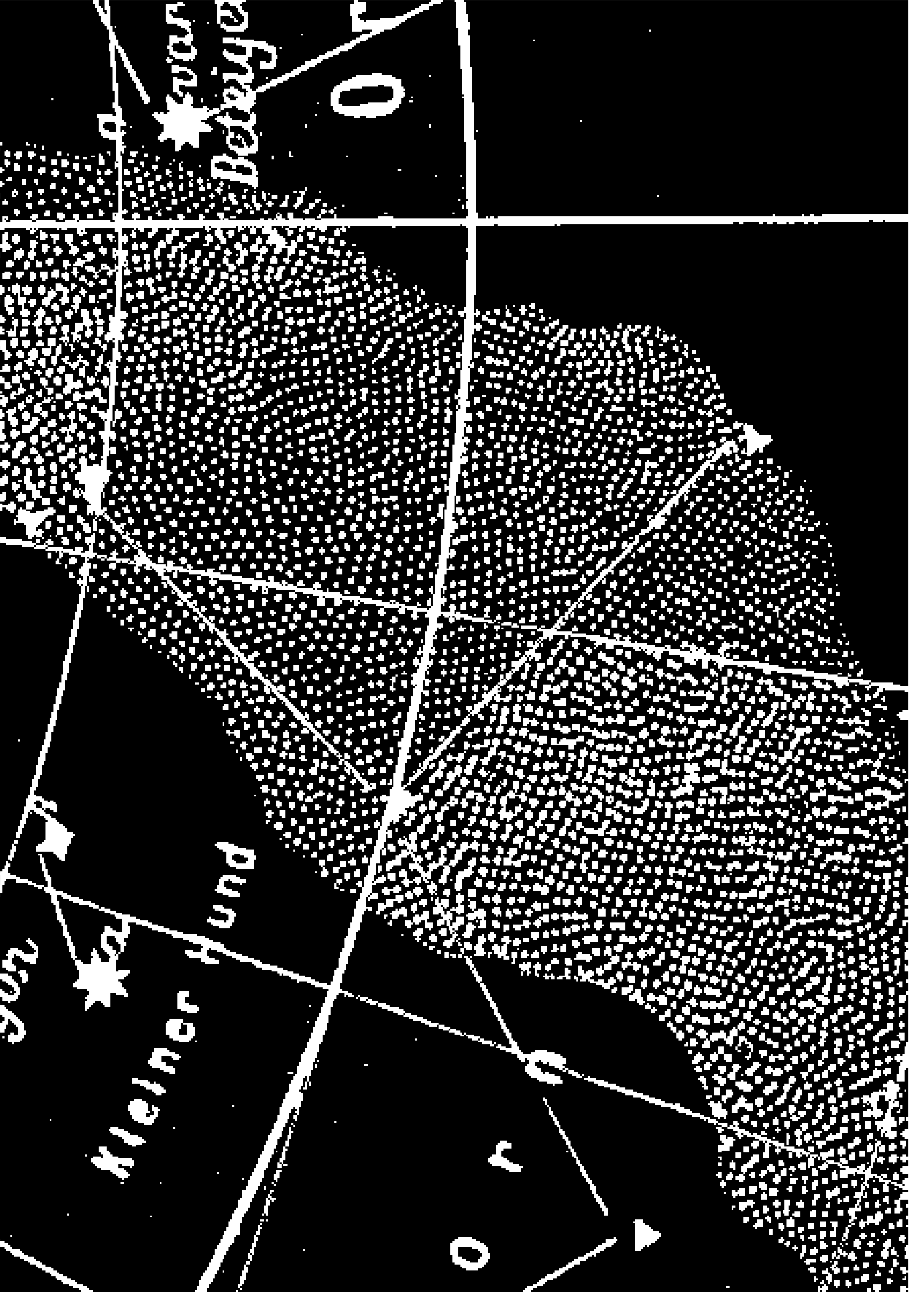
years, and Rob van Grinsven in particular, for making my teaching obligations so much easier and much more fun.

Moreover, I am very grateful to all the members of the Centre for Television in Transition (TViT) who have offered a safe space to exchange and test new ideas throughout my struggles at various stages of the dissertation.

Over these past four years I have had the fortune of having some great friends for encouragement and to help overcome setbacks. For this I express gratitude to Martin Zebracki, Anna Sonnemans, Loes Meys, Debbie Marbus, Laura Sie, Nienke de Groot, Tamara Zijtsel, Pepita Hesselberth and Claudy Op den Kamp. A special thanks to Elke Boogert for her friendship and willingness to proofread the final draft of this dissertation, and to Asher Boersma, who was kind enough to use his talent to make this dissertation look good.

Above all I want to thank my family: Bart, Ika, Annemiek, Sophie, Alberto and Lara. For they have never failed in providing safe and warm homes from which to explore the world and in offering the much-needed sense of relativism. And finally, much affection to my wife Eef, who not only keenly reflected on my work along the way, but who on a daily basis provides me with strength, faith and love.

Hilversum, February 2014.


Kleiner Hund

Introduction

> And we really messed up. And we're all very sorry. That didn't belong on TV. We took every precaution we knew how to take to keep that from being on TV. And I personally apologize to you that that happened. – Shepard Smith (Fox news anchor, 2012)

JoDon Romero, an alleged carjacker, led police on an 80-mile high-speed chase on 28 September 2012. Fox network was broadcasting the chase 'live' during *Studio B with Shepard Smith*. Romero, who had been shooting at the squad cars and news helicopter that pursued him, suddenly stopped his vehicle, got out, and started running. He stumbled down a dirt road and, after he got up, pulled out a gun and shot himself in the head. News anchor Shepard Smith, who had been narrating the event, was heard shouting at the control room to get off the air. Smith immediately apologized to the viewers, with the words quoted above (an excerpt from his full apology). After the broadcast, Michael Clemente, Executive Vice President of news editorial for Fox News, issued a public apology as well. Nonetheless, the three sons of Romero filed suit against Fox, claiming to have suffered post-traumatic stress disorder from watching the footage of their father's shooting online.

Leaving the tragedy of the incident aside, I would like to draw attention to the interesting dynamic surrounding liveness that it reveals. On the one hand, the program's claim to broadcasting 'live' entails the promise of an *en direct* feed of events as they unfold. But on the other hand, this incident also demonstrates a need to *manage* what is broadcast over the air. This managing involves, amongst other things, narration (making sense out of these images), but also monitoring and editing what is shown.

The dynamic that presents itself here has been well captured by John T. Caldwell (2000). In the article "Live Slippages: Performing and Programming Televisual Liveness", he looks at what he calls 'live slippages'. These slippages occur when liveness "slip[s] from the technical conditions of simultaneous transmission and viewership" (2000:22). Caldwell explores the hypothesis that programmers use liveness tactically (meaning textually and aesthetically), rather than simply as a strategy (meaning as displays of transmission and superior connection). Analyzing how Wescam's Air-to-Ground

Surveillance System was being sold to station executives in a demo tape, he concluded:

> The threat of the live may test the limits of the news division and journalists, yet Wescam's hi-technology offers to seek, *tame, and package* the volatile live-flow in manageable ways. (Caldwell 2000: 27, my emphasis)

By recognizing the desire to control the live flow of images, the insight surrounding Wescam strikes at the core of what I here propose to call the *paradox of liveness*. This paradox concerns the desire by media institutions to make use of liveness as a strategy, therein promising their users/viewers unstructured real-time feeds, however without being able to fulfill this promise because of the need to 'control' the content offered. This need derives primarily from the networks' dependency on programming schedules and tightly formatted narratives for economic viability (as I shall demonstrate further on in this book), but also, as in the example used above, from their moral obligations towards society (as imposed by external bodies like the Federal Communications Commission in the United States).

Within media studies the notion of liveness has been developed theoretically in numerous ways. The concept has long been central to television studies, despite the fact that over time, less and less television output was broadcast 'live'. Caldwell (1995) has explicitly criticized theories that treat liveness as central to television's style, referring to it as a myth that "simply will not die" (27). Yet despite such critique, the concept has been picked up in academic writing on the so-called 'new media' (McPherson 2002; Couldry 2004; White 2006; Ytreberg 2009). Thus not only has the live paradigm persisted in reflection on television, it has gone on to find new forms (Couldry 2004; Auslander 2008). With the emergence of social media, after the dot-com bubble bust of 2000-2001, new forms of liveness were once again brought into effect. These new forms fail to be captured by current assumptions and perspectives on liveness, and so provoke a revisiting of the concept.

As a result of the emerging forms of liveness that challenge existing conceptions of 'live', there is thus a necessity to re-evaluate liveness. My conviction is that the paradox of liveness can be productive when re-evaluating the concept in media studies, for its ability to clarify the stakes surrounding the control of media content. I must, however, immediately concede that there is one area of liveness exempt from this paradox, namely the kind that is seen

to have 'instrumental value' (White 2004). For instance such programs as *Wetterpanorama* (back and forth pans of landscapes of spas or ski resorts in Alpine regions), Trafico (traffic coverage) or House votes on C-Span, where a 'boring' stream of content is allowed to flow with very limited intervention. I would provide this has to do with how the perceived *societal value* of such channels/programs trumps *economic imperatives*.

In this dissertation I seek to develop a more comprehensive understanding of what liveness is and, perhaps even more pertinently, to clarify the field of contestation that comes with the 'live', and the significance this endeavor has for media studies. My contention is that tracing how the notion of liveness is changing, taking multiple forms, and offering various affordances, provides a useful entry point to explore the looming standoff between the highly concentrated media of the broadcast media era and the highly fragmented media of the social media era. In using the notion of 'liveness' to focus the analysis, I am able to consider the aforementioned standoff.

This introductory chapter begins with an overview of perspectives on liveness and the 'live' in media studies. This will include a brief examination of the following three main perspectives through which liveness has been approached: as ontology, as phenomenology, and as rhetoric. The oversights of each of the perspectives will be addressed, after which I suggest approaching liveness as a construction.

Next, I discuss my research goals and theoretical assumptions. I begin by addressing how Couldry (2000, 2003, 2004, 2012) developed liveness as a media ritual category, which positions liveness as a *construction* involved in naturalizing 'media power' – the concentration of symbolic resources in the principal mass media. Building on this, I argue that the social media era introduces a wide range of forms of liveness, which should be analyzed according to their particular, what I am calling, *constellations of liveness*. The emergence of social media platforms furthermore invites reflection on participatory culture as instrumental in the new relations being forged between media institutions and users around symbolic 'stuff'.

Subsequently, I further elucidate the methodological approach that I will use to analyze constellations of liveness. I find inspiration here in the analytical framework developed by Mirko Tobias Schäfer (2008) in his PhD dissertation. Schäfer combines a meta-level *dispositif* with a micro-level of actor-networks. I provide that there are, on a meta-level, the following three domains of liveness to consider: metatext, space of participation, and user

responses. The dynamic interaction unfolding of these domains on a micro-level produces the meaning and value of liveness in a constellation. Such an approach acknowledges the constructed nature of liveness and exposes the fields of contestation, a product of the paradox, at the heart of the constellation.

Finally, I give an overview of the four case studies that this research revolves around (each of them developed in a separate chapter) and explain how they will help shed light on the questions that the 'live' concept raises. These case studies, the choice of which will be motivated further on, are the streaming video platform Livestream, the online music collaboration platform eJamming, the reality singing competition *The Voice* (2011), and the social networking platform Facebook. It is important to note that in this book, the term 'media platforms' is interpreted very broadly, so that the case studies range from television shows to social networking websites (all of which host and inform media content and practice).[1]

My contention is that by exploring the constellations of liveness of the selected case studies I can uncover what I call the *tensions surrounding liveness*: conflicts over the meaning and promise of the 'live', which reveal the *mechanisms of control* of both broadcast media and social media. These mechanisms enable media institutions to control media content. Identifying and reflecting on them will help to extend and deepen the understanding of the new media ecosystem, which I call the social media era. The periodization 'broadcast media era' and 'social media era', as used in the title of this book, is not meant to promote a teleological perspective on media development. Nor do I find that it is possible to clearly demarcate these eras.[2] However, it is useful for considering an important change that has come post dot-com bubble bust, namely the infiltration of social media platforms in everyday life.

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Moreover, in my use of the term 'platform' I aim to dispose of the technical neutrality and progressive openness that the metaphor propels (Gillespie 2010). For as my methodology is sure to illustrate, I regard platforms far from neutral, being shaped technologically, culturally, politically and economically.

2
In relation to dividing the history of television into eras, Roberta Pearson has rightfully warned,

> we must be aware of a teleological perspective that posits a clear historical process with clear demarcations between eras […] periodizations cannot contain history's multiple complexities and contradictions. (2011: 107)

1 LIVENESS AS CONCEPT IN MEDIA STUDIES

Presently, I set out to trace how the concept of liveness and the 'live' has been deployed to date, grouping them according to three main perspectives: as ontology, as phenomenology (located in the audience) and as rhetoric. Here I do not seek to offer an exhaustive list of all academic accounts of liveness, but rather I intend, by considering their insights and shortcomings, that I will be able to later argue the benefit of analyzing constellations of liveness. The artificial nature of these distinctions will present itself as some approaches fit into more than one perspective. This is in part due to the fact that for many of the authors, understanding liveness is not a primary objective. In light of the subject of this book the provided discussion concentrates primarily on media studies. Finally, I conclude that each tells only part of the story and that liveness is therefore best understood as a construction. Taking this idea as a point of departure I then move to introduce how I have developed my own approach.

(1) As Ontology

In relation to television it is possible to distinguish between two types of ontological claims of liveness, centered on respectively: the technology of the scanning beam, and the possibility for simultaneity between television production, distribution and reception. I first consider these two forms of reasoning, after which I zoom in on liveness seen as the ontology of so-called 'new media'.

The first type of argument is exemplified through the work of Herbert Zettl (1978) who claimed that television's very technological basis makes television 'live' as a process. To clarify, in his work he states that,

> While in film each frame is actually a static image, the television image is continually moving, very much in the manner of the Bergsonian durée. The scanning beam is constantly trying to complete an always incomplete image. Even if the image on the screen seems at rest, it is structurally in motion. (Zettl 1978: 5)

Stephen Heath and Gillian Skirrow (1977) have discussed liveness as a mode of televisual in similar terms. They claimed the following:

> In one sense, the television image itself is effectively 'live', very different in this to that of film. Where the latter depends on the immobility of the frame, the former, electronic and not photographic, is an image in perpetual motion, the movement of a continually scanning beam; whatever the status of the material transmitted, the image as series of electric impulses is necessarily 'as it happens'. Hence the possibility of *performing* the television image - electronic, it can be modified, altered, transformed in the moment of its transmission, is a production in the present. (Heath and Skirrow 1977: 53)

This differs from film which, on a technological level, is photographic rather than electronic. However, unlike Zettl, Heath and Skirrow identify liveness also as an ideology of the television apparatus, in that it is based not only on the electronic nature of the medium, but also on dimensions of the image which offers "a permanently *alive* view on the world" (Heath and Skirrow 1977: 54, my emphasis).

The second type of argument that posits television as ontologically live, is based around the mediums' capacity to provide simultaneity between the time of production, and the transmission and viewing time. As Auslander points out, right from its inception, the essence of the televisual was understood,

> […] as an ontology of liveness more akin to the ontology of theater than to that of film. Television's essence was seen in its ability to transmit events as they occur, not in a filmic capacity to record events for later viewing. Originally, of course, all television broadcasts were live transmissions. (2008: 12)

In some approaches liveness, as defined in the above quote, continues to be seen as an immanent feature of the operation of television. Despite the fact that television is in fact a collage of different media and temporalities (Feuer 1983: 15), liveness is always available as an option simply due to its electronic nature (Marriott 2007; Mumford 1994). The argument is problematic in that it constitutes a metonymic fallacy (White 2004: 76). In other words, live is taken as *the* defining characteristic of television simply on that basis that it *can* be 'live'.

In a similar line, an argument has emerged, and gained prominence since the decline of live programming on television, centered rather on the *organization of transmission*. It is found, for example, in the writing of Joshua Meyrowitz. Commenting on radio, he provides that,

> There is a big difference between listening to a cassette tape while driving in a car and listening to a radio station, in that the cassette player cuts you off from the outside world, while the radio station ties you into it. Even with a local radio station, you are 'in range' of any news about national and world events. (Meyrowitz 1985: 90)

And so, even when a broadcast has been recorded, its transmission is 'live' meaning that programming can be interrupted at any given moment. This is how liveness is now commonly understood (Couldry 2004; Ellis 2000).

The argument of liveness as television's ontological essence has been rivaled by more recent claims of liveness as ontological essence of new media. Margaret Morse (1998), for instance, made the following claims on interactivity:

> Feedback in the broadest sense ... is a capacity of a machine to signal or seem to respond to input instantaneously. A machine that thus 'interacts' with the user even at this minimal level can produce a feeling of 'liveness' and a sense of the machine's agency and - because it exchanges symbols - even of a subjective encounter with a persona. (18)

This is a clear case in which the technology is seen to cause liveness. Philip Auslander initially subscribed to this position as well in the second edition of *Liveness in a Mediatized Culture* (2008). In this book he aims to situate live performance in our mediatized culture providing a historical overview of the concept and claims that upon the introduction of a new technology, the definition of liveness is re-articulated. Discussing the latest form of liveness concerning interactivity, however, Auslander suggests that it is the feedback of real-time interaction that monocasually establishes liveness.

Four years later, Auslander (2012) amended his position on what he called 'digital liveness'. I expand on this revised position shortly, when addressing the perspective of liveness as phenomenology. It is significant as it comes closer to understanding liveness as a social-technical construction, which is what I find liveness to be.

The notion that liveness is connected to a medium's capacity for instantaneity is a convincing one, but due to the ambiguity permitted over how 'simultaneous' transmission and reception needs to be (White 2004), it seems flawed. Take for instance how at times there may be a slight temporal delay perceivable between different technologies that are broadcasting the same live event. Yet, all these media are understood to provide 'live' broadcasts.

The accepted ambiguity over what is understood as 'live' provides that liveness isn't simply a property of a technology. What accounts that conceive of liveness as ontology of a particular medium tend to overlook, is therefore the social dimension of liveness.

That liveness is also constructed socially is blatant when one considers the implications of the controversy over Janet Jackson's 'wardrobe malfunction' at the Super Bowl XXXVIII halftime show in 2004. During the halftime show, which was broadcast live on CBS television network in the United States, Jackson's breast was partially revealed, sparking public debate on indecency in broadcasting. The incident resulted in the House of Representatives passing the Broadcast Decency Enforcement Act.

The Broadcast Decency Enforcement Act enabled the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the U.S. government agency responsible for telecommunications regulation, to implement high penalties to broadcasters of profane and/or indecent material during the hours of six a.m. and ten p.m.[3] A breach of the Act can result in a $325,000 fine per incident, with a maximum of $3 million per day. The networks have generally responded to these stricter regulations by short-delaying live broadcasting, allowing for offensive materials to be preempted. The network ABC, for example, implemented a five second broadcast delay in all live entertainment in 2004.[4] And yet, even after the introduction of transmission delays, these broadcasts continued to be promoted as 'live' and discussed as such in popular discourse.

Again, the perspective of liveness as ontology is problematic because liveness clearly cannot be reduced to a technological fact alone. I am not denying the fact that electronic media share a capacity for instantaneity, but I want to insist that there is more to liveness than instantaneity. This argument will be developed in chapter one, where I compare and contrast liveness to

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The FCC defines broadcast indecency on their website as follows: "language or material that, in context, depicts or describes, in terms patently offensive as measured by contemporary community standards for the broadcast medium, sexual or excretory organs or activities". And profanity as: "including language so grossly offensive to members of the public who actually hear it as to amount to a nuisance".

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The Grammy Award ceremony, whose broadcast was already subjected to the five-second tape delay, started using a more sophisticated tape-delay system enabling CBS to delete not only inappropriate audio (as was previously the case), but also inappropriate video. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the tougher regulation did not extend to news broadcasts.

real-time in the context of the music collaboration platform eJamming. For now it is sufficient to understand that media platforms considered 'live', vary in terms of which elements are in fact simultaneous (c.q. production/transmission/reception, production/transmission or transmission/ reception) and even allow for flexibility when it comes to how simultaneous these elements need to be.

(2) As Phenomenology

Secondly, there are accounts of liveness which tackle it as primarily an experience, situating the definition of liveness in the experience of the viewer/user (Auslander 2008; Dixon 2007; Marriott 2007). As mentioned, Auslander initially argued that the emerging definition of liveness was increasingly built around the audience's affective experience (2008: 62). Later, he revisited this claim (Auslander 2012), stating he regretted the implications of his original formulation, namely that liveness was inherent to the technological properties of digital technologies. This problem of technological determinism, he finds, plagues not only his earlier work, but also the way Steve Dixon (2007) approached liveness. This since Dixon has implied that the difference in the affective responses media elicit can be explained in terms of their ontological distinction.

Nonetheless, Auslander does find that he was on the right track in seeing audience experience as key to understanding liveness. To solve the problem of technological determinism, whilst continuing to situate the meaning in affective response, he offers the following alternative:

> The benefit of a phenomenological perspective is that it enables us to understand that digital liveness is neither caused by intrinsic properties of virtual entities nor simply constructed by their audiences. Rather, digital liveness emerges as a specific *relation* between self and other, a particular way of 'being involved with something'. The experience of liveness results from our conscious act of grasping virtual entities as live in response to the claims they make on us. (Auslander 2012: 10)

The updated definition avoids the pitfall of liveness being reduced to a property or effect of the technology. What is fruitful about his revision is that it addresses liveness as a construction, effective of the relation between the technology and its user.

Whereas I praise Auslander for his move whereby digital liveness is

treated more as a construction, there are problems that remain in his work on liveness at large. When Auslander discusses the historical development of live in his book, he has linked types of liveness to particular cultural forms, suggesting a one-sided relationship between liveness and a medium. It provides a complete break with other forms of liveness, which seems unlikely. Instead of a break, I suspect that media are borrowing and refashioning earlier conceptions of 'live', a series of 'remediations' (Bolter and Grusin 1999) so to speak. Moreover, a term like digital liveness conceals the fact that there exist diverse manifestations of liveness within such a cluster, i.e. live-tweeting and live-blogging offer two distinct constructions of liveness. It not only overemphasizes the role of technology in constructing liveness, but also suggests that digital technologies share in their definition of 'live'.

Connected to the above issues, I find that Auslander is unclear in what "the claims they [technologies; KvE] make to us" entail, and the role such claims play for the experience of liveness. I suggest that how the technology makes a claim on us stems not only from a technology, but is also based on the discourse that accompanies a particular platform.

(3) As Rhetoric

Thirdly, numerous academics have discussed liveness as rhetoric. The accounts that I align with this perspective see the 'live' construction as part of a producer's strategy. I begin by highlighting prime accounts of authors who argue that liveness is used as a marker of distinction. Then, I identify those that tackle specifically the ideological dimensions of liveness as rhetoric and expand briefly on Jane Feuer's influential account.

For one, William Boddy (2003) underscores such a social shaping of technology when claiming that:

> Every electronic media product launch or network debut carries with it an implicit fantasy scenario of its domestic consumption, a polemical ontology of its medium, and an ideological rationale for its social function. (191)

Numerous media technologies have been promoted as 'live', including radio, telephone, television and now online platforms. With liveness as rhetoric I refer to accounts like that of Boddy, who analyzes the commercial discourses of "self-serving fantasies of the medium's nature" (*ibid*). For example, against the competition of pay-television services in the 1950's, the three major American networks of the time strategically boasted television's live status as

a nation-builder and heralded its aesthetic superiority. As media are made sense of through these influential marketing techniques that redefine media, the conventional notions of a medium are continually shifting

In a similar vein, Michele White (2006) finds that television and Internet producers invoke liveness to suggest that their form is unmediated. She compares the construction of liveness in the two media, therein disclosing the politics behind rendering interfaces as (a)live. The politics concerns how this rendering makes users overlook the mediated aspects of the platform.

Whereas Boddy and White both examine how liveness has been rhetorically used to hierarchize media, Elana Levine (2008) has analyzed how liveness is used to create a hierarchy between television programs. This was the case in the 'Golden Age of live television'[5] when the live anthology drama distinguished itself from other programming that was equally live (i.e. daytime shows and soap operas). Levine analyzes the creation of media hierarchies by various discursive attempts that construct medium specificity. She analyzed the discourses around live experiments with scripted drama and comedy television shows since the 1990's finding that rhetorically, these experiments drew on the concept live to position themselves as 'not television'. Her conclusion conflicts with the idea that liveness is already inherent to the medium television and can be seen as television's response to the claims that new media do liveness 'better'.

Then there are authors who have examined more specifically the ideological dimensions of liveness as strategy in programming at the level of the text. This has been done in relation to television (Vianello 1985; Caldwell 1995; Ellis 2000; White 2004), the Internet (McPherson 2002) and in multiplatform formats (Ytreberg 2009). The most influential theorist here is certainly Jane Feuer who, in her seminal essay "The Concept of Live Television: Ideology and Ontology" (1983), rejected the then prevailing conviction that liveness is the essence of the medium television. In doing so, she directly positioned herself against accounts that see liveness as ontological to television.

According to Feuer, technologies like computerized graphics and instant replay destroyed the simplest meaning of 'live', as in the simultaneity

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The idea of liveness as central to the medium television is often indebted to the fact that in the beginning, particularly the live drama post-WWII until the Fifties, the medium was essentially live in the sense of simultaneity between event, transmission and reception. However, other technological developments were possible. In the 1930's, for instance, Germany and the UK had prototypes that relied on recorded images (Friedman 2002: 3).

between event, transmission and reception as media forms and temporalities became mixed in American network television (Feuer 1983: 15). Rather than ontologically live, Feuer argues that television uses its perceived ontology as ideology. To do so, "flow and unity [in television programming] are emphasized giving a sense of immediacy and wholeness" (Feuer 1983: 16).

With specific regard to the mode of address, Feuer has analyzed how in the television show *Good Morning, America* liveness helps to overcome fragmentation, allowing for the illusion of directness and presentness. In the concluding remarks of the essay, Feuer admits she is somewhat uncertain of how the ideology of the program is reproduced in its audiences, and how oppositional readings of the program may be possible (Feuer 1983: 20-21). What her account specifically overlooks, a limitation that Couldry (2003, 2004) engages with in his work, is the connection to the larger sociological question of how people participate in this construction.

The benefit of the liveness as rhetoric perspective is that, because liveness is seen as a construction, it can explain certain things about liveness that the other accounts cannot. Such as, how it is that liveness is characteristic of a variety of media, the ambiguity permitted over how simultaneous transmission and reception need to be, and it's persistence over time (Couldry 2004: 355). My problem, however, is that these accounts overemphasize the role of institutions in the construction of liveness. As such they overlook how the users and the material affordances of media platforms play a vital role in the construction too.

What the above overview of the three different perspectives on liveness has clarified is that the concept is more than simply descriptive. Its meaning depends on the context in which it used and effectively, constructed. Whereas these perspectives all provide relevant reflections on certain domains of liveness (e.g. technology, users and institutions), to investigate further requires an approach that considers liveness as a construction in which all these 'domains' play a part.

2 CONSTELLATIONS OF LIVENESS IN THE SOCIAL MEDIA ERA

Having looked at the three main perspectives on liveness, the ensuing section explicates my own perspective on liveness, provoked by the social media

era, captured in the proposal to analyze *constellations of liveness*. I do so by first shortly introducing what I have chosen to call the social media era. From here, I discuss Couldry's media ritual theory, clarifying how he sees the relation of liveness to media power and how this connects in turn to the paradox of liveness. From the trouble he has in explaining new forms of liveness, I introduce my own research goals and take on liveness. Subsequently, I explain how analyzing constellations of liveness will help to realize the goals I have formulated. Furthermore, because of how social media have changed relations to and around media content, I explore the two dominant views that have emerged about participatory culture. Concluding, I propose extending Eggo Müller's (2009) concept of space of participation in order to be able to fully chart the changing relations on each particular media platform.

The Constructedness and Multiplicity of Liveness

Nick Couldry's work on liveness emerged as a result of his interest in answering the question why people place such value on media output. For Couldry the media, as institutional sector,

> provide an essential flow of information and meanings, that enable the generation of new discursive resources at a societal level, both through factual information and through media fictions, such as soaps, which may focus important social debates. (2000: 51)

In this manner the symbolic power of the media pertains its ability to inform societal discourse. Couldry is specifically critically of, what he calls, the 'weak concept' of symbolic power developed by John B. Thompson (1995). Thompson has defined symbolic power simply as the ability,

> to intervene in the course of events, to influence the actions of others and indeed to create events, by means of the production and transmission of symbolic forms. (17)

Couldry explicitly references Bourdieu's 'strong concept' of symbolic power in his work because it appreciates that some concentrations of symbolic power are so intense, so pervasive that they come to dominate the *whole* social landscape. This power is then a general, rather than local, power constructing social reality. It is so pervasive that it is 'misrecognized', and thereby legitimized by those subjected to it, concealing its arbitrariness (Couldry

2004b: 176). While I understand that certain concentrations like that of the media require special analysis, I would find it important not to ignore Thompson's insistence that the different forms of power (he distinguishes between four: economic, political, coercive and symbolic power) overlap and shift.[6] In other words, symbolic power is bound up in other forms of power. As I clarify later, whilst my work does tackle the question of symbolic power, its project expands beyond a concern for just symbolic power.

In order to explain how this large concentration of symbolic power in media institutions ('media power') is maintained, Couldry has developed a media ritual approach. He has defined media rituals as the actions organized around key media-related categories (i.e. reality, celebrity and so forth). They help legitimate the idea that there is such a thing as a social center, and that the media are a privileged access to that center. He refers to this set of ideas as 'the myth of the mediated center'.[7] Although the myth of the media center is proposed by institutional structures, it is reproduced locally through what people say and do in relation to the 'media frame'. As the belief in the myth is reproduced on a more general level, it is argued, local skepticism may still exist.[8]

Media ritual categories such as liveness help naturalize the division of the world in two (that which is 'in' the media and that which is 'outside'; the first being of higher significance than the second), legitimizing the uneven distribution of symbolic resources. These categories, however, have different reference points to explain why the media are necessary. Liveness, for one, centers on the capacity of the media to show society's *current* social reality

Couldry's work relates to what I have called the paradox of liveness, as

6
Economic power is created through human productive activity where raw materials are extracted and transformed into goods for consumption or sale. Then there is also political power that concerns the coordination of individuals and regulating the pattern of their interaction. Coercive power is about using or threatening the physical force to dominate an opponent (Thompson 1995: 12-18).

7
It is inspired by anthropology of media consumption approaches, like that of Roger Silverstone on television, that explore media as a cultural process. In Couldry's approach, ritual is seen not as the affirmation of what is shared, in that it maintains or produces social integration, but is connected to the management of conflict and the concealment of social inequality.

8
To provide evidence of media power, Couldry (2000) has analyzed how people act and talk in situations where they encounter a media production process (i.e. filming sites, Granada Studios Tour and the set of Coronation Street).

seen by an idea he put forth in the final chapter of the book *Media Rituals: A Critical Approach* (2003). Here he speculated whether Internet and digital technologies, in providing new opportunities for production and consumption, might come to weaken the concentration of symbolic power in the media. As a result, possibly making categories like liveness redundant. This, I find, makes rather explicit that Couldry too sees a relation between liveness and the control media exert over content. However, in his design, which was established during the broadcast media era, the institutions of the media have near absolute control over the production and distribution of symbolic content.[9] The social media era, as mentioned, changed the relation between media institutions and users around content and, rather than this making liveness redundant, introduced new forms of liveness.

There are, nevertheless, two connected problems that emerge on the topic of liveness in relation to the work of Couldry. First, his primary interest lies with developing a theory that helps explain media power, not liveness. Second, this results in his trying to explain how liveness works to help reproduce media power, rather than providing a means in which to investigate how liveness is constructed. Consequently, Couldry has built the definition of liveness around broadcast media. This explains why he has trouble coming to grips with new forms of liveness introduced by cell phones and the Internet (Couldry 2004). These forms challenge the idea that media provide "a shared attention to 'realities' that matter for us as a society" (Couldry 2004: 356). My interest, by contrast, lies not with developing a theory of media power, but rather with coming to understand when and how liveness is constructed in particular instances. In other words, I explore liveness first by focusing on its *constructions* and only then seek to explain it. More radically perhaps, I contend that by reverting the interest and using liveness as starting point, I could even - through a careful selection of case studies - enhance the understanding of media power in the social media era.

The goals of this dissertation are – put simply - to understand *when liveness is, what constitutes liveness* and *how liveness operates*. These questions are largely inspired by the work of Dirk Eitzen (1995) in which he attempts to define documentary films. By asking them, I seek to address the

9
In his later book (Couldry 2012) he has come to propose that rather than contributing to its demise, the Internet might actually make it easier to sustain 'the myth'. This because the Internet can easily link separate contexts, thereby creating common reference points for people.

circumstances, or rather conditions, through which liveness comes to be. Eitzen's approach proposes a dialogue between 'situational cues' and 'reception', which I incorporate into my own model of a constellation of liveness as the metatext and user responses. To accomplish these goals, I consider the contribution of institutions, technologies and users to what I call *constellations of liveness*. And when analyzing these particular constellations I am not attached to a certain function of liveness *beforehand*, nor do I fall back on an existing definition built around a particular communication model. Rather, analyzing them allows the definition of liveness to be considered in each particular situation from the ground-up.

At this stage, I would like to make note of several points on which my approach of liveness distinguishes itself from work done by others on the topic. These are:

- My aim is to lay bare how liveness is constructed around and through media platforms.
- I see liveness as a socio-technical construction, meaning as a product of a chain of social and technical elements.[10]
- My approach appreciates that there are multiple constructions of 'live' that should be analyzed according to their specificity. Media platforms thus need to be put to closer scrutiny rather than clustered into generalized groups like those producing 'online liveness' (Couldry 2004) or 'digital liveness' (Auslander 2012).
- I find that liveness, because of its paradox, may elicit *tensions surrounding liveness*. These are the struggles between various contributors over the meaning of liveness and are valuable in considering the (changing) relations between media institutions and users around content.
- As mentioned, my approach explores different *constellations of liveness*. I do so in this book through four chapters that each addresses a different media platform in the social media era. Respectively these are: Livestream, eJamming, *The Voice* (2011) and

10
Bruno Latour has suggested in relation to technological objects, rather than asking 'is this social' or 'is this technical or scientific' that "we simply ask: has a human replaced a non-human? Has a non-human replaced a human? […] Power is not a property of any of those elements [of humans or non-humans] but of a chain" (1991: 110).

Facebook. Exploring their constellations, I propose, will help realize the formulated research goals. The particular relevance of these cases will be argued in the methodological section of this introduction.

The Social Media Era: Relations To and Around Content

When I refer to the 'social media era', I am referring to the period in time post-dotcom bubble bust of 2000-2001. At this time an awesome increase in user-generated content and online sharing facilitated by, but not reducible to, the emergence of social media was witnessed. These social media are said to be replacing the media of the broadcast media era, as the dominant media forms in everyday life.

Social media refer to,

> a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010: 61)

It was in the wake of the dot-com bubble bust in 2004, at a conference organized by O'Reilly Media and MediaLive International, that 'Web 2.0' was first explored (O'Reilly [2005] 2012: 32). In its most basic definition, Web 2.0 is said to describe a collection of web technologies that facilitate simple publishing, content sharing and collaboration.[11] So whilst user-generated content was of itself not new, these easy-to-use interfaces simplified user-participation in cultural production. These applications have, what Tim O'Reilly calls, 'a natural architecture of participation'. Meaning that these are systems with a built-in cooperation ethic, making the service better as more people use it. Think of how useless Facebook would if you had no friends posting stuff on the platform and liking/commenting on your posts. The more people join, the more useful Facebook becomes. This has been labeled the network effect. Moreover, data management is a core competency of Web 2.0 as these applications are data-driven. In 'sharing', 'commenting' and

11
Also referred to as AJAX – asynchronous Java and XML.

'liking' on Facebook, users create data that the platform can monetize.[12]

In the following paragraphs, I discuss participatory culture because, as briefly touched on, in the social media era the institutions of the media have changed. And with it, how people relate to and around symbolic content. Although this certainly relates to symbolic power, I deliberately avoid the term in handling the constellations because I approach the question of power more broadly.[13] This change in the relation between people and people to media has been evaluated in different ways. I therefore briefly review the utopian and dystopian view of participatory culture, but criticize their inability to fully capture the changing relationship between media institutions and users brought about by these new platforms. As a productive alternative, I then put forward Müller's concept 'space of participation', which I find can be put to use as a method to analyze these changing relations.

The Utopian and Dystopian View of Participation 2.0

The narrative of user participation in media studies commonly begins with the culture industry. From World War II, when consumers were said to have been manipulated and controlled through the creation of false needs

12
The attempt by O'Reilly to describe the technological framework for participatory culture through the term Web 2.0 has been criticized. In a podcast interview for IBM in 2006, Tim Berners-Lee, director of the World Wide Web Consortium, when asked if the difference between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 was one of connecting computers against connecting people, formulated the following response:

> Web 1.0 was all about connecting people. It was an interactive space, and I think Web 2.0 is of course a piece of jargon, nobody even knows what it means. If Web 2.0 for you is blogs and wikis, then that is people to people. But that was what the Web was supposed to be all along. (n.p.)

For Berners-Lee the Web was always meant to be a collaborative space for social interaction, and he stresses that Web 2.0 is simply building on the existing standards of the Web and adding some Java Script (see also Scholz 2008; Berry 2011). The term itself is problematic because of its teleological connotations, providing that the Web is constantly being improved upon towards ever-greater sociality (Van den Boomen 2007). Whereas I agree with Berners-Lee's criticism in terms of the level of technological innovation it has failed to introduce, I do find, like Van Dijck (2013), that there has been an evident shift in online services; from offering networked communication, functioning as channels, to networked sociality, mediating relations (5). The ways in which people can interact and participate with one another has changed.

13
I would argue that my interest for economic and legal forces (accounted for in my method) attests to this.

(Adorno and Horkheimer 1944)[14] to the 1970s, the British cultural studies changed the assumption of the viewer as passive, by providing that the reader was a site of meaning making (Brunsdon 1978; Hall [1973] 1980; Morley 1980; Fiske 1987). Henry Jenkins consequently addressed active users not in terms of their ability to create meaning out of texts, but because they appropriated and reworked cultural materials (Jenkins 1992: 293). And he later expanded on how the topic related to digital technologies and the Web in *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (2006). In this book he provided that the traditional barriers between media consumption and production had become 'blurred'.

The debate on the social and cultural effects of social media has bifurcated between utopian discourses on participatory culture and dystopian discourses on the online economy (Müller 2009). The former perspective tends to celebrate social media platforms as democratizing. The latter perspective sees this as a period in which users are actively commercially exploited through their participation.[15] I explore these two perspectives in a bit more depth presently, concluding that they are both equally unable to usefully chart how the relationship between institutions and users has/is changing in the social media era in particular.

The utopian discourse celebrates the social progress made possible through the collective efforts of users (Leadbeater 2007) and is replicated in popular discourse (i.e. the deterministic view of the role of social media in the Arab Revolutions). Developed as a corporate strategy book, Tapscott and Williams (2006), for example, have assembled a series of success stories about organizations fostering models of production that are based on community, collaboration and self-organization. They use these cases to promote the incorporation of user-participation in emerging business models, convinced that it stimulates social progress. 'Prosumers', as Alvin Toffler (1980) has called them, are considered highly motivated and interested individuals willing to donate their time and energy to a shared cause.

14

In contrast to their contemporaries, Bertolt Brecht ([1932] 1964) and Walter Benjamin ([1934] 1986) reflected on the participatory potential of media.

15

See Schäfer (2011) for a short reflection on three different 'critical' accounts of social media in particular: (1) the free labor account, (2) the privacy violation/control and regulation accounts, and (3) Web 2.0 platforms as emerging public spheres/the new socio-political quality of user-producer relations in governing software applications and their users.

Such optimism about participation is also found in the work of Jenkins (2006).[16] He has, however, admitted more recently to having "underestimated the barriers to achieving what we see as the potential for transformative change emerging as the public has gained greater control over the means of participation" (Jenkins 2013: 7). He continues, however, to be hopeful about the potentials for greater participation. For the authors grouped in this utopian view, the social media era has brought closer an egalitarian media space, open to participation, with multiple centers of production and consumption.

These optimistic claims about participation have been met with criticism. This criticism is directed not only at the assumed *scale* on which consumers turned producers, as it has been found that in fact only a small percentage of users actively contribute to and/or produce cultural products, but also at the rosy picture of the willingness of users to collaborate with one another in a community setting of shared interests. A more general critique is that the stress on the 'social' in these accounts overshadows the commercial character of many of these projects (Schäfer 2011: 37; Van Dijck and Nieborg 2009).

Within the dystopian discourse, the corporate industry's dominant role as cultural agent is examined. Authors who take such a view tend to adopt a neo-Marxist perspective, finding that users are exploited, as their free labor is capitalized on (Andrejevic 2009, 2011; Fuchs 2011; Palmer 2003; Petersen 2008; Scholz 2008; Terranova 2004). Users are commodified through the sale of their data. Or, in a more nuanced version, user labor is implemented

16
Jenkins' exploration of participatory culture deals primarily with fandom. Matt Hills has pointed out that Jenkins, in discussing reading and talking about texts as a form of production, has made this concept fairly futile, for the only way to not to be producing is by not watching (2002: 36). There are three more problems with Jenkins' work: first off, on the macro level, he offers a fairly romantic account of participatory culture and, in doing so, downplays the top-down forces that shape user activities (Burgess and Greene 2009; Müller 2009; Schäfer 2008). The second criticism concerns the fact that for Jenkins convergence is about the struggles between top-down corporate activities with bottom-up user practices (2006:18). As Müller (2009) correctly points out, much like the utopian versus dystopian accounts of digital media, this sketches a 'moral opposition' between the empowerment of user practices versus the oppressive corporate enterprises (59). Thirdly, Jenkins' focus on fan activities fails to account for user-production that does not take place in relation to existing media production (Schäfer 2008: 74).

by design in the 'extended culture industry' (Schäfer 2011).[17]

There is a second strand of criticism to be found in this critical discourse on participatory culture. It points to how these technologies are equally used for control and regulation (e.g. Galloway 2006; Morozov 2011; Zittrain 2008). Evgeny Morozov (2011) is a prime example of such a position. He has offered a critical take on a particular euphoria surrounding the Internet, and social media sites in particular, calling attention to 'the net delusion'. It refers to a technologically deterministic approach of the Internet fuelling the enthusiasm, wherein the Internet is framed as a tool that can help realize democracy. He finds that here the context in which these technologies are used is neglected. Through careful analysis, Morozov challenges the utopian claims that the Web results in liberation, providing numerous examples of how these technologies are being used as tools for oppression.[18]

Evaluating the social media platforms from a dystopian perspective of the online economy ignores the many *opportunities* new technological frameworks give for users to participate in cultural production and the public sphere at large. In that sense, neither perspective is productive in itself. Against the background of these discourses on participation, Jenkins has more recently pointed out that,

17

Connected hereto is how practices like data mining and user profiling have brought to the foreground issues of privacy (Fuchs 2012; Zimmer 2008). Part of the problem has been that users do not know what data is being collected and/or have limited control as to how this data is being used (i.e. for targeted advertising).

18

The most often cited example is perhaps the surveillance technologies of China, known also under the umbrella The Golden Shield Project. They restrict the flow of information by monitoring and blocking, what has been referred to in the regulations as 'harmful information'.

This technological determinism nonetheless persists. In Ankara a Turkish a court imposed a YouTube ban in 2008. This was made possible by Turkish law 5651, Internet regulation passed in 2007, enabling courts to block sites that insulted the republic's founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Besides YouTube, Facebook has been blocked, on and off, in numerous other countries (i.e. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Syria). In their actions, they attribute awesome power to technologies to transform societies.

In the 2011 riots in Egypt, part of the North Africa and Middle-East revolutions, the Egyptian authorities first blocked Twitter, and soon after Internet access was entirely shut down. Morozov is critical of the power being transposed to these technologies as careful consideration of ethnographic data makes it hard to sustain a monocausal link between Twitter and the revolutions. In the case of the 2009 'Twitter revolution' in Iran, it was the U.S. State Department's request for Twitter to delay maintenance that catalyzed euphoria over the Internet's role in driving the protests and had others respond accordingly (Morozov 2011: 1-19).

> It becomes more and more urgent to develop a more refined vocabulary that allows us to better distinguish between models of participation and evaluate where and how power shifts may be taking place. (2013: 5)

Understanding where and how power shifts are taking place would require analyzing how platforms structure the relation between institutions and users, and users amongst themselves. I contend examining the participatory practices the platform affords can accomplish this.

Analyzing Participation on Media Platforms

A more productive way of considering participation, and with it the relationship between media institutions and users, is by analyzing the 'space of participation' of media platforms. It is in the article "Formatted Spaces of Participation: Interactive Television and the Changing Relationship Between Production and Consumption" (2009), that Müller examines how the relationship between production and consumption have been structured in *Aktenzeichen XY*, *Big Brother* and on YouTube by examining their spaces of participation. In short, the concept space of participation facilitates an analysis of how technological, cultural, economic and legal forces interact to structure the participatory practices allowed on these platforms.

