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Geert Lovink, On the Social Media Ideology

Social networking is much more than just a dominant discourse. We need to go beyond text and images and include its software, interfaces, and networks that depend on a technical infrastructure consisting of offices and their consultants and cleaners, cables and data centers, working in close concert with the movements and habits of the connected billions. Academic internet studies circles have shifted their attention from utopian promises, impulses, and critiques to “mapping” the network’s impact. From digital humanities to data science we see a shift in network-oriented inquiry from Whether and Why, What and Who, to (merely) How. From a sociality of causes to a sociality of net effects. A new generation of humanistic researchers is lured into the “big data” trap, and kept busy capturing user behavior whilst producing seductive eye candy for an image-hungry audience (and vice versa).