Is there anybody out there?
Social Media as a new social fetish

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...an empirically based theoretical reflection on the participative subject
1. Context
2. Research Questions
3. Theoretical Reflections
4. Methodological Design
5. Results
6. Conclusions
1. Context

- democracy
- participation
- empowerment
- well-being
- sociability
- social capital
2. Research Question

- How do users deal with Social Media?
  - Do they become more (inter)active Web-users?
  - Or might they even become interpassive users?
3. Theoretical context

- Agency of Social Media-user as a key concept in hypermodern world
- “Social Entertainment Age” (globalwebindex 2011)
- “We are the Network – not the Creator” (globalwebindex 2011)
3. Theoretical Context

Interactivity

*An alternating process with reciprocal relationships*

- Key dimension of Social Media
3. Theoretical Context

**Interactivity**

*An alternating process with reciprocal relationships*

- Key dimension of Social Media

**Interpassivity**

*The consensual transfer of activity or emotion onto another being or object, who consequently ‘acts’ in one’s place.*

- A new dimension of Social Media?
3. Example for Interpassivity

Tibetian Prayer Wheel
4. Methodological Design

Approach:

- **Qualitative**
  
  ✓ Sample: 6 focus groups (total of 41 participants)

- **Grounded Theory-based**
  
  ✓ Extraction of code-trees and categories following the paradigmatic scheme proposed by Strauss and Corbin
5. Results

pragmatic driven use of SM

HOMO OECONOMICUS

participative and collaborative use of SM

HOMO SOCIALIS

HOMO INDIVIDUALIS

individualistic and egocentric use of SM

HOMO GAUDENS

impulsive driven use of SM
5. Results

HOMO OECONOMICUS

Examples

- RSS-feed as fetish
- Practice of job-seeking
5. Results

HOMO GAUDENS

Example

- Taking, sharing, consuming and memorizing of photographs
5. Results

HOMO INDIVIDUALIS

Examples

- Gossiping
- “Trawom” – travelling without moving
5. Results

HOMO SOCIALIS

Examples

- Retweeting the ‘Spanish revolution’
6. Conclusions

- The interpassive user

✓ Use of Social Media as a commodity: Users depose their belief onto Other(s). Pressing the ‘I like’ button makes them feel like a believer or activist.

✓ Being (inter)passive through Other(s): Enjoying (or suffering) the ‘entertainment’ of Other(s) through pure consumption, delegating their own enjoyment.
6. Conclusions

- Paradox of the so-called attention industry:
  - Living in the most (inter)connected, social and interactive era ever known to man.
  - Most of this attention is only experienced interpassively, creating fetishes, fake realities and the illusion of connectedness and attention.
THANK YOU!

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