In order to critically consider the changing opportunities for participation in participatory culture, Müller uses the concept in a comparative historical approach. This comparative dimension is less significant for my research, as my interest lies not with evaluating participatory culture itself, but with how ways of relating to and around content changes the forms and shapes of liveness. In order to function as a method by which to analyze media platforms, the concept space of participation requires some minor expansions (for which I combine insights from political economy, actor-network theory, interface studies and platform studies).

It is in the methodological section of this introduction that I extend the concept space of participation (transforming it into a method for delineating relations: between the institution and users around content, but also amongst users themselves) and introducing it as one of the domains of liveness. Here it becomes even more evident that studying constellations of liveness is a double-edged sword, for it helps (1) to understand when and how liveness is constructed and (2) clarifies how relations (between institution-users, and users-users) are organized on media platforms.

3 ANALYZING THESE CONSTELLATIONS

In this book I set out to scrutinize the constellation of liveness in four media platforms existing in the social media era. These are: Livestream, eJamming, *The Voice*, and Facebook. Their selection is motivated on the one hand by the fact that these platforms, or subsets hereof, have explicitly been indexed as 'live', and on the other hand by their diversity, as each participatory platform has a rather different sociotechnical configuration. Livestream is a fruitful case in that it provocatively claims to have redefined liveness: shifting from a platform for user-generated content to professional content. Considering this shift helps to parse out the paradox of liveness. Following, eJamming was selected because it fails to deliver on user expectations of live, therein revealing how liveness operates as a construction. Next, *The Voice* offers an interesting string of liveness constructions within the live shows constellation and between media (television and social media platforms), helping to locate the conditions under which liveness comes into effect. Lastly, Facebook was selected because it is a social media platform par excellence, performing the new relation to liveness, the producer-relation to liveness, most emphatically. Furthermore, selecting both *The Voice* and Facebook helps compare the media of the broadcast media era to those of the social media era and reflect on their relation. My hope is that the selection of these four cases helps precisely to consider liveness in its plurality, and allows reflection on the interesting dynamic between broadcast media and social media in the present-day age.

Between Domains of Liveness and Actor-Networks

To analyze liveness, I use a mix of methods that are suited to capture the ways in which liveness is constructed in particular cases. Foremost, I find inspiration in the analytical framework used by Mirko Tobias Schäfer (2008) in his dissertation on participatory culture. This framework combines an interest for a media dispositif with insights from actor-network theory (ANT) as has been most notably conducted by Michel Callon, Bruno Latour and John Law. In the dissertation he analyses how the macro-level of formations (i.e. discourses, technology, and users), which he names the dispositif of participatory culture, unfold on a micro-level as actor-networks. In his definition of the media dispositif, Schäfer states that it "describes formations of various participants" (2008: 27).

Rather than speak of a dispositif, which has lost its specificity in Schäfers

dissertation, and thus only works to confuse rather than clarify, I take from his work the idea that liveness can be considered the product of formations of different relations between three domains working on a meta-level. The three domains of liveness I would identify with regard to my research are metatext, space of participation (Müller 2009), and user responses (Van Dijck 2013). I find in using these concepts over, although similar to, those selected by Schäfer, I am able to better convey that these domains reciprocally affect each other. An interest for spaces of participation, rather than simply technology, helps to posit these platforms explicitly as a product of various socio-technical forces.[19]

In the four chapters of this book I intend to analyze what I call *constellations of liveness*. These constellations are the product of the particular unfolding of the domains of liveness on the micro-level. They will make apparent how the different domains of liveness connect and transform the meaning of liveness for each particular case.

Like Schäfer, I borrow certain *ideas* from ANT to conduct this micro-level analysis (the unfolding actor-networks). For a start, in the methodological framework I have developed I assign agency to both human *and* nonhuman actors. This aligns with my conviction that a medium should be taken seriously as, what Taina Bucher (2012a) has called, a 'material-discursive practice'. Furthermore, I find that the domains of liveness are not equally relevant to constructions. Thus similar to ANT research, I only address those 'actors' that leave 'traces' and play a role in shaping what liveness becomes. As a result, each case study demonstrates a different balance between the three domains in its constellation. In other words, certain aspects of these domains are more relevant in certain constructions and less in others.

In addition, like ANT, I approach power as a consequence of action, obtained through the enrollment of many actors (Latour 1986). However, although not assuming asymmetries between the actors beforehand is useful when studying particular empirical cases, I recognize it is insufficient for a

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Schäfer introduced a third formation, namely the socio-technical ecosystems. These "describe an environment based on information technology that facilitates and cultivates the performance of a plurality of users" (Schäfer 2008: 30). He found they could be an actor in an actor-network and contain actor-networks. By using space of participation as a domain of liveness, I find I have rendered this analytical tool obsolete. I prefer the latter not only for the mentioned benefits, but also in that the concept socio-technical ecosystems limit the analysis to information technologies whilst I seek to analyze media platforms more broadly.

generally theory of media. As Couldry (2004b) has pointed out,

> ANT's initial insights into a dimension of social order (spatiality of networks, power asymmetries) are not developed for a network's longer-term consequences for social space and its implications for power.[20] (8)

The paradox of liveness, as chapter one aims to clarify, is borne out of an *existing* power imbalance between 'media' and 'non-media'. Such an assessment would not fit ANT. Although it is not my specific goal to develop this relation, I find that Couldry has done this rather convincingly in his media ritual approach, it does inform my perspective on liveness.

My method deviates from the ANT tradition on several crucial points. Foremost, the research is not concerned with non-exhaustive descriptions, based on fieldwork including in-depth interviews and observations. My 'application' is more abstract, in that my interest lies with how the category 'live' operates. It is for this reason that I have no particular need for terminology derived from its method (with the exception of the notion of an actor).

In addition, ANT overlooks 'content' as formative to technology and users (Van Dijck 2013a: 26), which is something I do consider in what I have explicated as method for analyzing constellations. Lastly, rather than simply describing liveness, my aim is to help produce a theory that explains the phenomenon. And as John Law (2008) has pointed out, "actor network theory is descriptive rather than foundational in explanatory terms" (141).

20
Couldry (2004b) goes on to explicate in relation to the question of power in particular,

> If we consider media as a distinctive social process which links producers and audiences in a regular set of relationships for the production and consumption of meaning in particular time-cycles across large territories, then the organisation of those relationships, and particularly their asymmetries, must have consequences for how both media producers and audiences think about their possibilities of action. (9-10)

Couldry's solution has been provided through his media ritual approach. However, again, I am not seeking to develop a general theory of media power and find that for the analysis of particular cases it is more productive to follow ANT by not assuming any asymmetries beforehand, but letting that speak through the analysis itself.

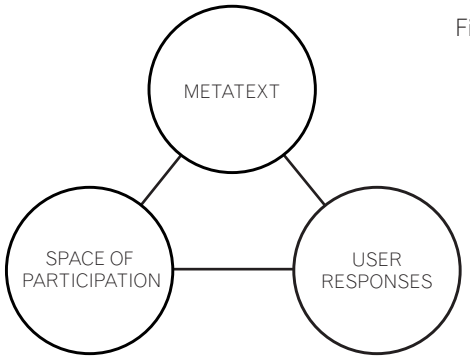


Figure 1: Domains of liveness

In short then, I aim to disclose how liveness is constructed on particular media platforms by examining the interrelated domains metatext, the space of participation and user responses (see Figure 1). As I just mentioned, the importance of these domains varies per constellation. In some instances the metatext is more formative whilst in others it is the space of participation or user responses. As such, the domains are not dealt with in equal length in each of the chapters.

In what follows I first expand on the domains of liveness after which I address how I understand a category. Lastly, I explain how my case studies can help in coming to grips with the category 'live'.

Metatext

Literary theorist Gérard Genette (1991) introduced the term 'paratext' as a means to describe how a book presents itself to its readers. Herein he included elements like titles, appendix, dedications, and illustrations that essentially contextualize the primary text. These accompaniments make the book present and attempt to instruct its reception.

In my research I am using the term paratext similar to how Jonathan Gray (2010) has developed it in his work on 'media paratexts'. Herein, Gray has favored the term paratext because in how the prefix 'para' is able to emphasize that these texts are both distinct from and intrinsically part of the primary text. He does so on the basis that 'para' is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as 'beside, adjacent to', and 'beyond or distinct from, but analogous to'. In his research, he considers how opening credit sequences, poster advertisements, etc. create meaning and relations to a certain television show. Paratexts create an understanding of 'the text', or rather in my

case, the media platform itself.[21] As Gray puts it,

> paratexts tell us what to expect, and in doing so, they shape the reading strategies that we will take with us 'into' the text, and they provide the all-important early frameworks through which we will examine, react to, and evaluate textual consumption. (2010: 26)

What differentiates my use of the term paratext from that of Gray is the object of study. Rather than film, television, toys and games, I focus on the media platform. Therefore, in this dissertation, the following types of paratexts are considered: the information provided on the platform website, particular features of the platform itself, promotional materials, press releases and interviews with representatives of the platform. These reflexive materials are seen as discursive sites that can be analyzed to disclose how (the liveness of) the platform is conceived of. In each chapter I identify the paratexts I have drawn on. The repetition found across the paratexts in terms of the perpetuation of certain ideas and themes, will be referred to as the platform *metatext*. More specifically, in the analysis of the metatext I try to answer the following question: what do these texts disclose about the meaning of the platform's liveness? It should be noted that the metatext stands in relation to the space of participation and user responses.

Space of Participation

As briefly touched upon earlier, the concept 'space of participation' allows capturing how technological, cultural, economic and legal *forces* shape participatory practices. I have deliberately replaced the term 'constraints' here, as used by Müller, for 'forces' because I want to draw attention to both constraints *and* affordances in my analyses. As mentioned, for my purposes the comparative framework space of participation was put to use in by Müller, although valuable to avoid normative statements about participation, is less significant. Foremost, I intend to develop the concept in the following pages so that it can be used to disclose the framework for action on platforms and the politics through which it solidifies. Below I will discuss these forces

21
In his book he differentiates between official and fan-created paratexts. The focus of my research is on the meanings offered by the media themselves through their platform and paratexts.

separately.[22] Since Müller has provided only a very basic outline of what they entail, I expand on them with the help of insights by others and inspiration from the field of software studies. Moreover, in finding technology and society as mutually constitutive, I consider technological and cultural forces jointly.[23]

(1) Techno-Cultural forces

The most productive way to consider the constructive role of technologies, I find, is by reflecting on the *affordance* of the platform's material assemblage.[24] The term affordance was introduced in the work of perceptual psychologist James Gibson (1977), who used the term in order to discuss what possibilities for action an environment offers animals (i.e. shelter, fire, water etc.). The concept gained prominence when Donald Norman ([1988] 1998) picked it up within the context of design theory. Here the term,

> refers to the perceived and actual properties of the thing, primarily those fundamental properties that determine just how the thing could possibly be used. A chair affords ('is for') support and, therefore, affords sitting. A chair can also be carried. Glass is for seeing through, and for breaking. Wood is normally used for solidity, opacity, support, or carving. Flat, porous, smooth surfaces are for writing on. (Norman [1988] 1998: 9)

Ian Hutchby (2001) transposed Gibson's concept to another domain, reflecting on the affordances of communication technologies. The benefit it offered him was that it facilitated a concern for the technical in social constructivism without slipping to technological determinism. Hutchby argues that man-made technologies have both *affordances* and *constraints* influenced by the materiality of artifacts. As he puts it,

22
In truth, their compartmentalization clashes with what the concept stands for.

23
The method is very similar to what Van Dijck (2013) proposed as method by which to analyze platforms. She specifically mentions complementing a political economy approach (by looking at platform ownership, governance and business models) with ANT (analyzing platform technology, users/usage, and content). However, I prefer the concept 'space of participation' as it allows me to explore how various forces come to shape frameworks of action. Moreover, it is relieved of the claim that it uses ANT. For though I am inspired by certain ideas from ANT, what I end up doing is not ANT for reasons I have noted.

24
This material assemblage includes software (Van Den Boomen et al. 2009: 9).

> [...] there is not one but a variety of ways of responding to the range of affordances for action and interaction that a technology presents. We can analyse the development of these responses empirically, but in order to do so we have to accept that technological artefacts do not amount simply to what their users make of them; what is made of them is accomplished in the interface between human aims and the artefact's affordances. (Hutchby 2001: 453)

In the above citation, Hutchby criticizes positions like that of Grint and Woolgar (1997), who have proposed that technologies should be approached as 'texts' that are 'written' by their developers, producers and advertisers and then 'read' by consumers. The meaning of the text is consequently negotiated between these two parties. Such an understanding, Hutchby finds, overlooks the role that the material aspect of things has in constraining possible meanings and uses of the technology. This is precisely what the concept affordance draws attention to. Affordances arise from the material properties of the object and its design (Hutchby 2001; Norman [1988] 1998; Schäfer 2011). However, the scenario of use inscribed in an artifact by design says nothing about how it is actually used (Akrich 1992: 209; Couldry 2000: 190; Müller 2009: 54). For example, even though a book is designed for the purpose of being read, as a consequence of its material properties, it may be used as a doorstop too.

The way that Müller analyzed technological forces of platforms, focused chiefly on the *user interface*, and thereby no tools were developed within his provided framework with which to dismantle the technological dimension below the visible user interface. Inspired by the interdisciplinary research field of software studies, I am convinced that it is necessary, in the case of online social media platforms, to include reflection on the *algorithms* and *protocols* that are processing and channeling the platform's *(meta)data*. Herein I consider digital material as 'in-material', rather than immaterial, as it is unable to exist without material carriers (Schäfer 2008). The user-interface, algorithms and protocols all introduce different platform constraints and affordances, and thus help shape the space of participation and with it the way in which people relate to and around media.[25]

Data (i.e. text, image, sound) and metadata (data about data) are

25
I, however, agree with Bucher (2012a) that it "[…] is not necessarily [important] to know every technical detail of how a system works, but to be able to understand some of the logics or principles of their functioning in order to critically engage with the ways in which systems work on a theoretical level". (14)

resources for coding technologies (Van Dijck 2013: 30). Algorithms process data: they are the set of instructions a machine uses to calculate a given task. For instance, Netflix, a popular on-demand streaming media platform in North America, uses an algorithm to recommend movies and shows to its users based on calculations of (meta)data, including browsing and purchasing behavior of all others, with which it establishes relations between user tastes and preferences. Protocols, on the other hand, are the rules for regulating the transmission and exchange of messages in distributed networks. They essentially control data flow. Both algorithms and protocols, as Taina Bucher (2012c) has pointed out,

> […] can be understood as plans of action or rules that govern computational processes. From a media and communications perspective especially, algorithms and protocols are important elements when considering networked and software-enabled media such as social networking sites, as they in many respects prescribe and define the possible actions within these programmed spaces. (17)

In addition to the affordances implemented by design and effective of materiality, the implicit rules and conventions of a platform equally inform how it is used. These rules and conventions are established through the recurrent practice of the platform users. To explain this, Müller offers an example in relation to YouTube, finding that the informality of the comments on video-sharing sites reflects everyday language (2009: 58). In other words, the style of communication was established as cultural norm through the practices that emerged around the platform.

(2) Economic forces

But techno-cultural forces alone do not define the space of participation, as there are also economic forces that can impact a platforms' space of participation. I provide that there are two main economic forces constructing the possible range and forms of participation that can take place on these platforms. These concern, respectively, the business model and costs users incur to use the platform.

In terms of business models, the social media era brought about a 'hybrid economy' (Lessig 2008). Within this economy, effective of the architecture of participation of these new platforms, traditional commercial interests have started to overlap with sharing economies like that of Wikipedia. Thus,

rather than producing audiences for advertisers, the traditional business of broadcast television according to Dallas Smythe (1977), new business models have been developed for online platforms. For platforms hosting UGC, most now center on generating value out of user-generated data. However, these models range in complexity. Google, for instance, sells keywords, statistics of keywords and search results in its AdSense program. Herein the corporation acts simultaneously as advertising agency, ratings company and content provider (Lee 2011). In support of these business principles, the possibilities of interaction become part of the platform's design.

Established media industries are increasingly interested in trying to capitalize on the large communities that these social platforms draw. It was the News Corporation that made one of the first major Internet acquisitions purchasing MySpace (Intermix Media) in 2005.[26] In 2006 Google purchased YouTube for the whopping amount of 1.65 billion dollars. The following year Microsoft purchased a 1.6 percent interest in the social networking platform Facebook and went on to acquire Skype in 2011. In December 2011 the Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal bought a 300 million dollar stake in the micro-blogging site Twitter. The extent of this trend extends far beyond the examples just provided.

Regarding business models, within the selection of my case studies, there are already some important noticeable differences. Whereas the online music collaboration platform eJamming sells a service to its users (i.e. the software and tools that enable online jamming with others), in *The Voice* the situation is more akin to Smythe's (1977) contention that mass media sell audiences to advertisers. In the case of Facebook, in addition to other practices to be explicated in the relevant chapter, audiences are sold to advertisers. These types of platforms "seek to capture, commodify and control the public's desire for meaningful participation" (Jenkins 2013: 10).

As for user costs as economic force shaping the space of participation, here I mean the basic costs that users incur when wanting to use these platforms. These include simple requirements like a computer (with particular hard- and software specifications) and broadband connectivity, and may be pertinent as to the ability of users to participate.

26
Although it was put up for sale again in 2010 when tides changed and its market share rapidly decreased with Facebook becoming increasingly popular.

(3) Legal forces

Lastly, a concern for legal forces entails reflecting on the explicit rules concerning property, privacy and acceptable behavior on the platform (Van Dijck 2013: 38). These are often formulated in the EULAs (End-User License Agreements) and Terms of Use. By signing off on these 'contracts', users agree to particular uses of the platform and face legal action if they are in breach of these defined rules. They are important in that they influence design decisions and constrain how the platform may be used. Think for example of how copyright law prevents certain content from being shared online.

User Responses

Aside from the metatext and space of participation, what Van Dijck calls, 'user responses' (2013: 33), also play a role in the construction of liveness. Van Dijck classifies user responses as a form of user agency wherein users explicitly reflect and comment on the platform. Whereas she explores user responses to disclose the norms and values associated with social media platforms, my contention is that they are also fruitful when it comes to establishing how users understand the liveness of the platform.

When users become critical of the understanding of liveness put forth through the metatext, they respond either by appropriating the platform itself, changing its scripted use, or publicly articulate their dissatisfaction (i.e. on a page, forum, blog or in tweets). The sources drawn on for the analysis of user responses will be identified in the chapters separately. User practice does figure in my analyses, as will be evident in chapter two on eJamming where a user appropriated the platform to fit his understanding of liveness. However, I do not deal with practices separately or in depth, simply understanding them as a form of user response.

Moreover, it should be pointed out that my interest is more specifically with user responses as it deals with what people *explicitly* say and do that reflects on the *meaning* and *value* of liveness on the platform. As such, a consideration of user responses is not about conducting representative research into how people experience these platforms. In fact, at times the amount of user responses available for consideration may prove rather limited, but this does not detract from their ability to enhance the understanding the liveness of the platform. Such user agency can be seen as a contribution to the

meaning of 'live' and exposes how they understand the liveness proposed by the metatext.

Liveness as Category

In light of my interest in liveness, I also owe an explanation as to how I see 'live' to constitute a category, particularly as I suggest liveness to come in many shapes and forms. My conviction is that all these constellations of liveness, despite their diversity, constitute a category through their shared function. My understanding of a category derives from Warren Schmaus' (2004) radical rereading of Durkheim's sociological theory of the categories. He claims that a distinction needs to be made in Durkheim's work between the theory of the social functions of the categories and the theory of the social causes of their various representations. For Schmaus, the meaning of categories should be established through their *social function* rather than, as Durkheim has suggested, through the social causes of their individual and collective representations (Schmaus 2004: 23).

This reconceptualization makes it possible to explain the cultural variability that may exist in collective representations. Simply put, it would help me to explain how it is possible that liveness comes in many different shapes and forms, but still all come to be understood as part of the category 'live'. People such as Ludwig Wittgenstein were therefore right to reject the idea of inherent characteristics running through a category, as such the definition by Schmaus provides there to be none.[27] In this book I intend to use Schmaus' idea as a structural analogy in order to explore the various manifestations of liveness in the social media era and reflect on them as category. However, in contrast to what Couldry has done in his work on media power, I want to avoid restricting the variation in liveness by attaching the function of the category to a particular communication model.

27

Perhaps the most compelling and well-known treatment of the category has been the 'family resemblance' theory by Ludwig Wittgenstein ([1953] 1958). Wittgenstein suggests that a category works much like a family, in that the similarities between the family members are blurry and overlap. But that having been said, his theory has been criticized for, amongst other things, its misleading analogy; for in light of their genetic code families do have an intrinsic connection to one another. What makes Wittgenstein's position attractive, but simultaneously problematic, for my purposes is that his take on a category runs the risk of becoming too inclusive and thereby rendering itself obsolete.

4 STRUCTURE

Having discussed the methodology that informs the research conducted in this book I now briefly introduce the four case studies (i.e. Livestream, eJamming, *The Voice* and Facebook), that each constitutes a chapter of the dissertation. I will explain how they help me to push the understanding of the concept of liveness further.

Succinctly I aim to analyze the following through these case studies:

- The paradox of liveness (in chapter one).
- The working of liveness as an evaluative category (in chapter two
- Some of the main conditions under which liveness is brought into effect. Reflect on the rhythms and temporalities of broadcast media and audience participation (in chapter three).
- Consider the 'new' user relation to liveness, where users have a producer-relation to liveness (in chapter four).

Concluding the analyses of the different constellations, I intend to locate parallels between manifestations of 'live'. Hereby I hope to detect several patterns that help in understanding *when* and *how* a platform, or a subset hereof, is conceived of as 'live' in our present-day culture. As my working hypothesis reveals, I suspect that the category is put to use in institutional contexts in particular.

More specifically, **chapter one** investigates two very different diachronic constellations of liveness for the live streaming platform Livestream. It explores how the Mogulus/Livestream platform initially borrowed heavily from the practices of traditional television in platform design, and promoted the ability of users to become media moguls themselves. However, over time, a clearer picture emerged of how the platform was used and what type of content was most successful at drawing an audience. Learning from this beta testing period, the company shifted their focus from democratizing broadcast television to becoming the destination platform for live event television. In support hereof, the New Livestream platform was introduced, which provocatively stated to have redefined the 'live' in live streaming. Here a new constellation of liveness was born. By reflecting on the need for Livestream to institutionalize the platform, I am able to clarify the paradox of liveness.

Following, **chapter two** tackles the online music collaboration platform eJamming. The failure of the platform to deliver on the expectations liveness elicits, helps to demonstrate the constructed nature of liveness. Here I reflect on the fact that eJamming's success relies, in part, on its ability to provide simultaneity between the production, distribution and reception of audio. As such, the notion of real-time is seen as of particular importance to this constellation and it allows for this chapter to provide insight into how the concepts live and real-time, too often used interchangeably, compare and contrast. And whilst the case refutes a technological definition of 'live', it clearly demonstrates how aside from the media institution, technology and users are implicated in the construction of liveness. Moreover, the chapter rather explicitly reveals that 'live' works as an evaluative category. In the specific case of eJamming, it is found that ideas from offline garage rock culture practices drive user expectations of what the platform is and how it can be experienced.

After having explored the relation of liveness to media power in chapter one and deconstructed the constructedness of liveness in chapter two, the attention of the dissertation shifts. It shifts from introducing my approach to liveness, to using liveness to focus an analysis between the media of the broadcast media era and those of the social media era.

Chapter three explores the reality singing competition *The Voice* as social TV. The social TV phenomenon is commonly understood as a response to the demise of broadcast television. In the chapter I trace and analyze the synchronic variations of liveness embedded in the large constellation of the live shows. I show how these constructions arise from the constellation of liveness. Their various *meanings* are part of the *meaning* and *value* of 'live' in *The Voice*'s live shows. By discussing these constructions, I am able to point to several main conditions under which liveness comes to be. Furthermore, the case allows for a consideration of the intensifying relationship between television and social media platforms (i.e. Twitter and Facebook). In this constellation a tension surrounding liveness emerges which centers on the rhythms and temporalities of broadcast television. I connect this tension to discussions on series dumping and Big Data driven artistic strategies, which invites comparison between broadcast media and social media.

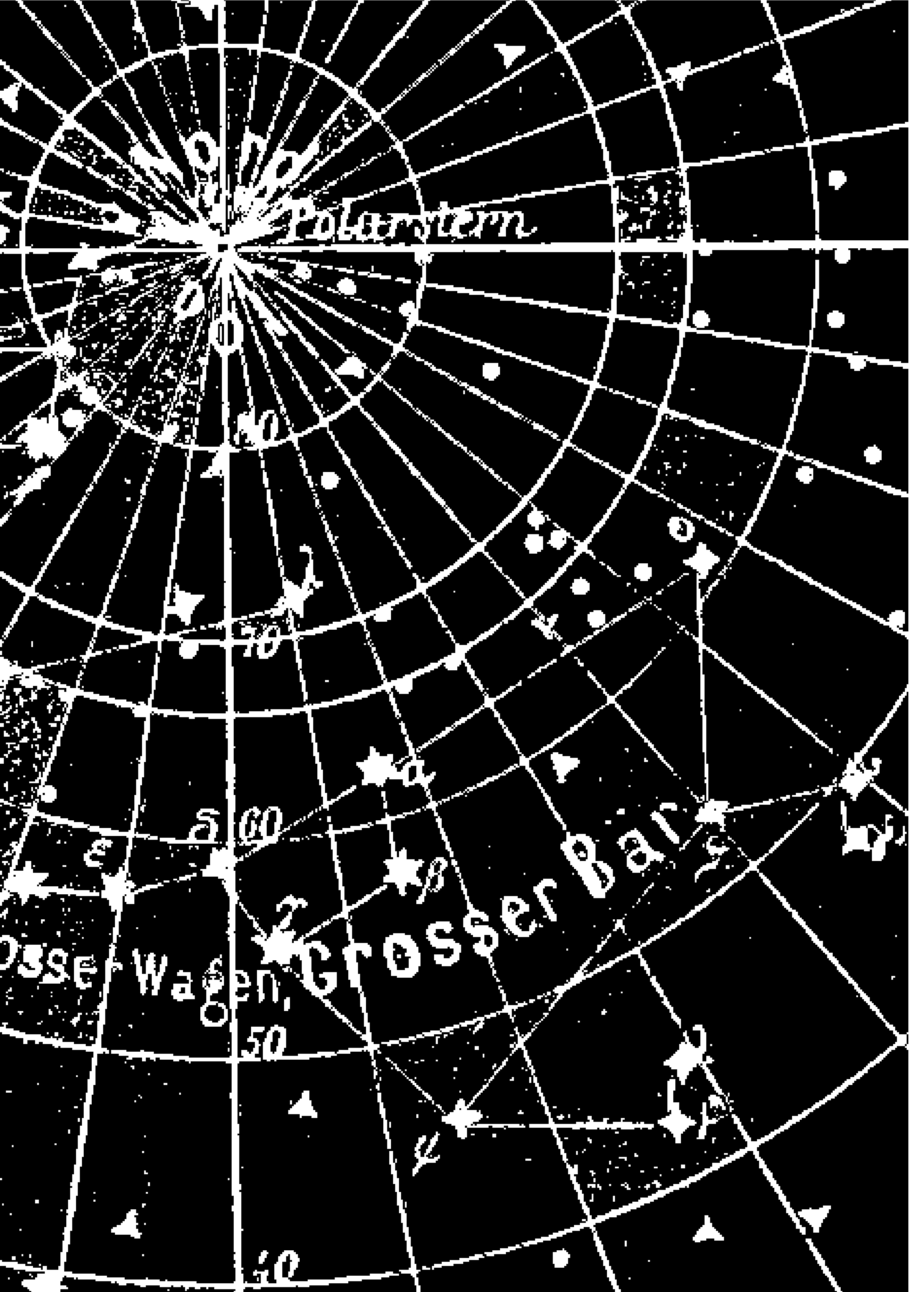
Another tension surrounding liveness surfaces when looking at *The Voice* over the course of five seasons. It concerns the gradual decline of audience participation in the production over the course of the seasons. It is argued

that producers have a desire to control what unfolds on-air which explains why they gradually drew back on the central role of social media in the episodes themselves.

Lastly, **chapter four** zooms in on the social networking site Facebook. Here I explore the feature News Feed, and its Live Feed subsidiary, that has known various reincarnations. In this, the construction of liveness is seen to revolve primarily on the intensity of (algorithmic) selection done for the user when looking at his/her New Feed. Here a tension surrounding liveness emerges focused on the fact that users now have a producer-relation to liveness. This tension leads to a series of connected reflections. The first of these reflections concerns how users are presently able to spread content with the help of social media platforms. And also how, despite users being the ones making content available by uploading it to the platform, the News Feed sorts and filters friends' activities as headlines in a stream through algorithms. Lastly, I consider the emerging Like economy, which centers on data collection across the Web, and personalized targeting of users. Each of the reflections facilitates comparison between the broadcast media era and the social media era.

Essentially then, charting the constellations of liveness in *The Voice* and Facebook allows for a comparison between the 'mechanisms of control' that inform these two different communication models, providing an understanding of how the production and transmission of symbolic forms works. In the meanwhile, these last two chapters equally contribute to developing the concept liveness, helping to address when liveness is and how it operates.

Concluding, this book serves to tie the analyses from the case studies together and revisit liveness as concept in media studies. More specifically, I intend to explore liveness as part of a communication ideal discussing both producer and audience interest in media being 'live'. Moreover, I reflect on when liveness is and return to the tensions surrounding liveness in light of the comparison these elicit between broadcast media and social media. Ultimately, I also consider how my essentially methodological argument can benefit media research.



Polarstern
80
70
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Grosser Bär
Grosser Wagen

1.
The Paradox of Liveness: The Case of Livestream

In the following chapters of this book it is my aim to further develop the idea of the paradox of liveness by analyzing the constellations of liveness of several platforms and to pursue the question of how liveness comes into effect. As mentioned, it is my contention that tracing these constellations will help not only to expose the constructedness of liveness, but also compare and contrast broadcast media to social media. The primary aim of this first chapter is to consider the relation between institutionalization and liveness to tease out the paradox of liveness. I want to do this through a case study that, upon revamping its platform, provocatively claimed to have redefined the 'live', thus making the paradox of liveness particularly explicit. I begin with an analysis of the constellation of liveness for the live streaming video platform named Livestream. This platform was launched under the name Mogulus in 2007, a year in which several live video sites, like Justin.tv, BlogTV and Ustream.tv emerged. My choice for Livestream, over these other rather similar platforms, is motivated by the fact that it transitioned from a user-generated to a more professional market, enabling the parsing out of the paradox of liveness. The shift from Mogulus/Livestream to the New Livestream highlights the problem that emerges when content is left unstructured, and suggests how institutionalization helps the professionalization of content, making the channels more appealing to audiences.

Whereas Mogulus/Livestream initially promoted itself as a site for user-generated channels, the company behind it gradually sought partnerships with event organizers, and worked on becoming a destination platform for live event television. In line with this new interest to cater to event organizers, it revamped the platform and introduced the New Livestream in October 2011, making it available to users in April 2012. This New Livestream platform provocatively claimed to have redefined the 'live' in live streaming, and brought a new constellation of liveness into existence. It is by

comparing and contrasting the two constellations for live streaming on those two versions of the platform that I am able to reflect on the link between liveness and media institutions. In the process, I touch on two observations that relate to developments taking place in traditional broadcast television: (1) the socialization around live broadcasts and (2) the fact that live television is increasingly reserved for event TV.

To realize the above-mentioned aims, the first step I take in this chapter is to analyze the constellation of liveness for the Mogulus/Livestream platform, addressing its metatext, space of participation and user responses. After having considered this constellation, the second step is to evaluate the constellation of liveness that came into effect for the New Livestream platform. This more recent constellation is explored through the example of the Volvo Ocean Race, the event that was used to launch and showcase the platform. Its exploration helps get into focus how the 'live' in live streaming has been redefined. Here, the shift in interest in event television is made apparent, and more importantly, the implications this had for how liveness came to be constructed.

Having studied these two hi hstoric constellations of liveness, I then reflect on the market-failure of the first constellation, wherein users had acquired what I call a *producer-relation* to liveness. Consequently, I argue that liveness has been institutionalized in the New Livestream platform and deliberate on how this need for institutionalization relates to the paradox of liveness.

1.1 THE MOGULUS/LIVESTREAM CONSTELLATION

In the paragraphs that follow I explicate the domains metatext, space of participation and user responses in the Mogulus and the Original Livestream platform. I subsequently connect these domains in order to reveal how the meaning of the 'live' in the Mogulus/Livestream constellation is constructed. I show that they construct the liveness of the platform with explicit reference to ideas of broadcast TV. My contention is that this 'trial phase' (dating from the platform's inception to 2011) can be approached as a single constellation of liveness because of the relative stability in the identity and form of the platform throughout this period. Even though the platform had been renamed and there were some small tweaks and expansions, a more or less

stable concept of liveness was accomplished. I will, however, be touching on the more gradual transition from Mogulus to the Original Livestream which is essentially a tale of how the service shifted from targeting video bloggers to targeting a more diverse group of producers.

1.1.1 The Mogulus/Livestream Metatext: Remediating Traditional TV

Evaluating the first constellation of liveness for Mogulus/Livestream means considering the platform when it was still named Mogulus. In order to understand why the company ventured into live streaming and to trace how the metatext framed the liveness of the platform, I reflect upon an interview conducted by Jamison Tilsner of Tilzy.tv the day after the official launch of Mogulus with Max Haot, co-founder and CEO of Mogulus/Livestream. I complement the insights gained from the interview by analyzing its website between 2007 and 2011, using numerous snapshots archived by the Wayback Machine of the Internet Archive. In addition, I also use the press releases made for the launch and reflect on the composition and layout of the platform itself. It is found that these texts associate the liveness of the platform with traditional (broadcast) television.

In the interview with Tilsner, Haot stated that other live streaming platforms were boring because they offered footage from a single, often stationary, camera (see Figure 1).

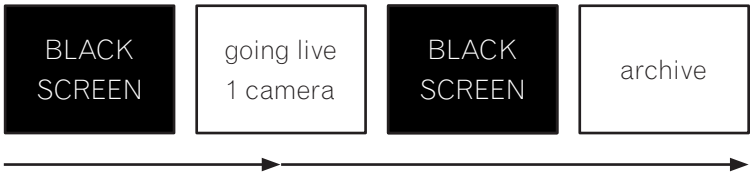


Figure 1: Live as initially practiced on the Internet, according to Haot

Mogulus set itself the challenge to change the 'boring image' of live streaming platforms. In an attempt to make live streaming more interesting, it provided numerous creator tools that expanded the traditional methods of live streaming. It added the possibility for users to switch between multiple real-time cameras (including mobile phones) during a broadcast, and also introduced the possibility of overlay graphics. Furthermore, Mogulus included a video library. As such, users could mix recorded content with real-time footage from cameras. The main message in the Mogulus press material was

that, with its tools, ordinary people could operate their own television station and were able to do all the things a television producer could.

Reflecting on the video library, Haot stated that he thought it was more important that content was being offered in a linear fashion, than if the content was 'live' or not. Statistics Mogulus had gathered suggested that linear programming was good for audience retention, helping to expose viewers to new content and creating the illusion of a continuous stream of fresh content.[1] They concluded that viewers spent more time watching live streaming channels with a constant flow of content than videos featured on-demand.[2]

So far, an impression of the platform has been provided primarily through an interview conducted with one of its founders. Other texts are informative as well in understanding the platform and its metatext. Going back to 2007, I examined snapshots of the company's web pages and for this particular constellation, focused on the website as it was set up in early September 2007, two months before the platform's public launch. These snapshots reveal the original tagline for Mogulus.com to be: "Mogulus gives you everything you need to launch your own LIVE 24/7 television station". As seen in Figure 2, which features a section of the home page of its website, the company also voiced the ambition of enabling user-generated television stations through its tools.

What is perhaps most striking about the text in Figure 2, is how yesterday has been juxtaposed to today (a comparison explored further in the 'About Us' page where graphics are used to show the tools of yesterday – the television control room, video switching hardware and a character generator – and their replacement by the tools of today, in the shape of the Mogulus studio). This way, a discontinuity between the past – in which the landscape is dominated by an institutional center with a concentration of symbolic resources - and present state of affairs - with the possibility for multiple centers of production and consumption - is emphasized.

The platform was referred to on the website as "a revolution in live television" - an idea also expressed in that the subtitle beneath the 'About Us'

1
In video on-demand platforms like YouTube, adaptive agent systems help to create a flow by processing metadata (Uricchio 2004: 176), connecting program units into a sequence of related videos.

2
This has since been confirmed by comScore, a research company specialized in digital marketing intelligence, which posted in September 2010 that on average, a live stream video is watched 7% longer than the typical online video (Palmiter 2010).

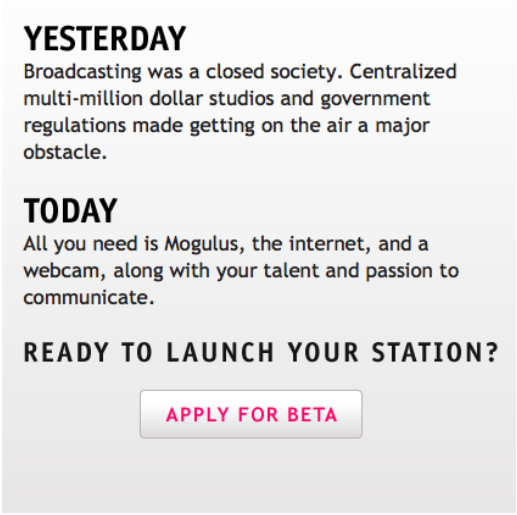


Figure 2: Cropped Snapshot From Mogulus' Homepage on 9 September 2007

button which indicated that the button linked to the Mogulus manifesto, and in a video uploaded to YouTube in 2007 in which an explanation is given of how the system works.[3] The then new service claimed to redistribute agency by giving individuals the tools by which to produce and broadcast content. In short, the message was that Mogulus, paired with the power of the Internet and a webcam, could make broadcasting publicly accessible.

Much like the rhetoric around social media applications in general, the barrier to participation was presented as very low. Realizing a television station was said to be as easy as clicking the 'Apply for Beta' button. The portmanteau 'Mogulus' equally reflects this rather utopian ideal of democratizing broadcast television by playing with the idea that anyone can be transformed into a media mogul. Therein also arises some conflict, as the platform's promise also centers on no more moguls determining what gets broadcast. Transforming the user into a mogul allows him/her to perpetuate that power themselves.

By mid-2008, a shift in narrative was evident, in that more parties were being identified on the website for whom the platform would be suitable. At the time, the following was posted on the homepage:

3
"Mogulus – How It Works," YouTube, posted May 10, 2007, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gVjPHAUpBo.

Whether you are a video blogger, independent producer or large media company, there's a Mogulus for you. Click here to get started!

This shift, I find, can be explained in part by the fact that in July 2008 Gannett Company Inc., who was using the Mogulus tools for USA TODAY and several other newspapers, television and radio stations that it owned in the USA and UK, invested $10 million in the live streaming service (Haot 2008). The financial sector crashed shortly after this investment, which encouraged Mogulus to begin deploying and monetizing premium business (Haot in TechCrunch 2011). In line with this, the company found it necessary to rebrand itself in May 2009, introducing the same functions under a different look and name. They hoped that by changing their name to Livestream the platform would become more synonymous with live streaming (Parr 2009).

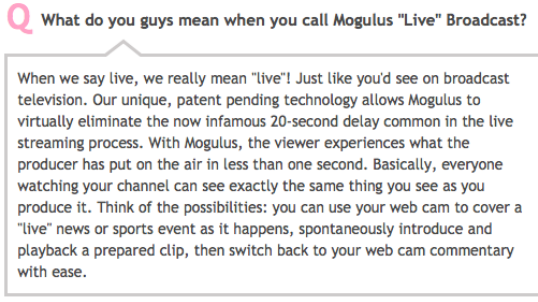


Figure 3: Cropped Snapshot From Mogulus' FAQ Section on 9 September 2007

In terms of how Mogulus promoted live streaming, the platform was persistently being compared to live broadcasting. A suggestion towards a definition of live broadcasting was made in the FAQ section of the website in 2007 (see Figure 3).

In the FAQ the 'live' of live streaming has plainly been defined as the liveness found in broadcast television. Here the technological dimension of the definition of live is touched on as it is claimed that the platform is able to offer this liveness by having eliminated the common 20-second delay in live streaming. This instantaneous connection allows the platform to connect producers and viewers in "less than one second". Liveness was, however, considered to be more than simply instantaneity. Evidence from how the sharing of a frame of reference, a social dimension of liveness, is alluded to here.

Again, the liveness of the platform is being directly associated with broadcast television.

Mogulus explicitly remarked on its website that it was paying homage to traditional television. The question that then emerges is: how so? The metatext puts forth that they decidedly mimic the medium of television by (a) offering users the tools to produce a *linear* viewing experience and (b) the ability to mix 'live' and recorded content. Recall how this is how Haot said the company attempted to differentiate itself from the 'boring' image of live streaming platforms. And in explaining Mogulus on the homepage of its website, it was stated:

> With Mogulus, you can blend your webcam, video clips from YouTube, and your own original content into your own unique TV program - and you call all the shots. When you're not broadcasting live, turn on the auto-pilot and let it drive your playlist.

Linear programming, as earlier mentioned, had the advantage of audience retention as even after a live broadcast, viewers could be kept entertained on the channel with pre-recorded and on-demand video. It links directly to the paradox of liveness, as it suggests the need to 'control' content by using the possibility to structure program units and graphicize liveness into fragments in order to attract audiences.[4]

Even over the years that followed the platform's renaming, the company continued to compare its live streaming to traditional TV. This comparison was most apparent in the product tour offered on its website in 2011, where slogans such as "Just like you see on television", "Just like traditional TV" and "Like any multi-million dollar studio" were used.

To further enhance the understanding of how the 'live' of the Mogulus/Livestream constellation had been constructed, it is also fruitful to briefly consider the organization of the channels on the platform. This too, I would intend, fuels the metatext in that it informs the understanding of the platform. The platform started out with the Mogulus Grid in 2007, a feature that showed the 26 most popular Mogulus channels live on the same screen,

4
In Mogulus' explanation of 'live broadcast', live cameras were contrasted to video clips. This distinction shows that the constellation of liveness of the Mogulus platform was informed by another 'live' construct: that of the live camera. For now I leave that insight for what it is and pick it up in chapter two where I intend to trace how multiple constructions of live can be embedded in a larger constellation.

and was combined with a chat feature. The platform also included a program guide to search/browse the channels that were not shown in the Grid. Then in late January 2008, a list of channel categories was introduced and then by the first week of December 2008 the Grid had been removed. The switch between these two features is to me an indication as to their transformation to a platform for more professional content, providing enhanced navigational tools to find content. The different website layouts experimented with, from its inception up until 2008, reflected a particular interest in the 'Live Now' channels. In so doing, a hierarchy was created wherein *live now* content was privileged over all other types of content.[5]

The Original Livestream platform was organizationally more streamlined than Mogulus, in that, other than a long list of categories, it selected top categories which expanded in a dropdown menu. In addition to 'Live Now', these top categories were: 'News', 'Entertainment', 'Music', 'Sports', 'Games', and 'Xfire Games'. The presence of these categories corresponds to the idea that the platform positioned itself more conform to traditional television than to other online video platforms such as YouTube (on-demand) and Ustream (live).

There was, however, one category featured on the Mogulus and Original Livestream platform atypical to traditional television, namely 'Lifecasting'. It refers to a genre of online video which centers on the continual real-time broadcast of one's life through first person video. Moreover, the platform introduced the categories 'Games', and 'Xfire Games'. Both refer to channels where 'gamers' share their gameplay with others. Although the games categories can be found on traditional television, they are not principal categories there. Through their dominance on the Mogulus/Livestream platform they become central to the meaning of the live streaming of the constellation. In essence, both these categories reaffirmed how the liveness in this constellation concerned a space where amateurs, rather than professionals, could broadcast their content.

1.1.2 **The Space of Participation**

For the moment, I leave aside the question of metatext and sketch the space of participation of the Mogulus and the Original Livestream platforms by

5
They developed the Mogulus Grid for the public launch scheduled in November 2007.

investigating their design. I begin by comparing the basic interface of live streaming platforms (i.e. Mogulus, the Original Livestream, Justin.tv and Ustream) to that of the on-demand streaming platform YouTube. The goal of this comparison is twofold. First off, it helps provide a basic outline of the space of participation of the Mogulus and the Original Livestream platform for viewers. Secondly, the comparison also foregrounds the seemingly inextricable relation between the live transmission of content and real-time socialization on streaming platforms more in general, which I use to reflect on the connection between liveness and interactivity. After the discussion of the space of participation encountered by platform viewers, I reflect on the so-called *creator tools* of the Mogulus and the Original Livestream platforms, available to registered users, which allow for the production and distribution of video content.[6]

At the Interface: Interaction Around Live Content

When considering the space of participation of live streaming platforms and on-demand streaming platforms in broad strokes, focusing on how they are used to view (rather than to produce) content, a couple of main features they share are plain. For starters, both provide users with the option to share video content (through Facebook or Twitter) or copy either the embed code or hyperlink. Furthermore, they allow for the content to be 'liked' and for the user to make recommendations as to what other content viewers are likely to enjoy, based on the viewing and browsing behaviors of platform users.

