This is the original, somewhat rough version of the dialogue. The 'official' German version (translated by Stefan Heidenreich) was published on March 22, 2018 by Carta.info here.

Stefan Heidenreich: Why is the Cambridge Analytica affair coming back ? The events of the past months look like a concerted effort to push Facebook out of the politics business. Not bad, per se. So, what's at stake?

Geert Lovink: It's indeed about the future of politics and the shift in marketing tactics, employed by the political class, to do micro-targetting of critical voters that matter to win a seat. As the Channel 4 videos show, the work of these consultancy firms go es in two directions: setting the agenda, producing adds and videos, including blackmailing of adversaries, and 'canvassing in the age of socialmedia'. Cambridge Analytica offered both services but they are notnecessarily related. Regardless of the outcome of the current efforts to take Facebook into account, both tactics are here to stay. Thedigital age is one of infinite manipulation. Localization and personalization are core features, not a bug.

SH: Old fashioned, broadcast oriented strategies like framing are being replaced by new, individualized and fragmented practices. As much depends on participation, affects and hysteria play a much bigger role, as they trigger user reaction. Cambridge analytica just looks like the tip of the iceberg. of a common new practice.

PS: The Channel 4 videos show criminals at their everyday work, its a good backdrop to the post-Brexit blues, between the fashionista whistleblower and the snake-oil shadyness of an upper-class boy named Nix. This type of reality soap is a perfect anti-dote against pseudo-official cold war mongering of the new conservatives, blaming the ruskies. Meanwhile, what interests me here, since this article about micro-targetting by two Swiss journalists back in 2016, is the aspect of multi-vectorial subjectivity formation. It exploits what is often called an intensified narcissism of the online subjects and goes beyond the 5 vectors of the OCEAN model. more like the end game fight in Bruce Lee 'Year of the Dragon'. Fragmentation, fractalisation and atomisation are a substantial part of a 'Facebook devolution'. On the one hand one is reaffirmed in the echo chambers by homophilia of similar opinions, on the other hand one is weakened to make it easier to be "nudged" by various advertisements.

SH: What do we have to expect? More AI, post facebook, different platforms?

GL: What we already see happening is more national regulation. The idea of social media as borderless global platforms is gone. Social media platforms are seen as key national hubs, strategic traffic intersections. Zuckerberg already announced that he wants to reduce the role of the news feed and seperate 'news' from 'community'. The deliberate mix of the two was, of course, what advertisers, political organizations and media were most interested in. They will have to be on the look-out for new business models. The vast majority of users may still be clueless what's happening but the political class and the media experts are finally catching up, and Facebook the company cannot ignore these two groups.

PS: Regulatory forces may be national, or regional, but the ideology of Facebook is still global. Zuckerberg has now not only to report to the US Senate, but is invited to speak to UK and EU officials. The problem is here that the model of regulation is not going to the heart of the value extraction of Facebook, it tries to fix privacy issues, or fake news issues, but not the lack of democracy on that platform. The EU is approaching the political problem from the side of consumer protection, "to intervene in the interests of spreading more fairly the benefits of digitization." But they re-actively focus on data protection. I think one needs to proactively speak about changes in the back end (API) and feature sets and front-end design elements to tackle the lack of transparency and filter bubbles, probably risking to reduce the addictive effects of screen time.

GL: Facebook as we know it is beyond repair. On the long run, a mass exodus and a fragmentation of publics seems to be inevitable. Add to this the growing aversion of the young generation who consider FB the control platform of parents and other old farts. For politicians, this may not be their first concern but that's another issue for the marketeers that these days depend on social media data. Half of the advertisement budget worldwide is spent through Google and Facebook. That's a vast sum of money. As a result, social media marketing has established itself as a new. Our applied science school here in Amsterdam (HvA) delivers thousands of them onto the labor market.

SH: What will happen on the long run? Will we witness an exodus? And what is next on the short run?

PS: The Facebook exodus can be used as a scenario to change Facebook (or Google), the erosion of trust, the lack of shareholder value on the side of the users. if its not getting fixed this time, it has to be done with the platform

which will replace it. An non-transparent fully privatized public sphere is too much of a risk for the market democracies of today. with the influence of India and China, there will be the question how design changes are democratized or at least adapted to the need of different cultures and political systems. Transparency of the data models, full back-end access for researchers excluding commercial use. especially important to ethically evaluate AI and algorithms. I rather see a Facebook science revolution first. It is useful social data if more scientists could use it for good.

GL: Little over a year ago, a small group in which I took part, wrote the Data Prevention Manifesto. Rather than protecting existing data through privacy legislation or the use of cryptography, the group proposed to develop design rule that prevent data production from its inception. I would like to apply that to Pit's proposal for the APIs that produce 'good data'. What we should develop is culture in which data can be ignored and overcome. We all know that computers store everything. That's the nature of these devices. However, we activate and collect these data, or ignore them. Data is not information is not evidence is not truth. For me, data is poly-perverse ur-material, and precisely not oil. It is discourse, ideology that brings data into existence. Words such as 'friend' and 'like' produce data inside the Facebook universe. The social is a computational category these days. How can we overcome this quantified life? I know this is a Nietzschean rhetoric but still, the question is out there, on the table.

SH: The Facebook exodus has already started. it's not losing users, t here is a lack of activity. I don't see Facebook being replaced by a similar platform. Rather dissolve into a variety of new social networks. I'd like Geert to explain what the difference is between networks and social media. And how to apply it here. In the short run, I'd read the Facebook reshaping of their news feed and the Cambridge Analytica affair as a lost battle against the 'old' media. Facebook has to retreat from the political field, or face an anti monopoly action. Old media will not fix it, but fall into an abyss of fragmented political realities. These days, no one talks about community anymore (or of networks, for that matter). Ever since 'social networks' turned into 'social media' the a-priori is the user-profile centric model in which the individual customer is the central category. The original promise was the networks themselves. Once marketing and advertisement took over, and infrastructure and ownership were centralized, groups were no longer an interesting category.

PS: Despite of a new data puritanism, big data is here to stay, and it will continue to increase in volume and complexity. The problem with it is the unequal access to the data and the lack of transparency. users need to gain more control of their own data. it is not the algorithms but the data structures which need to become smarter, especially the conditions of sharing and reselling it. along these lines i would advocate to understand the chances of the atomized self in rebuilding it in new ways, the identity politics of the Hillary Clinton campaign were so unsuccessful not just because of these micro-targetting campaigns, but their insufficiency in terms of representing the fine grained molecularity of the fragmented selves of the users today. Which are most probably not accepting to be subjugated into predefined target groups and indentitarian constructions. it is something visible in music for years already which escape the genres of the 20th century pop culture. Optimistically, the roll out of fibre-optics to the last mile, will make end to end pe e r-to-peer infrastructures possible which also include a re-valorization of the countryside. the rights of the userhave to be even strengthened inspection, data flow control and surveillance techniques.

GL: These days, no one talks about community anymore. Ever since ‘social networks’ turned into ‘social media’ the a-priori is the user profile-centric model in which the individual customer is the central category. In the early days the internet was network-focused, it was ‘network of networks’. Once marketing and advertisement took over, and infrastructure and ownership were centralized, groups were no longer an interesting category.In the Cambridge Analytica drama users are individual voters, consumers that can be targeted. What would have happened if Facebook and the other groups would have focused on users with collective forums and collaborative tools? Can networks become cool again? Not even Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the World Wide Web, is certain that the Facebook ghost can be put backin the bottle again. The internet is broken–that’s something we already know since the days of Snowden, back in 2013. But is it also beyond repair?