There are also several obvious differences between the two. FFirst, live streaming platforms all seemingly note how many people are watching content *now*. This is true not only in the case of the Mogulus and the Original Livestream platforms (which note the number of viewers), but also for Ustream (which notes the number of current/total views), and Justin.tv (which notes the number of viewers/followers/views). It therein differs from YouTube where the total amount of views is tallied. This quick-and-dirty comparison suggests that simultaneous viewing is considered an important aspect of live content.

Another difference, related to the first, is that the live streaming

6
It is worth emphasizing that I am not out to reiterate the binary producer-consumer (let my use of the concept 'space of participation' be a testament to that); however, for the sake of clarity, I have used these positions to delineate what practices the platforms afforded.

platforms offer a chat module that allows for real-time interaction between viewers. The chat-module also facilitates logging on to Facebook and Twitter, providing a timeline of the comments made on these social networking platform, enabling viewers to join the conversation. By contrast, YouTube, as an on-demand streaming platform, provides a space below videos for users to leave comments that are date and time stamped. It is telling, I find, that with YouTube Live, its platform for streaming live events, a counter showing how many people are watching now and a chat module are also featured. This suggests a relation between live content and interactivity.

The consideration of the two types of streaming platforms proposes a natural relation between live transmission and real-time social interactions. This relates to an insight by Couldry, who argues that interactivity around content is a means of "showing, in performance, the otherwise merely assumed connection between medium and representative social group" (2003: 109). Understood in this way, the view counter and chat module fuel the idea of collective viewing, offering viewers the possibility to be a part of the event by discussing it with others as it unfolds. It furthermore proposes that the content is important and must be seen *now* rather than later. It seems to me, however, that in a failure to capture continuous activity, this 'strategy' could easily backfire, by highlighting the fact that no one is watching.

User-Generated Television

In addition to the space of participation for the viewer at the interface, there is also the space of participation that emerges in relation to the available creator tools (i.e. when the platform is used to *produce* rather than *consume* content). Here, techno-cultural, economic, and legal forces are at work shaping how users produce and distribute television. These forces are tackled in successive order in the following paragraphs.

For those working with the creator tools of the Mogulus and Original Livestream platforms, there are several techno-cultural factors that shaped the production and distribution process. The most basic of these was the recommendation that users have a 700 Kbps minimum upstream bandwidth, to ensure streaming at a high video quality.[7] In light of the fact that

7
When the platform was still named Mogulus it was only 500kbps, because streaming at higher bandwidth was not yet an option.

the average national upload speed in the United States was 595 kbps in 2010,[8] this begs the question as to how many people actually had the proper resources to use the platform optimally. It could be argued that the company targeted a tech-savvy crowd, but that would contradict its claim to democratize television.

As Mogulus, the platform offered a single tool to produce a live broadcast through Mogulus Studio (a browser-based encoder). Eventually, as Livestream, it added two more creator tools: Webcaster (a browser-based application) and Procaster (a web-based application). I address their basic affordances presently, noting beforehand that all three methods enabled producers to chat with the viewers of their channel through the chat client and to send tweets from within the application.

Mogulus Studio was the most expansive of the three tools, and was the first and only tool available in 2007; following the rebranding, it was renamed the 'Livestream Studio'. This tool enabled mixing graphics, videos and webcam footage in real-time. Producers could also enter a text graphic in the lower third of the video content or create a scrolling ticker bar. Livestream Studio was distinct from Webcaster and Procaster in that it featured an autopilot function and offered tools to manage the public video-on-demand library. With autopilot, users could create and queue storyboards. Here users could store videos that had been either uploaded, or imported from pod casts, webservers or a YouTube account. The Livestream Studio also enabled users to work with multiple cameras.

As indicated earlier, in the platform metatext it was stressed that the Mogulus/Livestream offered creator tools that reference traditional television practices, allowing for linear programming. The autopilot feature, made available with Livestream Studio, can be seen as the materialization of that ambition. Here producers could broadcast to audiences even when they were not live broadcasting and the autopilot could be set to activate the playlist, in the case that a live video encountered unexpected downtime. Furthermore, the tool was a multi-user application facilitating the collaboration of multiple producers, who were possibly even scattered across the globe, in real-time.

By contrast, Procaster and Webcaster, only made available per June

8
Source: Speed Matter and Communications Workers of America, "A Report on Internet Speeds in All 50 States," Speed Matters, posted November 2010, http://www.speedmatters.org/2010report?nocdn=1.

2009, were fairly simple tools that allowed users to set up a live broadcast in minutes.[9] Procaster was encoding software that needed to be downloaded and installed first. However, the software (at least, version 20.2.28) was not equally accessible to all computer owners, as certain system requirements had to be met for proper installation.

With the Procaster software, users could encode settings as well as the input source for video and audio. It enabled users to stream 'live' from a cellular phone or video camera and offered a selection of settings for the broadcast with Game Mode, Screen Mode or 3D Mix. Procaster allowed users to screencast from their desktop in 2D Mix or 3D Mix. Whereas the 2D Mix displayed the secondary screen in the bottom left corner of the screen, the 3D Mix option displayed the secondary video source next to the full screen capture window. The Game Mode option enabled users to broadcast gameplay in full frame rate. In order to broadcast gameplay in full frame rate, however, users needed a computer that ran Windows OS.

Webcaster, on the other hand, was a web-based application intended as "a simplified web-based version of Procaster".[10] With it, users could record their broadcast and have the completed recording imported into the record section, added to the autopilot or on-demand library. Also, next to the text monitor, users could select one of three options: 'local', 'remote' or 'off'. Selecting 'Local' allowed them to see the direct camera feed. With 'Remote' they could see what was being broadcast on the channel they were broadcasting on. The 'Off' options enabled the monitor to be turned off.

Each of the three tools explored above changed the type of video content that could be produced and distributed through the platform. In affording and constraining broadcast production in different ways, they contributed to the meaning of the liveness of the platform. Moreover, they can all be seen as part of the desire of the company Livestream to making live streaming about linear programming.

With respect to economic forces shaping the space of participation, Mogulus/Livestream has experimented with different ways of securing a revenue stream. In their early days Mogulus worked with overlay advertising.

9

A snapshot of the website on 15 June 2009 announces Procaster as a new feature. Webcaster is mentioned in the forum for the first time in September 2009.

10

"Webcaster," Livestream, n.d., http://www.livestream.com/userguide/index.php?title=Webcaster.

Then in December 2008, it introduced Mogulus Pro, officially pursuing what is called a freemium model: offering the service for free, but charging for a package of premium features (Hopkins 2008). By 2011 it diversified these premium features, offering several different pricing options for the Original Livestream platform. These options will be discussed shortly. But first, I would like to highlight the main challenges facing live streaming platforms that are centered on the hosting of user-generated content (UGC). I do so by reflecting on the wait-and-see approach of YouTube towards live streaming. This will be used to help explore Mogulus/Livestream and should benefit the understanding of why Mogulus was rebranded, and its decision to pursue a new revenue stream focusing on more professional rather than user-generated content.

Nicholas Carlson (2008) has connected YouTube's hesitance to offer live streaming (which it has, however, since ventured into) to two interrelated problems that concern monetization. The first of these is the fact that advertisers don't want to advertise next to low-quality user-generated content (Kim 2012). They are afraid of losing control over what their message would be displayed in relation to. The risk being that their message is placed besides an antagonistic video (i.e. a campaign banner against underage drinking paired with a video of a group of intoxicated teenagers). By contrast, mainstream media have successfully co-evolved to meet the demands of advertising and reinforce its messages (Andrejevic 2009: 414).

The problem of 'uncontrollable users' is in fact relevant to all platforms hosting user-generated content (Carlson 2008), including Livestream. In opening up to user-contributions, a platform can be used for the sharing of indecent and pirated materials. The question that has emerged as a result of such illegal practices, and which has played out in court, is who can and should be held accountable for what is shared on these platforms. In a producer-controlled space, such as created in traditional television, certain parties can be held responsible for what is broadcast. The matter is not that simple, however, with platforms that host material for millions of individual producers from around the globe.

The Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA), a US law established in 1998, protects service providers from the infringement violations of their platform users. The law does, nevertheless, mandate that service providers remove infringing material 24 hours after receiving a legitimate takedown notice from the rights owners. For many years, to prevent users from uploading

pirated material, YouTube for example, enforced a time limit for uploaded videos. When an improved Content ID system made it easier for YouTube to filter out pirated content in 2010, it lifted the aforementioned restriction for selected users (Siegel 2010). However, for Livestream, where videos are produced, distributed and most consumed as the event transpires, such a removal window makes little sense (most potential viewers would have readily watched the stream by the time it is removed). So whereas with on-demand video platforms content can be removed when the copyright holder files a complaint, or infringing materials can be tracked through filtering technologies, with live video content the timeframe in which to act on the infringement is fleeting. For a platform like Livestream, then, the monitoring of user content is even more pressing and complex. Live content requires an automatic takedown system that allows rights-holders to kill streams without having to send takedown notices. This demands a more active role on the part of the platform in the prevention of infringement.

Livestream, Haot has claimed, has wanted to retain the free model made possible by advertisements, keeping the platform open to user-generated content, whilst concurrently trying to prevent advertisements from accompanying illegal content. In order to accomplish this, the company enacted what it called a "zero tolerance policy on piracy". It developed a way to efficiently monitor the platform for copyright breaches, namely by focusing on channels that attracted over 50 concurrent viewers. So rather than having to filter through millions of channels, it only had a list of several thousand to monitor.

In February 2009, Livestream implemented the rule that users who set up a free channel were limited to 50 concurrent viewers as long as their channel remained unverified. This also meant that the channel was not mentioned in the platform channel guide. In order for these restrictions to be lifted, users could have their channel verified for free. The verification process required that the user revealed what he/she intended to use their channel for in a short text. This was a way for the platform to protect itself in the case of infringement. They could then claim to have been misled by the channel user, who had stated intentions for the channel that did not suspect infringement. In short, Livestream's approach to piracy not only helped prevent users from streaming pirated content, but also limited the amount of concurrent viewers they could have, unless they opted to have their channel verified.

Another challenge identified by Carlson that prevented YouTube from joining the live stream bandwagon earlier is the overhead expenses of live streaming. He provides that,

> Live streaming is very expensive and hard to monetize [...] if just 10% of YouTube's users adopted live streaming, bandwidth costs would go up 20% to 25%. That's because live streaming clips tend to last much longer than the short video clips typical of YouTube. (Carlson 2008: n.p.)

Despite the relatively high costs of bandwidth for live streaming compared to on-demand platforms, Haot has defended live streaming as a good business strategy on the grounds that the average viewing session on the Livestream network was some 16 minutes, which is similar to Hulu, which features long video forms. By comparison, the average session on YouTube at that time was only around three to four minutes (Beet.TV 2011).[11] Success here is being defined by the ability to capture and attain audience's attention (with the possibility of selling these audiences to an advertiser).

Offering live streaming for 'free' to users makes it very hard to contain the costs of bandwidth. As stated, at first Mogulus offered free use of its services, but with overlay advertising. Later in 2008, it opted for a freemium model, in which the Pro account provided expanded features and the possibility to remove advertisements. Just before it was revamped as the New Livestream in late 2011, the Original Livestream platform offered three different plans: the 'free plan', 'channel plan' and 'network plan'. They corresponded to three types of users envisioned for the platform: individuals, professionals and organizations. It should be noted that Livestream was breaking even for the first time in 2011 (Haot in TechCrunch 2011), after premium services were put on offer.

The 'free plan' offered users unlimited free channels, ad-supported streaming, SD quality and a 10 GB storage limit. For $3,500 per year it was possible to upgrade to a 'channel plan' which offered one premium channel, including 3,000 viewer hours, 1,000 GB storage and HD quality streams. The 'network plan' cost $12,500 per year. It featured 10 premium channels with 15,000 viewer hours and the same amount of storage and video quality

11
There is some conflict in the numbers concerning online video between Nielsen and comScore. For my purposes these discrepancies are not troubling, as Haot cites comScore and uses them to promote his cause.

as subscribers of the premium channel plan. It was the premium plans, and the investments from third parties, that made the free plan possible. Aside from more storage space, the channel plan and network plan allowed producers to remove Livestream branding and to monetize content through advertising.

At this stage, it should be clear that the three plans each afforded and constrained users in their activities differently. Basically, the more people were willing to pay for the service, the more they could do with the broadcast, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Moreover, I hope to have made evident that there were problems facing platforms in finding business-models around user-generated.

1.1.3 **User Reponses**

Having examined both the metatext and space of participation, a closer examination of user comments and practices on the forum during the time frame 2007-2011, will help to further understand the construction of the 'live' on this live streaming platform. Here I include a consideration of the channels that were listed in the channel guide. I find that their listing bears on their ability to attract more than 50 concurrent viewers thus reflective of user practice.

The Livestream forum provided users a space to pose questions on how the software works, and raise problems they encountered in working with the software or in getting hardware hooked up (i.e. cameras and microphones). On the forum there were several discussions on copyright issues and particularly what constitutes a copyright violation. But with particular respect to liveness, there was only really one question, raised by two different users, that helps to provide insight into how users understood the 'live' in live streaming.[12] The question they raised concerned how they could identify whether the video being streamed on a channel was in fact 'live'. For instance, Animemog remarked the following:

12
Again here I must note that exploring user responses is not about conducting representative research, but about locating comments and/or practices that reveal something about the liveness of the platform.

> Sorry for being a bit of a newb, but how do I know if a channel is live or showing a pre-record? I've watched some streams with a decent amount of people and then the video will seamlessly change and then I realize it's not live at all. And when it is pre-recorded, I don't know which video it's playing from the playlist.[13]

And Frank Adams raised the following question:

> I am watching a whole series of streams. Some of them are live, others are recorded and replays. Is there any way to tell which ones are live and which are replays?[14]

The confusion these viewers had concerned the point of reference for the 'live' in live streaming. The Livestream Support replied to these questions with the following answer: "A feed that is broadcasting live will say 'LIVE' next to the pause button on the bottom left corner of the player".

However from playing around with the options myself, I found that, the way content was labeled, the chromo key that identified live broadcasts equally featured for content such as music videos. And so the stream was being presented as 'live' at the viewer. The red icon identifying the material as live only disappeared with videos loaded from the channel library (and, interesting with respect to my earlier observation, along with this the counter which kept track of how many people were watching the content at a given point in time). It seems then that there was miscommunication between the tech support and platform users. Whereas the answer of the former referred to the status of *transmission*, the viewers had actually asked how to distinguish between prerecorded content and content broadcast at the time of its recording (the latter's definition of 'live' in this instance). What this shows is how different interpretations of the term 'live' can clash when its point of reference is not clearly identified.

Then turning to user practice, as mentioned earlier, I explored the channels officially listed in the Livestream channel guide. I consider this a 'practice' because, as per February 2009, the channel guide reflected viewership

13
"Live or pre-recorded," comment posted on October 24, 2010, http://www.livestream.com/forum/showthread.php?t=5271.

14
"How can you tell if it is really live?," comment posted on November 16, 2011, http://www.livestream.com/forum/showthread.php?t=8355.

quantitatively. Channels were limited to 50 concurrent viewers unless they had sought verification. And verification was a prerequisite for being listed in the channel guide. I find it likely then that only those channels exceeding 50 concurrent would thus seek verification.[15] By 2010, the majority of the listed channels were either broadcast/stream footage of name brands, events (e.g. concerts from popular bands such as Foo Fighters) or operated by small existing media institutions (i.e. local radio stations who now offered a live video stream of their DJs at work), high schools and universities. Of course, this does not necessarily say anything as to the ratio of user-generated channels as many of these may simply not have been listed.

The ubiquity of professional content in the listing certainly suggests that established institutions are better able than individual users to attract larger audiences. Statements made by platform founder Haot in an interview held with *Inc.com* in 2013 in fact support this observation. The piece contains several reflections on how individuals used the platform and the problems they faced when running their own television channel. Haot:

> And we put that service out there called Mogulus and we were seeing bloggers starting to use it and then they would stop using it because they didn't have the *content*, they didn't have the *audience*, they didn't have the *know-how*. But then we found event owners were starting to use our service. And then we would see that at bigger audience [***sic***], the content was more compelling because it's an event. It's already there, you just capture the event. (in Maclean 2013: n.p., my emphasis)[16]

Apparent is that people simply weren't watching the content being produced by these individuals, ironically decreasing their visibility on the website even more, whilst events were attracting viewers and featured front and center.

In summary, even though the platform was successful in lowering the

15
I realize this is an assumption I am making, and it might be that even those without 50 concurrent viewers sought verification in order to be listed. However, the conclusion I draw on the basis of this assumption, as I discuss shortly, corresponds to how the CEO of the company reflects on platform use.

16
In an earlier interview held with *TechCrunch* in 2011 he made a similar observation. Haot stated that,

> Bloggers really don't have the resources, monetization, the content, the audience, so they would try [to set up a channel] and it would stop. But then, every time an event used the platform, you know, it was very successful. It made sense and it would keep happening every time at all of them.

threshold to television production and distribution, individuals failed to offer compelling content. In a sense, to push this point even further, they failed to deliver 'live', as a qualitative category, content. It is the paradox in action, by providing that content needs to be 'controlled' in order for it to be made economically viable.

By exploring the constellation of liveness of the Mogulus and Original Livestream platforms, several insights have been gained into how liveness took shape on the platform and on the nature ('meaning') of the liveness construct (within the platform's particular constellation). Apparent was, however, that the company, at this time, was in an exploratory phase, still experimenting with finding a way to make the platform catch on. In the process, it shifted away from its original audience of individual users - as well as its ambitions to revolutionize traditional television - and began to target event organizers as potential clients.

From the start, the tools made available to the producers supported a 'new' conception of live streaming, one that was no longer bound to a single (web)camera and allowed for continuous broadcast in a mix of recorded and so-called 'live' content. In doing so, live streaming borrowed heavily from a particular conception of broadcast television, which involved production tools that facilitated the use of multiple cameras, could add text overlays, a ticker, and could create linear programming through a mix of live and non-live material.

Even though the conception of liveness in the Mogulus/Livestream constellation borrowed heavily from notions associated with traditional television, the platform refashioned some aspects too. This is evident in how new cultural practices, like 'homecasting' (van Dijck 2007) defined as the sharing of self-made content from home to home, and cultural forms (e.g. game casting), emerged on the live streaming platform. This is related, of course, to the opportunity viewers had to produce content of their own. Offline practices like recording gameplay and keeping a diary have gained their online cultural counterparts on Livestream. These genres are, clearly, less common in broadcast television.

The ways viewers were able to engage with video content on the Original Livestream platform is in many ways very similar to watching content on a traditional television set. Even the chat function and 'Share' and 'Like' buttons resemble existing offline practices (e.g. water cooler conversation,

lending out tapes and making viewing recommendations). What differentiates live streaming platforms here, is not only that the television production process has been drastically simplified, in that it requires less specialized know-how, but also how many people can now financially afford to create a television channel for themselves, not having to purchase expensive equipment for production and distribution.

Essentially, the platform has put an interesting 'spin' on liveness by offering audiences a very different relation to content than they have thus far been accustomed to. Rather than the *user-relation to liveness*, which viewers were familiar with from the broadcast model - where content was pushed at them - users could now enter a *producer-relation to liveness* in that they were able to broadcast content themselves. However, as has been evident in the course of scrutiny, the older platform was rather unsuccessful in realizing its ambitions. In the Mogulus/Livestream constellation individuals did not have the content, audience and know-how to run a channel, so the platform consisted of many unstructured feeds that were unable to attract an audience. As the next section deals with, by institutionalizing liveness in the New Livestream constellation, structured feeds and event television - which were far better able in drawing eyeballs - became the platform norm.

1.2 FROM USERS TO EVENT OWNERS: THE NEW CONSTELLATION

Having dealt with the Mogulus/Livestream constellation, I now explore the New Livestream constellation that was pushed into service. I do so by zooming-in on the Volvo Ocean Race, an event that spanned the period from October 2011 to July 2012, after having provided some context for the introduction of the new platform. I use this event to explore the constellation, because it had been specifically selected to showcase the features and identity of the new platform. In this consideration, user responses to the platform where notably absent, which suggests to me that the users didn't take particular issue with the platform's own conception of liveness. In this section I seek to demonstrate that with the new constellation the meaning of the 'live' in live streaming was no longer inspired by traditional television, but rather on facilitating the experience of 'being there'.

1.2.1 **The Metatext: Being There**

In order to get a general sense of the metatext, I consider and connect insights harvested from several sources: a TechCruch TV interview with Livestream founder Haot, the platform website and the Volvo Ocean Race promotional video. Their analysis equally helps me to outline some of the main functions of the new platform.

By late 2011 Livestream had built a new platform, introduced to the market as 'the New Livestream'. Around that period, in an interview with TechCrunch TV, Haot motivated why a new platform was necessary (see TechCrunch 2011). He claimed that although the product had been 'right' all along, it had been paired with the wrong vision (i.e. democratizing broadcast television). When it became clear that live streaming events attracted far larger audiences than user channels ever could, the company slowly started to shift its attention to this 'event television' market. It began specializing in providing event owners the tools for broadcasting their event live and engaging an audience.

With the New Livestream platform, the metatext and space of participation were fundamentally modified, producing a new constellation for live streaming. This break from the old was very explicit in the provocative slogan that accompanied the new platform: "Live. Redefined". The mission statement was also revised, the company now stating as its primary aim:

> to provide the premiere interactive live streaming platform for every event owner, broadcaster and premium rights holder in the music, movie, newspaper, radio and television industries.

In order to trace the changes in the metatext over time, I again used the Wayback Machine to access snapshots of Livestream's past web pages with the goal of locating a shift in how the company framed the 'live' in live streaming. Doing so brings to the fore that a subtle change was made to the main webpage title, somewhere between late August and early September 2010. It went from reading "Livestream – Broadcast Live streaming video" to include the words "BE THERE". This is a clear indication that with the New Livestream platform, the platform was sold to users as a way to be a part of the event, by watching and engaging with channels, rather than encouraging starting a channel of their own, as was the case with the Original Livestream platform. The shift in the company's focus, now targeting event

owners as potential clients, became visible to the website visitor with the new website in 2012, when rather than an invitation to "Broadcast Now", when logging onto the website, he/she was invited to "Discover & Experience Live Events".

The New Livestream is a platform that aggregates live streaming events ranging in production quality. Because it is unable to compete with cable television, which has a more profitable economic model due to the rights of premium content, it serves the mid- and lower market of event television.[17] The platform, says Haot, differentiates itself from competitors like Brightcove and Ooyala in that it aims to be a destination platform, providing not only the technology that makes the live streaming of events possible, but also the promotion of these events. It is YouTube Live that presently poses the biggest threat to Livestream's operations, although YouTube seems to target the somewhat higher end of the market (in Beet.TV 2011).

Throughout the TechCrunch TV video interview shortly after the launch of the new platform in November 2011, Haot persistently described Livestream as a service by which to extend physical events.[18] With the emphasis shift to the streaming of live events, *presencing* the viewer became a central value perpetuated through the metatext, perhaps best captured by the new "BE THERE" slogan. This new direction for Livestream was sold to the public as a means to help event owners extend their physical event to mobile devices and the web in real-time.

Haot claimed that the New Livestream provides a 'unique' experience of liveness. His goal was to accomplish an experience of liveness that went beyond simply adding a chat function to the page (as he accused the other live streaming of doing). A clue as to how the platform thus redefined live streaming was given on their new website:

> A live stream is no longer solely about live video. We now support realtime text updates, video clips and photos seamlessly integrated with live video posted from desktop and mobile devices.

17
It promised that the free channels for live streaming would remain available, and that the Original Livestream platform would be supported - but only until (at least) 2014.

18
He even suggested that whereas viewers may prefer to be present at the actual event, Livestream is a good alternative.

The above reference suggests that the multiplication of channels and media surrounding and integrated in the event are crucial to the new experience provided by the New Livestream platform. It coincides with the trend of incorporating social media in television, a topic discussed in more length in chapter three when I consider *The Voice*.

1.2.2 The Volvo Ocean Race: The Metatext and Space of Participation

In order to capture the constellation of liveness for the New Livestream, I now turn to the Volvo Ocean Race event. This world yacht race takes place every three years and was used in late 2011 to showcase the New Livestream platform. Examining the promotion of the new platform through this event, functions to further explicate the metatext of the new constellation and delineate the platform's space of participation. In addition to the platform itself, I consulted the Livestream website, which at the time centered on the race, as well as the promotional video for the race and a PDF document on the website entitled "What is the New Livestream?" that explored the platform and its values. The metatext and space of participation have been taken together as they strongly interweave in this particular constellation. However, I first consider these when in a user-relation to liveness (using the platform as viewer), and then consider a producer-relation to liveness (using the platform to produce channels).

At the Interface

With respect to the metatext, although already discussed in broader terms earlier, I want to briefly point out the two central claims made through the promotional texts of the Volvo Ocean race. These two ideas about the new platform have, I dare assert, been implemented in the design of the platform (and are therein connected to its space of participation). First off, the platform claimed to be "social at the core". Secondly, aside from a more social experience, the platform claimed to be able to bring the viewer "into the race" and to "take [him/her] on the journey out to sea". The promotional video and website promoted the idea of the platform providing a *holistic* experience of the event. The platform slogan of "Being There" equally reinforced this claim. Because the promotional video for the race summarizes many of the new features of the platform, it is a fruitful source to start delineating the space of participation and connecting it to the two central claims

perpetuated in the metatext.

With respect to its claim of being "social at the core", compared to the Original Livestream platform, the new platform expanded the opportunities for social interaction. There are two types of relations mediated by the new platform and that can be discussed to illustrate the expansions of the space of participation: (1) connecting viewers to each other and (2) connecting viewers to the event.

In terms of the connecting viewers to each other, like the Original Livestream, the New Livestream platform provided viewers with several simple means to interact with others. Users could share content with others, through a chat module and a comments section. Additionally, it offered several ways through which users could interact with the channels featured on the platform: they could (a) comment on (media) posts, (b) follow a channel, (c) 'like' posts or (d) share posts via Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr or e-mail. Furthermore – and here the discontinuity with the old platform is evident – the New Livestream platform allowed users to create profile pages and have a customized homepage feed where they could receive updates from the channels they followed. While they could now follow channels and receive notifications of upcoming events, users could also, similar to social networking sites, choose to follow other users. Just like on the first Livestream platform, the streamed content had a viewer ticker. But an extension of this idea was implemented on the new platform. Here, channel pages listed the amount of total followers an event had, and how many of these followers were viewing the channel page ('Here Now'). Both facilitated awareness of other viewers, fulfilling the function of having the content appear to have vast reach and command mass interest.

As for connecting viewers to the event, the New Livestream platform provided multiple ways for viewers to do so. According to the promotional video, these were:

1. An inside view of the event realized by real-time text and photo updates from official photographers integrated with the live video broadcast.
2. Access to photo, text and video clips sent by the boats through satellite straight to the users on the event-related channels.
3. An instant SMS and e-mail notification directly from the team a user follows as the action unfolds.

These means of allowing users to connect to the event correspond to the idea of the new platform bringing viewers 'into the action'. The promo boasts that a satellite connection facilitates 24/7 updates and "raw access" as the boats send media made available to the viewers *en direct*. Moreover, "official" photojournalists on the ground and in the air would provide an "inside view" of the action. The video perpetuates the values of *authenticity* and *presence*, which are brought to bear on the liveness of the platform.

Aside from providing viewers with access to the event from multiple perspectives, the new platform equally allowed users to receive real-time notifications through e-mail, SMS or iPhone push. They could furthermore follow the race from the perspective of one of the teams by watching and/or subscribing to their Livestream channel. The voice-over in the promo assures viewers that, thanks to all these new features, they never have to miss any of the action. Succinctly, the New Livestream platform is all about making viewers feel present at the event by expanding the access to the event, both spatially (from *which perspective* one can experience the event) and temporally (*when* one can experience the event).

The video pushed the idea of a more holistic experience of events. Two main features were mentioned as key to providing such an experience. The first was the so-called adaptive quality selection. This meant that content viewers, based on their connection speed and computer power, could select in which quality they preferred to watch the video streams. The new platform made it possible to watch up to 720p HD. The second mentioned feature was the DVR functionality, which allowed viewers to rewind and replay the video stream. A superimposition in the top left corner of the stream identified the content either as "LIVE" or "DVR".

These features were all equally mentioned in a PDF document put on their website to introduce the platform. In that document, stability and scale were also mentioned as core values. More specifically, they boasted that the new platform could stream live to one million+ concurrent viewers. I find this indicative of their pursuit for a more professional client base.

Producing Content

Having addressed the ways that the platform invited the viewer to interact with content and other viewers, I presently consider how the platform changed for those wanting to produce channels.

With the New Livestream, the company explicitly claimed, on their

website, to strive for professional production values. They mentioned three core values for production: quality, speed and professionalism. To facilitate these standards it expanded the services it offered. It was now possible to hire production teams with Livestream, and/or to design and customize Facebook Apps. Moreover, Livestream could be consulted about customized campaigns and marketing plans. But they also offered a store where they sold "producer-certified HD encoding solutions and production equipment". In addition to production services and equipment, training services in the fields of production and marketing were sold on the website. Such services were less accessible to individuals, due to a financial commitment and resource/skill threshold (including professional tools, time and know-how).

In terms of pricing, the New Livestream offered a 'producer account' at a price of $45 a month in June 2012, when the platform had just been fully launched.[19] A 'free' account for the new platform did not exist, although they continued to support free accounts through the Original Livestream platform. With the New Livestream several functions such as video embedding, Google analytics and API's were not yet available. It was recommended that, whilst they worked on developing these for the new platform, those interested in these features take an Original Livestream Premium account.[20]

The available tools for producing and socializing around content expanded significantly compared to the earlier platform. Now using 'Web Posting', producers could post text, photo video or live video updates on their page, which operated like a blog. Moreover, there was a possibility for 'Mobile Posting', which was very similar to web posting but as an iPhone application. The app moreover enabled the managing of events (creating, deleting, publishing), the creation of event posters and the monitoring of comments.

There are several noticeable expansions in the space of participation between the Original Livestream and the New Livestream platforms when it comes to production tools.[21] For one, the New Livestream allowed the producer to add real-time photos, videos and text updates before, during

19

These are the prices as noted on 17 June 2012. Source: "Livestream Platforms Plans & Pricing," Livestream, n.d., http://new.livestream.com/broadcast-live/pricing-plans.

20

This account went at $269/mo for the channel plan (best for individuals), $962/mo for the network plan (best for organizations) and for the custom plan (best for large events) they said to call for pricing.

21

For a full comparison, see the FAQ section of "Livestream Platforms Plans & Pricing".

and after the event. An important social feature added to the platform was the ability for viewers to 'Follow' profiles, 'Like' posts, 'Comment' on material and receive 'Notifications'. Whereas both platforms supported HD streaming, only the new platform offered DVR, allowing viewers to rewind a stream. The iPhone app furthermore allowed producers to post real-time from an iPhone. The new platform also enabled the trimming of video recordings.

However, a couple of features that the old platform had offered were not yet available in the new platform upon its release (i.e. the embedding of video, the reception of analytics and APIs). In sum, what the consideration of both metatext and space of participation makes apparent, is that the new platform targeted a new type of customer, one interested in distributing 'quality' content around events and making that content available and engaging for large audiences.

1.3 THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE LIVESTREAM PLATFORM

What Livestream has created over time is two rather distinct constellations of live for live streaming. Whereas the first constellation of was predicated on turning the user into a television station producer and imitating practices from live broadcast television, the second constellation emphasized how live streaming could make one present at an event. In the latter case, it was said that particularly techno-cultural advances had been made that were considered to enhance the immersive experience of the mediated event.

As a result of my consideration of these two constellations, I am now able to discuss the paradox of liveness in terms of the institutionalization of the Livestream platform. I define institutionalization here as "becoming part of a relatively stable cluster of rules, resources and social relations" (Thompson 1995: 12). The connection between liveness and institutionalizing being that institutionalization wields control over how media content is produced and distributed. It involves the managing of content, and in so doing, making it compelling for audiences. In this manner, institutionalization provides a bigger opportunity for the values of liveness to be constructed and attached to the concept. Something 'non-media' are less equipped, and perhaps even motivated, to do. So, as I have suggested, in their inability to

provide compelling, and valued content, the user-generated channels of the Mogulus/Livestream platform *failed* to deliver liveness (if they had even chosen to evoke it in the first place).

Livestream's decision to focus on event television can be interpreted as a step towards institutionalization in two ways. First off, event owners construct said events in order to attract audiences at a given time. It concerns their ability to control when people watch particular content, linking it to the schedules of broadcasters. In this chapter I have disclosed how in the Mogulus/Livestream constellation the meaning of 'live' had been constructed around the *technological infrastructure*, emphasizing the capacity for live transmission in particular. With the New Livestream platform, the focus of what 'live' meant shifted to the platform as a site for streaming live events in particular. Here 'live' referred to the experience made possible by the platform and functioned as a qualitative category promoting a superior experience of events.

Livestream has therein seen the same sort shift in focus to event television as broadcast television is undergoing. Whilst audience fragmentation has been said to characterize the television industry today (Lotz 2007), this does not mean television is never watched by large numbers of people simultaneously. Jennifer Gillan (2011), for one, has noted how some programming like episodic drama and event TV (i.e. gamedocs such as *American Idol*, major sporting events and special event programming) continue to attract rather sizeable audiences. The reason she sees behind this is that,

> [...] people are attracted to the general idea of participating in a national television event, but they are also motivated to watch Event TV as it airs to avoid having someone spoil the announcement of the results. (Gillan 2011: 221)

Furthermore, as I explore in chapter three, there has been a strategic push by broadcasters to have people watch television live and to construct shows as event TV using social media. It continues to be common for presidential addresses/debates, award shows and sports to be broadcast live on television as events.[22]

Secondly, the Mogulus and Original Livestream rhetoric 'sold' the

22
I am not suggesting live television is limited to event television. As a discursive practice it is a multiform phenomenon (White 1999).

platform as a tool for democratizing broadcasting and envisioned the blogger as its user. With the New Livestream, certain textual and aesthetic demands were placed on the content. This can be explained by the fact that unstructured feeds are rather boring to watch and that they are unable to draw large audiences. So whilst the platform wanted to use liveness to promote the superior value of its content, it had to control the content on these channels in order for them to potentially attract viewers. The institutionalization of the Livestream platform herein links rather explicitly to the paradox of liveness, as liveness needs to deliver on its promises of value, through formatted narratives.

This is also evident in the New Livestream platform, where the company started selling extensive production services and hardware to support the professionalization of content. The New Livestream no longer targeted bloggers wanting to set up their own 'TV station', choosing instead to attract event organizers, content owners, celebrities and artists seeking to broadcast their events live. Thus, with the new platform, *two target audiences* were addressed by the platform: event owners who needed the platform to produce and distribute content and viewers for whom it was hoped it would function as a destination platform for watching live streaming content. By contrast, with the Original Livestream platform, a single party assumed the role of producing and viewing channels promoting the ability for anyone to be a television station owner.

The transformation of the platform from UGC towards more professional content makes the continued struggle between the voice of the individual and that of the media institution apparent. As Natalie Fenton (2012) has found,

> Even accepting that social media engender a form of self-communication that is expressive and creative, self-communication to a mass audience is still the individual trying to be heard above the organization, still the small organization trying to shout louder than the large organization. […] in this economy the traditional and the mainstream are still dominant. (135)

In this light it is not surprising that Livestream started to associate itself on the business-oriented networking site LinkedIn with a series of established brands (e.g. NASA, HBO Academy Awards, Associated Press, Ralph Lauren

etc.).[23] It can be seen as a means to promote its relevance in the live streaming service industry and as an attempt to secure a revenue stream. Whilst the Original Livestream platform has been integrated in other institutional contexts, individuals using the platform don't have the resources that known brands do. Unable to develop a profitable business-model around user-generated television, Livestream has paired with established companies who pay for the use of the platform and who participate in the codes and conventions of 'the media'.

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude this chapter, I want to offer some final reflections concerning the two constellations of liveness for Livestream and state what can hereby be learned about liveness. These reflections are based on my findings about the constellations of the live streaming platforms rather than on the constellations that may be in place for the individual channels or even programs

The first observation reaffirms the connection between liveness and interactivity, explored first through the comparison of the interfaces of different types of streaming platforms and then later in the chapter in discussing the role of liveness in media events/event television. Through the comparison of the streaming platforms it became apparent that there was a special relationship between live transmission and forms of interaction like chat. The inclusion of a chat module and view counter on live streaming platforms has the function of making viewers feel as though they are part of an event. Interactivity stands to support the 'liveness' of the content, which would explain why chat modules are less relevant for on-demand streaming platforms and also why the latter have total view counts instead of real-time view counts. This connection between liveness and interactivity helps clarify the intensification of event TV and the recourse to social TV in present-day

23
See Livestream LinkedIn page, http://www.linkedin.com/company/livestream_2.

televisions, a topic I return to in chapter three.[24]

The second finding of this chapter was the insight that new media platforms borrow and refashion existing conceptions of 'live'. The Original Livestream borrowed heavily from broadcast television. Exploring the relevant constellation in more depth revealed what the changes and continuities entailed and demonstrated how users have a role in the construction of liveness through their own practice. Most fundamentally, in terms of change, the Original Livestream platform offered users the potential to enter a new producer-relation to liveness by being able to create content. That this new relation was unsustainable for the company was attributed by the platform's founder to the lack of resources (i.e. time) individuals have to provide a steady stream of compelling content.

Thirdly, examining the Original Livestream constellation helped to demystify the magical qualities bestowed upon the 'live'. The vast majority of user-generated television channels, although making use of a live streaming platform, were unable to attract large audiences, not having the resources to create captivating content. It was evident that in terms of production values, amateurism has its limits as a mass attractor. In that regard, their channels weren't 'live'. Moreover, individuals don't have the same relevance as established media. For a good brand name, in terms of being able to guarantee a certain 'quality' of content, helps establish a loyal viewer base.

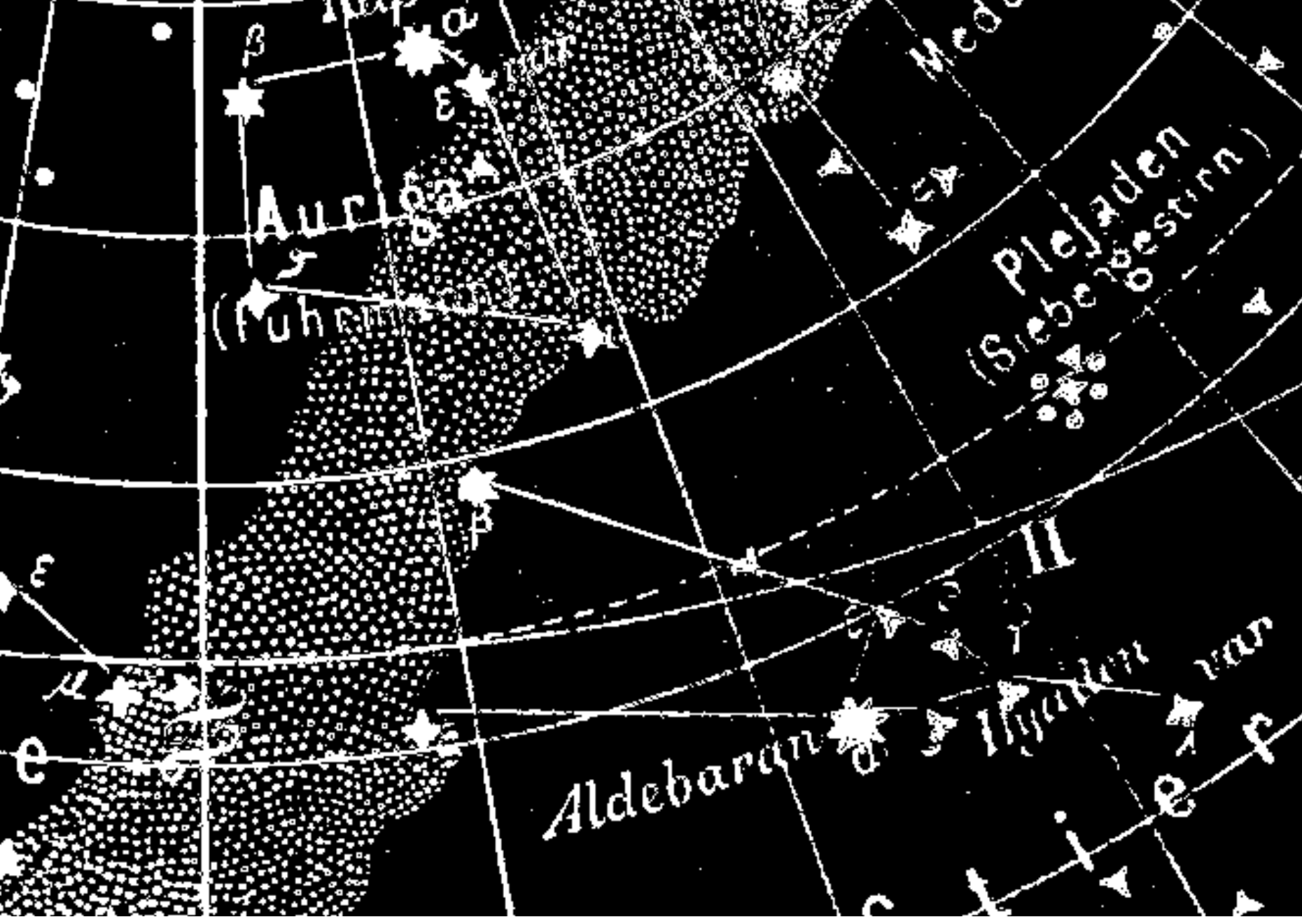
Finally, then, in the pursuit of fiscal solvency, Livestream needed to introduce production values. It is by means of liveness that the platform attempts to position itself as a destination platform for events. This not only, once more, clarifies the flexibility of the term 'live', seen in the move from the one constellation to the other, but it also reveals its use as a category to signify worth. To achieve 'quality', the platform introduced production codes and conventions, thus institutionalizing the platform, which in the process made it less accessible for everyday users and allowed for the reintroduction of a dividing line between producers and viewers. It makes for the paradox of liveness: the need for formatted narratives and program units to attract

24
Thinking about television as a diversified medium is derived from Lotz (2007), who has pointed out:

> As the multifaceted technologies and uses of television continue to burgeon, and television itself acquires disparate and unfamiliar attributes, we need to think of the medium not as "Television" but as televisions. (78)

audiences clashes with the promise of de-mediation. At work here then are two criteria: on the one hand the relevance of the speaker (individuals don't count whereas established brands, known to adhere to particular codes and conventions, do), and on the other hand the relevance of structured live feeds and programming schedules (as unstructured feeds are unable to generate mass audience interest).

In the following chapter I explore the constructedness of liveness and introduce the phenomenon tensions surrounding liveness. I do so through the case study eJamming. On this online music collaboration platform, liveness fails to be realized, and as a result all of the elements that make up the liveness construction are exposed.


Aldebaran
Plejaden
(Siebengestirn)
Auriga
(Fuhrmann)

2. 'Live' as Evaluative Category: The Case of eJamming

So far, in chapter one, I have explored the *paradox of liveness*, explaining the relation between liveness and institutionalization. This chapter sets out to explore a particular case where liveness fails to be realized. It investigates the online music collaboration platform eJamming, founded in 2001 and made available in beta in 2007, and its constellation of liveness, as it was constituted during my one-month trial of the platform in April 2011. The selection of this particular case is based first of all on the fact that eJamming explicitly promotes itself as 'live', in contrast to similar platforms like NINJAM and JackTrip. But also interesting for my purposes, is that the technology of the platform destabilizes the constellation as a whole, thus making all the elements of liveness visible. In other words, eJamming makes plain that liveness is a construction born out of various elements active in the three domains of liveness that I identified in the introduction of this book.

I begin the chapter by analyzing the eJamming metatext. Within the overarching promise of liveness, real-time and sociality are two main recurring themes. Drawing on the special combination between those two in liveness, the platform is promoted as a tool that helps empower the musician in a variety of ways, that I explicate. I use the term 'empowerment' here in light of techno-optimistic views of new media that situate new technologies as tools for users to fulfill their own needs - which I find that the eJamming metatext complies with. In this case, the platform enables musicians to jam together online, giving them control over how, when and with whom they make music.

Subsequently, the space of participation of the platform is delineated in order to create an understanding of how techno-cultural, economic and legal forces have shaped what practices the platform affords users. As I demonstrate, the technological challenges lie mainly in facilitating real-time audio

collaboration between musicians. I therefore argue that technological forces introduce real limitations in terms of how music collaboration can take place.

After having considered the metatext and space of participation, I bring the analysis of the constellation full circle by discussing user responses to the liveness of the platform. There are several sources from which I gather these responses; a specification of these sources is provided in section 2.3. Reflections on the liveness of the platform indicate overall user dissatisfaction, as users find the implicit promises made through 'live' unfulfilled. They do so in a critique of the real-time feature of the platform, but also of its inability to allow them to share their jamming sessions with a public.

Following a more descriptive treatment of the constellation, I reflect on the 'opening' of the black box of liveness, which occurred with the failure of the platform to deliver on user-expectations of liveness. This reveals not only the central role of technology in the construction, but also liveness as an *evaluative category*. It furthermore facilitates an introduction to what I call *tensions surrounding liveness*, as well as a comparison between the concepts of real-time and liveness, and a consideration of the role of the metatext in framing the meaning and values of 'live'.

At the end of this chapter, I assemble the analyses of the metatext, space of participation and user responses in order to draw conclusions on the meaning of 'live' in this constellation. It furthermore provides an opportunity to reflect on the insights garnered about liveness through this chapter, and connecting it to observations made in chapter one.

2.1 THE METATEXT: EMPOWERING MUSICIANS

In order to delineate the platform metatext I examine the eJamming website in addition to several promotional materials found there, analyzing how in promoting its service through these texts, eJamming draws on the notions of real-time and sociality. From this consideration, I intend to argue that the platform promotes the empowerment of musicians, in a multiplicity of ways, by making inferences about the special relation between real-time connectivity and sociality. It is how this interaction between real-time and sociality is understood, I would contend, that defines the liveness of the platform.

Unlike other online music collaboration platforms, eJamming is explicitly

promoted as 'live' throughout its metatext. Through the reiteration of the term it comes to stand as the overarching promise of the platform. The associations the platform raises through the metatext in cooperation with its technological infrastructure and user responses contribute to the meaning and value of liveness in the constellation. But in examining the metatext, a comparison between real-time and liveness also becomes possible. This helps to debunk the common misconception that the two terms are interchangeable.

Figure 4: Home page of the eJamming Website

Figure 4 is a snapshot of the home page of the eJamming website as it looked in the spring of 2011. It was styled like an amplifier stack, with six musicians playing instruments layered over it. The term 'live' featured in three separate taglines. The first, beneath the eJamming logo, read: "Now play and record together live with musicians anywhere in the world". The second figured below the buttons on the bottom left, beneath a simulated control panel (featuring the buttons 'Play', 'Record' and 'Rehearse'), and had the following text, styled as a stamp: "Together Live Online". The last, below a green 'Sign up' button, contained the following catchphrase: "Jam live with musicians anywhere in the world". The promise for liveness, repeated throughout the website as an experience the platform delivers on, I would argue, manifests itself in the metatext in the main topic threads real-time and sociality.

2.1.1 **Real-Time**

Throughout the metatext the term 'real-time' was far less prominent than the term 'live'. An embedded video on the website featured the introductory text "Watch and listen as 3 musicians play live over the Internet in real-time", thus providing the first suggestion that the concepts are not interchangeable and mean different things. The term 'real-time' was only very subtly used in the page header that read: "eJamming AUDiiO - The Collaborative Network for Musicians Creating Together Online in Real-time". This tagline explicitly characterized the service as real-time. The facilitation of real-time playing together is also the first point eJamming addressed in its mission statement. By analyzing the space of participation and user responses further down the line, I aim to readdress this promise of real-time and reflect on its relation to liveness (see 2.3.3).

2.1.2 **Sociality**

The terms 'connectivity' and 'collaboration', which were used recurrently in the metatext, relate to the other main theme, that of sociality. For example, a promotional video on the website explained how eJamming works. Here, the platform was explicitly aligned with other social networks:

> All the things you would normally expect to find in any social network are available here except we are specific to live music jamming.

But connectivity also manifested itself in the platform design, specifically in the mini-profiles and the embedded chat window featured. The 'Learn More' section on the website furthermore addressed the promise of sociality:

> Check out who's in the eJamming Lobby. Look over their instruments and musical influences in their mini-profile. Chat with them.
> Then invite them to a Session. Or join theirs.
> You can talk live. Decide what to play.
> Then jam together. Live. Online.

This run-through of how eJamming might be used draws on a familiar narrative: a person walking into a bar, looking around, spotting a fit, initiating small talk and finally, in this particular instance, making music with others. The metaphor depicts the platform as casual and accessible. It also draws an

analogy between the platform and a lobby, suggesting that people are coming, going and waiting around. In short, it is characterized as a place to meet new people.

This particular idea of the platform was also underscored in the website's mission statement, where it is typified as "central meeting ground". In the subscription store, it said: "It's easy to Subscribe to *connect to a world of musicians* on eJamming ® AUDiiO" (my emphasis). And so, in the metatext, the platform was repeatedly framed as a social space.

But aside from being social in the sense of simply bringing musicians into contact with each other, eJamming was also portrayed as a site for collaboration. This is most explicit in its labeling itself as an online music collaboration platform. The repetition of the word 'together' in the 'Learn More' section supported such an assessment as well:

> With eJamming, you can be a beginner who just wants to *connect* with other musicians.
> To jam. Sing and harmonize *together*.
> Rehearse *together*. Create *together*. Even learn some new techniques.
> Or just hang out *together*.
> Even when your jam mates are 8000 miles apart. (my emphasis)

In addition to portraying the platform as an easy portal to a vast community of musicians scattered across the globe, essentially promising a 'long tail' (Anderson [2006] 2007) of musicians, another side to sociality was suggested as well. This dimension manifested itself in October 2010, when eJamming had three musicians play for a club full of residents in Linden Lab's 3D Virtual World *Second Life*. Here a band made use of the platform to perform for an online audience. The showcase calls attention to eJamming's desire to connect musicians and their fans through live performances. In the event press release too, it was promoted as a 'live' session.

Drawing on the particular relationship between real-time and the social expounded in the metatext, eJamming promoted itself as a tool for empowering musicians. This argument was found most openly in the 'enabling' the company referenced in its mission statement. More specifically, the platform provided that it empowered musicians in three ways. These different forms of empowerment directly ties in with the website and platform's tendency to create a garage rock band look and feel, and define the 'liveness' of the

platform.

The first form of empowerment concerned how the platform brings a geographically dispersed group of musicians together. It was implied that the connecting and togetherness facilitated by eJamming allowed users to overcome the barriers of physical geography: "Across town. Across the country. Or if you want to, even across the ocean". Moreover, throughout the metatext, locations were identified to make this point. Likewise, in the *Second Life* experiment just discussed, the geographical configuration of the band was emphasized in promotional materials. But the point was also made on the home page of the eJamming website. Here, in two of the text bubbles accompanying the musicians portrayed (six in total), a location was referenced. Furthermore, in YouTube videos that showcased eJamming sessions, the cities participants partook from were central to the explanation of how the platform worked. This form of empowerment was in turn considered to have two advantages. For starters, the comfort of allowing users to partake "right from your [their] home". But also due to the fact that musicians could play right from their homes: the convenience that they didn't have to haul their instruments across town.[1]

The second form of empowerment was centered on *time* rather than space. It was formulated on the eJamming website as follows:

> In today's busy world, the hardest thing is to find time to make music. […] so you can play together […] whenever you want.

This snippet captures a point mentioned not just on the website, but which is repeated throughout (i.e. promotional talks and materials). In other words, people can practice music whenever they want, and even find others to jam with (thus not having to rely on the availability of regular band members).

Then, a third form of empowerment was also expressed in the eJamming mission statement. Here an educational ideal was formulated wherein the platform is seen as mediating between music students and teachers. In contrast to the other two forms of empowerment, this ideal was only developed in the 'About Us' section on the eJamming website.

1
"It's a lot easier than lugging your gear across town". And, "Right from home".

2.2 THE SPACE OF PARTICIPATION

In analyzing the eJamming metatext, I outlined how the platform promotes the empowerment of musicians drawing on notions of real-time and sociality. In what follows, I reflect on the online music collaboration platform's space of participation. Specifically, I look at how techno-cultural, economic, and legal forces shape user participation. Although these forces overlap and interrelate, for the sake of clarity they are discussed separately in this order.

2.2.1 **Techno-Cultural Forces**

First, there are some very basic requirements for the use of eJamming, such as a computer and Internet connection. The computer needs to be running Windows or Mac OS X (note that Linux, an operating system developed from free and open source software, is not supported) in order to install the necessary software. Furthermore, a musical instrument and (built-in) microphone need to be present.

One of the advantages eJamming developed over its competitors is that the software works with both Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) instruments (many conventional instruments have been converted to MIDI instruments) and non-MIDI instruments (e.g. drums, violins, strings, voice, etc.). Nevertheless, to counter latency, the company highly recommends using an external audio interface to plug in instruments. With a Mac computer, for instance, by directly plugging an instrument into the soundcard, or using the internal microphone, one creates a 40mS delay - which, as will be elaborated on soon, proves very problematic to musicians.[2]

But a broadband connection is not sufficient in itself. For two musicians to join a session and make stable use of the platform, a minimum of 400 kbps upload speed is required. In order to use the platform to its full capacity, meaning that one takes part in a session of four musicians in real-time, all users need to have an upload speed of 800 kbps. In the previous chapter, I already noted that the national average upload speed in the United States was 595 kbps in 2010, so as with Livestream, the question is how many people actually have the proper resources to use the eJamming platform to its full potential.

2
Source: "Audio Interfaces", eJamming, n.d., http://ejamming.com/audio-interfaces/.

Reliance on broadband connectivity brings forward perhaps *the* biggest challenge to online music collaboration tools: that of latency. Latency refers to the incurred delays in network processing that can be introduced, among others, by technological variables like bandwidth. Distance delay is another variable in latency, as it is physical wires that transport bits (Davis 2008). This means that eJamming actually functions better, the closer connecting peers are to each other spatially.[3] As Driessen et al. (2011) observe:

> To achieve a good user experience the latency over the network has to be within reasonable bounds. If the delay is excessive, then the musicians will not be able to maintain a consistent tempo. (76-7)

Renaud et al. (2007) have researched what the ensemble performance threshold (EPT) is, the maximum level of delay for musicians to play in synchronization. They have determined the EPT end-to-end (from source to destination) to be delays of 25ms or less (Renaud et al. 2007: 2-3).[4]

Typically, online music collaboration platforms encounter the following kinds of latency: sound hardware latency (>5ms), perceptual CODEC latency (>20ms) and network latency (>40ms).[5] This makes it difficult for eJamming to attain their goal of real-time synchronization, if not impossible. The latency between two players on eJamming in jam mode was registered (by a user) to be 60ms in 2010, which is significantly higher than the EPT considered ideal for musicians.[6]

3
It should be noted that in contrast to early proclamations of the Internet as an 'electronic frontier', geography here still matters:

> the efficacy of Internet communications depends on the real-space location of data and data consumers, and on the geographical distribution of the underlying Internet hardware through which the data travels. (Goldsmith and Wu [2006] 2008: 55)

4
To avoid gaps in conversation over the telephone, for instance, a round-trip delay of 100ms or less would constitute the norm.

5
See "NINJAM", Cockos Incorporated, n.d., http://www.cockos.com/ninjam/.

6
This was observed by William, January 17, 2010, comment on "Fender and eJamming Audio Unveil Synchronized, Streaming Jamming Software", Premierguitar, posted January 15, 2010, http://www.premierguitar.com/Magazine/Issue/Daily/News/Fender_and_eJamming_Audio_Unveil_Synchronized_Streaming_Jamming_Software.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that the problem of latency is unique to *platform* mediation. All experience is somehow mediated and is subject to a lag between the time of production and that of consumption (Auslander 2008; Kobrin 2007). Even an orchestra set-up is no exception in this respect:

> In an orchestra, there is a roughly 1 millisecond-per-foot delay between, say, a flautist and a bassist, who can be seated up to 50 feet apart. Humans typically notice delays of 15 to 60 milliseconds, depending on the individual. That's one reason an orchestra needs a conductor to keep players in sync. (Kobrin 2007: n.p.)

Thus whilst latency is not unique to technological mediation, the multiplication of mediations in online music collaboration, introduced through hardware, software and along networks, add to the latency incurred. This, paired with the EPT, is why latency is such a central problem for these types of platforms.

To date online music collaboration platforms have found facilitating EPT extremely challenging. And have dealt with latency differently, introducing a series of 'fixes' to the problem. Novel Intervallic Network Jamming Architecture for Music (NINJAM), for one, has found that the only way to realize latency-free collaboration is by actually increasing the delay in sent audio by a measure (one bar) and having musicians synchronize to music generated in the previous measure. The NINJAM website explains it as follows:

> Since the inherent latency of the Internet prevents true realtime synchronization of the jam, and playing with latency is weird (and often uncomfortable), NINJAM provides a solution by making latency (and the weirdness) much longer.[7]

Effectively then, it has chosen to incorporate, rather than challenge, latency. For this reason NINJAM has been said to offer 'fake-time' (Renaud et al. 2007) and 'near-real-time' (Van Buskirk 2007). These labels, used to describe NINJAM's strategy, help to establish the definition of real-time as something only realized when technology is pushed to achieve 'absolute' simultaneity.

7
See "NINJAM".

The eJamming AUDiiO software, on the other hand, has adopted a series of approaches that try to minimize latency (Greene 2007). First, it has decreased file sizes with (de)compression algorithms that, the company claims, help maintain a higher sound quality than the MP3 compression format. Secondly, rather than having audio streams sent through a remote server, the online musicians are connected peer-to-peer. Finally, audio packets are time-stamped in order to facilitate the synchronization of the music at a slightly delayed moment.[8]

In addition, at the time of consultation, the eJamming website also made several suggestions as to how users could themselves help reduce their experience of latency. First, because the platform works with peer-to-peer connections, all users needed to configure their router and open the IN and OUT ports. It was also suggested that users connect to the router via an Ethernet cable rather than through a wireless connection, and that they should limit the data activity of others connected to their router. eJamming, moreover, advised using headphones whilst playing sessions. Finally, Windows users were advised to download and install Audio Stream Input/Output to allow for a direct audio path to the sound card/audio interface as a measure to reduce latency.

What is apparent is how the eJamming constellation is intimately bound up with the choice to take on the challenge of latency head on. By doing so, eJamming defines itself in opposition to those platforms that circumvent latency by introducing delays. In this way, it also exposes liveness as a qualitative category, associated with a superior form of connectivity.

Leaving the topic of latency aside, I move on to analyzing how the affordances provided through the graphical user interface (GUI) shape online jamming. At the time of my trial, the platform offered two distinct modes of online music collaboration: sessions could be created in 'Jam mode', a form of virtual rehearsing, or in 'Overdub mode', in a virtual recording studio. In 'Jam mode', a maximum of four geographically dispersed musicians could create music together over the Internet in sync. However, in contrast to 'Overdub mode', it did not allow for recording Jam sessions.

8
Driessen et al. (2011) have found that these methods backfire. As the processing time for synchronization, compression and decompression are increased, so is latency, and they therefore find that peer-to-peer connection is not always beneficial to the users.

In 'Overdub mode' eJamming enabled long distance recording collaborations through a 'Virtual Recording Studio' (VRS). This, of course, was also a way of circumventing latency. Here a musician could lay down a track with limited latency and then tracks recorded earlier were placed on top of it (users could record up to 16 MIDI and 16 audio tracks). Session participants could listen to the tracks and converse with one another. The 3.0 software version only allowed people that were musicians in the session to listen to what was being performed. In late 2010, eJamming stated on its website that it intended to release JamCast Live soon, a feature that would allow sessions to be netcast to an audience.

The platform also offered some social functions. In setting up an account, users would create a profile (having the option of providing basic profile information and music-related information), might search and find other musicians, and could create a network of contacts by 'befriending' others. In addition, an internal messaging system allowed them to send (asynchronous) messages to other members. Also, the home page, referred to as the Lobby, featured a chat box.

Also, eJamming is 'topic centered' (boyd and Ellison 2007). Its community is based around the shared interest in music making. The platform is framed by the metatext as a space for music collaboration, found most explicitly in its name and on the website, in both text (i.e. its slogan) and image (i.e. the garage band theme). It has also been translated into the platforms design, as the profile fields prompt users to define their 'musical influences' and 'talents' (in addition to allowing them to upload and store music files for sharing with others). These social networking aspects of the platform revolve around further facilitating online jamming. In this way it is rather different from platforms like Facebook, Instagram or Pinterest.

Finally, the eJamming forum provides a space where questions of social etiquette are played out. In 2011, I encountered a prime example of how this factor shaped participation: because users were unable to netcast sessions, there was interest in whether it was deemed acceptable practice to simply join, but not play.[9] The answer was 'no', which was a clear cultural constraint in effect, in regard to the sharing of sessions. As a result, although

9
Whereas such practice suggests that there is some sense of community, the reality cannot be ignored that only two users replied to the question that was raised.

from a purely technical stance users could join sessions but stay 'lurkers', social condemnation discourages such practice from taking place.

2.2.2 **Economic Forces**

In addition to techno-cultural ones, there are also economic forces that impact on the use of eJamming. Here it is relevant to note that eJamming differs from the other three cases that I explore in this dissertation. The platform has a very different business model, providing a service purchased by the users rather than made available to them for 'free' (as is the case with The New Livestream, but not Mogulus/Livestream). I would contend that different trade-offs occur when consumers are actually paying for a particular service/product as opposed to using the service for 'free'.

Aside from a computer and an Internet connection, users need to buy a subscription plan. Whilst computers and Internet access are common in most Western countries and both are used to multiple ends, the subscription plan could prove a constraint, particularly for those wishing to use the platform for band practice. When the beta phase for the service ended in mid-2009, so did the free trial. From then on, using eJamming meant downloading the software from the website and purchasing one of the available subscriptions plans (in 2011: $9.95 a month/ $24.95 quarter/ $89.95 a year). For a four-member band this meant shelling out at least $360 a year to use eJamming with your band, which is decisively more expensive than playing together with friends in someone's garage.[10]

2.2.3 **Legal Forces**

Finally, the terms of use also shape the type of interaction possible on a platform. Before installing the software and making use of the platform, users have to agree to the terms and conditions of use. By doing so, they bind themselves to the listed rules and obligations. These regulations, in 2011, went as far as to address the issue of online identity:

Pretending to be anyone you are not - you may not impersonate or misrepresent yourself as another person (including celebrities), another eJamming user, an eJamming, Inc employee, or a civic or government leader;

10
Rafe Needleman (2007) makes note of the high costs of the service and suggests it may limit its uptake.

eJamming, Inc reserves the right to reject or block any eJamming service user name which could be deemed to be an impersonation or misrepresentation of your identity, or a misappropriation of another person's name or identity.

Furthermore, there are issues pertaining copyright that play a role in how the platform and participation on it are organized. At the time of consultation, the user agreement stated that users had to pay license fees to publicly perform and/or mechanically reproduce any copyrighted materials. Moreover, in order to make use of the service, users had to grant eJamming the right to freely use (reproduce, modify, adapt and/or publish) content to promote the platform. In a session with others, users jointly acquired ("by virtue of their interaction") the copyright of the compilation they collaboratively created in the session. Participants could determine otherwise, but had to do so in writing prior to the session.

With regard to the performance of *non-original material***,** eJamming claimed to be negotiating so-called blanket licenses from the music performing rights organizations in order to allow registered users to perform non-original material. Such legal issues are relevant to the constellation of liveness in that they may have contributed to the delay in the introduction of netcasting on eJamming.

In short, reviewing the space of participation is fruitful in that it discloses how users can interact on the platform, enabling an understanding of the platforms affordances. When considering real-time and the social that the space of participation mediates, some conflict immediately surfaces when they are compared to promises made through the metatext. For instance, although real-time interaction between musicians is promised, there are real technological challenges that stand in the way of this actually being delivered on. I will return to this point shortly, as it indeed creates difficulties for realizing liveness.

2.3 USER RESPONSES

So far I have considered how the eJamming metatext promoted empowerment of musicians by drawing on notions of real-time and sociality, and analyzed the various forces that play a role in defining the space of participation and the numerous practices hereby afforded. In what follows I explore user responses, looking at what users of the platform say as well do in relation to

liveness. This should offer more insight into what meanings they attribute to the 'live' of the platform.

More specifically, I first look at how the eJamming forum was used at the time, taking inventory of the amount of threads (both permanent and user-initiated), posts and views it hosted, and then reflecting on the topics the former addressed.[11] This can be seen as an exploratory reflection on platform use.[12] Subsequently, I explore comments posted both on and outside the eJamming platform, with a particular focus on those comments that were likely directed at the 2011 software release (eJamming AUDiiO 3.0). Aside from the eJamming page on Facebook, I happened on these forums through a Google web search. As a reminder, my aim is not to disclose the ideas of a representative sample of users, but rather to locate those comments/practices that reflect on the liveness of the platform.

In general I find that the comments on the forums I encountered through the web search were of a different nature, and addressed different topics, than the eJamming forum. They were less concerned with solving specific technical problems, which is probably because the eJamming forum ensured a connection to eJamming staff and other users, and more about sharing general experiences with and opinions about the platform compared to other platforms with (potential) users. Overall, the amount of people here not satisfied with the platform vastly outnumbered satisfied customers. Essentially, eJamming was found only suitable for casual rather than more professional use, or to jam with people in their vicinity.

Taking into consideration activities on the eJamming platform as well as the comments from a range of forums, I interpret that topics of discontent

11
The eJamming forum was divided into four sections: 'Help', 'News', 'Discussion' and 'Community'. Among those, the 'HELP!' tab was by far the most popular in terms of user activity, meaning that it had the most threads and attracted the most views. The most popular permanent title, in terms of views, within this section was 'Port Issues'. In terms of the amount of threads and posts, it was 'Feature Requests'. The 'HELP!' section lead in terms of user-initiated activity, counting a total number of 85 threads, 137 posts and 4809 views. To put this into perspective, under 'Community' there were only seven threads, eight posts and 140 views.

12
I am well aware that the view count on the forum concerned total views rather than unique ones, so the numbers may have been generated by a small group of active users. What's more, in 2011 co-founder Alan Glueckman was not only often available to chat with in the Lobby, he also actively initiated threads and frequently replied to posts. For those reasons, the data is not used here as a starting point for far-reaching conclusion, but merely to provide a general impression as to what topics were popular amongst eJamming users.

mimicked the main themes of the metatext: real-time and sociality. With regard to real-time, the users were frustrated about not being able to play synchronized sessions. The expectations for sociality concern, on the one hand, an active community of musicians and, on the other hand, the ability to share sessions with an audience. The interrelation between real-time and sociality are what the platform draws on as a 'live' platform to promote its experience, which is why I believe these to be reflections of the liveness promised by the platform.

2.3.1 **Real-Time**

When looking at the eJamming forum, there was no indication of users having problems with real-time connectivity. However, real-time clearly presented as a dominant topic on the other forums that I encountered, with users articulating their frustration over the platform.[13] I think that this might be related to the particular character of the eJamming forum, namely as an *official* space which is not only monitored by the owners, but also used only by paying customers (who likely have come to terms with the limits of the platform).[14]

To flesh out the discontent, and to underscore this as a problem experienced by users, I zoom in on a few of these posts found on these other forums. User *Learjeff*, for example, made the following comment:

> But they [eJamming] say, 'The whole point is to focus on the music that one hears, as opposed to on the sounds coming directly from one's instrument'. Bad idea: we need to relearn how to play, to have good timing with a delayed monitor. Sounds like something a non-musician would say![15]

13
The issue of latency was far less central on the eJamming forum. Also, whilst there was some attention to netcasting, the topic did not dominate the forum.

14
They must surely have taken note of the many tips provided by the platform to minimize latency issues and decided to use it nonetheless. Moreover, as my research suggests, the amount of users is an issue - which itself is indicative of users experiencing problems with the platform.

15
February 14, 2011, comment on Gadi R, "Online Jam Sessions vs Ejamming Opinions?", posted February 13, 2011. http://forums.musicplayer.com/ubbthreads.php/topics/2273653/Re_Online_Jam_Sessions_vs_Ejam.

In a similar vein, *JohnnySixString* mentioned in that same thread that the service does not work for count off or playing covers, but works "pretty well" for jamming "improv and stuff", despite coming in a measure behind others.[16]

eJamming's founders, Gail Kantor and Alan Glueckman, responded to the concern for latency in an interview in *Indie-Muisic.com* conducted in 2007 with the following:

> But after playing over eJamming for a while, we've found that musicians can play ahead of the beat even with delays of 120 milliseconds, and vocalists have been able to adjust even to 60 milliseconds. The best way to work with eJamming is to listen over headphones, and focus on what you're hearing, and not what your hands or voice are doing, and performing to the synchronized audio in your headphones. (Glass 2007: n.p.)

The quotation reflects the situation anno 2007, when eJamming was still beta (and thus free to use). However, the numerous comments in the years that followed indicate that the problem had yet to be resolved. *Rob* is just one of the users who pointed out this problem in 2011:

> As a paying eJamming customer, I play online from SF, CA to St Louis, MO, and yes lag is about 50ms. So no, it doesn't sound great playing a song. You'll never feel locked in. However, it can still be fun for casual use, but the software is very buggy. […] They seemed to have stopped all development work on it now. I mean how can they sustain development if there are only 10 people in the lobby at all times. […] To get the latency down though will take the next version of the internet.[17]

Rob's experience is in line with that of *JohnnySixString*. They both find that it can be fun to use eJamming AUDiiO for improvisational jamming sessions, but that when trying to play songs, latency proves to be a real obstacle. So despite the connotation attached to the name eJamming (i.e. online improvisation and playful) users voiced criticism over the fact that they were unable to play songs together. The metatext established the ability to jam together as something a user could expect from the 'live' platform and users complained

16
March 5, 2011, comment on Gadi R, "Online Jam Sessions vs Ejamming Opinions?" (see note 15).

17
March 11, 2011, comment on "Fender and eJamming Audio Unveil Synchronized, Streaming Jamming Software" (see note 6).

that it failed to deliver on these promises. In so doing they disclosed what it is they expected of the platform.

2.3.2 **Sociality**

But *Rob*'s post, just discussed, by mentioning how there are only "10 people in the lobby at all times", equally directs attention to how the dissatisfaction with eJamming went beyond its failure to technologically mediate a jam session without the bother of latency. The other strand of criticism users voiced concerned the issue of sociality. From the online comments and the use of the eJamming forum, I gathered that eJamming was unable to realize the social end of the live promise for its users in two main ways: (a) insufficient other musicians were online to jam with and (b) performing for an audience was not possible. I expound on these in the following few paragraphs.

Jamming with Others

JohnnySixString equally complained about the lack of attendees on the platform. He posted the following on the *Music Player Network* forum:

> Every time I have ever tried the eJamming 30 day trial, over the past couple of years now, there simply aren't enough people using it. Unless you and some friends plan to log on at the same time to play, there needs to be a butt load more people in the pool in order to find someone else to play with. […] There never seems to be more than 20 people on at once and that seems to be at peak.[18]

JohnnySixString, however, expressed the hope that the company's intention of partnering with Fender would boast public awareness of eJamming and increase the amount of registered users. Nevertheless, even after the partnership was enacted in March 2011, instead of a large community of musicians in the lobby, users still found themselves having to schedule jam sessions with people they already knew or they had solicited on the forum.

Comparably, in a 2010 comment to the YouTube video ONLINESESSIONS SUCKS (dizzytree13 2009), *armystrongamerican* remarked:

18
March 5, 2011, comment on Gadi R, "Online Jam Sessions vs Ejamming Opinions?" (see note 15).

> i play the drums..... this site sucks for that, everytime i went in the room there was no one there! come on! how am i supposed to play when everyone is freakin gone! and the only people that do show up is jamming [the platform's founder] who is a complete dick or his wife! wtf man this site is a joke! i would never pay money just to sit in a fuckin room and day dream!

The post makes apparent the expectation of other attendees in the assessment of the platform. The last two sentences of the citation in particular, by means of strong language, demonstrate the irritation of the user about eJamming's inability to deliver an active pool of musicians. The experience users had in relation to a lack of attendance is consistent with what I encountered in using the platform myself, never finding more than three ongoing sessions, or over seven people online.[19]

Aside from this criticism being voiced through online comments, the relative popularity of the topic 'JAM' on the eJamming forum underscores the idea that there was a very limited pool of online musicians to jam with. Under 'JAM', users were scheduling jams with each other. The popularity of the section confirms my earlier findings from users comments, namely that users experienced difficulty finding active users to jam with. Recall that the eJamming metatext promised users, both implicitly through liveness and more explicitly in describing the platform, that they would have a community of musicians to jam with.

Connected to this issue, and therein relevant to note, is that about one third of the requests for features on the eJamming forum concerned the addition of social functions (e.g. Buddy Lists, listen in features, Messaging, JAM Schedule). User displeasure over not having enough others to jam with may very likely be why forum threads that made an appeal for jam appointments were comparatively popular.

This problem was not limited to eJamming; other real-time music collaboration platforms face it too. A thread on the Ninbot forum entitled "Why are we the only ones on Ninjam??" provides evidence to this effect.[20] Even

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I signed up for a one-month trial on 4 April 2011, followed by a membership for three months thereafter. During this time I found that Glueckman was frequently online as ThunderPup44. Of course, working from Amsterdam, rather than the United States, my time zone may well have played a role in the lack of attendees. Nonetheless, online comments show I was certainly not the only who experienced it this way.

20

The thread started May 6, 2010, http://ninbot.com/topic/why-are-we-only-ones-ninjam.

though the question originally concerned Ninjam, it was a springboard for a wider debate about the general lack of attendees on online music collaboration platforms. The reason why then I still consider it a particular promise of liveness will be discussed in the conclusion of the chapter.

Playing for an Audience

But not having others to jam with was just one concern users had over the sociality afforded by the platform. The other was its inability to facilitate the sharing of active sessions with an audience. This was found not only on the encountered forums, but also, as I consider in more depth in this section, through the RaDiiO project.

The sharing of sessions with an audience was a central issue in several online forums. On the eJamming forum *BenBrannan* remarked the following in a request for a 'listen in' feature:

> This is exactly what I'd love to sdd [sic]. I signed up hoping to put on virtual concerts with friends. So I thought there'd be some sort of listen URL stream. I think this would seriously boost the amount of people interested in ejamming if this feature were enabled.[21]

In the 'Help' section of the forum, some users asked how to enable listening in. eJamming responded to users' requests on its homepage where, in the 'FAQ' section, it promised to offer netcasting in the foreseeable future. Perhaps this can be seen as a form of consensus among users and facilitators as to what should be part of the software functionality in order to make eJamming live up to its promises.

In the absence of an official platform feature that enabled the sharing of sessions with an audience, the RaDiiO project, which ran from 2009-2010, was initiated. The birth of the project, to my mind, shows that users had expected the ability to share sessions with an audience on such a platform. A dedicated eJamming user named *Cartman* set up the project. He modified the platform so that it enabled sessions to be netcast. His goal was to create an Internet band with musicians from around the world and to broadcast live sessions over the Internet in real-time. In the blog he kept about the project, he reflected on some of the other problems he faced in using the

21
Posted in January 2011.

platform. His critiques echo the central topics I found in the eJamming metatext. For instance, he mentioned the shortage of active users on the platform. *Cartman* attributed this to the following:

> What was obviously lacking though, was a focal point to sustain people's interest and engender a sense of community.

The comment indicates that sociality relies on the platform's ability to generate sufficient interest amongst users in order for them to, in turn, contribute to the sociality of the platform.

Important with respect to the earlier mentioned complaints surrounding real-time, is that *Cartman* also reflected on the experience of latency, which he found increased as more users joined a session. In his blog he stated that latency problems required him to make artistic compromises in sessions. One such compromise, for instance, was that in their decision of what to play the group considered which song would suffer least from delays.

In late 2009, the RaDiiO project was temporarily suspended, as a new software release was being anticipated. However, by April 2010 a listen-in feature had still not been realized by eJamming, and the radio show was briefly revived. But the relations between the group of enthusiasts propelling the project and eJamming had, according to the blog, gone from bad to worse. Then after a series of additional setbacks, one of the projects' regular volunteers dropped out, and the radio shows were abandoned for good.

What is found then is that eJamming opted for boycotting the project, securing its established business. But regardless hereof, both its mission statement and 2010 *Second Life* marketing stunt strongly suggest that the company also finds, just like the users themselves, that as a platform for live jamming, it needs to facilitate the sharing of online performances with an audience.

2.4 OPENING THE 'BLACK BOX' OF LIVENESS

The consideration of user responses to eJamming has exposed that the platform has been met with a fair amount of criticism. The chapter drew attention to the platform's technology, and, by zooming in on its failure to deliver on promises of liveness, highlighted the domains of liveness. It showed how de-mediation, considered here as the network value of liveness, was not

accomplished. But rather than merely amounting to a strain between the promise of de-mediation and its actual mediatedness, liveness simply was not 'realized' and in this way, its elements were revealed.

This breakdown, I argue, reveals liveness as an evaluative category therein clarifying what users expected of the liveness of the platform. In users' assessment of eJamming, they referenced ideas they believed were promoted through the notion of 'liveness', as used in the metatext. The experience of the platform was being *assessed* through the category 'live'. This became explicit only because not all domains of liveness synched up to provide a combined understanding of the constellation.

The failure of the platform to deliver on expectations of the platform's liveness furthermore helps me to clarify what I mean by what I have called *tensions surrounding liveness*. Tensions surrounding liveness are the *conflict* that emerges over the meaning and promise of the 'live'. In eJamming, however, these tensions are so prominent that, rather than speaking of tensions, a complete debilitation of liveness occurred as liveness failed to be realized. So whilst eJamming doesn't lend itself for tensions to be discussed, I plan to identify tensions in chapters three and four. These tensions will subsequently help facilitate a comparison between mediation in the broadcast media era to that of the social media era.

In not working with the rest of the elements found in the three domains, the technology of eJamming 'talked back', and in doing so it demonstrated that it played an active role in the construction of the 'live' of the platform. This is informative in the relationship between liveness and real-time, concepts that are often used interchangeably, but as I argue are rather distinct. Real-time connectivity emerged as a problem on the platform because of the latency introduced through the various mediations encountered in online music collaboration platforms. In creating problems for the musicians to jam together without 'glitches', the mediated nature of the platform was emphasized.

Based on the earlier analysis of the domains of liveness in this chapter, there are two conclusions that can be drawn in regard to the constellation. First, in analyzing the metatext I found that real-time and liveness were not positioned as interchangeable (consider, for instance, the remark on the website that musicians "played live in real-time"). In discussions of the technological forces shaping the space of participation, however, I demonstrated that real-time is *part of* what *enabled* eJamming to claim liveness - in contrast

to the platforms that delivered 'fake real-time'. In the user responses, the experience of latency by the musicians prevented them from experiencing the platform as 'live'. Here the close kinship between real-time and liveness also presents itself, albeit in a different way. As a whole, the analysis of the constellation clarified that the term real-time references a *technological* capacity. Even though that which is considered real-time is context-dependent, other than liveness, it is temporally quantifiable (i.e. in terms of speed). Think, for example, of features like real-time stock trading and updating information in real-time, which are void of a claim to sociality, and therefore, of liveness. Whilst real-time is certainly an axis of liveness, liveness exceeds this technological capacity, which is provided through the axis of sociality.

Secondly, the dismantling of liveness on eJamming reveals that it is the metatext that frames how the liveness of the platform is to be understood. It seems that the same technological base, through its interaction with the metatext and user responses, can establish a range of values for 'live'. This is most evident in traditional television. Although the space of participation is fairly consistent across programs, particularly prior to the advent of transmedia formats and social TV, different values are attributed to 'live' in drawing on the relation between real-time connectivity and sociality. Whereas a sporting event may emphasize *presence*, a news program may seek to highlight the *authenticity* of the reporting, whilst the special live episode of *30 Rock* in 2012 played with the *excitement* that anything could go wrong.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I have sought to demonstrate how, in their combined efforts, the metatext, space of participation and users responses constitute a constellation of liveness. However, in this particular instance live was not 'naturalized', in that friction emerged over its realization. This friction made eJamming a fruitful case because user responses became an explicit contributor to the construction. In the other case studies dealt with in this dissertation, user responses seem less important to the constellation, though they are valuable in identifying certain tensions surrounding liveness, as the meaning and values promoted through the 'live' go largely uncontested.

The overarching promise of the eJamming platform was that of liveness. Within the platform metatext, hinging on this promise, two themes emerged

that reiterated what I identify as the axes of live: real-time and sociality. Analyzing the metatext readily supplied clues as to what liveness meant within the constellation, which were later in the chapter complemented with insights on the space of participation and as derived from user responses. In drawing on the relationship between real-time and sociality, the platform promoted the empowerment of musicians. This was done within the atmosphere, which has been created through language and design, of garage rock music.

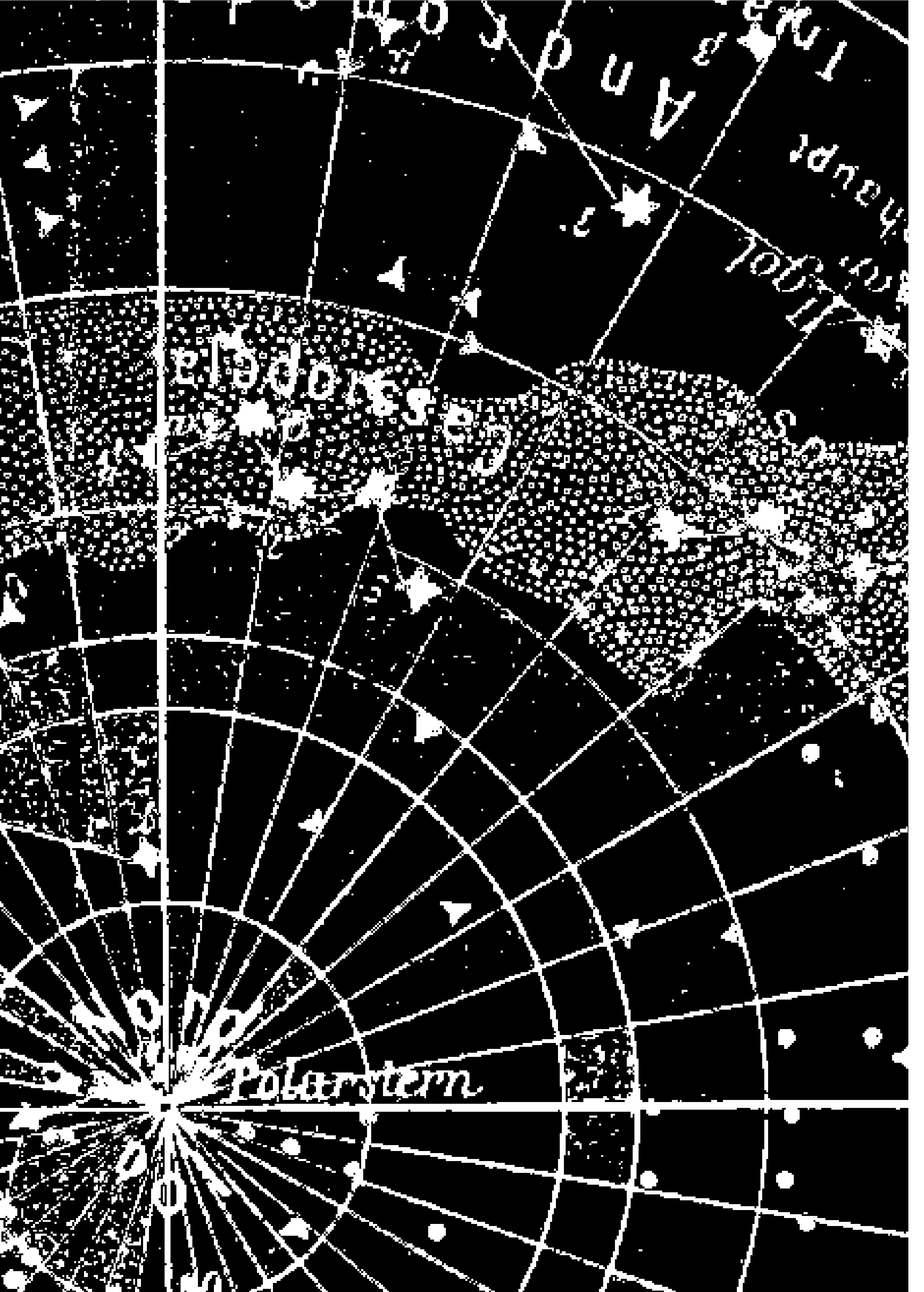
Because of the strong claim on real-time in the constellation, the question of how liveness and real-time compare and contrast had to be posed. In eJamming the term came to mean musicians being able to play sessions together without experiencing latency or delay audio, for fractions of a second, in order to synchronize it later. It helped to make evident that real-time, although malleable per context, is ultimately temporally quantified.

The topic of sociality was, like real-time, addressed in the metatext, space of participation and user responses. In this constellation sociality concerned the bringing together of musicians and allowing them to perform for an audience. The desire users had to play for an audience with the software was evident from their interest in both a listen-in and a live recording feature, both of which would enable them to more easily share the music with others. This notion of sociality harks back to the idea of offline garage rock practice. It concerns meeting up with other musicians in someone's garage and then, when the time is right, finding a stage to perform on for an audience. It aligns with the atmosphere perpetuated by the metatext and the platform itself.

A final observation is that the assessment of the eJamming platform by its users was based on expectations related to the offline practices of garage rock culture, framed in large measure by the metatext. In eJamming's attempt to position itself as go-to platform for online music collaboration, it employs liveness to promote value. The constellation of liveness has brought to the surface the particular shortcomings of the platform. And whereas other music collaboration platforms face a lack of attendance too, it is because eJamming claimed itself as live, that its failure to deliver made users feel that certain promises of liveness had not been fulfilled. It is increasingly obvious that 'live' functioned as placeholder for the set of promises made by the platform. In other words, the most important contribution of this chapter perhaps has been making explicit that liveness works as an evaluative category.

The question as to why many of these other online music collaboration platforms have not been promoted as live is still on the table. Based on the previous chapter, I would propose that there are two reasons why these other platforms have not been promoted as live. The first was mentioned earlier and concerns how they approach real-time, opting to use delays to their advantage rather than overcome it. But then there is also the fact that these other platforms are open-source and not commercial. This latter point ties into the paradox of liveness developed in chapter one, as it is revealed through the relationship between liveness and institutionalization. Open source platforms promote collaboration, whereas commercial platforms are profit oriented, working within an institutional sphere. Thus, they have a vested interested in employing liveness to promote value.

In short, in this chapter I have shown that liveness works as an evaluative category, hereby also being able to introduce the idea of tensions surrounding liveness which become more central in the next two cases. At this point in the dissertation, I shift attention from explaining how liveness operates, to using it to focus an analysis of the present-day standoff between broadcast media and social media (which allows me to continue to develop the concept in the meanwhile). In the next chapter I analyze the reality singing competition *The Voice* (2011), exploring the social TV phenomenon, a useful starting point to exploring liveness in the transition from the broadcast media era to the social media era. Herein I further push forward some of the insights acquired in chapter one, like that of the relation between live broadcasts and interactivity, as well as the trend towards event television. Moreover, I examine how numerous live constructions (in)form the larger constellation of *The Voice* live shows, and through their consideration, start identifying some of the main conditions under which liveness comes into effect. This then leads to the identification and subsequent discussion of a tension surrounding liveness concerning the rhythms and temporalities of television in addition to a tension pertaining audience participation.


Polarstern

3. The Liveness of Social TV: The Case of *The Voice* (2011)

Having explored the paradox of liveness in chapter one, and subsequently the constructedness of liveness in chapter two, I now switch gears from explaining my take on liveness to using liveness to focus an analysis of the looming stand-off between broadcast media and social media in the social media era. More specifically, this chapter investigates the paradox of liveness in broadcast television with the emergence of the so-called social media platforms. It positions the phenomenon called 'social TV' in a lineage of post-television strategies centered on participation, critically engaging with claims in popular discourse regarding its *sociality*. As the latest configuration of television, I propose that social TV be understood as a strategy centered on bringing back audiences to the schedules of the broadcasters. Herein the viewer has been transformed into 'viewser' (Harries 2002) as the format promises and provides users the opportunity to participate in and around the format.

The chapter takes as its case NBC's popular reality singing competition *The Voice* (2011), primarily the first season, focusing the analysis chiefly on the constellation of liveness of the live shows.[1] The selection of the show is motivated by how it has positioned itself as the pinnacle example of social TV. Studying *The Voice* (2011) paves the way for pinpointing some of the conditions under which liveness comes into effect. This is particularly useful, as in this case there are numerous live constructs that interact to inform the three domains – metatext, space of participation and user responses - of the *The Voice:* Live Shows' constellation. The selection for the American adaptation is motivated by the fact that the United States is comprised of multiple

1
The format of the program was purchased by the NBC network from the Dutch company Talpa productions and first aired in the United States on 26 April 2011.

time-zones and that in broadcasting the show to these different regions with delay, illuminates a large issue at play, namely the disconnect between the schedules of broadcasters and the 'empowered' viewers.

The first part introduces social TV as a strategy that has been employed in order for television to regain its central significance as a medium, critically engaging with the narrative of social TV found in popular discourse. Subsequently, I group and discuss the various uses and experiments of television with social media, classifying them in four main tendencies: extension, envelopes, overlays and integrations. This serves as a means to discuss how the social media/television assemblage distinguishes itself from other, existing television assemblages by centering on connecting people in *real-time* in and around the broadcast. It also provides a broader context for understanding the case study at hand.[2]

Part two analyzes the metatext and digital media use of *The Voice*, comparing what is said about/happens in the three different phases of the program (namely, the blind auditions, the battle rounds and the live shows). Here the role of social media in the construction of television as important will be traced. The section is furthermore dedicated to the format's space of participation, reflecting on how people can participate in the format.

The third part then parses out the ways in which the term 'live' has been used, specifically, in the metatext of and in user responses towards the program's 'live shows' (the final phase of the show). Herein I recognize and discuss five constructions: (1) live television, (2) watching live, (3) live tweeting, (4) live performance, and (5) live audience. In reviewing those, it is my aim to reflect on how multiple constructs operate in a constellation and to identify some of the basic conditions from which liveness emerges. The intended result is establishing a few pointers necessary to start answering the question *when* liveness is.

Part four zooms in on the two tensions surrounding liveness that emerge in this constellation, one of which results from a friction between broadcasters' scheduling and user participation. This tension becomes apparent in the user responses, wherein a feud between East and West Coast tweeters surfaced over the 'liveness' of the broadcast. I relate this redefined relation between the industry and its viewers to discussions surrounding the subscription-based streaming video platform Netflix. This platform for watching

2
This first part has informed a publication I wrote together with Eggo Müller (see: Van Es and Müller 2012).

television is releasing entire seasons of television series at once, catering to viewer desires for binge watching, and is collecting large quantities of user-data with the purpose of crunching them to inform the production of original content. It hereby challenges longstanding television practices from the broadcast media era. The second tension I identify pertains to the gradual transformation of audience participation in the production over the course of five seasons of *The Voice*. Here I discuss how producers started reclaiming control over on-air developments, redefining the place and depth of viewer interaction. I then relate this tension, arising from the friction in the space of participation, to the paradox of liveness.

Lastly, the conclusion draws the various insights of the chapter together. Observations concerning the status of broadcast television in the social media era and how the various live constructions are entangled in the larger constellation at hand are discussed. Moreover I push forward the project of understanding the conditions through which the 'live' comes into effect.

3.1 SOCIAL TV

Television has always been characterized as a flexible medium (Uricchio 2009) marked by 'hybridity' (Bennett 2011; Jacobs 2000). Increasingly, with new sites for production and reception, it has become impossible to speak of *television* in the singular (Lotz 2007; Turner and Tay 2009) as it has become a diversified medium. Social TV is one of the latest televisual configurations and has attracted widespread attention in popular discourse. In order to better understand *The Voice* and its metatext, it helps to first very briefly consider the popular narrative explaining social TV as it reflects back on earlier historical configurations of television. In what follows I therefore consider social TV in more depth, exploring it as a part of the dynamics of what has been called 'post-network television'. It is discussed as an emergent strategy against the challenges digital media are said to present to traditional television. I subsequently offer an overview of the various ways in which social media platforms and television nowadays interact to help distinguish it from existing strategies of TV. Finally, I zoom in on *The Voice*, exploring on the one hand how the program has been positioned through the metatext as exemplary of social TV and on the other hand how social media have been woven into the fabric of the format.

3.1.1 The Death of Broadcast TV

In her book *The Television Will be Revolutionized* (2007) Amanda Lotz explores the characteristics of the three main phases of American television history. She labels these phases as follows: the network era (approximately 1952 to the mid-1980's), the multi-channel transition (mid-1980s to mid-2000s) and the post-network era (mid-2000s to present).[3] The network era was typified by limited program choice, a linear viewing experience and appointment television. It was then that,

> […] the medium [television] gained its status as a primary cultural institution because network-era programming could and did reach such vast audiences. (Lotz 2007: 32)

It is because people were watching the same shows, and at the same time, that television became known for instigating what is known as water-cooler conversation, shared content for discussion. It is a myth perpetuated in today's nostalgic perspectives on broadcast TV. The multi-channel transition introduced more viewer choice, thanks to distribution systems such as cable and satellite, and viewer control through devices like the remote control and video-recorders.

In the post-network era the fragmentation of the audience intensified with the advent of digital technologies that increased the amount of available channels and viewer control. These changes lead to the further erosion of network control over how and when viewers watched certain programs. Television from then on is seen as less capable of prompting water-cooler conversation. Whereas in the 1980-1981 broadcast season, the number one show *Dallas* reached 45.2 % of the households in the United States, present day top rating programs like *American Idols* for example reach only about 14% (Lotz 2007: 43);[4] for this reason, there was less of a shared television experience.

These last observations have formed the stepping-stone for the typical

3

To Uricchio (2009) this first period, which he has identified as the 'broadcast era', constitutes television's stable period and it continues to frame common conception of what television is (27). These conceptions are well captured by the metaphors of television, flow and broadcasting (Gripsrud 1998).

4

It must be pointed out that these figures may be tainted; they do not consider consumption that takes place through any other channels than the traditional distribution models (although Nielsen has recently included time-delayed replays in its figures).

popular narrative explaining 'social TV' (see Dumenco 2011) as a strategy. It is a narrative that can be broken down into three recurrent parts:

1) the television audience has dispersed,
2) but by embracing the real-time of social media platforms as an opportunity, the lost sociality of television long past can be rekindled
3) and in doing, so television ratings have increased.

The descriptor 'social TV' is somewhat confusing, as it suggests that sociality is new to broadcast television. But it is not. In the postwar years in the United States, tavern screens facilitated amusement and conversation (McCarthy 2001: 36), a tradition that persists today in (sports) bars and particularly around major (sports) events. In the 1980s there was experimentation with audience members messaging through the TV screen (Jonietz 2010, n.p.). And with the introduction of the Internet, online forums, for discussing television shows, emerged as well (Baym 2000). I find that each of these particular television configurations emphasized different forms of social. Aside from the overarching assumption found in this narrative explaining social TV that people are very eager to participate in television formats, it is problematic in several other ways. Pointing these out will help me to establish how social TV relates to the paradox of liveness, and later on, rectify some inherent misconceptions about the relationship between television and social media.

First off, whilst today's popular television series do in fact attract substantially less viewers than those during the network era, in 2010 the *Super Bowl XLV* was viewed by 39.8% of American television households (Klayman 2011), which made that night the most watched-evening on any network in 20 years (i.e., since well before the beginning of the post-network era). *The Grammy Awards* of 2012, moreover, were the second-most viewed ever since the show's inauguration in 1959 (in the first quarter of the network era). These two examples demonstrate that television is still able to attract large audiences. Graeme Turner (2009) has interpreted this type of success as follows:

> The one area where almost everyone agrees that there will continue to be a market for broadcasting is in live 'event' television - key sporting events, national celebrations and so on. It is still possible for broadcasters to gather enormous audiences for these events, and everyone acknowledges that they should continue. (61)

The conclusion that mass audiences have withered away thus overlooks the fact that particular genres of television, specifically carefully produced events of national or international significance, continue to thrive, attracting very sizeable audiences.

The second claim found in the narrative, although the discourse rightfully points out that sociality has previously occurred in television practice, focuses on the idea of the water-cooler conversation. In using the analogy it fails to elaborate on how social TV has refashioned this practice. Important differences, I would suggest, emerge as a result of, for instance, the technological specificities of the medium Twitter, changing the way in which communication takes place.

As to the third part of the narrative, networks and cable channels are celebrating how social media platforms seem to help audiences flock back to the collective experience of watching television live. Yet despite the fact that several social TV experiments have been rating success stories, the 2011 Oscars, whilst making heavy use of social media in the program, drew 9% less viewers than the year before (Guthrie 2011).[5] This exposes a problem in the reductionist, causal relation being drawn by the popular discourse between the use of social media platforms in television and higher ratings. The suggestion that expanding TV shows to social media platforms alone results in higher viewer ratings overlooks the numerous other factors involved in determining a program's success.

Nowadays broadcasters see platform proliferation and the harnessing of audience participation as a low cost, strategic effort to retain and build audiences (Steinberg 2009b; Ytreberg 2009). With the help of social media platforms television producers are trying to lure audiences back to linear viewing and foster viewer loyalty, through what has been called 'affective economics' (Jenkins 2006). Rather than posing a threat to broadcast television, as digital

5
Audiences even complained how the pre-occupation of James Franco with his cellular phone during his hosting tasks was annoying and made him come across as autistic.

media have often been said to do, social media platforms are said to stimulate audiences to return to appointment TV (Patel and Slutsky 2011: n.p.).

The connection between social TV and broadcast media is viewed as simple: broadcasters are employing social media to combat the fragmentation of audiences (Highfield et al. 2013). The strategy is implemented in the hope that it encourages appointment TV. In *The Voice* (2011), for example, it is possible to see how the live shows are, with the help of social media, constructed as must-see event TV.

My analysis of the metatext and space of participation of *The Voice* (2011) will highlight how the program's live shows perpetuate the illusion that 'America' is watching an event at society's center.[6] As discussed in the chapter on Livestream, interactivity is instrumental in making more visible the connection with others, otherwise just taken for granted. The role of social media, as I understand it, is thus to reinforce a sense of togetherness by providing a space for people to discuss the program as it happens.

3.1.2 **In Television Practice**

Having positioned social TV as a strategic response to audience fragmentation, I move to examine the relation between social media and television in practice. The present-day 'social TV' experiments embrace what Henry Jenkins (1992, 2006) has termed 'participatory culture'. According to Jenkins, participation concerns the cultural blurring between the lines of consumption and production with as a result that users engage in new ways of media production, facilitated by the possibilities of digital technologies.[7]

In order to clarify how current 'social TV' experiments redefine the 'social' in 'social TV', I now parse out the different types of relations that social media establish with television. Analyzing how television shows presently make use of social media brings forward four different relationship types: extensions, overlays, enveloping, and integrations. Expounding these relationships should make evident that the presumed strength of social TV

6
This was an argument made by Roel Puijk (Lillehamer University), in his presentation "What Happened to Media Events", at the 2010 NECS conference, Kadir Has University (Istanbul), June 25, 2010.

7
His analyses, however, tend to favor optimistic readings of bottom-up forces such as fan cultures; Jenkins therein neglect to critically consider how participation is structured by top-down forces (Müller 2009; Schäfer 2011a).

lies in connecting people in real-time in and around the telecast. The four uses of social media that I identify below can complement and interact in different assemblages. For each relationship I use examples for clarification. Whereas the examples I use concern a play between social media platforms and entertainment programs, these are also found in programs from the information sector.[8]

(1) Extensions

The first relation concerns the use of social media for the *extension* of television programming (Ytreberg 2009; Gillan 2010). It coincides with what Jenkins has called 'transmedia storytelling' (2003, 2006). Jenkins defines this as the practice of extending storylines and developing characters across multiple media channels (e.g. games, films, books, websites and mobisodes). In such a configuration, each platform offers a unique entry-point to the franchise. Simultaneously, new demands have been placed on the audiences as they are asked to seek out information across multiple platforms and make connections between them (Jenkins 2006: 96-7).

As an extension, social media platforms serve the purpose of providing an ongoing relation between the audience and the format. They extend the lived relationship beyond initial consumption (Caldwell 2000). A show's official website, for instance, offers viewers several unique ways of entering a show's narrative, linking to all types of related content. Today's shows' hosts and producers are active on social media platforms too, creating new entry-points into the experience of the show themselves. Here television is a medium that combines broadcasting with narrowcast address on digital platforms (Beyer et al. 2007; Castells 2009; Gillan 2011).

(2) Overlays

The second relation between social media and telecasts I propose to call *overlay*. It is an aesthetic relation, and similar to what has been conceptualized as

8

But also, I would claim, within various (other) cultural institutions, which increasingly experiment with participation and sociality through urban screens. Prince William and Kate Middelton's royal wedding sparked multiple news organizations to use Twitter integration for their live reporting of the event. Al Jazeera English has opted for a more aggressive use of social media in news reporting. In May 2011 the daily television program *The Stream* was launched, which constructs news by harnessing user-generated content and tapping into online discussions on social media platforms using the content curation platform Storify.

'hypermediacy' (Bolter and Grusin 1999) in that it concerns the multiplying of media. In my use of the term overlay, however, I specifically target the incorporation of media in television.

In the United States, Fox Network ran what turned out to be a controversial 'tweet-peat' experiment in 2009 around repeats of *Fringe* and *Glee* that illustrates what overlay is and points to one of its pitfalls. The experiment was intended as a Q&A between fans and the cast members/producers as well as episode commentary. Tweets scrolled by during the East and West Coast airings on the bottom third of the screen. The experiment ended up agitating viewers who complained that large portions of the onscreen action had been blocked by the overlay.[9] Thus, although seemingly a straightforward interaction between Twitter and television, such complementation has been, and continues to be, a straining process of trial and error for program makers. An easy fix to this problem has been the emergence of the second screen, which allows viewsers to interact with and around the content without it interfering with the on-screen action.

In spite of the critique, the overlay of tweets has since become common television practice in the United States. Fox Network has used it in shows like *Glee*, *Bones*, and *Fringe* to encourage and organize Twitter activity.[10] The strategy has also been pushed further. USA Network has, for instance, started asking viewers questions (i.e. what the characters should do next at crucial points in the story) with reference to their shows *Royal Pains* (2009), *Covert Affairs* (2010) and *Suits* (2011).

(3) Enveloping

Yet another way that social media can relate to television programming is through *enveloping*. Diverse media platforms aggregate a community around the content of a TV program and facilitate communication amongst the participating members of the audience. This relation differs from *extension* because these platforms are means for users to communicate with each other in real-time whist watching a program, as opposed to communicating

9
See also: Steinberg (2009a).

10
There are many other examples. On Comedy Central, for instance, *The Roast* with Donald Trump was typified by Twitter itself as the "single deepest integration of a Twitter hashtag on air - ever". The hashtag #TrumpRoast featured in the bottom-left corner of the screen during the broadcast.

outside the broadcast time frame. Twitter, in particular, boasts that it lends itself well to this practice.[11] And as pointed out,

> Users' ability to participate in the real-time social media conversation around shared texts is crucially dependent on parallel, synchronized viewing by large audiences, thus providing a strong incentive for the live viewing even of pre-recorded programming. (Highfield et al. 2013: 317-18)

But besides Twitter being able to provide a sphere for conversation around the shared text, other platforms offer(ed) this type of relation as well. Since 2008 the ABC Family has been hosting 'online viewing parties'. That same year CBS equally experimented with social media, introducing 'social viewing rooms'.[12] Both initiatives offered viewers the possibility to watch shows together and chat about them in real-time on Facebook or their own websites. In addition, they also facilitated other interactive activities like polls and competing in quizzes through the platform. A year later, in 2009, cable channel Bravo embraced the idea of enveloping television content, also offering viewing parties. Lisa Hsia, the senior vice-president of digital media for Bravo, has typified the viewing party format as follows:

> a real-time watercooler event that allows us to grow our audience through social media, and to have a two-way conversation with fans as they experience Bravo in a more personal, intimate way than ever before. (Cited from Swedlow 2010: n.p.)

Here a talk bubble is created *around* the content as viewer questions are exclusively answered online. In short, these platforms help aggregate a community of people around the content and facilitate communication amongst these individuals.

In this context, we should also situate the emergence of second screen experiences that offer viewers a form of content personalization through their

11
On Twitter's corporate blog the successes of its marriage to television is heavily celebrated and promoted. For example, statistics gathered around the 2011 MTV Music Video Awards by Trendrr, an analytics service for digital and social media, indicated that Twitter is the major platform for social TV. Of the 5.57 million social media mentions the show had generated, 5.48 million were attributable to Twitter (in Warren 2011).

12
These have however since been suspended.

Figure 5: The Shark Week App (Bergman 2011b)

iPad, iPhone or Android phone.[13] These apps sync to the broadcast in real-time, offer 'companion content' (i.e. polls, quizzes and other extra content), a moderated social stream to communicate with other viewers and staff, and they enable users to share comments on Facebook and Twitter. An example of this is the app developed for Discovery Channel's *Shark Week* (2011), seen in Figure 5. But *Shark Week* is not alone in offering such a tool. Increasingly, other networks have also launched second screen apps for their series. NBC, for instance, has rolled out the NBC Live app for the network. It facilitates second screen experiences for a selection of their TV shows (including *The Voice*), with the intention of expanding it to all its shows.[14]

Similarly, 2008 saw the rapid emerging industry in entertainment check-in apps such as *GetGlue*, *Philo*, *Miso* and *BeeTV*. The goal of these applications is to encourage appointment television by make the consumption of media more social through interactivity. Viewers are encouraged to 'check in' to the media they are consuming and receive rewards like points, badges and

13
This specification varies per app.

14
This trend is not limited to TV shows. Disney has been rolling out second screen experiences for Blu-ray discs. The app syncs up to the film and allows the viewer to interact, in real-time, with extra content.

stickers if they do so. These platforms also allow users to connect and communicate with other viewsers. Anno 2012, *GetGlue* claims to have over 2 million users and it has made high profile branding deals with over 75 major networks in the USA and UK.[15]

(4) Integration

The fourth type of relation I identify is *integration*. It relates to the idea that with digitization, interactivity is increasingly integrated into a program (Gripsrud 2010, 16). Hereby I refer not only to various voting mechanisms, but also to how the comments posted to the social media platforms are integrated with the on-screen action. It differs from overlay in that these online comments are used as direct input for the show. For example, at the 2011 Annual Academy Awards, live television was mixed with real-time tweeting as host James Franco took viewers behind the scenes, posting videos, photos and messages on Twitter under the hashtag #OscarsRealTime. Although his onstage performance was criticized,[16] Franco was well received on Twitter.[17]

The four different relations between television and social media that were just addressed have been developed as part of producers' efforts to help television maintain its centrality in the media landscape, by encouraging users to return to the linear programming of broadcast television. By parsing out these relations, it becomes clear that what is different about 'social TV' as compared to the popular concepts of 'transmedia storytelling' (Jenkins 2003, 2006), 'cross-media' (Davidson 2010) or 'deep media' (Rose 2011), is that it combines live television with real-time information afforded by social media platforms. It does so through a combination of extension, overlay, enveloping and integration. Thus, although *The Voice* can be understood as either a 'transmedia storytelling', 'cross-media' or 'deep media' format, it cannot be captured by these theoretical frameworks. This is because these concepts

15
Alex, "GetGlue Raises $12M in new financing, Reaches 2M users milestone", GetGlue, posted January 11, 2012, http://blog.getglue.com/?p=10232.

16
Mostly this critique concerned the solipsism effective of his cell phone engagement. With *The Voice of Holland* there was criticism that fixation with the tablet made the performers "autistic zombies" (@wmeulendijks in a tweet).

17
See the official report by Twitter, http://media.twitter.com/1341/oscars2011 that does not take note of the drop in viewer ratings.

focus on how these media platforms *extend* the lived relationship *outside* of the broadcast time slot, rather than considering relations such as overlays, envelopes and integrations.

3.2 SEASON ONE OF *THE VOICE*

Having discussed the various relations between social media and television, the following section introduces the case study *The Voice*. I begin by outlining the metatext of the television show based on information gathered from the official NBC website of *The Voice*, the show's press releases for season one, elements in the episodes themselves (including the implementation of social media by the producers) and online exposés on the show in which representatives have been interviewed. Following, I compare and contrast the metatext and digital media use in the first two phases of the show, the blind audition and battle rounds, to that of the live shows, the third and final phase. In doing so, I identify a shift in emphasis from authenticity to that of participation. I then zoom in on the space of participation as realized in the live shows. Throughout the analysis of the show, I direct the attention to how social media are used to construct the broadcast as event TV and reflect on how liveness is constructed and implicated herein.

3.2.1 **The Format Metatext: From Authenticity to Participation**

Like many reality show competitions, *The Voice* heavily promotes 'the American Dream'. The show is showcased and discussed by those involved with it, including the contestants, as life changing. By voicing the conviction that exposure on television can advance social standing of those featured on screen, they acknowledge the power of broadcast television. *The Voice* has sought to differentiate itself from its competitors in the following ways: it has capitalized on the fact that auditions are blind, claiming this allows for contestants to be judged on their voice rather than looks (hence the title of the program) and it heavily played the social TV card, positioning itself as the most interactive show on television.

Carson Daly hosted the first season of *The Voice*. Four coaches joined him on-screen: celebrity musicians Blake Shelton, Cee Lo Green, Christina Aguilera, and Adam Levine. The role of the coach was to assemble a team

and tutor its members throughout the competition. In addition, Alison Haislip held the rather unique function of social media correspondent. Her role, by mere existence, readily emphasized the centrality that social media were thought to have in the format.

Season one comprised of three phases: the blind auditions, battle rounds and live shows. During the first phase (broadcast in the first two weeks of the program) the coaches needed to select eight contestants, referred to as 'artists', for their team, whilst listening to the performers as they auditioned, without seeing them (with their revolving chairs turned away). If a coach wanted to have a contestant on his/her team, he/she pushed a button (making his/her chair turn around), subsequently facing the contestant. In the event that multiple coaches had turned their chair, the contestant got to pick which of their teams he/she wanted to join. Then in the battle rounds (episodes three to six, broadcast over four weeks) the coaches paired their artists to compete in battle round performances. Each coach had to select the winner for the round, and by the end of this phase all teams had been brought back to four contestants. The live shows, in the third phase of the program (during the remaining four weeks of the season's broadcast), had three segments (the quarterfinals, semi-finals and finales) each spanning two episodes.

In a press release announcing the program to the world, *The Voice* claimed to be "the most digitally integrated show on TV". The popular press picked up the statement and Daly and Haislip repeated this on-air. The contestants of *The Voice* were introduced to the possibilities of social media and encouraged to document their experiences of participating in the program from day one:

> From the minute they landed in LA for blind auditions, artists were given training in blogging and Facebook Page and handed Samsung Galaxy Tabs and cameras to document everything from team dinners to rehearsals with photo and video. Each artist has his own hub on the site that links to a blog, Facebook, Twitter, video and photos - viewers really have the opportunity to be heavily invested in the show and the artists, and that translates to better ratings and higher engagement. (Drell 2011a: n.p.)

The 32 contestants that made it through the blind auditions each had a blog, Facebook page, Twitter account, video blog and photo blog, where

they shared their experiences of being part of the show.[18] In this manner, *The Voice* offered its viewsers, aside from the television broadcasts themselves, multiple narrative tracks into *The Voice*-verse.

The NBC.com homepage featured links to the show's social platform and provided "24/7 storytelling and continu[ed] all of the reality stories and experiences of the artists and the coaches and the rivalries between them" (Yaron qtd. in Drell 2011a: n.p.). These features, then, could well be identified as a form of what I have called extension, as the connection between the audience and the format is extended beyond the broadcast timeframe. The shows' producers were active on the website, Facebook and Twitter, not only in between airings, but also in the time leading up to the season and well after the season finale.

In the following pages I examine the roles which digital media, and social media in particular, were attributed by the makers to *The Voice*, along with the narrative of the program rhetoric. I identify two different, albeit non-exclusive, approaches, to social media in the show: (a) whereas the show, in the first two phases, primarily focused on educating the viewing audience about the possibilities of connecting with digital media in and around the show, (b) during the live shows phase social media were made a part of the episodes. Simultaneously, the live shows marked a noticeable change from promoting the show as authentic to promoting audience participation. Specifically, I first examine the blind auditions and battle rounds through the example of episode one and then compare the situation in those, to that in the live shows.

The Blind Auditions and Battle Rounds

> Welcome to *The Voice* - a singing-competition unlike any other because it puts vocal ability first. - Carson Daly

Above the first sentence uttered on *The Voice*, which reveals the primary way that the show attempted to differentiate itself from other singing competitions. The fact that the auditions were done blind was highly emphasized during its first two phases. This was addressed not only in the surrounding rhetoric, but also reproduced in the show through sound bites from

18
When a contestant was eliminated, his/her activity seemingly stopped on blogs hosted on the NBC.com website, but all remained active on Facebook and Twitter.

contestants and the shows' hosts. They all claimed the show was different because it centered on people's voices rather than their looks. A related strategy was to call the contestants *artists* and to refer to the judges as *coaches*, and to encourage a mentor-student type relation between the two. Whereas the first phase laid claim to authenticity through the way that the blind auditions were held, the battle rounds were made authentic through the clips that showcased the coaches mentoring their team members.

With respect to social media, the first two rounds of *The Voice* demonstrated a shared set of uses and functions. For this reason, I only elaborate on one episode in more depth as exemplary of the social media use in the blind auditions and battle rounds more generally.

Figure 6: The First Use of Tweets on *The Voice*

The first time a tweet was used on *The Voice* was during the first episode, where one was incorporated as an overlay. Figure 6 depicts this moment. It shows contestant Patrick Thomas, pictured on the right, after his audition, when asked to pick between the three coaches that had spun their chair for him. Before he was asked to make his choice, the coaches offered feedback on the audition that led to a discussion between Levine and Shelton (who had both pushed for Thomas). At this time, as seen in the left screen-shot, users were asked to "Tweet along with our coaches" and the show's official hashtag #TheVoice featured as a call-to-action. Following this, seen in the right screenshot, a tweet from Shelton directed at what Levine had just said was used as an overlay.

Throughout the episode viewers were encouraged to tweet along with Daly, or one of the coaches. Like in the example above, only tweets from the show's hosts and coaches were used as overlay. The tweets by Daly, for instance, were used to welcome contestants to the battle rounds. The official

hashtag #TheVoice was strategically placed throughout the episodes.

In putting an official hashtag on-screen, producers hoped to encourage a community of interest to organize around #TheVoice. It was intended as a coordinating mechanism for Twitter discussions about the show. Its placement on-screen was meant to instruct users to include the hashtag when tweeting about the show. In fact, it has been proposed that 70% of the tweets about *The Voice* did use the official hashtag (Drell 2011a).[19] This statistic is important because it suggests that tweets collected by searching this hashtag, which I have done in order to analyze user responses, capture the majority of tweets about the show.

Social media correspondent Haislip made her first appearance on *The Voice* in the final minutes of the first episode. She reported from backstage and introduced herself as: "The official V-correspondent and guide to all that is digitally awesome at *The Voice*". Haislip went on in this segment to encourage viewers to participate and drew their attention to the official website and iTunes store. As she talked, an overlay featured at the bottom third of the screen, telling viewers to tweet using the designated hashtag and along with @alisonhaislip. The segment ended with her summing up the multiple ways to stay connected with *The Voice* 24/7.

In conclusion, both the blind auditions and the battle rounds were concerned with setting-up social media use and creating awareness among the audience of activity outside of the broadcast, particularly on Twitter. Such a relationship has earlier on in the chapter been typified as 'enveloping'. This was done by involving online commentary from the cast on Twitter, putting the hashtag on-air and having Haislip explain which other platforms were part of the format. The overlays were limited to tweets by the show's hosts and coaches. In general, the use of social media was modest, especially when compared to the live shows.

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Producers are not always successful in their attempts to implement certain hashtags. This was evident with The World According to Paris where the on-screen tag #TheWorldAccordingtoParis, appearing throughout the show in the upper-right hand corner of the screen, was less popular than the user-driven tag #Paris which emerged naturally (Bergman 2011). With The Voice, although the given hashtag was successful, various user-driven hashtags emerged as well from more straightforward indicators such as #VicciMartinez (one of the contestants) and #TeamCeeLo to #wardance (used to typify Martinez's onstage style).

The Live Shows

> And starting tonight, you at home get a shot at saving one artist on each team. - Carson Daly

As Daly's words make immediately clear, the live shows introduced a shift in the program's rhetoric and digital media implementation. Whereas the metatext for the blind auditions and battle rounds had emphasized authenticity, the metatext of the live shows centered on online connectivity and audience participation. This shift was furthermore apparent in the introduction of what they called the V-Room, a side stage where social media correspondent Haislip reported.

The metatext of the live shows heavily stressed the show's new 'live' status, even, as touched upon later in considering user responses, to the degree that viewers were wondering why Daly was repeatedly stating that the show was live. Included in Daly's call to participation was the construction of the audience as an 'imagined community' (Anderson [1983] 2006). This was most explicit in how, throughout the live shows, he repeatedly called upon 'America' to vote and tweet.

Moreover, from the live shows onward the relation between social media and television was no longer simply one of enveloping, extension or the overlaying of tweets from hosts and coaches. Now, social media comments from *viewers* were being used as overlays and integrated into the episodes.

The V-Room, as the following introduction to it by Daly clarifies, was the center of this online social activity:

> We at *The Voice* are really proud to be the most digitally integrated show on TV. That means you can vote for your favorite artist by calling, voting online, you can also vote by downloading your favorite artist's individual performances on iTunes. So voting will open at the end of the show. And at the center of our social media is V-correspondent Alison Haislip in our brand-new V-Room brought to you by Sprint. Alison how is it going in the V-Room?

Haislip explained its role to the audience as follows:

> This is the V-room. This is where viewers can connect live, right here right now with teams Blake and Christina in so many different ways. First, let's talk Twitter. You can Tweet the artists directly at their personal Twitter handles. Just go to @NBCTheVoice/artists and all the artists are listed there so hit them up with your questions and comments and make sure to include in your tweet #TheVoice. You are getting a direct line to these guys. Or you can post your comments on The Voice Facebook page and online at nbc.com/thevoice. The artists will be here throughout the show to answer your burning questions. The coaches will be responding as well, so stay connected!

With the live shows, the amount of check-ins with Haislip increased from just the one during the blind auditions and battle rounds, to multiple times per episode. The V-Room was the materialization of the changing emphasis of the metatext and the expanded space of participation.

The first live show episode featured four check-ins with the V-Room. Out of these, three mentioned the online buzz. The first time Haislip remarked: "Twitter is blowing up right now" and that coach Levine was trending worldwide because of his guitar solo. She emphasized that viewers could connect "right here, right now in so many different ways". With the second check-in she stated that all performing artists of that night were trending worldwide and that it was going crazy in the V-Room. She read viewer comments off her tablet about getting chills from the performance, which had just ended, and reminded viewers they could connect directly to the artists through Twitter, Facebook and NBC.com. From her tablet she posed a question to one of the contestants. The segment was closed off with the statement: "For all things digital we got you covered right here in the V-Room. This is your chance to connect live. Back to you Carson."

During the third check-in Haislip mentioned "more good news", namely that out of the top ten trending topics on Twitter in the United States, four were related to *The Voice*. Hereby the notion of the social significance of the broadcast was reaffirmed. Aside from the fact that there was so much happening online, emphasis was also placed on the possibility for viewsers to connect directly with the artists. Haislip furthermore posed one of the artists a question put forward by a viewer online, which she read to him from her tablet. The last check-in was short. Haislip simply noted, "There is so much social media action happening in the V-Room tonight. I got to read this funny tweet. This is great." And she concluded the segment by reading the tweet out loud.

Analyzing the role of the V-Room brings forward two uses of social media: (1) bridging the on-air and online worlds, and (2) forging a relationship with the home audience. First, the switch to the V-Room was explained as a means to "see what's happening online". A sharp distinction was drawn in the metatext between the on-air and the online. The V-Room essentially materialized the online user-activity through a web wall with crawling Tweets and physical monitors displaying Facebook pages and NBC.com. Tweets were featured during check-ins with the V-Room, although Haislip did not interact with the crawling Tweets displayed in the lower portion of the screen. In each live episode she did, however, pose a question or two from the social media realm to the artists, which she read out loud from her Samsung tablet.

Moreover, every candidate in the V-Room had a tablet at hand, and Haislip's conversations with the candidates in the V-Room always touched on how viewsers on social media were commenting on a candidate's performance, suggesting that the conversation between candidates and fans was developing 'live' during the show. Daly frequently asked Haislip during the show what was going on online. Situated in the V-Room it was Haislip's task to keep people informed as to the latest online developments. She reported from the V-Room in the style of a news correspondent on scene. Outside of the V-Room, social media were only referenced through a strategically placed hashtag.

Secondly, presenters and hosts of traditional forms of broadcast television suggested direct contact with the audience through 'para-social interaction' (Horton and Wohl 1956). The use of social media in *The Voice* seemed to sustain the illusion of viewers actually being connected and being part of the ongoing conversation, thus potentially strengthening the bond between program and audience. Through its extensive use of social media during the live shows, *The Voice* proposed that actual communication with the audience was going on via the integrated back channels of social media, creating a communicative community of producers, candidates and viewsers. To sustain this illusion, Haislip even asked the artists some questions viewsers had posted online. However, for most viewers not engaged in social media during the live broadcast of the show, the interaction with program, cast and other viewers still is an imagined one as in traditional para-social interaction.

Taken together, the live show metatext and social media use are involved in the construction of event TV. In the case of the first season of *The Voice*,

the incorporation of social media activity acknowledged the home audience by making it part of the conversation, and thus underscored the significance of the broadcast. Haislip reported on how the trending topics on Twitter were about *The Voice*, thus enhancing the idea that a lot was happening online. Not only was this a "hook into this sense of real-time and urgency" (Sladden in Halperin 2011: n.p.), giving viewers the feeling that the show was well discussed, but it also confirmed the liveness of the broadcast, with liveness here being a marker of importance.

3.2.2 **The Live Shows' Space of Participation**

Having outlined *The Voice* in terms of its metatext, I now trace the various spaces of participation of the format by discussing techno-cultural, economic and legal forces shaping user participation. What follows is not intended as an exhaustive list of all opportunities afforded by the format, but rather a concern with the main space of participation, which will allow me to reflect both on the various liveness constructs, and their constellation at large.

The Voice was developed as a format with multiple spaces of participation that were tied together by the telecast. There were, for one, multiple media by which viewers could cast votes on (a) contestant(s). Furthermore, the real-time of Twitter, Facebook and the NBC.com website extended this domain, and even transformed it when channeled into the show. However, in contrast to the enthusiasm that accompanies social media and participatory television, the live shows remained a producer-controlled space with viewers having very limited impact over what unfolded on-screen. It seems that user-participation was harvested around the program and occasionally pulled in to help stimulate the illusion of para-social interaction. These peripheral spaces are discussed in brief, because they co-shape the space of participation of the *The Voice* format as a whole.

Officially, people couldn't watch *The Voice* outside of the United States because the show wasn't broadcast there. Within the region, also, some people couldn't watch for the practical reason that they didn't have cable. However, links were also shared on Twitter to (illegal) online video streams of *The Voice*. Here people could watch the show in real-time as it was being broadcast on the East Coast. The diversity of languages used to promote these streams on Twitter suggests that the show reached beyond the borders of the United States and was being viewed by people across the globe. This

was furthermore possible because shortly after airings the episodes were illegally available as bit-torrents and streaming video. As such, the official space of participation could be extended through illegal practices.

To accommodate the economic imperative at the heart of prime-time strategy in the United States, *The Voice* was first broadcast on the East Coast and then re-aired three hours later for the West Coast. This practice is known as tape-delay and is used as a strategy to maximize audience size, airing the show in the most attractive time slot in order to target particular audience segments and sizes. As I intend to discuss later on, as television has come to incorporate social media in its practice, doubt has been cast as to whether this continues to be a smart strategy for networks as it creates frustration for audiences engaging online encountering spoilers.

As touched on earlier, the live shows recalibrated the relation between the show, the cast, and its audience. An important change was that the fact that viewers could now cast votes to help their favorite artists move forward in the competition. Daly repeatedly stressed this transfer of power: "You at home get to choose which artist is saved". In actual fact, for the quarterfinals and semi-finals, it was the audience votes in collaboration with the coaches', weighted in 50/50, which determined which contestant moved to the next round.[20] During the finale episode the results of user voting determined the winner.

The Voice offered several voting methods: (1) by phone, (2) online and (3) through iTunes purchases. However, voting was not open to all. Although people had managed to view the show outside of the United States, which was evident from online comments, the audience participation through voting was officially restricted through the 'Voting Terms and Conditions' that defined geographical parameters for voting. The toll-free telephone voting and online voting was only open to those people located in the continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico.

In iTunes, geography also played a role as geo-filtering prevented people from accessing the U.S. store outside the designated territory from purchasing the contestant songs that had been performed during the show and which would count towards that week's voting. During the voting window,

20
In all fairness, it was apparent from the reasoning the coaches gave that their choice was influenced by the success of the artist's performance on iTunes. As such it can be argued that the home audience had more control at that stage than the show initially suggested.

the songs were only available through the U.S. iTunes Store, and were released to an international audience only after the voting window had closed. Moreover, downloading a song from iTunes cost $1.29. The price introduced an economic barrier to this particular method of voting and the required iTunes software a technological one. The voting window via all three methods was fairly long. Even if someone watched the show several hours or even days later, they would still be able to take part in the voting.[21]

The NBC.com website served primarily as an extension of the broadcast. Here all 32 contestants that had made it to the second round were featured with a series of hyperlinks to their blogs, Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, video blogs and photo blogs. It provided viewers multiple ways of accessing the show's narrative. The website also included 'web exclusive' content like videos. As a result of geo-filtering, however, these were not accessible to those visiting the website from outside the United States.

The social media strategy for the first season of *The Voice* focused primarily on Twitter and Facebook. These platforms allowed for the enveloping of the program and the on-air integration of social comments. In both cases, watching live was an important prerequisite. In light of Twitter's central role in the program, I take a few paragraphs to outline its space of participation.[22] Twitter enabled for audience members not only to connect with one another, but also with the cast of the program.

Simply put, Twitter is a microblogging service that facilitates the sending and reading of text-based messages with up to 140 characters.[23] In the default settings, a tweet is publicly visible. The platform allows users to subscribe to the tweets of others in a practice known as *following*. Consequently, all the tweets from the people being followed by the user are collected in a stream on their Twitter homepage.

Twitter accommodates several forms of social interaction. There is 'mass-self communication' (Castells 2009), meaning that it can be used as a tool for individuals to disseminate messages to a potential mass audience.

21
In reality it would be possible for anyone to vote, whether having watched the show or not.

22
For a comprehensive understanding of the Twitter platform and its space of participation, see: Van Dijck (2012c).

23
This character limit was meant for compatibility with SMS messaging.

However, it is also possible to set up conversations about or directed at individuals. This is done by including their username in a tweet preceded by the '@' symbol. Such a tweet will appear on the sender's profile page. Furthermore, if the recipient is a follower of the sender, the tweet will appear in their timeline view (visible to all),[24] but not on their profile page. However, if the recipient is not following the sender, he/she can find the tweet in the @mentions tab.

It is possible to post messages by topic through the use of hashtags. Hashtags are a cultural shorthand enabling communities of interest to emerge around a given topic by prefixing a word with a pound sign. They were popularized in 2007 around the San Diego forest fires when Nate Ritter used #sandiegofire to identify updates about the disaster.

Returning to the show, with respect to the integration of social comments, each live show episode overlayed several user tweets and posed two or so questions that had been posted to Facebook or even from NBC.com. Although the show's producers had hoped to incorporate other social networks as well, the fact that it required negotiations for use of each specific post prevented them from doing so (Adashek in Edelsburg 2011). This is an obvious way that legal forces, by limiting which social comments could be used on the show, helped shape the format's space of participation.

The official hashtag allowed for those concerned with *The Voice* to find one another and interact. Part of the excitement in tweeting, and therein enveloping the broadcast, was created by the possibility that a representative of the show replied to the tweet or that it appeared on-air.[25] However, for the producers, getting real-time commentary from Twitter into the live broadcast was a challenge. For instance, it took about 15 seconds to get tweets on air because tweets had to pass several standards and legal filtering. Furthermore, in line with Twitter's recommendation on the use of tweets in a broadcast, a large percentage of the featured tweets were from coaches and/or contestants rather than the audience. And so these legal and cultural factors reduced the likelihood of viewer social comments to be used as overlay or integrated on-air.

24
This is true unless privacy settings have been set to restrict access.

25
I conclude this based on comments I found on Twitter in which users would ask how they could get their tweet on-air (in the V-Room).

In Twitter as envelope or extension to the broadcast it was also possible to @mention the show's host, coaches and contestants particularly as their Twitter names were promoted on the website and on-air. The sheer volume of messages directed at these individuals, however, stood in the way of responding and building relationships. Clay Shirky (2008) has explained the problem aptly:

> On the Web interactivity has no technological limits, but it does still have strong cognitive limits: no matter who you are, you can only read so many weblogs, can trade e-mails with only so many people, and so on. […] These social constraints mean that even when a medium is two-way, its most popular practitioners will be forced into a one-way pattern. (91-2)

The consequence for the cast of *The Voice* was that they were unable to reciprocate the attention they received and were forced back into a one-to-many way of communication. Interestingly, users, sympathetic to the problem, asked to be re-tweeted/followed on Twitter or have their Facebook comments liked instead.

In sum, the implementation of social media platforms within broadcast television is used to drive audiences back to watching television live (in the sense of 'while the broadcast takes place'). *The Voice,* as exemplary of social TV, demonstrates the televisions industry's continued investment in what Jenkins et al. (2013) call an 'appointment-based model' of watching television. Such a model is of interest to the industry because revenue generated through advertisements from first-run content is the most significant source of income for television studios and networks (Jenkins et al. 2013: 119).

What I hope to have made evident is that formats like *The Voice* offer a range and depth of different interactive possibilities shaped by techno-cultural, economic and legal factors. It should be clear that in *The Voice,* the space of participation outside the broadcast timeframes was substantially narrower because the relations of enveloping, overlay and integration were no longer possible. Moreover, the social comments of West Coast viewers were excluded from overlay and integrations altogether.[26]

26
The participatory potential that has just been outlined, as already mentioned in the introduction to this book, says nothing about the utilization hereof.

3.3 USER RESPONSES

Having delineated the show's metatext and space of participation, at this stage I want identify and explore five different live constructions in the constellation, identifiable thanks to mainly, but not exclusively, user responses. These will help me in considering how viewsers reflected on the liveness of the show. Following, I explore the conditions under which liveness comes into effect by reflecting back on these constructions.

3.3.1 **The Live Constructs**

The five live constructions that emerge from *The Voice* live shows constellation have been identified through user tweets/online comments. Specifically, I looked at how the term live was used in relation to the show on Twitter during the two-hour episodes (specifically I looked at episode eight, nine, eleven and the finale). These tweets were gathered by taking a snapshot every five minutes during the broadcast of the feed in Monitter (a web based tool for real-time Twitter monitoring) set to filter through those tweets that mentioned both 'TheVoice' and 'live'. This method left me with a collection of 658 unique tweets tweeted as the show was broadcast on the East Coast, plus 38 tweets collected from the final result-show whilst it was broadcast on the West Coast.

It is only through these user responses that it becomes possible to diversify the different ways that the 'live' makes up the larger constellation. The metatext does not explicitly reflect on these notions because they are simply a part of the live shows, and help inform the meaning and values that materialize for the larger constellation. It should, however, be noted that these constructions are all part of this same constellation of liveness – i.e. notions alluded to by the user responses cannot be separated from the metatext (and, of course the space of participation).

In short, I presently consider how people evaluated the liveness of the show. I do so by discussing, in their respective order, the following five constructs: live television, watching live, live tweeting, live performance and live audience. Aside from a consideration of these responses, it also includes a brief quantitative consideration of how many people were watching and

tweeting about the show and at what times.[27]

Live Television

With the live shows, the relationship between audience and the format was redefined. This resulted in a shift in the metatext, from an emphasis on authenticity to an emphasis on participation, as well as an explosion of social media use in and around the program itself. In relation to the 'live' associated with the construct of 'live television', I discuss four points in the following paragraphs. First, I want to address television as a mix between content broadcast (more or less) real-time and recorded content. Then, I consider the tape-delay practice and what this reveals about the understanding of live television. Thirdly, live television is explored as a socially constructed space for self-monitoring. Finally, the interruption of *The Voice* by a presidential address and storm alerts will be connected to the idea of broadcasting as a social necessity. Together these four points provide a better understanding of what the construct of 'live television' entails.

The disclaimer "portions pre-recorded" at the beginning of each of the live show episodes immediately revealed that live television is understood as a mix between content broadcast (more or less) real-time and pre-recorded materials. Not only were these episodes clearly identified as 'live', in being referred to as 'live shows', but they were consistently referred to and discussed as such on the official website and by the show's representatives. I found no audience comments that complained about the fact that portions of the show had been pre-recorded. Perhaps this is because, in support of the disclaimer, prior to most performances the word LIVE would, for a few seconds, be subtly superimposed in the top left corner of the screen. Despite the fact that the live shows were framed as 'live' in themselves, it seems then that with some of the performances, it became even more important

27

As for non-real-time engagements: the Facebook fan page had a total of 381,18 likes, the fan pages of the top 4 contestants altogether had another 100,000. The sum of those two, divided by the 10 million viewers who watched the least popular episode would still only translate to less than 5% of viewers having confirmed their relationship to the program with a mouse-click. It therefore seems that people, at least presently, are not as keen to engage with these formats, as has been assumed.

On the NBC website there was seemingly limited use of the opportunities it offered for engagement as there were only a few comments posted. As to the amount of downloads on iTunes and user votes cast, no data has been released. This stands in contrast to the strategy adapted by *American Idol*, where the show discloses the amount of votes cast and uses it on-air in a similar vein to how Haislip makes use of Twitter to promote the power of the show.

to point out when they were 'live', so they were accompanied by an explicit label. Furthermore, the superimposition also makes it more acceptable for the audience that certain segments of the show have been pre-recorded. It is a token of 'honesty' on the part of the maker and promises the viewer that they will know if content is *really* being broadcast live. This creates hierarchies of value within the live shows, without eclipsing the general appreciation of these shows as 'live'.

Whilst the mix of pre-recorded material with live material was understood as live television, another established television practice, namely tape-delay, brought about conflict. Viewers on the West Coast, for whom a three-hour tape-delay was in place, took issue with Daly's continuous use of the term 'live'.[28] For instance, @bcanfield14 tweeted:

> #TheVoice comes on three hours later here than in St. Louis and yet they still try to claim its live. #lies

In a similar vein @blueridge70 updated the following to Twitter:

> Why the Fffff!!! They say live what it's not! Why not say live on East Coast… #thevoice #westcoastgotfuckedagain

Live telecasts run into trouble in countries located in multiple time zones, because in order to air programs at the desired time slots, tape-delay is required. In the United States, the West Coast viewers are presented with a re-broadcast of the East Coast airing. Although tape-delay is common practice, in the social TV assemblage it generates dissatisfaction amongst audiences because of online spoilers, particularly in relation to Twitter, an issue elaborated on when I address live tweeting.

Aside from live television as a mix of live and being subject to tape-delays, @BeccaZeels exposed another aspect of live television in a tweet. Towards the ending of the second live round episode she noted the following:

> Hey Carlson Daly, is #thevoice live? ….how many times are you gonna remind us? Probably gotta remind @blakeshelton so he watches his mouth.

28
This usually happened in phrasings like, "We are live", or "Welcome back to The Voice live".

Not only does it make clear that liveness was strongly emphasized in the metatext, her tweet suggests that Daly's repetition was necessary to keep Shelton from using profane language on the show. This reveals that live television was perceived as a space that required self-monitoring. Not surprisingly, a popular topic on Twitter concerned what the coaches/hosts can and cannot say or do on live television. This understanding of live television surfaced in the program itself too.

In the second live show episode, for example, following a provoking comment by Levine, Daly tapped his microphone twice then spoke the words, "Hello. Hello. Are we still live?" into it, consequently double tapping the microphone again to test if it was on. Although this was done jokingly, it referenced the fact that some self-monitoring is required on television and that on-air conduct is shaped by cultural norms. Federal law prohibits the airing of indecent programming and profane language between six a.m. and ten p.m., and the airings of *The Voice* fell into this timeslot. The Federal Communications Commission is responsible for enforcing indecency regulation and imposes penalties for violations. Pre-recorded television gives broadcasters more control in selecting what material to air, whereas live television requires that the people aired on television are more self-conscious with respect to what they say and do.

Ironically, for the audience these slips seemed to constitute part of the fun and excitement of watching live television. Like other networks, NBC has in the past broadcast on five-second delays for much of its live programming, in order to prevent unwanted material from being aired. It is unclear if *The Voice* live shows aired with such a delay as well. The airing of Adam Levine's "I hate this country" comment in season four led to speculations as to whether this was the case. Moreover, despite the implementation of these delays, often extended to seven seconds for award shows, incidents of profanity and live suicides on television continue to make news headlines, and are usually attributed to computer or human malfunction.

The fourth aspect made evident through the tweets about live television, is how live television is used as a platform to address 'the nation' about things of social significance. Earlier, in my consideration of the metatext of the live shows, I argued that through collective address and social media use the significance of the television broadcast was underscored. In line with this, two incidents occurring during *The Voice* live shows disclosed forces that continue to favor a centralized media system. The first was how, for Obama's

primetime address to the country, the results show was aired ten minutes later.[29] Daly established that the interruption of regular programming was for something *even more* important than *The Voice*: "If The Voice should be delayed for someone it should be for the President - let's get to it" and thanked the President in his final words of the episode. This relates to how central media, like television, have always served as the platform for governments to speak to the people (Couldry 2009). It is found that these types of appearances highlight television's continued central importance (Gripsrud 2010: 15), or to nuance this statement, its perceived importance.

The second incident was an issue of tornado watches for the Central Plains that interrupted the East Coast broadcast.[30] Here a tweet from @ lillmstiffy, echoing popular online sentiment, cast light on the *meaning* of live television:

> Weather service I need you to stop interrupting #TheVoice to talk about this tornado watch. I get it, but my show is on live, let me live!

The tornado watches created some frustration amongst audience members because, as a live television show, *The Voice* could not be paused as it transpired in real-time. The East Coast audience missed several minutes of the episode as a result of this tornado watch. Both the president address and the tornado watch contain the argument that central media are necessary in order to address the nation on things that matter to society.[31] However, a tweet like the above suggests that what people find important does not go uncontested.

29
The speech concerned the drawdown of troops from Afghanistan.

30
This happened on 21 June 2011.

31
Less than two decades ago, David Marc reflected on the death of broadcasting in his article "What Was Broadcasting?" (1996). Jostein Gripsrud (2004) provided a more optimistic take and argued that, considering the functional necessity of the media, the chances of its survival are good. He developed his argument claiming that the current social situation is similar to that preconditioned by Raymond Williams for broadcasting and that there is a continued need for institutions that facilitate some sort of social cohesion (221).

Watching Live

Connected to the construct live television is the practice of *watching live*. Watching live centers on the status of transmission rather than the status of what is broadcast (as is the case with live television). The following consideration examines audience reflections through tweets on watching *The Voice* 'live' and then takes note of audience size.

The collected tweets show that watching live created a polarized audience experience. For @jaredmv70, watching television live was marked by having to watch advertisements:

> First time watching #thevoice live. Now I remember why. I hate commercials!

This loss of control was also experienced by @Henrypeck who tweeted:

> if I wasn't watching live I would have fast forwarded through dia. hate power ballads. SO 80s. http://bit.ly/IHTW3d

These are just two tweets out of many reflecting on the disadvantage of watching television live. Not everyone shared this sentiment. In contrast, @ Indigoperry stressed the advantage of watching live:

> #TheVoice has made watching TV live relevant again! #SorryDVR This show is so much fun!

So whereas the drawback of watching live meant less viewer control and having to watch advertisements, others were seemingly excited about being able to watch the show with others.

The season one finale of *The Voice* attracted 5% of US households (roughly 10.5 million viewers), which is significantly lower than some of the present-day big television events. Moreover, the live shows received, on average, a fairly similar audience size to that of the blind auditions and battle rounds. The tweets earlier discussed to explore 'live television' pointed to the mixed ideas about having to watch the show live, some preferred it whilst others did not. In line with these points, it is important then to recognize that the index 'live', although proposed as a value, does not guarantee more viewers.

Live Tweeting

Another central construction in the live show constellation came up in relation to tweeting, which I therefore call 'live tweeting'. To explore this construction I discuss tweeting briefly as an activity that enveloped the broadcast, subsequently examining two problems that live tweeting draws attention to. The first problem surfaces when a qualitative analysis of the tweets reveals a clash between East and West Coast viewers. Then a second problem is explored which concerns live tweeting as a form of integration in the program. Afterwards, I question the value of the interpretation of live tweeting as a renewed water-cooler conversation. Finally, I argue that the relationship between Twitter and television is mutually beneficial. This stands in contrast to popular discourse, which tends to only frame the relationship in terms of how it benefits television.

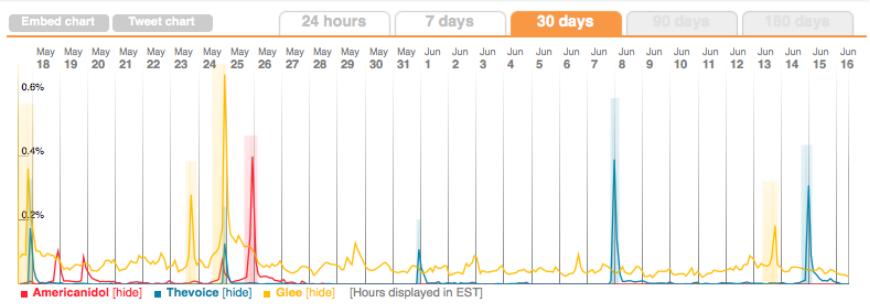

Figure 7: Frequency of Tweets about *The Voice*, *American Idol* and *Glee* in 30 days on Trendistic

Research conducted by Pew Research Center in June 2011 found that 13% of online adults use Twitter, up 5% compared to November 2010.[32] Data on *The Voice* is hard to come by, but publications reveal that the first live episode generated 200,000 *The Voice* related tweets.[33] Considering that 12.31 million people watched that episode, helps understand how many viewers were actually involved in online chatter. Even with the assumption that each tweet represents a unique viewer, this would mean that only 1.6%

32
In a report released in November 2010, this percentage was at 8%, wherein 24% of users claimed to check for material posted by others at least once a day and 41% stated that they either never checked or checked less often than every few weeks

33
See Halperin (2011). It concerns the episode broadcast on 7 June 2011.

of viewers tweeted during the show. In other words, at least 98.4% of viewers were not tweeting at all.[34] This, of course, is purely a quantitative measure and says nothing as to the *quality* of these minority viewers for the advertisers. Moreover, it remains unclear what percentage of viewers was *following* tweets alongside the broadcast, reading them, although not tweeting themselves.

For insight in the tweet activity around *The Voice*, I used the tool Trendistic, which traces the frequency of a topic on Twitter on the Y-axis. Figure 7 compares the percentage of tweets about *The Voice* to that of the reality singing competition *American Idol* and the musical comedy series *Glee* over a period of 30 days.[35] I decided to trace the transition period from the battle rounds to the live shows, which made the following observations possible. To begin with, with each of the shows the peak in activity corresponds to airings. It underscores the idea that social TV is, in particular, about participation *during* the broadcast time frame. The spikes demonstrate an explosion of tweet activity for *The Voice* when the live shows kicked off on 7 June.[36] Compared to the battle rounds, the percentage of tweets mentioning the show seemingly tripled. The shift in metatext themes and the expansion of the space of participation thus corresponds to more tweet mentions, underscoring the participatory character of the live shows.

For season one, *The Voice* attracted some 12.3 million viewers on average, which is a lot less than the number one show *American Idol*, which had 24.9 million, and more akin to *Glee*, which had 10.1 million viewers on average (Gorman 2011). These numbers make the tweet activity around *The Voice*, compared to *American Idol*, a similar show, rather impressive, considering that the peak around *American Idol* on 25 May represents the live finale episode of season ten. However, compared to *Glee*, the tweet activity around *The Voice* seems fairly modest. For my purposes, the latter comparison is

34
Shirky (2008) argues that social interaction tends to function according to a power law. He describes an imbalance in participation wherein a small percentage is responsible for most output and the difference in level of participation drops off according to nth power (122-30).

35
It concerns the number of mentions every 100 tweets. It must be noted that I used the program title for the search between 18 May and 16 June 2011.

36
These episodes drew even less viewers than the episode aired on 31 May, making the tweet-peak even more curious.

interesting because here an episodic drama has trumped live television in generating tweets.[37] It shows how, for conversation around a program, live transmission is the most important prerequisite, as it enables participation around content. Whether or not the content itself is 'live', however, is far less relevant, despite being used as a category to promote content.

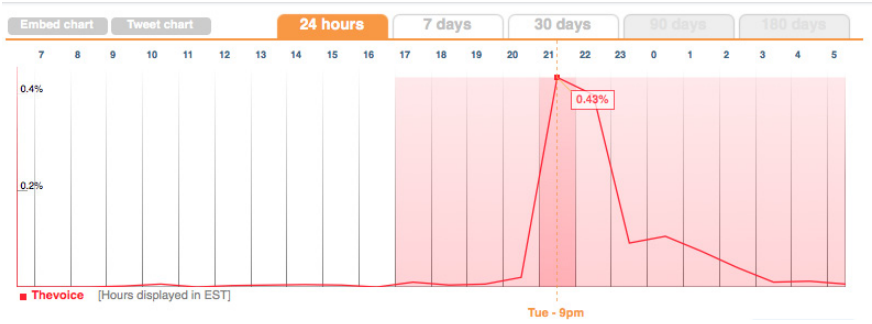

Figure 8: Percentage of Tweets Mentioning *The Voice* 24 hours on Trendistic

Figure 8 zooms in on the percentage of tweets that mention the term 'TheVoice' on the day of the first live show (episode eight). The episode has been singled out for no particular reason, since all of the live shows demonstrated this same pattern in Twitter use. The peak of tweet activity is reached just after nine p.m., the beginning of the initial East Coast airing.[38] It then descends, slightly inclining again for the start of the West Coast airing. After about an hour it starts declining again and three hours later the amount of tweets about the show return to pre-broadcast levels. This suggests that online conversation is taking place around airings.

Earlier, I mentioned that the live shows prompted more tweets than

37
The comparison is admittedly problematic because I do not know how many people were actually tweeting. It could be that a small number of people are extremely active in tweeting about *Glee*. It should also be added that even outside of broadcast timeframes, a fair amount is being tweeted about this show. The reason that a fair amount is tweeted at any given time could be that the show attracts a media-savvy audience for whom it is a cultural reference point in everyday life. Moreover, it may also have to do with the reality-show *The Glee Project* (2011) that was being aired at the time, where contestants competed for a seven episode guest-starring role on *Glee* and the fact that the Glee Live Tour also took place in that period. In other words, there were three simultaneous Glee-related events that could have prompted the tweeting.

38
This corresponds to how the Twitter company describes real-time conversations (http://media.twitter.com/twitter-tv)

the blind and battle rounds did. Figure 8 demonstrates another significant discrepancy, namely that between the tweet activity on the East Coast and the West Coast, the former of which far exceeds the latter.[39] It might be explained by the fact that the West Coast had a three-hour tape-delay, meaning that integrated social remarks were from viewers watching the initial airing. In other words, there was more of an incentive for viewers on the East Coast to tweet.

Apparent from what was tweeted is the conflict that arose between East and West Coast viewers on Twitter - an issue now also receiving scholarly attention (see Deller 2011: 224). More specifically, the West Coast audience was frustrated that people on the East Coast were tweeting spoilers. They demanded they stop revealing outcomes. The West Coast tweeters shrugged off such complaints, like @wonderfulcolors did:

> Stop tweeting to not tweet about #TheVoice! It's not my fault you live in the west coast!

The problem reached a climax in the finale episode. A tweet from @msenna expressed the position that social media and television shows would always clash unless these were broadcast 'live':

> #thevoice ruined the results by not having a live finale.. With social media you can't keep results secret for 3hrs!

This was underscored in a tweet by @dyeisag who had problems with the show's rhetoric, a point that has surfaced earlier in discussing watching live:

> WTH MAN! These lives [sic] shows aren't really live! People need to keep their mouths shut until each time zone watches the show #TheVoice

The above tweet questions the applicability of the index 'live' for the re-airing. It makes clear that the index 'live' cannot be pushed into effect from metatext alone - a topic I have readily pursued in more depth in chapter two, where users took issue with the claim that eJamming was promoted as live.

The spoiler problem, an effect of tape-delay and the real-time of social

39
With relative rather than absolute data this remains speculation.

media, is not limited to live tweeting in North America in that there are numerous other countries that work with multiple time zones (i.e. Russia and Australia). Moreover, syndication delays, have equally strained the relationship between audiences from different countries, as spoilers circulate online.[40] However, the problem has changed now that programs are encouraging users to go online. The following tweet by @aegaas makes this clear:

> Hey live TV shows, don't tell your west coasters to go on Twitter only to have your show spoiled. #fail #theVoice #fail

Evidently, in this situation, encouraging viewers to go online fails to be a smart social media strategy. The 'clash of coasts' problem when enveloping television programs has been met by different solutions. Some apps make a distinction between the two audience groups, allowing users to select joining the East Coast or West Coast discussion. Another strategy has been using separate hashtags for the groups. In live-tweeting events, the East Coast can chat with different members of the cast than the West Coast. More radically, award shows like the Golden Globes, Academy Awards and Emmy Awards have opted to broadcast live coast-to-coast on account of the proliferation of real-time social media.

An exception has been CBS's continued tape-delay of the Grammy's. This decision, which ignores popular criticism, is strategic as the network expects it can draw larger audiences at night than during the day. Soaring ratings and social comments have been used to justify the choice.[41] Insiders at CBS have argued that because the Grammy Awards are more about the performances than about the contest, the use of social media does not lead to antagonism between the coasts (Flint 2012).

40

See for example http://www.lostremote.com/2011/04/29/even-doctor-who-cant-time-shift-social-media/, which discusses the show *Doctor Who*, which aired episodes later in the US than in the UK. In reply to the complaints, producers decided to air the show on BBC America on the same day as on the British BBC. In academic literature, see also Bruns (2008: 270) or Jenkins (2006: 25-58).

41

The 2012 show drew 40 million viewers, the second largest audience ever, and Bluefin Labs recorded a total of 13 million social comments, a growth of 2,280% compared to the previous year (in Warren 2012). The comparison to the previous year does not take into account the overall size of the audience drawn by the show, the general increase in social media use or how Twitter enlisted 25 celebrities to tweet from home (Peoples 2012). Moreover, these figures require critical consideration (e.g. in that they make no distinction between coasts), as they have been used by CBS to justify tape-delay.

In section 3.4 I will return to the topic of this clash of the coasts on Twitter, because it highlights a tension surrounding liveness, in that broadcast control over the schedules conflicted with the audience's desire to participate, and helps to grasp the standing of the broadcast television landscape in the social media era. More specifically, it raises questions about the rhythms and temporalities of broadcast television.

A second problem the program experienced with Twitter emerged when it was used as an integrated feature. The original series *The Voice of Holland* had received criticism in its first season over the zombie-like and tablet obsessed behavior of contestants in the V-Room. With *The Voice UK*, coach Will.i.am, to the dismay of viewers and the show's producers, was seen typing on his Blackberry sixteen times in the span of a single episode (Magrath 2012). He received similar criticism to that which James Franco received whilst presenting the Oscars. Cell phones, much like television itself, are media that have been accused of both socializing and estranging users.

Looking at the amount of followers the cast of *The Voice* had on Twitter allows for a valuable observation to be made concerning the relation between social media and television. The amount of followers Adam Levine, Cee Lo Green and Blake Shelton had on Twitter almost tripled when comparing the before and after *The Voice* data, with apparent rises after airings.[42] The following of Javier Colon, the winner of season one, grew exponentially, with 743 followers two days before the beginning of the show and reaching 60,882 on the day of the finale.[43] The popular discourse on social TV tends to frame the relationship between these media in terms of benefiting only television. The numbers I just considered, suggest rather that this relationship is mutually beneficial.[44]

As for the conversation that has taken place on Twitter, a qualitative analysis of the tweets reveals that the forms of social interaction taking place on Twitter, distinguish those from traditional conceptions of water-cooler conversation around television. The audience could now address the hosts,

42
Twittercounter has provided this data. The reason that Christina Aguilera has been excluded is because she did not have a Twitter account prior to the show.

43
More specifically, it concerns the situation on 24 April 2011 and then that of 29 June 2011.

44
The increase in followers, however, cannot be directly traced to their exposure in *The Voice* alone, the visible boosts following airings points to a correlation.

coaches or contestants either by tweeting at them, or mentioning them in a tweet. Moreover, most of the tweets constituted commentary, a form of mass self-communication, rather than dialogue.[45] Apart from very modest re-tweet activity, viewsers were seemingly not responding to one another - although the sheer volume of tweets might well prevent one from establishing this (for even when filtering by hashtag, tracking conversations around popular topics in real-time is an impossible task).[46] Haislip's reference to online activity as "buzz" thus aptly reflects the experience of Twitter alongside television.[47]

Bruns and Stieglitz (2012) have written the following about the role of hashtags, wherein Twitter functions as a backchannel for live events:

> [it] support[s] a shared experience of 'audiencing' (e.g., Fiske, 1992): of talking back at the television (or at the live event), along with thousands of other viewers. This sense of temporary, imagined community persists even if - as our data show - actual direct interaction between users through hashtagged @replies and retweets remains relatively rare; it may be sufficient to observe the stream of hashtagged comments, even without engaging with and replying to them. (177)

Herein they underscore many observations I have made in relation to *The Voice* specifically. Further on in the article from which this quotation was derived, the authors propose that the incorporation of selected tweets on-screen in a ticker, as has been done in *The Voice*, can further enhance this sense of community. Related hereto, I would propose, social media were involved in constructing the episodes as event TV.

Live Performance

Having addressed the constructions live television, watching live and live tweeting, I now explore the construct 'live performance'. To do so I return to the rhetoric of authenticity found in the metatext, discussing the role of live performance in promoting this value. After dealing with this issue I will discuss how the audience wrote about the 'live' in live performances on blogs

45
This is true for all the tweets I collected, not just those containing the words 'thevoice' and 'live'.

46
My intention is not to elevate dialogue above dissemination. John Durham Peters (1999) has shown the flaw of romanticizing dialogue.

47
The term is, however, somewhat misleading in framing all online sentiment as positive.

and in tweets.

Throughout season one, the coaches had the opportunity to comment on the performances of the contestants. On several occasions, a performance would be applauded on the basis that singing that particular song *live* was considered not easy. Here, obviously, live performance is being valued more than a studio recording. More specifically, the live performance, it is suggested through such statements, better allows the evaluation of the talent of the performer.

The reflections in the tweets confirmed the judges' perception that live performances are particularly difficult, and allows for someone's talent to be assessed. For instance, @morgangantt13 tweeted:

> Wow. #TheVoice contestants sing better live than Neyo and Pitbull. #truetalent

And in a similar vein @mitchellholder equates the ability to perform live with talent:

> Adam Levine is a talentless live singing sham. Pales in comparison to the other coaches. #TheVoice

And @SwiftyGuy13 uses the comparison between studio recording and live performance to reinforce the value of the latter:

> Blake sounds as good live as he does in studio. Not many artists can do that! #TheVoice

In the above tweets, it is suggested that studio recordings are the product of extensive editing, polishing the voices of performers. Live performance, by contrast, is done without the help of studio equipment and therein reveals if a performer is truly talented. The definition of a good live performance is sounding like the studio recording. It also implies that live performance is a means to evaluate the quality of an artist. The coaches on the show further reinforce this logic by repeatedly conjuring this connotation of live by commenting, for instance, on how certain songs are particularly difficult to perform live.

That live performance is the promise that the singing takes place now, rather than the artists dubbing a recording, becomes apparent through tweets about the performances made available on iTunes. Here the question

was raised on how it was possible that the recordings offered through iTunes of the contestant's performance were already available online, before the song had been performed on the show.[48]

Jethro Nededog (2011), a reporter from the online magazine Zap2it, wrote a short review of the taping of the show that helps to understand the value attributed to live performance. An interesting disclosure Nededog made was that the performance by the coaches was pre-taped:

> Yes, it was mostly live (as coach Adam S-bomb proved), but the judges pre-taped their Queen medley right before the show went live. We don't blame them. After all, they're not competing. As for the actual performers, we can vouch for all of them - *that* was *live*. (my emphasis)

There are several observations that can be drawn from the above citation. For starters, the definition of live offered here is that the performance has not been pre-taped. This returns us to my discussion of the notion of live television, where it was suggested that the use of obscene language in the episode proves that the show had not been pre-taped or edited. But also, the importance of the contestants performing live on television is underscored through his finding the need to vouch for their performances as really being live. Because he is sympathetic to the fact that the coaches had their performance pre-taped, this becomes even more important. Moreover, it reveals how the live dimension of the show is appreciated as necessary for the competition, due to the fact that it allows for the show to reveal whether or not a contestant's talent is authentic.

Live Audience

Closely akin to the live in 'live performance' is that in the 'live audience' construct. The live audience concerns the people present at the tapings or airings of *The Voice*. Some of these audience members made themselves known online, providing blogs of their experience, and live tweeting extras. At a certain point a photo celebrity stylist, Simone Harouche, made a photo of Christina Aguilera's designer shoes and tweeted:

48
The conclusion was that the iTunes songs were not 'live recordings'. This would constitute yet another possible construction to explore.

> Since you guys asked… Here are @TheREalXtina louboutins live from #thevoice.

It was a popular tweet, in that many users retweeted it.

In addition to people responsible for home-brew blogs, *The Hollywood Reporter* was present at the tapings as well. The reports on the show published on its website were accompanied by the slogan "THR's Live Feed was there, here's what you didn't see on TV". Examining these blog accounts and tweets from both amateurs and professionals makes clear that being present at the taping is seen as a condition for a privileged relation to the show. In the role of eyewitness, the live audience is considered closer to the 'real' event, and not simply the 'reality' accessible through a television set. It is the act of live witnessing which gives it a privileged relation the events.[49]

3.3.2 **Some Conditions of Liveness**

The various constructs that I discussed above emerged in the constellation of liveness at play for the *The Voice* live shows. They shed light on the ways in which viewers could engage with and around the format, solidifying the idea of live as perpetuating the value of being part of the unfolding on-screen action and witness to real artists (in the making). These constructions allow for several observations to be made concerning how liveness comes into effect.

For starters, that to make inferences about the specific live construct that takes shape, an understanding of context is necessary. To clarify this point, let me give an example. A while back, I saw a poster ad for *Lord of the Rings* (LOTR) Live at Rotterdam's central train station. Behind me, I heard the people asking the question what it meant that it was 'live'. First, I interpreted the poster as an advertisement for a stage performance of LOTR. The small print, however, clarified that it was a screening, accompanied by a live film score, meaning that the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra would perform the film score in the presence of those watching the film. Reflecting on the various types of live found in *The Voice* live shows, it becomes similarly apparent that the reference point for the 'live' is absolutely crucial to its understanding. This was also proposed earlier when I stated that there were

49
John Durham Peters (2001) has provided interesting insight into the relation between witnessing and live television and the value of the witness. Auslander (2008) has interrogated the value of the witness specifically within the context of the law.

hierarchies of value created within the episodes, in distinguishing between live and non-live segments in the live shows. In this case it is important to know if in using 'live', someone is referencing to the show at large, or referring to a particular segment.

In considering the live constructions in *The Voice* identified in the user responses, I found that all five of them emerged in relation to a non-live variant: (a) live television as compared to pre-recorded television, (b) watching live versus watching a recording, (c) the live performance of the contestants as it relates to the pre-recorded performance of guest artists and the coaches, (d) tweeting when the show is broadcast as opposed to tweeting outside of the program's timeframe, and (e) the live studio audience versus the home audience.

Furthermore, in each of these instances, the live variant was positioned as *superior* to the non-live variant. In watching live, people shared a point of reference which they could communicate about, which made it more special than watching a recording. The surplus value of live tweeting was that it allowed viewers to interact with other viewers and the cast. Attending the taping was considered to establish a privileged, and therein superior, relation to the program because the live audience got to see and experience things not accessible to others. Live performances were valued for their ability to reveal an artist's talent and live television allowed for unplanned things to occur and, as part of the larger format, widened the participatory space for viewers.

3.4 TENSION SURROUNDING LIVENESS: THE RHYTHMS AND TEMPORALITIES OF BROADCAST TELEVISION

Having analyzed the constellation of liveness of *The Voice* live shows, in the next paragraphs I want to zoom in on a tension surrounding liveness that clearly manifest itself in the constellation, namely that concerning the rhythms and temporalities of television. The tensions came to light when I discussed user responses. In the complementation of television with social media, the liveness of the broadcast came under question, as the live episodes of *The Voice* were re-aired, three hours later, for West Coast viewers. I want to relate this issue to a larger transformation taking place in the social media era, namely that of the changing relationship between the television industry and its 'empowered' viewers (and how this disrupts established industry

practice). Here I propose scheduling as a *mechanism of control*, a way in which media institutions exert control over media content, of broadcast media.

Between Broadcast Television and New Media

Jenkins et al. have argued that the television industry continues to struggle with measuring the value of engagement, as it slowly transitions from an "appointment-based model of television viewing" to an "engagement-based paradigm" (2013: 113-52). In the case of the former, viewers watch programs according to the schedule of the programmers. In the latter instance, the willingness of viewsers to pursue content over numerous channels is seen to have market value. But what form of engagement to measure and what business transactions can consequently be made around these engagements remains undecided (Jenkins et al. 2013: 116).

With social TV, there is a commitment to the appointment-based model. The complementation between social media and television, however, has raised important issues as to what is at stake in having people participate in and around the media process. *The Voice* brings to light a tension surrounding liveness between the participatory spaces provided by the institutions and the agency of the viewers. The tension is at the core of social TV, in that social TV is employed as an industry strategy to have people watch programs as they are aired on traditional television, as opposed to having them time-shift viewing.

As became apparent in the interaction between television and Twitter, the differing temporalities of the media created conflicts amongst viewers on the East Coast and those on the West Coast. It brought into question the institutionalized practice of re-airing programs several hours later for the West Coast. More specifically, as pointed out earlier, there is the problem of 'spoilers'. Ironically, these spoilers are equally what makes social TV an attractive strategy against viewers time-shifting programming, encouraging simultaneous consumption through the original airing. This problem is perhaps best explored through Matt Hills' (2002) concept of "just-in-time fandom". The concept refers to the enmeshment of fan practices with the rhythms and temporalities of broadcasting in the digital environment. In clarification of the concept and in reflecting on the implication of the digital environment Hills writes,

> Describing the temporality of just-in-time fandom as a techno-evolution towards fuller 'interactivity', which is deemed superior to the prior 'time-lag' involved in the writing to and reading niche magazines' letter pages, therefore neglects the extent to which this eradication of the 'time-lag' works even more insistently to discipline and regulate the opportunities for temporally-licensed 'feedback', and the very horizons of the fan experience. (2002: 179)

But whereas Hills discusses just-in-time fandom as the ability of fans to show their dedication in the digital environment right after an airing or during ad-breaks, he had seemingly anticipated social media platforms which enable viewers to discuss on-screen action with others *whilst* it is transmitted. More than a decade later, with social TV, the timing of fan response is being aligned to the broadcast *even more* closely. Computer-medicated communications have then, to reformulate Hills, placed a premium on the timing of fan response and social media platforms have made the timeframe for it even more immediate.

Digital and networked media have allowed viewers to challenge the schedules provided by broadcasters, allowing them to watch content at their own convenience, upsetting the long established business model for broadcast television. These technologies, which help 'free' viewers from broadcast schedules, have contributed to the need for broadcasters to develop counter strategies like social TV.

I want to just briefly suspend my questioning into liveness and consider Netflix as emblematic of 'new television' in the social media era. I do this in order to relate the identified tension to larger transformations taking place in the media landscape. These transformations concern the strategies that have been developed and run counter to established norms and hierarchies of the established industry, in what has been seen as a rewiring of American culture itself (Wu 2013).

With Netflix, rather than having to sell audiences to advertisers, as in the broadcast model, viewers pay for the service according to a subscription-based plan. The platform has made news headlines for two strategies it implemented making name on the market: (a) series dumping and (b) using data in developing original-content. These strategies center on the behaviors and values of viewers. Although my discussion concerns Netflix, many others have come to emulate them.

Series Dumping

The more interesting of these two strategies is how Netflix has challenged established ideas of television seriality. As they had done early in 2012 with the show *Lilyhammer*, in 2013 Netflix decided to release all episodes of the series *House of Cards* (an original Netflix production), *Arrested Development (*continued after having been cancelled on Fox*)* and *Breaking Bad* at once. Netflix did so to free viewers from broadcast schedules and in doing so, indulged the binge watching of these shows. The company anticipated that this would deepen the attachment to the show. CEO Reed Hasting explained the strategy in the company's Q 2013 Investor's Letter as the future of television:

> Imagine if books were always released one chapter per week, and were only briefly available to read at 8pm on Thursday. And then someone flipped a switch, suddenly allowing people to enjoy an entire book, all at their own pace. That is the change we are bringing about. That is the future of television. That is Internet TV.

In doing so, Netflix essentially reduced the control of broadcasters as to when people consumed television content, which was slipping readily through the introduction of digital and networked technologies, even further. It enabled more viewer freedom in terms of when to watch particular shows.

The responses to the simultaneous release of all the episodes at once have not all been supportive. In a 2013 article for *Mashable*, Christine Erickson compared the first four weeks of conversation around *House of Cards* on social media to the average first four weeks of conversation for the season premiere of another six shows from top television networks. Whereas *House of Cards* garnered the highest social buzz from the start of the comparison, the volume quickly dropped and continued to do so over time. By contrast, the other shows managed to create weekly peaks and maintain conversation over time.

Suzanne Scott has been equally cautious towards series dumping. In an interview with Jenkins (2013b), published on the latter's blog, she pointed to the importance of the gaps and margins of television text for fan culture. Citing Hills' concept of "just-in-time fandom", she suggests that eradicating the time lag between episodes may have negative implications for the pleasures of television fandom. Interestingly, rather than proclaiming the viewer as emancipated from the broadcasters' schedules, she finds fans are

impoverished in their inability to *share* and *engage* with a community of peers around the show.

In light of such reflections, it is not surprising to find that for the show *Orange is the New Black*, released in July 2013, Netflix tweaked its approach. This time round it managed to sustain and grow online buzz by organizing regular Twitter events that brought actors and audiences in contact and selected a more dispersed promotional campaign, rather than one large promotional push (Miller 2013). Similarly, Amazon Studios has created its own series with and released the first three episodes of its own series like *Alpha House* and *Betas* at once, finding middle ground between Netflix and traditional TV.

Big Data Driven Artistic Strategy

As to the second Netflix strategy, in a plot to differentiate itself from existing streaming video sites, it decided to start producing its own original series in 2013 (Baldwin 2012). In doing so, it sought to establish itself as an online network. Netflix made headlines with its production because they were the product of vast number crunching done by algorithms on viewer preferences and habits. Andrew Cohen (2013) remarked on the creation of original series by Netflix with the help of collected data as follows:

> Netflix doesn't know merely what we're watching, but when, where and with what kind of device we're watching. It keeps a record of every time we pause the action - or rewind, or fast-forward - and how many of us abandon a show entirely after watching for a few minutes. (n.p.)

Algorithms are playing an increasingly big role in society as they are helping to write news stories, composing music and picking hits and therein spurring debates on whether creativity can be automated (Steiner 2012). But before heralding a new dawn of television production with *House of Cards*, it should not be forgotten that selecting what series to produce on the basis of numbers is in fact hardly new. As Cohen (2013) rightfully notes, "We wouldn't be seeing teenage vampires or zombies every time we turn on the TV if the money that bankrolls the content creation business hadn't already decided that's what we want to see" (n.p.). Several things have changed in the social media era, like the scale on which the data can be collected/crunched, the steering of users to new content through sophisticated recommendation systems (Keating 2012), and also the real-time data dimension which allows

for real-time analytics (Van Dijck and Poell 2013: 10). Questions of data collection and the intervention of algorithms will be dealt with in a bit more depth in the next chapter on Facebook where it plays a more central role.

Amazon Studios has undertaken a similar but more elaborate route to collect audience feedback. They use a submission system and crowd-sourced feedback to test shows and determine which ones to bankroll. They do so in addition to crunching the data they have on Amazon purchases and browsing behavior on the Internet Movie Database website (which they own).

3.5 TENSION SURROUNDING LIVENESS: AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Analyzing *The Voice* there is yet another tension surrounding liveness that can be identified. However, this tension only surfaces when considering how the program evolved over the course of time. An important observation is that gradually friction emerges between the multiple spaces of participation for *The Voice* of the different seasons. Here the meaning of liveness stayed intact, just as was the case in chapter one between the Mogulus and The Original Livestream platform, but a noticeable withdrawal in the role that social media played in the episodes and a transformation of the opportunities for audience participation took place. So rather than a whole new constellation, friction emerges through the inconsistency in how audience participation manifested in the live shows over the course of five seasons.

To support my observation, let me briefly summarize the changes that took place. In the transition from season one to season two, singer-songwriter Christina Milian replaced V-Correspondent Alison Haislip. She held this position up to and including season four. After this personnel switch, the focus in the social media segments shifted from integrating social media comments into the show to backstage-like interviews with the artists. For season three, the V-Room was traded in for the much smaller circular Sprint Skybox located in the middle of the audience bleachers. It featured a single screen. Also, viewer comments that were featured on-air were increasingly overlays rather than integrations.

In season five the role of social media correspondent was axed, with host Daly making appearances in the Sprint Skybox to talk to guests and erratically address social comments. These integrations (social comments

addressed in the show) became a bit more frequent again, but were now commonly directed at Daly himself or the coaches rather than at the contestants. Moreover, a new type of integration was introduced that season, namely the 'instant save', which enabled viewers to save one of the bottom two contestants from elimination by voting with a tweet. This allowed for low influence on the production when compared to the high influence possible when social comments were addressed.[50]

In short, over the course of the seasons, the relations between the program, the show's representatives and the audience were reconfigured to favor the *control* that the producers had over what transpired 'live' on-air (i.e. giving viewers accumulative influence on the production through voting, limiting the amount of viewer questions answered on-air and directing these questions at Daly/the coaches rather than the less predictable contestants). Mainly, the talent show drew back on the interaction with the audience on-air through social media.[51]

Finally, I would provide that this tension links directly to the paradox of liveness, the need to structure programming (rather than allow viewers to create 'chaos'). It therein connects also to questions of interactivity and participation in television, a relation that has already been explored amply (see Müller 2008). For my purposes, this reclaiming of what transpires is most interesting and it connects questions of interactivity, participation and liveness directly to the control media institutions attempt to exert over content.

CONCLUSIONS

Analyzing the live constellation of the *The Voice* live shows has resulted in several fruitful insights which are grouped in this conclusion into several key observations. The first two address the construction of liveness, whereas the third and final insight considers how the analysis helps to understand the

50
I use the three degrees of user influence on media production put forward by Gunn Sara Enli (2012): reactive, active and interactive. Respectively these refer to low influence on production process (i.e. quizzes & polls), accumulative influence on production (i.e. voting) and high influence on parts of the production.

51
User participation was diverted to the margins of the production, where they would stimulate viewers to (re)tweet about the show by making Twitter a voting mechanism. In having many viewers (re)tweet about the show, they were spreading the word of *The Voice* to their followers/friends.

relation between broadcast media and social media in the social media era.

The first observation concerns the co-existence of multiple live constructions in a larger live constellation. In this chapter, the constructions were analyzed, in their interaction, as informing and informed by the domains of liveness for the live shows. The constructs live performance and live audience for instance bolstered the experience of the format by underscoring the authenticity of what the show presented. As with live television, with the live shows not all aspects have to be 'live' in order to be appreciated as such.

Based on my consideration of the live constructions I would like to propose that each construction is a particular articulation of how the format interacted with its audience(s). In their combined operation these constructions exist within, but also gave shape to, the main space of participation that came to be for the live shows. The participatory practices ranged from being present at the taping, watching it live, tweeting live, or staying connected through other platforms that offer insight into the program around the airings. There were, however, also a number of other interactions possible within the shows' space of participation, not identified as live (e.g. voting, downloading songs from iTunes and non-real-time activities on the NBC website). This demonstrates again that live constructs are varied in meaning, resulting from very different spatial and temporal configurations.

The second insight has to do with the fact that this chapter marked a gradual, though not absolute, shift in focus of the research in this dissertation from the *paradox of liveness* to exploring the *conditions* and *operation* of specific live constellations. Based on the exploration of the constructions, and in reflecting back on the previous chapter, I have identified the following, non-exhaustive, list of conditions of live. These are:

1. 'Live' is used as an adjective to describe the properties of a given noun. The noun and the context inform the meaning of the adjective 'live'.
2. 'Live' is seemingly always contrasted to a 'non-live' counterpart, and its meaning is informed by that contrast.
3. 'Live' is a qualitative category. It is used as a source of distinction (Levine 2008).
4. 'Live' propels certain values by drawing on the special relationship between *real-time* and *sociality* (as connection, possibly, to an event/performance rather than other people).

With regard to this fourth point, what has been my working hypothesis, and has been reinforced in this chapter in particular, is that liveness is built around a special relationship between sociality and real-time. In different constellations of liveness, these axes are articulated in a range of ways. And so the sociality offered on the one platform differs from that of another.

The conditions of live apply in the case of the specific constructions of live analyzed in section 3.3, but also in the broader, overarching live shows constellation that has been the subject of this chapter. For starters, the *The Voice* live show constellation interacted with the multiple constructs that provided numerous relations to the format, there were multiple references for the term live. Additionally, the live shows are contrasted against the blind auditions and battle rounds; these were pre-recorded and had relatively limited opportunities for audience participation. Then also, the live shows were framed as superior to the blind auditions and battle rounds, being built as must-see event TV. From this phase in the competition onwards the show became 'live' and with it a more expansive space of participation took shape.

Finally, as a third and final observation, the case has shed light on the standing of broadcast television in the present media landscape and of social TV as a strategy. The suggestion that digital platforms would result in the end of broadcasting has proven highly problematic. This is the case certainly because episodic drama and event TV continue to attract what could be typified as mass audiences. But also, because digital platforms are being used to supplement television (Gray and Lotz 2012; Gillan 2011; Ytreberg 2009), helping to reassert the significance of the broadcast medium. This has been demonstrated through *The Voice*, explored as event TV, particularly in terms of the support digital platforms can offer liveness. Indeed, as Castells (2009) has put it, "The three forms of communication (interpersonal, mass communication and mass self-communication) coexist, interact, and complement each other rather than substituting for one another" (55). And so, although the mass communication paradigm has not disappeared, it has changed (Gripsrud 2010: 16; Turner 2011: 48).

For now, the business model of networks continues to center on calculations of audiences watching television live. However, Nielsen Company, a key player in measuring television ratings, in the fall of 2013 introduced the 'Twitter TV Rating' - an industry metric that complements TV ratings with insights garnered from Twitter data. The introduction of this metric changes the value of social media platforms by tracking audience sentiment in

real-time.[52] But, whilst it expands on the *how* and *where* of data collection, it remains faithful to an appointment-based model of viewing.

However, as discussed, the strategy of complementing live television with Twitter has not been without its problems, causing friction amongst *The Voice* viewsers. For West Coast viewers the promises made for the live shows were unfulfilled. The relationship they had expected to have with the format had not been delivered on. Rather, it created a privileged relationship to the broadcast for the East Coast viewers, who could view the program earlier and experience the thrill of their comments potentially being shown or replied to on-air. It is ironic then that the purpose of social TV is to motivate viewsers to watch a program when broadcast, rather than time-shifted.

This tension propelled further reflection on the rhythms and temporalities of television, pointing to trends of series dumping and a Big Data driven artistic strategy. Herein industry practices are continually being redefined. One of these redefinitions - namely the role of audience participation in productions - triggered yet another tension over time. What was proclaimed as a 'revolution' in television, having audiences participate in and around the production through social media, was gradually translated back to established practices as the producers reclaimed control over what transpired on-air.

Whereas chapters three of this dissertation has provided insight into broadcast television's supplementation with social media platforms, the next chapter addresses Facebook as a platform exemplary of the Web 2.0 ideology and how this may interact with broadcast media. Through the constructions of liveness of Facebook I explore this 'new' relation to liveness, readily touched on in chapter one, and reflect more specifically on the intertwinement of media institutions.

52

Wired-journalist Tom Vanderbilt heralded such a new era when in March 2013 the magazine published an article proclaiming the Nielsen family to be dead as it had failed to keep up with how people watch television. Vanderbilt predicts that, some day in the near future, a show's tweetability may be just as crucial as the sheer size of its audience. It's something that advertisers and networks already realize, albeit in a vague and unquantified way. But as Nielsen - and other analytics companies - race to capture a show's true impact across all platforms, it will change the way those shows are valued (n.p.). It raises the question as to what will happen when new types of measurements become the norm.


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4.
Redefining Relations to Live: The Case of Facebook

In the first two chapters of this dissertation, I developed my propositions on the paradox of liveness and demonstrated liveness to be a construction and evaluative category. Then in chapter three I started to use liveness to focus an analysis of the standoff between broadcast media and social media, whilst simultaneously developing the concept. Through the case of *The Voice*, I located two tensions surrounding livenesss - the one pertaining the rhythms and temporalities of broadcast television and the other pertaining audience participation - and outlined several conditions of liveness. This chapter shifts attention from the broadcast model of *The Voice* to the social media model of Facebook.

Facebook, I find, is emblematic of how social media platforms today promote 'liveness' to typify their activities. It serves as an argument against generalizations about newer forms of live such as "online liveness" (Couldry 2004) or "digital liveness" (Auslander 2012). Through the platform, I explore the emergence of a very different user relationship to liveness, already latent in the Original Livestream platform, from that which broadcast media have offered. This 'new' relation gives rise to a tension surrounding liveness, one which centers on the fact that users now have a producer-relation to liveness.[1]

Although Facebook is not identified as a 'live platform' in popular discourse, feeds that make up News Feed, the central Facebook feature, are actively discussed as 'live'. These feeds are the topic of this chapter. It should be recognized that Facebook is a particularly challenging research object. This not only because it is a 'moving target', constantly under construction,

1
It is not so much a new relation to live (consider, for instance, reality TV) as it is a type of relation more dominant in the social media era.

but also because in converging with numerous other websites/platforms, it has no real contours, with its reach expanding across the Web. I investigated the platform primarily in November and December 2012.[2]

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the diversity and flexibility of live forms and expound on this new producer-relation to liveness. Analyzing the constructions of live that are part of the central feature, the 'News Feed', allows me to accomplish these goals. Furthermore, I want to pick up on the exploration of the interrelation between broadcast media and social media that I embarked on in the previous chapter. The first half introduces the platform Facebook, discusses its metatext, and outlines the main features of the social networking platform. It furthermore addresses the economic and legal forces shaping its basic space of participation. This outline functions to contextualize the analyses I conduct of the live constructs at work in the News Feed.

The second half of the chapter zooms in on the live constructs related to Facebook's News Feed, looking at the metatext and space of participation simultaneously. Here, a series of remediations of live are presented and reflected upon. This account provides insight into what 'live' means here, showing the flexibility of the notion in terms of constitution and point of reference. I subsequently consider user responses. This leads me to explore how social network sites (SNS) and central news institutions interrelate. The purpose of examining this relation is to contrast the claim on the 'social' made by central media institutions with that of social networking sites. What I intend to make clear is that Facebook is constructed as a privileged space for maintaining social relations, or rather 'friendships'. Which seems straightforward, but social media are increasingly thought to be taking over 'functions' such as providing news, long fulfilled by central media.

Moreover, in considering user responses to the News Feed in particular, I take a closer look at the tension surrounding liveness that emerges here, resulting from the producer-relation to liveness. The concern with this tension stimulates reflection on three issues through which the social media era can be compared to the broadcast media era: spreadability, algorithmic filtering and the emerging 'Like economy'.

2

Moreover, there are multiple routes by which to 'access' the platform. In this chapter I look at Facebook set to primary language English (US) and visited with a Mozilla Firefox browser during November and December 2012, unless otherwise noted. These settings, however, do not change the fact that that looking at the situation at this point in time and at how it had transformed in the period up until that time, can be productive for finding answers to such questions as when liveness is and what constitutes liveness.

4.1 ABOUT FACEBOOK

In this section of the chapter my goal is to first briefly introduce Facebook and review what characterizes its metatext. I do so with the help of information gathered on the platform itself, from official Facebook blog entries, and comments from an interview with Facebook's founder, Mark Zuckerberg. I also use academic reflections on the identity of Facebook (Gehl 2013; Van Dijck 2012b) for this purpose. From these sources a clear picture is painted of Facebook's self-presentation as a platform for mediating social relations. These texts also inform my dealings with the metatext surrounding the News Feed and its various live feed incarnations in section 4.2. Consequently, I outline Facebook's basic space of participation, where elements of the metatext return.

4.1.1 **The Platform Metatext: Me and My Friends**

Like other social network sites, Facebook offers users a platform to maintain social relations online. The use of Facebook is rather simple: after registration, users receive their own 'Timeline' (profile page) and can 'Friend' other users, or 'Subscribe' to their posts. They can also select to join groups or 'like' celebrities, products, and companies. Social networking sites (SNS) such as Facebook are not a new phenomenon. As early as 1995, a website named Classmates.com fulfilled a similar function (Scholz 2008: n.p.). As for Facebook, it was in 2004 that Mark Zuckerberg launched the social networking site named *The Facebook* for students and academic staff of Harvard. Membership was then extended to various educational institutions, and the site introduced 'networks' (high-school, regional and corporate), requiring that users be part of these networks in order to join. However, as the user base expanded, it was realized that this idea of networks did not scale well (boyd and Hargittai 2010: n.p.). In September 2006, Facebook was opened to the public, no longer requiring users to register through networks. By July 2012, the company had grown to service 955 million monthly active users and 552 million daily active users.

The official Facebook page on the platform states its mission as "to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected". Similar to other social networking sites, Facebook deploys a 'sharing' rhetoric that draws on a cultural image of connectivity, promoting activities of togetherness (Kennedy 2013: 130). As is claimed on the platform: "Facebook helps you connect and share with the people in your life". If a sharing

rhetoric is common to social media platforms in general, Facebook positions itself as intermediary for personal relations in particular. Aside from its slogan, quoted above, an obvious indication hereof is found in that fact that in enabling users to make connections with others, it has termed these connections 'friends' rather than 'contacts', as is, for instance, the case on the professional network platform LinkedIn.

How users have been invited to post through Status Update is, I would argue, also telling as to how the platform positions itself. What people post through Status Update is posted on the user's Timeline (their personal page), but also filtered and possibly presented in the News Feed (found on the front page) of 'friends'. The obligatory text used to prompt posts in this field was at first "[user id] is". This formulation instigated many grammatically challenged sentences for users who felt 'forced' into writing in the third person (Schiffman 2007: n.p.), and it was dropped late 2007. Then in 2009, the 'prompting text' in Status Update was modified again. Whereas the original text encouraged users to post "What are you doing right now?", they were now asked "What's on your mind?" And later in 2011 the text got an appendix to include the following two sub-questions in the lower panel: "Who are you with?" and "Where are you?"

Consistent throughout these tweaks of Status Update is that users were invited to share about *themselves*, what they were thinking, doing and/or where they were hanging out and with whom. The idea of the platform being about the users, corresponds also to how boyd typifies social network websites as being about "me and my friends" (2008a).

Aside from formulations on the platform, in an interview held in 2010 with *TIME* magazine, Zuckerberg remarked:

> The thing that I really care about is making the world more open and connected […] *Open* means having access to more information, right? More transparency, being able to share things and have a voice in the world. And *connected* is helping people stay in touch and maintain empathy for each other, and bandwidth. (qtd. in Grossman 2010: n.p.)

The values of openness and connectedness Zuckerberg stresses in this interview are perpetuated throughout the platform, both in statements and in how it encourages users to share through the platform interface. In terms of Facebook's language use throughout its metatext, Robert W. Gehl (2013) has pointed out that it contains many metaphors of citizenship and democracy. The idea of the platform as a nation-state materialized most clearly in 2009,

when the first Facebook Site Governance vote took place. The company even argues that its daily generation of user data contributes to democracy and is vital for social connection (Gehl 2013: 222).

4.1.2 The Main Space of Participation

In short, in its metatext, Facebook makes a strong claim on sharing and sociality and this characterization, I find, has been reiterated in popular discourse. In the following paragraphs, I discuss the platform and its central features relevant for a basic understanding of Facebook and its space of participation. Herein I reflect on, in respective order, the techno-cultural, economic, and legal forces that shape user-participation.[3] This consideration, as should be apparent at this stage in the book, also helps to clarify *what* relations are being mediated on the platform and *how*.

For starters, I consider the user-interface and what types of interactions are afforded through its design. After logging-in on Facebook, users enter a homepage. The News Feed feature, found in the center column, is basically an aggregation of stories from people in their social network which is, as is to be discussed in greater depth, filtered through the Edgerank algorithm. In being so central to the platform, the feature makes of Facebook a platform about sharing with friends. Above the News Feed is a Status Update field. Then the upper toolbar has three simple icons, next to a search toolbar. They signify 'Friend Requests' (two silhouettes), 'Messages' (a text bubble) and 'Notifications' (a globe). On the other side of the search toolbar is a profile image with username which functions as a link to one's profile page ('Timeline'), a 'Find Friends' button and a dropdown 'Home' menu (with the options to 'Advertise on Facebook', go to one's 'Account Settings', 'Privacy Settings', or 'Log Out', or consult a 'Help' module).

The left column on the Homepage features several options below a thumbnail of the user's profile picture. (The thumbnail links to his or her Timeline). From top to bottom these options are: 'News Feed', 'Messages', 'Events' and 'Find Friends'.[4] The right column on the homepage has, at the top, birthday listings and upcoming events, with below that a section with 'Sponsored links' and links to Facebook-related items like 'Cookies',

3
This is the situation as it presented itself on my computer with the Firefox browser in November 2012.

4
When something happens that affects the user in question, a light blue square pops up next to the text with a dark blue number featured in the square signaling unattended (an) item(s).

'Privacy', but also a language setting option. Next to the right column, the 'Ticker' feature is located, stretching from top to bottom, with a little box at the bottom for the Chat feature.

Evidently, the Facebook platform offers several ways for users to interact with one another. Its users can post a status, share photo/videos or ask a question through the Status Update feature on the homepage (previously discussed in terms of its user address). They can 'Like' or 'Comment' on the platform activities of others in their social network or post directly on their Timeline. It is furthermore possible to message other users through the embedded messaging feature, or chat with them via the Chat feature.

This brief account of the opportunities for participation should have brought forward the plurality summarized in the platforms' social identity. Whilst Facebook is positioned as a social platform, not all forms of social interaction afforded are centered on real-time communications and addressed as 'live'. In line with the aims of this book, my interest lies with how liveness is constructed on Facebook. To maintain focus, then, I explore the platform's *own* use of the liveness notion rather than of third parties (such as how Facebook is used to host 'virtual viewing parties' around TV shows and event television).

The Facebook Chat feature may seem a puzzling omission from this chapter, but there is a good reason for this, which links insights from chapter one. Although a chat feature clearly taps into values of both real-time and sociality, it is not referred to as 'live' in either the metatext or user responses. The most plausible explanation for this is that the function facilitates one-to-one interaction with limited intervention on the part of Facebook (unlike with its other social tools such as the News Feed). As soon as a celebrity partakes in an organized chat session, however, these seemingly unmediated streams become orchestrated and monitored, and the sessions are heavily promoted as 'live'. Here too we see the relation between liveness and institutionalization discussed in chapter one.

Aside from how the platform's design organizes social interaction, economic forces inform the space of participation as well. Through several investment rounds, Facebook has found investors in the likes of Digital Sky Technologies, Li Ka-shing, Goldman Sachs and venture capital firms Elevation Partners, Accel Partners, Meritech Capital Partners and Greylock Partners. The most publicized business transaction was perhaps the 2007 Microsoft Corporation purchase of a 1.7% stake in Facebook for $240

million (Stone 2007). In May 2012, the company's first initial public offering (IPO) was held, capitalizing $104 billion. An analyst at Robert W. Baird & Company has stated, on the implications of the IPO:

> Before they were a public company, Facebook was judged by growth in users […] Now that they are so well penetrated in most Western markets, growth has to translate into monetization. (Sebastian in Sengupta 2012)

Social media companies faced somewhat of a predicament after their success had – prematurely - been widely heralded. Despite their awesome capabilities for building audiences – which sparked initial euphoria - developing the right business model has proven extremely challenging.

Presently, Facebook has a mix of strategies for monetization, although it focuses on targeting users on the basis of their personal data. More blatantly, as Lev Grossman from *Time* magazine wrote in 2010 in an exposé on Zuckerberg, the magazine's person of the year:

> Facebook has a dual identity, as both a for-profit business and a medium *for our personal lives*, and those two identities don't always sit comfortably side by side. (Grossman 2010, my emphasis)

This friction between these two Facebook identities has been broken-down a bit further by José van Dijck (2013). She writes,

> Facebook's business model is […] a contentious balancing act between stimulating users' activity and exploiting it; its success ultimately depends on customers' willingness to contribute data and to allow maximum data mining. (Van Dijck 2013: 64)

Facebook sells customized metadata for target marketing in the Sponsored banner and equally features "Sponsored Stories" in the News Feed. In addition, it provides users the opportunity to purchase Facebook Gifts, and offers integrated paid services like social games. In the meantime, it continues to experiment with new revenue streams.

In 2012, Facebook tested a promoted post system allowing users to pay a sum of money to bump their status update higher in the News Feed (Hill 2012). The regime of visibility inherent to the logic of the News Feed creates a desire to participate by threatening those who do not to become invisible and a desire to be popular in that visibility is granted to these individuals (Bucher 2012a: 12-13). But this participation comes at a cost. As Navneet

Alang has pointed out in his editorial for *TECHi*:

> What he [Zuckerberg] failed to mention was that the more you participate in this 'openness and connection', the more you contribute to Facebook's main revenue stream. (2010: n.p.)

Alang furthermore comments on how it is not in the vested interest of Facebook to allow users more privacy (or privacy settings) because its business model thrives on personalized advertisement. Generic ads are less lucrative for the company, so incomplete data about a particular user is not desirable.

In short, the commercial success of Facebook relies on users sharing content (i.e. short messages, photos/videos, or files) and therein generating data (this is also done for instance by 'liking' something). By navigating the platform and in liking and commenting on content, users generate data that is used for processes they are not fully aware of. In other words, user activities are being channeled by design to improve underlying information systems, a practice that has been referred to as "implicit participation" (Schäfer 2011: 12). Facebook needs its users to be actively sharing and user participation is stimulated by the platform through an overall sharing rhetoric.

Particularly, aside from a regime of visibility, Facebook encourages user interaction through user address.[5] For instance, in addition to the prompt text in Status Update, when users have a pending friend request, receive a message and/or a notification of activities relating to their profile, the icons on the homepage (discussed previously) not only turn from dark blue to light blue, but in the upper right-hand corner of the icon space, a red square emerges with in white the number of the amount of actions that need attending to. When clicked on, it loads a list of items and the red square disappears. There are several other examples, including the incentive to recommend friends to newcomers, or the aggregation of comments as a sort of 'birthday feed' within the News Feed for people's birthday, making birthdays more visible and encouraging others to congratulate the birthday boy/girl.

Moving from economic forces to legal forces, in registering with Facebook a user agrees to its Terms of Service (ToS). This act delimits their participation on the platform in that these terms specify how users are expected to behave on the platform. A simple, but forceful, example of a legal

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The following sketches the situation in September 2012.

force at work is that users are not allowed to misrepresent themselves on Facebook, or use a false name. A user violating this policy could have their account disabled. Moreover, although they don't have to pay a fee of sorts for platform use, they sign away the rights to uploaded content and consent to being monitored (and that collected data about their interactions can be shared with third parties).[6]

Generally, social media platforms seek to capitalize on user data and are well known to spark public debates on online privacy. But Facebook in particular has had a lot of public backlash. Time and time again it has introduced new privacy policies, resulting in users forming (protest) groups which warn others of the implemented changes (Fletcher 2010).

In its Data Use Policy, the platform claims to use the information it 'receives' as follows:

> We use the information we receive about you in connection with the services and features we provide to you and other users like your friends, our partners, the advertisers that purchase ads on the site, and the developers that build the games, applications, and websites you use.

The quote above highlights how data strikes at the core of how users come to experience the platform. It is not only users' own preferences and connections on the platform, but also beyond its confines, with services across the Web that are connected to the social graph and provide input for its experience.[7] While laws prescribe how these data may be implemented for those purposes, the legal system needs to catch up with the state of affairs. In the meantime Facebook is in constant negotiation with its users over privacy, making of privacy – in Zuckerberg terms – an "evolving norm".

6

Some academics have referred to this as 'exploitation' (Petersen 2008). The understanding of these social networks in terms of neo-Marxist labor theory is not very productive. In critique of such moral framings, Banks and Humphryes (2008) have pointed out the need for a more refined understanding of enterprise-creator relations: "When there are abrasive encounters […] it is not always clear who is in control and who the winners and losers are, but it is clear that it is not as straightforward as corporate winners and user losers. Here we need a better understanding of the agents and agencies emerging through social network markets" (413).

7

A social graph, a term popularized by Facebook at the F8 conference in 2007, concerns the idea that if you mapped out all the connections between people and the things they care about, it would form a graph that connects everyone together. Facebook has focused mostly on mapping out the part of the graph around people and their relationships. (Zuckerberg 2010: n.p.)

4.2 THE NEWS FEED

Having introduced Facebook in terms of its basic metatext (which revolves more generally around me sharing with friends, rather than liveness) and space of participation, I now move on to discuss the constructions of live that have been part of the News Feed feature. As explained, it is the central feature for facilitating the connection of users to each other on Facebook. The introduction of the News Feed is said to have transformed Facebook "from a network of connected Web pages into a personalized newspaper featuring (and created by) your friends" (Pariser 2009: 37). The feature offers users a personalized list of news stories, based on the online activities of their friends/groups. It is this particular feature that is associated with liveness, both in popular discourse as by the platform itself.

Since its introduction, the News Feed has undergone numerous revisions. By exploring the development of the feature in the following paragraphs, other than a full-blown history of the News Feed, I aim to trace how liveness has been used and refashioned over time. To do so I recapitulate what the News Feed is in brief. Subsequently, I analyze the 'Live Feed', 'Most Recent' and 'Ticker' features, each being a particular articulation of 'live'. Throughout, I target both the metatext (which now does reflect on liveness), sourced primarily from the Facebook graphical-user interface and the Facebook blog, as well as the particular affordances of these different feeds that comprise the feature. I then discuss the Facebook algorithms, and close with a consideration of what can be learned from these different incarnations of the News Feed about liveness.

4.2.1 **The Incarnations of Liveness**

As mentioned, when logging onto the Facebook platform the user is directed to the Facebook homepage that centers on what is called the News Feed, a feature that was launched on 6 September 2006. On the user's homepage, updates from network connections are highlighted through this feature. The News Feed was introduced to the world on *The Facebook Blog* as follows:

> News Feed highlights what's happening in your social circles on Facebook. It updates a personalized list of news stories throughout the day, so you'll know when Mark adds Britney Spears to his Favorites or when your crush is single again. Now, whenever you log in, you'll get the latest headlines generated by the activity of your friends and social groups. (Sanghvi 2006: n.p.)

The tool helps to *manage* all of the user's Facebook connections, and is advertised as a tool which allows users to stay more up to date on the lives of their friends. Earlier on in this chapter, I pointed out that by sharing through the Status Update feature, a user posts directly to their own 'Timeline' and their activity is shared with their friends through News Feed. These friends can 'Like' or comment on these shared statutes, photos, videos, or links either directly on the Timeline or through the News Feed.[8]

Live Feed

On 23 October 2009, Facebook introduced what was called the wwwwwwa-set established Live Feed (Dybwad 2009). The Live Feed (see Fig. 9) was an option users could toggle to, within the News Feed. This is the first live feed, of the three I have identified, which I discuss in this section.

Figure 9: The News Feed with Live Feed Tab[9]

8
It is currently possible to specify for whom the user wants the specific status update to be visible: publicly, for friends or a custom-made subset of those, or one of the lists that have been composed for his or her profile.

In contrast to the News Feed itself, this particular section revolved around seeing what friends were doing in real-time. In a post on *The Facebook Blog* it was explained:

> Once you've caught up on what you missed, you can click through to "Live Feed" to see what's happening right now. As long as you remain logged into Facebook, you'll continue to see posts and activity from your friends in real-time. (Yung 2009: n.p.)

Contrary to popular belief, the Live Feed was not a neutral stream which aggregated friends' activities.[10] For Facebook users with over 250 connections, selection did figure in. In part, the method of selection was based on the calculated relevance of these connections and their posts. This was clarified in the News Feed options, about which Facebook stated the following:

> Live Feed automatically *determines* which friends to include based on who Facebook *thinks you want to hear from* most. You can manually adjust this list below. (my emphasis)

What the user saw was inferred from their user behavior and that of their friends. For the user it was, however, possible to opt to select 'Show More' or 'Hide' for their friends, in order to influence how these connections were weighed into the feed.

Most Recent

In 2010 the News Feed started organizing stories through a two-tabbed system, where users could access one of two different feed views at a time. It comprised of the 'Top News' view which offered a summary of top stories and a 'Most Recent' view, described in a Facebook blog post as "a live feed of all stories" (Quintana 2010: n.p.). This system was developed in order to cater to infrequent Facebook users for whom Top News featured as default view on their home page. The idea was that providing top stories would help these users catch up on activities that had happened while they had been away (rather than confronting them with just a feed of most recent posts).

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From an entry on the *Facebook Blog*, Yung 2009.

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Friends I have spoken to responded surprised to learn of the 250 connections limit and, and much to my intrigue, even asked me how it was then possible for this still be understood as 'live'. To me this lined up with the idea that liveness promises to de-mediate mediation, in and around content.

Top News was based on an algorithm and stood in contrast to the chronological list provided by Most Recent (which provided a view of "all updates from your friends"). The algorithms of Top News played a vital role in what users got to see. The relevance of these stories was calculated in part through the users earlier interactions with the platform and the type of content. Here time decay weighed in less prominently. In short then, whereas the Top News feed was organized by *relevance* the Most Recent feed was organized by *chronology* (Quintana 2010: n.p.).

Ticker

In late September 2011, the News Feed was changed from a feature that offered the choice between two views, to a single-feed that showed Top News higher up in the feed followed by Recent Stories. The company claimed to have made this change in order to tailor to both frequent and infrequent Facebook users. In the official Facebook Blog announcing the changes, the analogy between the News Feed and a newspaper was explicitly made:

> When you pick up a newspaper after not reading it for a week, the front page quickly clues you into the most interesting stories. In the past, News Feed hasn't worked like that. Updates slide down in chronological order so it's tough to zero in on what matters most. Now, News Feed will act *more like your own personal newspaper*. You won't have to worry about missing important stuff. All your news will be in a single stream with the most interesting stories featured at the top. (Tonkelowitz 2011: n.p., my emphasis)

Thus, rather than descending chronologically, Facebook had top stories appear above others whereas more recent stories appeared below chronologically.

Aside from merging Top News and Most Recent into a single feed, wherein top stories were henceforth marked with a blue corner, another feed of real-time stories named Ticker was introduced. It is a feature in the right margin as the user navigated the platform. It is essentially a real-time rolling list of your Friends' activities. As noted in an entry on the Facebook Blog, Ticker requires a steady flow of content in order to be useful and is therefore only available to users with 'enough' platform activity.

In both official Facebook blog posts and popular discourse, Ticker has been referred to as "the live ticker", which warrants its inclusion in this study. The difference between Ticker and the central News Feed is explained by the Facebook Help Center as follows:

> Ticker, on the right-hand side of your account, lets you see all your friends' activity in real-time. When you hover over an item in ticker, you can see the full story and join the conversation as it happens. Ticker updates itself as as [sic] stories happen. This gives you a more complete picture of what your friends are doing, right now.

If a user has been idle for over 15 minutes, Ticker stops updating. And in contrast to Most Recent, which comprises rich media updates, it is a text-only feed. The user can expand the story to rich media by clicking on the entry, making an overlay appear.

As for the stories that appear in Ticker, Facebook FAQ states:

> Ticker includes *live* stories - things like status updates, friendships, photos, videos, links, likes and comments. You can see this activity elsewhere on Facebook. Ticker just lets you see it as it happens. (my emphasis)

Tonkelowitz (2011) explains the specific advantage of Ticker over the content brought through News Feed:

> Ticker shows you the same stuff you were already seeing on Facebook, but it brings your conversations to life by displaying updates instantaneously. Now when a friend comments, asks a question or shares something like a check in, you'll be able to join the conversation right away. (n.p.)

In the blog entry that introduced Ticker to users, there is a strong emphasis on the 'right now' quality of the feature. Because aggregating and updating stories occurs in real-time, it is possible for users to participate in the ongoing activities.

My experience of Ticker provides that there is some sort of filtering conducted here as well, however, is unclear how this feed is managed.[11] In mid-November 2011, after much public outcry over the disappearance of the Most Recent function, the arrangement of the News Feed was modified yet again. Now, in addition to the Ticker feed on the right-hand side of profiles, users could toggle between Top Stories and Most Recent in the News Feed (Tonkelowitz 2011).

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In the final days of 2013, as I am finalizing my dissertation, Ticker seems to be 'broken'. It hardly updates and is not close to functioning in the way Facebook had described it in this blog post. This fact, however, does not deter from the insights it helps garner about liveness, as will be made evident a bit further on in this chapter.

4.2.2 **The Algorithms**

Although the three different incarnations of 'live' feeds in the News Feed have been briefly introduced, I have yet to specify how the algorithms, important actors in these feeds - operating beneath the hood of this feature – work. This clarification is necessary in that the liveness of each of the feeds is contrasted to the 'work' conducted by algorithms. I will finalize my reflection on these feeds, and the insights they offer us on liveness, after discussing these algorithms.

The algorithm that governs what is displayed in the News Feed, and how high up it makes it into the feed, is called Edgerank. This algorithm, in other words, is responsible for constructing a "regime of visibility" on Facebook (Bucher 2012a). Summarizing a take by Facebook engineers Ruchi Sanghvi and Ari Steinberg, Jason Kincaid (2010a) tried to chart the factors involved in the calculations executed by EdgeRank. Because algorithms are the 'secret sauce' of companies these days, finding a complete breakdown of the Facebook algorithms is impossible to retrieve (not to ignore the fact that they are continually tweaked). As noted in the introduction of this book, my particular research does not demand in-depth knowledge of every technical detail of these systems in that understanding the basic principles of their functioning is sufficient to engage with them on a theoretical level.[12]

Kincaid explains that each item in the News Feed is an 'Object'. An Object interacted with by another user is, in turn, called an 'Edge'. And an Edge, Kincaid points out, has three components that determine its relevance. These are:

u. – The affinity score between viewing user and Edge creator
w. – The weight for this Edge type (Create, Comment, Like, Tag, etc.)
d. – The time decay factor based on how long ago the Edge was created

The affinity score is determined by calculating the number of interactions between two members. A Facebook friend that is often interacted with (directly or indirectly) has a higher affinity score than a Facebook friend whose profile page one hardly visits and to whose objects one rarely responds. As to the weight of an Edge type: although no hierarchy has been revealed,

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See footnote 26 in the introduction.

certain Edge types have a higher value than others. Kincaid speculates that a Comment probably scores higher than a Like. The third factor weighing in is time. The newer an Object, the more relevant it is deemed. Multiplying the factors of all the Edges and consequently adding their scores up, creates an Object's EdgeRank. The value of this determines if the Object makes it into the feed (and the higher the number, the more likely).

In short, the EdgeRank algorithm determines what items make it into the News Feed. The Graph Rank algorithm, on the other hand, introduced in September 2011, is responsible for distributing Open Graph application activity, which concerns the mapping of relations of individuals, and individuals and online objects, across the News Feed, Ticker and Timeline.

As discussed, time is an important factor in determining the relevance of an Object in the EdgeRank algorithm. The importance of time is also apparent in how the platform communicates Objects in the News Feed. For instance, when a Facebook friend befriends another Facebook member, it is announced in the News Feed as follows: "[Friend X] is now friends with [Y]". The formulation is contradictory to the self-formulated aims of the platform (charting out existing friendships), implying that this friendship just happened. It continues to invite jokes amongst users who comment on the 'newness' of their relationship (i.e. we have been friends for longer than that). Recently added photos adhere to this same tactic. The photos are referred to as 'new photos', using the binary categories old-new to suggest what relevance these photos likely have to the user.

4.2.3 **The Liveness of the News Feed**

In the preceding paragraphs I have explored the metatext and space of participation of the News Feed feature. As for liveness specifically, the consideration has reaffirmed some of the conditions of liveness outlined in chapter three. Most notably, each of the live feed manifestations emerged in contrast to a non-live counterpart and brought with it a positive evaluation. The meaning of the first Live Feed was established through a contrast with the EdgeRank algorithms that filtered the News Feed. Later, the Most Recent Feed organized Stories chronologically, rather than around relevance, and with substantially less filtering than was the case with Top News. Then, with Ticker as live feed, liveness was no longer only about the filtering process, but shifted focus to real-time updating, allowing users to participate in ongoing activities of their connections. These three articulations of a 'live feed' illustrate the flexibility of the term 'live', as its point of reference (the noun and context) and with it, its meaning, has changed over time.

Furthermore, these constructions of liveness compel a consideration of the fact that Facebook is a privately owned and operated infrastructure. The platform exerts a significant amount of influence, specifically through design, over how people represent themselves and maintain relations with others online. In this particular configuration there are numerous actors involved in shaping these relations, most notably the underlying algorithms. So, one could therefore argue, as Van Dijck (2012a) does, that these platforms are less about "making connections", and more about "engineering connections" (168).

4.3 USER RESPONSES

In the following paragraphs I reflect on the general use of the platform. I do this in order to try and understand how users (help) define the identity of the platform, thus to see how their practice relates to the framing of the platform by the metatext. Particularly, I consider the role of Facebook as alternative news source and for referral traffic, since social media platforms are often said, in popular print, to have replaced media institutions as sources for news. It relates directly to a question posed by Couldry (2012), who wondered about the implications the replacement of traditional media by these social platforms as sources for news would have for media power (and the understanding of news). Afterwards, I turn to a consideration of how changes to existing features or the introduction of new features tends to spark discussions on privacy.

With respect to use, it is helpful to contextualize the popularity of the platform. For Europe the population penetration comes down to 30.25%, whilst for North America it is 45.55%.[13] This large-scale adoption of Facebook has created interest from the media industry in how the platform has changed media consumption habits. In 2011, Pew Research, a non-partisan center that conducts empirical social science research on media consumption, reported that 52% of users in the United States, according to the account of those interviewed, visit the website daily, and 32% one to five days a week (Rainie et al. 2011).

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Source: "Facebook Statistics by Continent", *Social Bakers*, October 8, 2012, http://www.socialbakers.com/countries/continents. The penetration is 42.30% in Australia and Oceania and 34.33% in South America. Facebook has a comparatively low population penetration in Asia (6.89%), where other social networking websites take the lead, and Africa (5.35%).

As to how Facebook is being used, yet another Pew Research study (Hampton et al. 2011) found that on an average day:

- 15% of Facebook users update their own status
- 22% comment on another's post or status
- 20% comment on another user's photos
- 26% 'like' another user's content
- 10% send another user a private message.

Whereas the above noted percentages indicate how users interact on Facebook around content and with others, it does not disclose what type of content is being shared and interacted with. As mentioned, for Facebook it is desirable that users share a lot because it enables the company to collect information about them to sell to third parties and to stimulate interactions on the platform. To users it is desirable to make many connections, because it enables them to acquire social capital (Ellison et al. in Van Dijck 2013a: 47). Sharing is what keeps the News Feed alive. When users don't provide a constant stream of content, the feed flatlines.

In an attempt to establish what people share on the website, I examined the "Wall" of 25 randomly selected Facebook friends. Timeline has per December 2011 replaced the Wall feature. Moreover, of these friends, two of them had their Wall feature disabled. Taking 1 September 2011 as point of reference, I looked at the last 10 objects the users themselves shared on their Wall, collecting 230 contributions in total. These contributions are biased in two obvious ways: (a) they had been explicitly shared with the public and (b) were reflective of my social group, seeing that these are my Facebook relations. Even though it is by no means a representative selection, it can - rather than simply accept the framing of the metatext - give an idea as to how the platform is used, and therein understood, by its users.

Of these 230 contributions, 132 of the posts were either comments on what the users had just been doing, were doing or intended to do, or thoughts/opinions that were not explicitly related to an action or event that had recently taken place or was about to. Only four of the contributions were links to news stories. This suggests that users understand the platform as a space to share *personal* information.[14] It is an unsurprising conclusion, because it corresponds to how Facebook itself envisions the platform, but

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The remaining 94 concerned photos, videos, check-ins and links to websites not news-related.

necessary to point out.

There has been much talk about if social networking sites are replacing mainstream media as sites for news consumption. Take for instance how social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook were said to have played a crucial role in spreading the news of the death of Osama Bin Laden.[15] However, the Washington Post-Pew Research Center, having asked Americans how they first heard of the Bin Laden raid, found that the majority of people first heard the news through television (58%) rather than online (11%).[16] Also, social media platforms are potential sources of referral traffic for official news websites. As Mitchell et al. (2012) note in their research conducted for the Pew Research Center:

> the survey confirms that Facebook and Twitter are now pathways to news, but their role may not be as large as some have suggested. The population that uses these networks for news at all is still relatively small, especially the part that does so very often. (n.p.)

Aside from the *sharing* of existing news stories through Facebook, people can also act as a witness to unfolding news events (e.g. the 'live' tweeting of the Bin Laden raid in 2011 by Sohaib Athar, aka @ReallyVirtual).

There are different forms of participatory journalism (Lasica 2003) in the social media era. Initiatives like *The Guardian*'s (which crowd sourced on the London Riots), CNN's (iReport) and Al Jazeera's (*The Steam*) are examples of mainstream news outlets that harness audience content. Couldry has linked the use of user-generated content by media corporations as a means for them to continue to assert their social centrality as social storytellers (2012: 24). In addition, there are also collaborative websites (e.g. Digg, Slashdot, and Reddit), participatory media websites (Indymedia) and personal broadcasting websites, which offer alternative news sources. In other words, social media, and 'social news sites' in particular, can introduce new content and filters for news, rebalancing power between traditional news

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In popular media, Twitter was said to have broken the news first. Reflecting on this incident, Salmon (2011) writes critically of the *New York Times* in that their ombudsman claimed to have broken the news in their papers, unwilling to credit how the news had broken on Twitter. Salmon furthermore provided an interesting visualization of how the news spread on Twitter, identifying the most interesting and influential actors herein.

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"Washington Post-Pew Research Center Poll", *The Washington Pos*t, n.d., http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/polls/postpoll_05022011.html.

editors and users. However, these social platforms more often are used in combination with, rather than replacing, mainstream news organizations.

Furthermore, Facebook is not the most convincing case of social media attempting to usurp the editorial control of mainstream news organizations. How Facebook is promoted and used supports the idea that the platform is about connecting people to each other, and only in this role is it also a space for the exchange of news. This idea of connecting people is therefore not just a rhetoric pushed at the users through the metatext, and inscribed in the platform's design, but something that is also performed in use. As explored in this section, users seemingly understand and use the platform as such a space.

The popular belief that social media platforms have become alternative platforms for news consumption seems, at least for now, unfounded. The websites of major media institutions are still the preferred destination for news consumption, over social media platforms and the sites of internet-based organizations (Baumgartner and Morris 2009). So, it can be concluded, at least for now, that the emergence of social media platforms and the citizen journalist, have not replaced mainstream media and professional journalism. It should furthermore be recognized that even everyday social relations prior to the Internet included the exchange of 'news' and that in this regard, it is not odd to find such exchanges online. Besides, not only do people on social media refer to mainstream media sites, the relationship also unfolds inversely, as many mainstream media stimulate the sharing of news via social media through buttons on their website.

Having discussed Facebook user-practice and the platforms' identity as social network rather than news source, I now shift focus to user responses in terms of what users have said in relation to the platform and, as I would propose, its liveness. Because of the hefty public debates the platform has provoked, I discuss their reflection more generally in terms of a discontent over privacy as reported on by the press and in academic publications. Moreover, I provide that this discontent locates a tension surrounding liveness which centers on the fact that now, users themselves are the topic which liveness promises to 'de-mediate' - making user information more visible to the public. This shared information is not just about the content they consciously put online for their friends, but also concerns information collected about their online activities (how they are engaging with content on the platform).

Repeatedly, as mentioned, following the rollout of a new feature or update, Facebook meets a new wave of public outcry and legal battles over the implications it has for user privacy. The launch of the News Feed in 2006, naming just one example, created public uproar - users felt they were being

tracked by the minute - and it pushed for Facebook to introduce privacy tools to lend users more control over how information is shared (boyd 2008a). Zuckerberg has brushed off such incidents, shifting blame to users rather than Facebook, like in the following statement: "That's a big part of what we do, figuring out what the next things are that everyone wants to do and then bringing them along to get them there" (ctd. in Fletcher 2010). Herein the problem surrounding privacy stems from Facebook having to 'educate' users on the norms around sharing.

The introduction of Ticker too was followed by a public outrage over privacy issues; it quickly acquired the nickname "stalker ticker" in online discussions.[17] And indeed at the time of its release it was unclear to users how they could prevent their activities from being shown in other people's Ticker.[18] Facebook claimed that Ticker did not change privacy settings, but that user activity had simply become more visible as it unfolded in real-time. However, the introduction of the Ticker indicated a shift in strategy from *deliberate sharing* of content to the *automatic sharing* of user activities without explicit user consent (Gordhamer 2011). Users experienced this making visible of 'their' data, first by News Feed and then by Ticker, as an invasion of their privacy. Danah boyd (2008a) has argued that privacy is in fact not about no one knowing, but an issue of users being able to *control* and *limit the knowing* as they please (14-8). When understanding privacy as an issue of control, the relation to the paradox of liveness – which reflects power relations between institutions and users - becomes explicit.

The public dissatisfaction with Facebook over privacy is the result of how platform changes affect the way that users relate to platform content and others. I contend that it points to a tension surrounding liveness. This tension arises because users now not only have a *user-relation to liveness*, as is the

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There were several other complaints about Ticker as well. It was, for instance, seen as cluttering the screen, and as such, experienced as a nuisance.

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In a Facebook Live Review on 2 August 2011, for instance, user Wendy Mishkin said to dislike Ticker on the following grounds:

> The new ticker, or "happening now" news feed is a clear case of Facebook violating my privacy. I have set my privacy so that ONLY friends (not "friends of friends" and not "everyone") can see comments I post. I regularly check my profile and remove things from it that I don't want others to see. Today after I removed this from my profile, I saw it in the ticker. I do not like this and wish it would stop, or at least that Facebook would clarify how privacy controls interface with the happening now ticker…

case with traditional broadcast media, but also a *producer-relation to liveness*. On Facebook, rather than merely consuming a stream of content, users are participating in that stream as well. They provide the content and data that drives the platform, and that allows for it to make a claim to 'liveness'.[19]

In contrast to broadcast media where content is simply pushed from a center to a periphery, on platforms like Facebook the ways in which people relate to content is more dynamic. It is formed by the interactions of the user as well as the underlying algorithms. This links to an idea expressed in relation to broadcast flow. As early as 2004, in looking at viewer-television interfaces, Uricchio addressed a narrative of shifting agency: from television programmers to RCD-equipped viewers to metadata programmers and adaptive agent designers (178). With social media platforms this trend has infiltrated media consumption at large, in that entertainment (e.g. YouTube, Netflix, etc.) and retail platforms (e.g. Amazon) steer user consumption. Here algorithms interact with user data to create individualized flows of content.

The insight on the changing user role is pushed further with the help of Uricchio (2011), who points at an important question that algorithmic intervention raises. His analysis of the image application Photosynth illustrates how authorship in such a media configuration has become problematic and multiple. As he explains, in such applications there are the people providing the content, those navigating the content, the authors of the algorithm and finally the algorithm itself, which makes only certain content visible to people (Uricchio 2011: 32). His insight in how the algorithmic reworks subject-object relations, herein drawing attention to what he calls 'algorithmic intermediation', extends to numerous applications, including Facebook. In these instances there is not one authorized position through which one experiences the platform and its content, as would be the case in traditional television where content is pushed from a center to the periphery, in that there are algorithms defining what a given user does and doesn't get to see.

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In chapter one, the Original Livestream also exemplified this 'new' relation to live; however, with an important difference, namely that of algorithmic intervention. I explain the social media era phenomenon of algorithmic intervention in more depth momentarily.

4.4 TENSION SURROUNDING LIVENESS: PRODUCER-RELATION TO LIVENESS

It has been found that with users as the locus of liveness, a tension arises between the 'boring' feeds of 'live' content and the control of these feeds by Facebook, in this case through algorithmic intervention. Ironically, however, users now take issue with liveness not in that promises of de-mediation are not fulfilled, but in that in being its subject, they feel exposed. In this particular relation they demand more control over their content and data.

I would now like to explore several implications of the producer-relation to liveness and connect them to current debates in media studies. Again, like in the previous chapter, in doing so I briefly sidestep the interrogation of liveness in pursuit of answers pertaining the comparison between broadcast media and social media. First off, I offer a reflection on how users can now circulate content which opens discussion as to how broadcast media and social media interact. Secondly, I then move to discuss how algorithmic intervention reworks how content is distributed. Moreover, algorithms shift the process of selection from normative frameworks, familiar to broadcast media, to statistical ensembles, typical of social media. Thirdly, I follow this up with an introduction to the emerging Like economy which concerns a process prior to filtering, namely data collection.

These three points are all intrinsically connected and help to tease out how on a social media platform such as Facebook, symbolic forms are produced and distributed. This allows me to touch on a process related to algorithmic intervention in thinking, namely that of how the data that is processed, is being collected across the Web. Finally, I return to the questions this tension raises for privacy.

Between Sticky and Spreadable Media

As explored throughout this chapter, users now not only have a reception-relation but also producer-relation to liveness. This in that they are contributing the content that essentially drives these platforms. It strikes at the core of the tension surrounding liveness. Although platform design is highly influential as to *how* comments, links, videos and photos are shared - which makes the promise of liveness effectively a promise to delimit users' control - *what* is being shared content-wise is for the better part, notwithstanding some techno-cultural and legal constraints, up to the user. In other words, the relation between media industries and users has, with the emergence of

social media platforms, been redefined.

As a form of audience participation, user sharing has recently attracted academic attention with the publication of *Spreadable Media* (2013). In this book, Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green investigate how media content is spread across cultures through what they see as a mix of top-down forces and bottom-up forces. Rather than looking at reception and production practices of audiences, which have been the focus of research on participatory culture thus far, they investigate online media circulation. They address the limitations of the current "stickiness model", wherein web traffic (i.e. impressions, clicks, retaining attention) defines online success. As they explain,

> the use of 'stickiness' in the business setting refers to centralizing the audience's presence in a particular online location to generate advertising revenue or sales. (Jenkins et al. 2013: 4)

Stickiness, then, exemplifies the broadcast media era and their ensuing business-model. 'Spreadability', on the other hand, concerns how media content travels through social media platforms (rather than how attention is aggregated centrally). Jenkins et al. find the media industry should precisely encourage access to content from multiple sites and allow users to engage with content in their own way. They argue that, "the 'distribution' reach of sticky destinations and the 'circulation' reach of spreadable media should coexist" (*ibid*. 8).

Jenkins et al. provide several examples in which the success of mainstream commercial media production has not been driven by broadcast distribution, but gained traction through their circulation on online networks. Susan Boyle's audition on *Britain's Got Talent* in 2009 is perhaps the most popular of these and illustrates the point they make best. Although the show was only broadcast in the U.K., the clip of her audition was uploaded and shared on platforms like YouTube and Facebook, bringing her to an international stage. The video attracted many more 'eyeballs' online than it had with the original telecast.

Couldry (2012) has reflected on the relation between SNS and mainstream media in a manner that I find connects to the idea of spreadable media:

> Far from SNS focusing an alternative 'centre', the centring processes of SNS and mainstream media may well become increasingly intertwined like the strands of a *double helix* in a world where marketing itself strives increasingly to be like 'conversation' and to 'mobilize consumer agency'. (23-24)

As previously established, both *The Voice* and Facebook have hinted at such a double helix. In the former, the broadcast stimulated conversation around airings, extending its reach on Twitter and other social platforms through viewers who shared their thoughts and ideas with their online followers/friends. Moreover, *The Voice* held official accounts on platforms like YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. Returning to the case at hand, on Facebook users are circulating content from mainstream media (e.g. photos and videos) and are linking to news websites.

Spreadability, as Jenkins et al. explain it, is the outcome of technological innovations and social and cultural practices. However, as rightfully pointed out by Van Dijck and Poell (2013), the notion of spreadability tends to highlight user agency, reducing platform agency to merely amplifying, rather than actively shaping, connections (8). In order to emphasize the mutual shaping of various elements, they therefore put forward the term 'connectivity'.

From Normative Frameworks to Statistical Ensembles

But aside from their user-generated content, these platforms also collect and process user-generated data.[20] This latter is a fairly unconscious form of participation on the part of the user. The tension surrounding liveness brings attention to how the relations between users and between users and the platform are constructed with the help of algorithms processing user generated-data on the back-end of the platform. These new actors penetrate all aspects of social life and their role should be addressed accordingly. As Michele Willson (2013) suggests:

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I borrow the distinction between user-generated content and user-generated data from Andrejevic (2009).

> Our social interactions are already influenced, shaped and constrained or enhanced by technologies and practices that are not always clear, but that have political and social ramifications. As technologies become increasingly enmeshed, interoperable and sophisticated, as personal and social data become thicker and more extensive and as our social activities take place increasingly online, these ramifications will be accentuated. (13)

Thus studying codes and algorithms is going to be even more pertinent in the future (for instance in terms of how people use search engines, browsers, and applications as filtering mechanisms to navigate through online information). However, returning to Uricchio's insight on algorithmic intermediation provides that such a consideration also needs to address the network in which algorithms operate, revealing the roles and relations the various actors assume.

Online users generate both content and data, and media use these to create custom-tailored feeds and recommendations. The strategy behind the use of personalized filters is that the more relevant material a platform such as Facebook offers, the more advertisements it can sell (or, in the case of Amazon, the more products it is likely to sell.) Eli Pariser (2011) fears that personalization, by eliminating chance encounters, will stifle personal growth and development as people get stuck in, what he calls, an endless 'you-loop' where what users have clicked on in the past determines what they get see in the future. He makes note of three specific issues that emerge in relation to this 'filter bubble':

1. It pulls people apart, as they no longer share a frame of reference;
2. It is invisible in the sense that users do not know the assumptions being made about them;
3. And unlike with traditional media where people select what filter to apply, having some knowledge of editors' leaning, with the filter bubble people simply don't select to enter these filters. (Pariser 2011: 9-10)

Within the Facebook Newsfeed and later in contrast hereto, what was identified as the 'live feed', promised less mediation. This was contrasted with the filtering mechanisms working at the back-end of the platform for Most Recent and Top Stories. The 'need' for algorithms comes from their ability to make information manageable to people by following a set of instructions in order to calculate a mathematical function.

As Alexander Halavais points out in relation to search engines, they create a topology of the Web rather than making Web space 'flat' (Halavais in Couldry 2012: 104). Algorithms, in this way, seem to fulfill a similar function to the 'editorial strategy' of mass media in that they help select, juxtapose and promote content in a single stream (Van Dijck and Poell 2013: 6). There are, however, important distinctions, not in the least in terms of how users themselves are involved and can steer the flows of information through their interaction. As Rieder and Sire (2013) correctly point out,

> In the context of 'big data', information is not *managed* through the conceptual and normative frameworks of journalistic practice or political deliberation but in terms of statistical ensembles, network centralities and frequencies of every kind (words, views, clicks, links, etc.). We simply cannot approach a search engine with the same critical toolset as we would use for, say, Fox News. (5)

As such, the sorting on the web resulting from the work of algorithms is very much distinct from the editorial decisions of the mass media. This connects to the third point discussed above in relation to Pariser and debates pertaining to the need for code literacy (Rushkoff 2011).

It must, however, be conceded that users do have *some* control as to what makes it into the News Feed (most obvious in that they can select what friends to add to their network). When hovering over the top right-hand corner of an Object in the News Feed field, a button appears that offers a dropdown menu when clicked. Here users can opt to 'Follow Post', 'Hide…', or 'Report Story or Spam'. Hiding users can change the frequency of the updates one gets from this user (here a selection from three levels is possible) and the type of updates. Furthermore, friends can be added to an 'Acquaintance List' to make sure they hardly show up in the News Feed. But these are all options with fairly limited influence over the composition of the feed, similar to the ability to toggle between Top News and Most Recent. Users may try and game the system, but that would require in-depth knowledge of the underlying platform algorithms.

Moreover, social filtering on these platforms doesn't just hinge on the work of algorithms. Willson (2013) clarifies the two levels at which politics comes into effect:

> There is […] an obvious difference in emphasis that can be made between some of the political implications as *a result or outcome of* the filtering done by SNSs and the politics *of the filtering itself*. The former partly depend upon the uses to which the data collection, for example, is put or the breadth of information that is excluded or included in any filtering process. The latter has to do more with the politics that are encoded and enacted in the technologies of filtering (as a practice and as a form) themselves. (12, original emphasis)

These two levels are important to consider and extends interest not just to how algorithms crunch data, but also the process of data collection itself and the context of use.

The Emerging Like Economy

Looking at the interlocking and back-end politics of Facebook makes visible its attempt to extend capacities for data collection across the Web. The identified tension surrounding liveness, centered on the producer-relation to liveness, connects as such to yet another important matter. Gerlitz and Helmond (2013) have explored what they call the emerging Like economy. This economy has been defined as,

> An infrastructure that allows the exchange of data, traffic, affects, connections and of course money, mediated through Social Plugins and most notably the Like button. (Gerlitz and Helmond 2013: 6)

They explain that whereas in the earlier link economy of the informational web, Google relied on the expert links from webmasters and bloggers, on the social web, users determine value by liking - and therein linking - -- - content on the web. In the Like economy, participation is not always a conscious act: "the underlying data mining processes foster participation by default, tracking users' browsing behaviour, storing Like button impressions or instantly sharing app engagement to the ticker" (Gerlitz and Helmond 2013: 14).

Particular to the economy of the social web is that data collection is connected to the platform's social graph. The connections mapped by the social graph are no longer limited to connections between people. The graph has since evolved to include objects (e.g. pages and photos) in the mapping of relations. Gerlitz and Helmond chart the presence of tracking devices on websites. In so doing they have managed to identify an alternative fabric of the web, based on associated trackers rather than the mutual linking between

websites.[21] From their sample of 1,000 global websites they suggest that about 18% of all websites feature Facebook Social Plugins and/or Facebook Connect (Gerlitz and Helmond 2013: 9). These plugins offer a way for the platform to complete the social graph that it develops on the basis of information generated across the Web. As Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg remarked upon introducing the Open Graph API at the F8 Software Developer conference in 2010:

> These connections aren't just happening on Facebook, they're happening all over the Web, and today with the Open Graph we're bringing all these things together. (In Parr 2013)

Social buttons thus facilitate the alternative web. It supports a decentralized form of data collection whilst enabling data processing and capitalization to be recentralized on the platform.

The duality in the infrastructure that decentralizes data collection across the web and recentralizes its processing on a particular platform, therein creating new centers of capital, alters the ways in which people relate to and participate in media. This is evidence of how in the transition from the broadcast media to the social media era, the way in which the media industries consider their audience has started to change. As Couldry (2012) aptly explains,

> Their focus now is on the targeted search for individual high-value consumers not through specific media packages (programmes or series in which advertising can be placed) but via continuous online tracking which targets them *individually* and *continuously*, as they move around online. (21)

The issues discussed in this chapter exemplify this transition particularly well. As a result of the strong role of user-collected data in the social media era, the conceptual distinction between 'implicit participation' and 'explicit participation' (the distinction between the channeling of user activity through software design and conscious user decisions) proposed by Schäfer (2011: 51) becomes even more important to uphold when considering user agency.

21
They have identified the following central trackers (named in no particular order): Google Analytics, Google Adsense, Google+1, DoubleClick, Twitter Button, Facebook Connect, Facebook Social Plugins, Quantcast, Scorecard Research Beacon, and Omniture.

Altogether, my consideration of the tension surrounding liveness on Facebook prompts a series of interconnected questions about what it means to share:

1. What content does the user share?
2. What data does the platform collect?
3. With whom is this content/data being shared?
4. How is the data being used?

With Ticker in particular, user-generated data *translates* to user-generated content, as user activities thought private are made visible to various publics. The user becomes the locus of liveness, and some have experienced the consequences of this fact as a violation of their privacy. It should, however, be apparent that the problem is not to be reduced to technology alone, for it is equally the product of economic imperatives (the users must be encouraged to interact with the platform), legal ones (as the Terms and Data Use Policy, for instance, illustrate) and cultural forces (i.e. what is found socially acceptable). The norms of sociality are a constant negotiation between the platform and its users (Van Dijck 2012a: 168).

The difference with the user in a producer-relation to liveness in the Original Livestream is the level of control maintained by Facebook. In the space of participation in the former, users have a comparatively larger space of participation, as they can produce and distribute their own channels. Algorithms were not actively shaping their relationship to a potential audience. Moreover, these user channels were not locked into a predefined metatext provided by Livestream - whereas users on Facebook work within a framework of dictated interactions, and are impacted in their experience by the platform's architecture.

CONCLUSIONS

I began this chapter with a general introduction to Facebook's metatext and space of participation. Here I concluded that the platform was being proposed as a space about 'me and my friends'. Then, I zoomed in on the News Feed, tracing remediations of liveness within this feature as produced through Live Feed, Most Recent and Ticker. In doing so, I found that liveness was in fact, as I proposed in the previous chapter, relationally constructed, this time specifically in relation to earlier versions of the News Feed

(and later Top News). The Live Feed and Most Recent tab were supposedly less filtered than their News Feed counterparts and their items were determined by time, rather than the other factors that weighed the relevance of the object. With Ticker, the meaning of live in turn was associated with real-time, unlike its News Feed counterparts. Whilst the Most Recent tab simply replaced the Live Feed, without noticeable alterations in terms of operations, the introduction of Ticker managed to displace it from being understood as a 'live' feed.

Next, after having explored these meanings of liveness, I turned to user responses. This helped me to establish that the relationship between social media and mainstream media, rather than constituting a struggle over attention and legitimacy, is at times mutually beneficial. It has been argued that the metatext, the focal position of the News Feed on the platform and people's reflection of this feature, help to perpetuate Facebook as privileged access point to peoples' social relations, to connect through sharing.

In exploring user responses, I also came to discuss the tension surrounding liveness. This tension concerned the new relationship users had to liveness, their entering into a producer-relation with liveness. This tension elucidated three things. First, that not only did Facebook promote and encode the platform as a space for social relations, this is also how users chose to use it. They primarily share media from their personal lives and by way of given expression to their (chosen) identities. It positions Facebook as something different from a prime destination for news. Traditional media institutions that fulfill this function continue to exist, and interact with these new social environments.

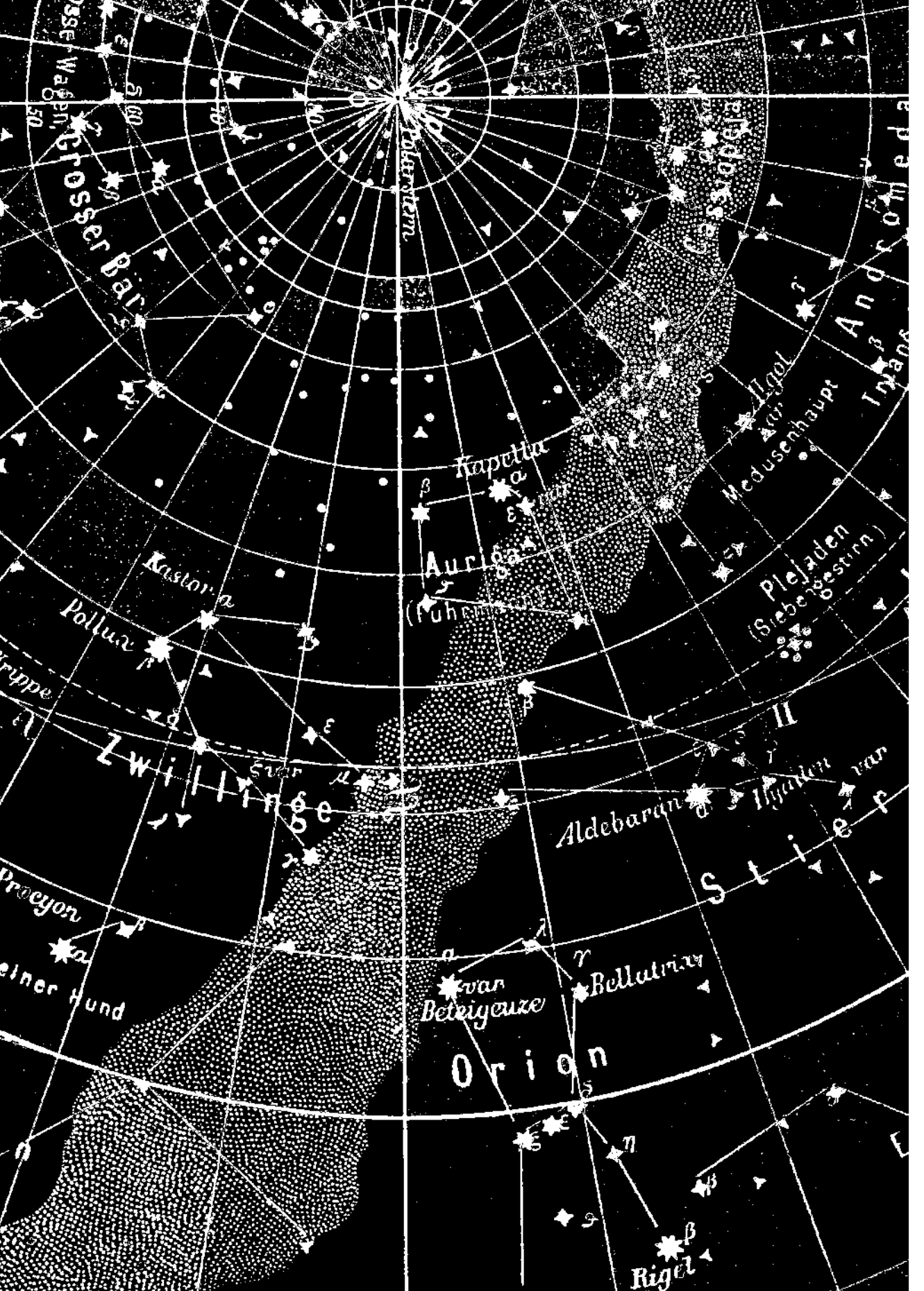
Second of all, it became apparent that Facebook *does* end up performing a general function similar to the traditional media in that it filters how people encounter the world. There is an obvious distinction in that users, rather than paid employees, are creating the content and data that drives the platform. However, whilst the roles of production/consumption may be far from clear-cut, the means for distribution (i.e. technological infrastructure including software and algorithms) remain in the hands of few. Even though users are responsible for almost all of the platform's content (with the notable exception of content created by applications and advertisements) what users are able to share and how they interact with others is impacted by the design of the platform (including the algorithms and protocols).

Because Facebook retains ownership of the technical means of

transmission, it is able to steer how people tell their own story and how they encounter the stories of others. I would propose that these algorithms constitute a *mechanism of control*, in that they play such a large part in structuring the 'flow' on Facebook and, as such, 'controlling' content distribution.

Lastly, the tension surrounding liveness connected to the new Like economy found in this social media age. In contrast to the eyeball economy that typified the broadcast media era, multiple strategies have been developed for monetization in the social media age. Predominantly, they center on the collection and crunching of user data. The discussion on the Like economy clarified how this type of economy focuses on the individual as he/she is tracked continuously online.

Whereas chapter one reflected on the paradox of liveness, chapter two explicitly confronted liveness as construction, then chapter three shifted focus and initiated the exploration into the interaction between broadcast media and social media reflecting specifically on scheduling practices and audience participation by identifying tensions surrounding liveness. This fourth chapter has picked up on the discussion of the interaction between broadcast media and social media and compared the character of these communication forms from the points of view of spreadability, algorithmic filtering and the Like economy. In the final chapter of this dissertation, the conclusion, I want to tie these insights together and reflect on the category 'live' in media studies and recapitulate how broadcast media and social media compare and relate.


Polarstern
Kapella
Auriga
Kastor
Pollux
Zwillinge
Pleiaden
(Siebengestirn)
Aldebaran
Stier
Procyon
Kleiner Hund
Rigel
Orion

Conclusion: Considering Liveness

The research conducted in this book has developed what I have called the *paradox of liveness*. This paradox concerns how media institutions seek to promote themselves as 'live', thus making a promise of de-mediation, whilst needing to control content, and thus mediating, when and how liveness takes shape. In spite of great academic interest in the concept 'live', contributions to its debate have tended to focus on a single dimension of liveness, therein overlooking important others. This can be explained by the fact that most insights on liveness are often merely a byproduct, rather than the primary goal, of the research. The emergence of new forms of liveness in the social media era in particular has most radically surfaced the shortcomings of these perspectives and provoked a revisiting of the concept.

In this dissertation, in wanting to contribute to and develop the understanding of the category 'live', I have proposed to approach liveness as a construction that can be analyzed as a *constellation of liveness* which comprises of the domains metatext, space of participation and user responses. Moreover, I have tried to show that there is in fact a lot at stake with liveness and that therefore earlier academic interest in liveness has not been misplaced. Furthermore, I suggested that there is a dual benefit to analyzing constellations of liveness, which I have attempted to harvest consistently throughout my analyses of the four case studies. The first of these benefits is that it helps develop an understanding of the *conditions* of liveness, and how the category operates in particular media configurations. The second is that, in capturing how liveness is mediated, it also provides insight into the mechanisms through which social relations and cultural production are managed by media platforms.

In the conclusion to this dissertation, I want to consider the implications of the insights on liveness generated in the preceding chapters. More specifically, my aim is to reflect on what and when liveness is, as well as to contemplate its broader significance as a concept in media studies. To do so I relay the paradox of liveness to what Michael Schudson (1987) has called "the ideal of conversation". I start from the assumption that the desire for

liveness stems from an ideal about what face-to-face communication entails. Subsequently, I zoom in on the conditions that bring liveness into effect, returning to the question of *when liveness is*. Next, I discuss the tensions surrounding liveness, the friction between actors from within the different domains of liveness over the meaning and promise of 'live', that I have identified in this research, linking them to current media studies debates. This enables me to then briefly discuss the gradual transformation from a broadcast media era into a social media era. Finally, I address the future of liveness, stressing the importance of engaging with liveness and reflecting on how it helps to further research within the field.

Liveness as an Ideal

The point of departure for my research has been, that at the heart of liveness lies an important paradox. As mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation, the paradox has been well-described, although not identified as a paradox, by John Caldwell in his article on live slippages, where he pointed out the desire and need that station executives have to tame and package live-flow.

I have explored the paradox in more depth in chapter one, where it was foregrounded in the consideration of the transition from the constellation of liveness in effect for the Original Livestream to that of the New Livestream platform. The case helped to explore how, despite its promise of de-mediation, liveness is born out of an institutional context where the formless shape of direct real-time content is 'managed'. This managing of liveness is necessary because media institutions have come to depend on tightly formatted narratives and program units to generate mass audience interest. In the Original Livestream it was evident that the 'amateurism', which characterized the bulk of the user-generated channels, failed to attract viewers. And since the platform was offered to users for free, this created a problem with regard to the company's need to generate revenue. A new Livestream platform was then introduced, which promoted certain production values and targeted a more professional user base. This transition made clear that whilst liveness is a selling point of the media, it is at the same time their Achilles' heel, for they need to structure programming (units).

Subsequently, the exploration of eJamming in chapter two revealed liveness as an *evaluative category*. In the failure of the online music collaboration platform to deliver on promises of liveness, which was revealed in the user

responses, several insights on the working of the concept emerged. These largely revolved around the relations between liveness and, on the one hand, *real-time*, which created the user expectation of online jamming without the experience of latency, and on the other hand, *sociality*, which created the user expectation that they could share their jamming sessions with an audience. With eJamming, the meaning and value of liveness was informed by conceptions from the offline music culture that was invoked in the metatext.

Throughout the book, the axes of real-time and sociality were evidently at the crux of all of the constellations of liveness addressed. The category 'live' could thus be summarized as the institutionalized product of the interaction between real-time connectivity and sociality, manifesting itself in a whole series of different 'configurations' of liveness. What I have yet to explain is what I believe to be the particular appeal of liveness.

I would suggest for the 'magic' of liveness to be understood as symptomatic of what Michael Schudson (1978) has termed the "ideal of conversation" in the study of mass media. In an article Schudson suggested that mass media have often been assessed as an inferior form of communication, implicitly being opposed to an ideal of communication - the so-called "conversation ideal". This ideal is based on what people think face-to-face communication is like, and what they think all communication should be like. He explains the superiority assigned to this particular model as follows:

> Given the cultural assumptions of a democratic society, this contrast [between interpersonal channels of communication and mass media] is necessarily to the disadvantage of mass media. Who would approve of one way over two-way message flow? Or low rather than high possibilities of immediate feedback? (Schudson 1978: 320)

The characteristics that have been associated with the conversation ideal, at least in American culture, is that it is continuous, multichannel, spontaneous, reciprocal and egalitarian. Throughout this book I have stated that the promise of liveness is a promise of de-mediation, and therein, I would now add, the creation of an experience of almost direct/immediate contact. As such, I believe, liveness links to the *characteristics* associated with this conversation ideal. This has been most obvious in my analysis of eJamming, in that ideas of *offline* garage rock practices were promoted - practices that are understood to have all these characteristics.

Whilst broadcast media can 'activate' liveness, appealing to *some*

characteristics of the face-to-face situation such as spontaneity, social media platforms are celebrated for their interactivity, for providing opportunities for people to act as both 'sender' and 'receiver'. In other words, they are even better able than broadcast media to claim characteristics associated with the conversational ideal. This ideal therefore, I would stipulate, also helps to explain the emergence of the phenomenon of social TV, for the complementation with social media (through interactivity) makes broadcast media more able to satisfy the ideal of conversation.

When Liveness Is

By now it should have been demonstrated that the three perspectives to liveness outlined in the introduction of this dissertation were not necessarily 'wrong' about what liveness is. However, they tended to relate to just one of the domains of liveness (i.e. phenomenology to user responses, ontology to space of participation, and rhetoric to metatext), thus limiting the scope of their analysis. Having approached liveness as a construction informed by a metatext, space of participation and user responses has proven a fruitful enterprise. All four case studies tackled in this dissertation have shown how the domains involved in claims of liveness interact within different constellations to establish meaning and value for the 'live'. In each instance, the organization of relations between them differed significantly, as a result of each platform's specific configuration of techno-cultural, economic and legal forces.

The cases have helped establish that the understanding of liveness requires situational context, and with it, knowledge of what the 'live' is being compared to (as liveness is commonly defined in contrast to a non-live counterpart). But also in establishing that the metatext frames how users interpret the liveness of the platform, providing them with a basic understanding of how mediation is being de-mediated and with what advantages (or rather values). It is when the platform fails to deliver on liveness, as seen in the case of eJamming, that user expectations are made most explicit.

An assumption has been t that the term 'live' is only used to describe those media where a 'power play' between different actors is in effect. In other words, liveness seems to only be activated when particular (institutional) interests are being served. Facebook Chat, as explained in chapter four, captures this condition rather well. Although the feature is not discussed as 'live' by Facebook or even its users, as soon as celebrities are invited to chat with a community of fans, the event is heavily promoted as being

'live'. It is only then that value is ascribed to that which is being mediated. However - and this cannot be stressed enough - what they frame as 'live' is, as has been demonstrated throughout this dissertation (think here of the example of tape-delay for instance), not infinitely flexible. The reason is that the platform technologies, and its users, both contribute to the understanding of liveness. The form that liveness takes is part of a constant negotiation between the three domains.

Furthermore, it has been found that the term 'live' can reference different *levels* of mediation. As seen in chapter three, *The Voice* episodes as a whole may be promoted as 'live', whilst specific components of that broadcast are in fact pre-recorded. Viewers don't consequently reject the values that the episodes of the live shows perpetuate through the promise of live. These episodes continue to be presented as 'live', supporting ideas of them being more participatory than the episodes of the blind auditions and battle rounds, without this entailing viewer backlash. In *The Voice* there are thus multiple levels at which liveness can be discussed, as there is a distinction between the 'live shows' and the 'live segments'. As a result, hierarchies of value are even being created within the show.

With regard to the conversation ideal and the existence of multiple reference points for liveness just discussed, I would argue that, unlike what has been implied in some accounts of liveness (Bourdon 2000; Caldwell 2000), it does not exist in a 'pure' form. Liveness is a feat of the media industries built from the three specified domains of liveness. It promises de-mediation in mediation, which reveals the contradiction in terms. And so, liveness breeds a wide range of different shapes and forms of the 'live', but in the end promises that which cannot be realized.

From the Broadcast Media Era to the Social Media Era

Having introduced my take on liveness in chapters one and two, I then used the concept to focus an analysis between broadcast media and social media. This was done through the tensions surrounding liveness found in *The Voice* and Facebook, the cases that I had strategically selected to invite the comparison. Through these case studies I was able to locate the following tensions, which I have linked to their respective contemporary debates:

1. Tensions pertaining the rhythms and temporalities of broadcast television (in *The Voice*) linked to:
    - Series dumping strategy
    - Big Data driven artistic strategy
2. Tensions pertaining audience participation (in *The Voice*) linked to :
    - Audience participation
3. Tensions pertaining producer-relation to liveness (in Facebook) linked to:
    - Between sticky and spreadable media
    - From normative to statistical filtering
    - The emerging Like economy

These tensions helped to make the *mechanisms of control* through which media institutions control relations (people to people and people to institutions). As I will discuss shortly, it revealed a difference in how broadcast media and social media exercise such control. It also allowed for a demystifying of liveness, and for grounding it as a socio-technical construction the media industry seizes for added value, appealing to a desire for it in the audience.

The tensions identified in the chapter on *The Voice* concerned the rhythms and temporalities of broadcast television and the control of on-air content. The first tension arose in *The Voice* between the schedule of the broadcasters, who had selected to tape-delay the live shows for the West Coast, paired with the ability of users to discuss programming on social media created these viewsers encountering spoilers online. I was hereby able to reflect on how in the broadcast media era, broadcasters determined *when* content was consumed and the constructed nature of liveness. But of course this tension is specific to countries with multiple time zones where programs are 'manipulated' to be aired in convenient timeslots (although some big sports events taking place on the other side of the globe tend to be aired 'as live' as well, creating considerable viewer backlash over spoilers). But whether new forms of television like Netflix and Amazon Studios will succeed in displacing the continued push of traditional television for event TV, with strategies such as series dumping and data-drive production development, remains to be seen. As Tim Wu (2013) rightly points out on the topic, in citing acclaimed novelist John Steinbeck: "It's hard to leave any deeply routined life, even if you hate it" (n.p.).

The second tension found in *The Voice* concerned the gradual decline of

audience participation in the program over the course of five seasons. Season one offered far more opportunities for audiences to impact on-screen action than was the case in later seasons. It seemed that the producers were reclaiming the program by diminishing the role of social media in the episodes. They particularly nurtured audience participation when it came to social media as envelopes and extensions and controlling how integrations were channeled into the episodes. This need to structure the programming units connects rather explicitly with what I have called the paradox of liveness.

In the chapter on Facebook, the tension surrounding liveness was centered on a new producer-relation to liveness. With users as the topic around which the promise of de-mediation unfolded, privacy concerns resulted. Also, because users provide the gross of content on such platforms and allow users to circulate content (also that produced by centralized media), this tension connected to discussions of sticky media, characterizing broadcast media, and spreadable media, characterizing social media. The tension furthermore brought forward th the differences between the normative filtering of traditional mass media and the statistical filtering of the algorithms of Facebook. As the algorithms calculates what content is visible in the News Feed to each individual user. The consideration of the algorithms then tied to the questions of what data is crunched and where it comes from. This resulted in a discussion of the emerging Like economy. In this economy, data collection is decentralized, creating connections across the Web, whilst platforms like Facebook then crunch the data allowing them to individually target users. This individual tracking and targeting of users typifies the social media era and contrasts with how the business models that dominated in the broadcast media era worked, where audience segments - flocked around sticky content - were sold to advertisers

The tensions discussed surfaced because contributors from within the different domains of liveness conflict over the meaning and promise of the 'live'. It has been clear that liveness is not just the product of one of the three domains (metatext, space of participation and user responses), but rather of their complex interaction. In each specific instance they weigh in differently on the meaning and value of liveness. This is why in some chapters I have found it necessary to pay more attention to certain domains (and its dimensions) than to others. In this dissertation, they have enabled reflection on the mechanisms of control in both social media and broadcast media in order to consider the questions at stake in the respective era.

Returning to Couldry and the question of symbolic power, these mechanisms reveal something about how media institutions operate. My comparison between *The Voice* and Facebook has suggested that in the social media era, symbolic power is more commonly practiced through the control of *distribution*. With *The Voice,* the producers of the show wanted to control when people watched the show (meaning 'live' rather than delayed) and what transpired on-air. In Facebook, users were primarily responsible for the flow of content, but the platform controlled - with the help of algorithms - how this content was distributed to the audience. It concerned not so much *when* people could see certain content, as with *The Voice*, but *which* content people were exposed to.

The abovementioned shift, I would contend, helps explain why media studies has witnessed a turn towards the interdisciplinary field of software studies, most notably represented by Lev Manovich (see Manovich 2013) in San Diego. It also helps explain the rising interest for Richard Rogers' digital methods initiative in Amsterdam (see Rogers 2013) and 'Big Data' research more generally. In short, there is a growing interest for the collection, cleaning and interpreting/applying of user data. This transition has furthermore prompted a call for code literacy (Rushkoff 2011), as some have proposed that being able to code is a requirement for participation in the digital world. This in that coding helps create awareness as to the limitations of technologies and reveals the agendas of its creators.

The Future of Liveness

Most all research reflecting on liveness as a concept in media studies has positioned liveness as the product of technology, rhetoric, or affect. Approaching liveness as a *construction* has invited critical reflection on the participatory dimensions of media platforms and allowed me to capture some of the conditions under which liveness comes into being.

In this dissertation I have considered how platforms are the product of various forces that interact to shape opportunities for participation. In the process I have found that addressing liveness helps to signal changes in institutional forms and as such generates a couple of important insights on the topic of user participation. The research has been about the struggle of participatory elements in the institutionalized framing of liveness. I have proposed that liveness caters to the ideal of conversation, and yet is something that media institutions want, or even need, to control. This paradox is why

liveness draws attention to the contestation between de-mediation and what I have called the *mechanisms of control*. In the chapters I have addressed the complexities of the negotiation of power by tracing how, as the institutions of media have changed, so have their mechanisms for the control of content.

Liveness, I suggest, is the product of cultural assumptions at the core of a democratic society that assesses mass media through an ideal of conversation. It clarifies why liveness is thought to matter. Media try to capitalize on this desire by promising connections 'en direct', but at the same time they find it necessary to control and regulate these relations. With the sustained struggle to assert the superiority of one medium/type of content over another, and the ideal of conversation still firmly in place, there is good reason to believe that the liveness paradigm in media will persist. As such it should not be dismissed as mere aesthetic or ideology, but rather as a functional red flag that helps locate struggles between the various contributors at work in the domains. As the spaces of participation of the media change over time, research into constellations of liveness will continue to prove productive, serving to critically reflect on the structures of relations, between users-institutions and users-users, productive here of and the power of the media to control media production, distribution and consumption.

Moreover, it has been made evident that communication and media raise important questions about power, access and participation (Couldry 2003: 136). In the wake of the 'Twitter' and 'social media revolutions' of the Middle East, wherein public media widely celebrated social media as tools of empowerment, the more recent exposure of NSA's mass electronic surveillance program PRISM has made evident that such platforms can equally function as tools of repression. This is just one very obvious example of the implications that the exercise of power within the current media landscape, centered on data collection across the Web, has on civil liberties. There are many more of such implications, influencing various aspects of private and social life.

The approach to liveness that I have proposed invites a critical stance towards the politics of media rather than giving in to their promoted neutrality, or rather de-mediation. Tracing how various forces shape participatory practices, creates awareness of the politics involved, and I would provide that this awareness offers opportunities for intervention on a cultural and legal level. And so analyzing these constellation helps to raise important questions and insights on how and at what costs people can engage with others, and

media institutions.

Returning to the category of liveness in specific, whilst it is impossible to predict its future, it is likely that it is here to stay, at least for as long as the ideal of conversation endures and for as long as media institutions desire to claim superiority over their content. In line with the definition of a category by Warren Schmaus, discussed at the beginning of this dissertation, the function of liveness - a function being what he finds binds a category - is to promote the superiority of the relation offered by the platform (or subset hereof) over another by drawing on the special relationship between real-time and sociality. With the emergence of new communication models in the media landscape, new forms of liveness will surface as well, drawing on a range of new interactions between real-time and sociality, and establishing new meanings and values for the 'live'. It will thus remain a dynamic category that is relied on to *evaluate* the quality of communication. Moreover, it will continue to be associated with a struggle with an ideal that cannot be realized. Now that this inherent paradox of liveness has been disclosed, the concept can offer productive ways of reflecting on how these media forms mediate - and therefore, how they exert influence over the relation between people to people and people to institutions.

In the end what I have developed in this dissertation is a methodological argument: a call to critically dissect liveness as a construction. I have demonstrated how doing so can help to avoid reductionist assessment of media (i.e. it is ontologically live, ideologically live, or live in affect). Furthermore, I have shown how deconstructing liveness can offer a rich consideration of how symbolic forms are produced and distributed, disclosing what particular values are bestowed upon this form of social interaction/production.

In my examples, *The Voice* clarified the interest of broadcasters to promote sociality through participation, as a means to stimulate live viewing, and their caution in conceding control of on-air content to viewers. Facebook demonstrated yet another structure. Here, users were relatively free to produce content (and generate data), but had limited influence over to whom this was made (most) visible. These two cases also revealed the continued control of the media over relations to and around symbolic stuff. This is also true for the New Livestream platform. Here codes and conventions for producing channels were introduced and user participation was channeled around the streaming content. In the end the particular relations established sought to promote 'being there' - the idea that viewers were part of the

unfolding event.[1]

And so rather than bemoan the persistence of the category (Caldwell 1995; Marriot 2007), it should be embraced in scholarship for the insights it can offer into media practices - helping to chart and investigate the values they promote through liveness and to surface their mechanisms of control. This is at least true, if the future models for social interaction continue to be institutionalized.

In these final days of 2013 it has become apparent that Facebook's younger audience is trading the platform in to from groups on messenger apps such as WhatsApp (Olson 2013) whilst the photo-sharing app Snapshot has surpassed both Instagram[2] and Facebook in daily photo-sharing activity. Does the success of these apps, which circumvent institutional centers, then mark the end of the line for liveness?[3] If the relatively short history of these new media platforms is any indication for the future, it is highly likely that established media are to acquire and absorb these new forms (it now rumored that Snapshot received an acquisition offer from Facebook), or that their popularity bubble busts (think here of the 3D virtual world Second Life and Chatroulette). This is not to forget that broadcast media have shown resilience, holding ground in part by finding clever ways to integrate new forms of social interaction and using liveness to promote the new relations emergent therefrom.

1
eJamming was the odd one out since users paid to make use of a service that promised liveness (but failed to deliver).

2
Facebook purchased Instagram in April 2013.

3
Couldry (2004) posed this question almost 10 years ago when he considered the ability of people to stay in continuous contact with each other through cellphones.

TV Show

The Voice (seasons 1 to 5). 2011-2013. Executive producers John de Mol, Mark Burnett, Audrey Morrissey, Stijn Bakkers and Lee Metzger. NBC.

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Platforms, Forums and Weblogs

eJamming: http://www.ejamming.com

eJamming Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/eJamming/368668856036

eJamming RADiiO project: http://www.cartmania.org.uk/ejamming/about/

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com

Justin.tv: http://www.justin.tv

Musicplayer: http://forums.musicplayer.com/

Ninbot: http://ninbot.com

Premierguitar: http://www.premierguitar.com

Stickam: http://www.stickam.com

The New Livestream: http://new.livestream.com

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SAMENVATTING

Liveness is een fel bediscussieerd begrip in het mediawetenschappelijke onderzoek. Lange tijd werd 'live' zijn gezien als een belangrijk kenmerk van met name televisie. Met de opkomst van sociale media zijn er echter ook nieuwe vormen van *liveness* te bespeuren. Die nieuwe vormen ondermijnen courante vooronderstellingen over en perspectieven op *liveness*, die niet langer geschikt lijken om het scala aan manifestaties ervan te karakteriseren. Ze nodigen dan ook uit tot een herbeschouwing van het concept *liveness* zelf en tot een reflectie naar aanleiding van de vraag of en hoe de verschillende vormen nog te begrijpen zijn als onderdeel van een coherente categorie (Schmaus 2004). In deze dissertatie differentieer ik niet alleen verder de notie van *liveness*, maar laat ik ook zien *hoe* de categorie 'live' er (nog steeds) toe doet.

Ik beargumenteer dat *liveness* – kort gezegd: de interactie tussen gelijktijdigheid en socialiteit – geconstrueerd wordt in een samenspel van media-instituties, -technologieën en -gebruikers. Dit uit zich in zogenoemde 'constellaties van *liveness*'. Door de constellatie van vier verschillende casussen te analyseren (Livestream, eJamming, *The Voice* en Facebook) onderzoek ik de werking van de categorie *liveness* en leg ik bloot onder welke voorwaarden die tot stand komt. Hierbij maak ik gewag van een paradox rondom *liveness*: waar die categorie belooft mediatie te de-mediëren, zien media-instituties een economische noodzaak om controle uit te oefenen over het mediaproces (zowel in de fase van productie, distributie als consumptie) en gaan ze toch nadrukkelijk mediëren. Middels de paradox kan ik weer een vergelijking maken tussen de controlemechanismen van verschillende media. Tot slot laat mijn casusselectie me ook toe te reflecteren op de manier waarop sociale media 'gevestigde' media (zoals televisie) niet vervangen, maar er juist mee interageren.

In hoofdstuk één analyseer ik twee in de tijd op elkaar volgende constellaties van *liveness* van het *live-streaming*-platform Livestream. Hier onderzoek ik hoe het Mogulus/Livestream-platform in eerste instantie refereerde aan de praktijken en conventies van traditionele televisie, zowel in zijn design als in zijn keuze om gebruikers aan te moedigen om zelf zogeheten *media moguls* te worden. Tijdens de bètatestperiode kreeg het bedrijf achter het platform meer inzicht in gebruikspraktijken en in de inhoudelijke voorkeuren van zijn publiek. In reactie daarop wijzigde het zijn doelstellingen, en werd de

service omgevormd van een platform voor het democratiseren van televisie tot een bestemming voor live *event*-televisie. Om deze doelstelling te dienen werd 'New Livestream' geïntroduceerd, een platform dat provocerend beweerde het 'live' in *live streaming* te herdefiniëren. Hiermee werd een nieuwe constellatie van *liveness* geboren. Bij het reflecteren op de aandrang van het Livestream-platform om zijn kanalen te 'professionaliseren' en aan allerlei institutionele normen te laten voldoen, introduceer ik de paradox omtrent *liveness*, en daarmee ook het principe van machtsuitoefening binnen de media.

Daarna, in hoofdstuk twee, bestudeer ik het online *jamming*-platform eJamming. Hier stel ik me tot doel het geconstrueerde karakter van *liveness* toe te lichten aan de hand van het onvermogen van het platform om te voldoen aan de verwachtingen die het oproept ten opzichte van *liveness*. In dit hoofdstuk poneer ik dat het succes van eJamming ten dele afhangt van het vermogen van de service om gelijktijdigheid tussen de productie, distributie en receptie van audio te faciliteren. Hierbij is de notie *real-time* cruciaal. De casus maakt het dan ook mogelijk inzicht te bieden in hoe de concepten 'live' en *real-time* – onterecht vaak gebruikt als synoniemen – zich tot elkaar verhouden. De casus laat zien hoe een puur technologische definitie van *liveness* faalt, en dat media-instituties, -technologie en -gebruikers *samen* vorm geven aan *liveness*. Daarnaast maakt het hoofdstuk duidelijk dat 'live' werkt als een evaluatieve categorie. In het geval van eJamming, bijvoorbeeld, geven offline *garage-rock*-praktijken mee vorm aan de verwachtingen en ervaringen van gebruikers van het platform.

Nadat ik de relatie tussen *liveness* en machtsuitoefening binnen de media heb verkend in hoofdstuk één, en de constructie van *liveness* heb gedeconstrueerd in hoofdstuk twee, verschuift de aandacht van de dissertatie. Na een introductie tot mijn benaderding van *liveness* ga ik het concept *liveness* zelf inzetten om een vergelijkende analyse te maken van media in, respectievelijk, het televisie- en het socialemediatijdperk.

In hoofdstuk drie onderzoek ik de zangcompetitie *The Voice*, als voorbeeld van *social TV*. Het fenomeen *social TV* wordt doorgaans begrepen als een reactie op de tanende populariteit van traditionele televisie. In dit hoofdstuk onderzoek ik de variatie aan vormen van *liveness* die aanwezig zijn in de grotere *liveness*-constellatie van de *live shows* in de programmareeks. De betekenissen van die verschillende vormen dragen samen bij aan de betekenis en waarde van *liveness* in de *live shows* als geheel. Door deze constructies te

bespreken, ben ik in staat om een aantal condities te identificeren waaronder *liveness* tot stand komt. In dit verband concludeer ik het volgende:

1. 'live' wordt gebruikt als bijvoeglijk naamwoord om de kwaliteiten van een zelfstandig naamwoord te specificeren; het zelfstandig naamwoord en de ruimere context geven mee invulling aan de betekenis van de term 'live';
2. iets wat 'live' is, wordt (impliciet of expliciet) altijd gecontrasteerd met een niet-'live' tegenhanger, en die laatste draagt bij aan de betekenis van 'live';
3. 'live' is een kwalitatieve categorie, die wordt ingezet als onderscheidend middel;
4. 'live' bepaalt waarden door te putten uit een bijzondere relatie tussen *real-time* en socialiteit (zowel als het gaat om de verhouding tussen mensen onderling als die tussen een persoon en een gebeurtenis of show).

Daarnaast nodigt deze casus ook uit om de steeds hechtere relatie tussen televisie en sociale media verder te exploreren. In de *liveness*-constellatie rondom *The Voice* komt in dit verband een spanning tot uiting die zijn oorsprong vindt in de ritmes en temporaliteiten van televisie. Er bestaat namelijk een frictie tussen de programmaschema's van de omroepen en het toenemende handelingsvermogen van gebruikers met behulp van nieuwe technologieën. Zo ontstaat rondom het gebruik van Twitter bijvoorbeeld een conflict tussen kijkers van de Amerikaanse oost- en westkust, omdat de omroep de programma's, ondanks een vertraging van drie uur in de uitzending, ook aan de westkust presenteert als 'live' – hoewel de uitslagen van de competitie op dat moment al via tweets zijn verspreid. Deze spanning bespreek ik in relatie tot nieuwe televisiepraktijken zoals *series dumping* en *big-data*-productiestrategieën, die op hun beurt weer een vergelijking tussen televisie en sociale media mogelijk maken.

Een andere spanning presenteert zich in het verloop van *The Voice* over vijf seizoenen heen. In de loop van die vijf seizoenen nam de participatie van gebruikers in het programma beduidend af. In hoofdstuk drie beargumenteer ik ook dat de producenten door het aanpassen en tezelfdertijd inperken van de rol van sociale media in het programma uiting geven aan een verlangen om de controle te behouden over wat er op het scherm gebeurt.

Tot slot focus ik in hoofdstuk vier op de *social-networking*-site Facebook. Ik onderzoek de News Feed, en in het bijzonder de Live-Feed-sectie, die in de loop der tijd verschillende incarnaties heeft gekend. Hier laat ik zien hoe de constructie van *liveness* voornamelijk draait om de mate van algoritmische selectie die de gebruiker ervaart in zijn/haar News Feed. Ook komt er een spanning rond *liveness* boven water die betrekking heeft op het feit dat gebruikers nu een producentrelatie hebben tot *liveness*. Deze spanning houdt verband met het feit dat gebruikers op Facebook zich bekommeren om hun privacy en bezig zijn met de vraag hoe hun data en content worden gedeeld met anderen. Deze spanning leidt op zijn beurt weer tot een reeks van gerelateerde reflecties. De eerste hiervan betreft de manier waarop gebruikers nu zelf in staat zijn om inhoud te verspreiden middels socialemediaplatformen. De tweede gaat over het feit dat hoewel het de gebruikers zijn die content online plaatsen, de News Feed de activiteiten van vrienden sorteert en filtert door middel van algoritmen. Ten derde heb ik het over de opkomende *like economy*, die put uit gebruikersdata die online verzameld worden. Samen dragen deze reflecties bij tot de vergelijking tussen het televisietijdperk en het socialemediatijdperk, die gekarakteriseerd wordt door een veranderde relatie tussen instituties, *content* en gebruikers.

Het in kaart brengen van de *liveness*-constellaties van *The Voice* en Facebook maakt het niet alleen mogelijk om een vergelijking te maken tussen de controlemechanismen die ten grondslag liggen aan het televisiemodel en het socialemediamodel, en dus te begrijpen hoe de productie en distributie van symbolische vormen werkt. Tegelijkertijd dragen hoofdstukken drie en vier ook bij aan de verdere uitdieping van het concept *liveness*, omdat ze bevragen onder welke omstandigheden *liveness* tot stand komt.

In de conclusie breng ik dan de analyses van de verschillende casussen samen. In het bijzonder bespreek ik hier hoe *liveness* uiting geeft aan een communicatie-ideaal – een ideaal dat logischerwijs nooit verwezenlijkt kan worden. Het is duidelijk dat zowel producenten als publiek het live karakter van bepaalde mediavormen waarderen. Zo lang dit onderliggende ideaal blijft voortbestaan, zullen er dus ook nieuwe vormen van *liveness* tot stand blijven komen. Daarnaast heroverweeg ik de condities waaronder *liveness* tot stand komt en keer ik terug naar de reeds genoemde spanningen omtrent *liveness*, om zo tot de vergelijking tussen televisie en sociale media te synthetiseren. Hier zoom ik in op de nieuwe relaties tussen instituties, content en gebruikers en de steeds belangrijker rol die algoritmen spelen in het vormgeven aan

deze relaties – een ontwikkeling die op zijn beurt de toenemende interesse voor *software studies* en *digital methods* binnen de mediawetenschap verklaart. Tot slot bespreek ik hoe het voorstel om constellaties van *liveness* te analyseren, onderdeel is van een in wezen methodologisch argument. *Liveness* is, dankzij de in de dissertatie uitgewerkte paradox, een handige 'ingang' tot het onderzoeken van de controlemechanismen van media – die uit het verleden, in het heden *en* in de toekomst.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Karin van Es was born on September 2, 1985 in Tunis (TN). After obtaining the International Baccalaureate Diploma from the Alberdingk Thijm College in Hilversum (NL), Karin studied for the BA in Communication and Information Science at Utrecht University (NL), spending a semester also at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (US). She followed up with, among others, an MA in New Media & Digital Culture and an RMA in Media Studies, both at Utrecht (the latter with a semester at the University of California – San Diego, US). During her MA in New Media she did a six-month internship in workshop organization and communication at the *Mediamatic* Foundation in Amsterdam (NL). Alongside her studies, she also acted as a teaching assistant to a range of television and new media related courses.

After her graduation she was hired as a junior lecturer-researcher at Utrecht University (NL) where she wrote her dissertation on liveness, combining her research interests in television and new media studies. In 2014 she joined the Utrecht Data School as research developer.

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