(This essay draft was written in late 2021. Due to academic publishing blues, the Bernard Stiegler memorial anthology for which this contribution was written is now supposedly coming out in late 2023 with Bloomsbury. HH & GL)

In this tribute to Bernard Stiegler, we highlight an obscure yet important episode in his work: Stiegler's contribution to the debate on the future of social media. This theoretical and technical work was done at the Institut de la Recherche et l'Innovation, the World Wide Web Consortium and the Unlike Us network in the period 2011-2014. As demonstrated by tracing Facebook's lineage to a reading of the concept of mimesis from Girard by Thiel, already then the toxic influence of Facebook on the mental condition of young users was known. In contrast, Stiegler's work quickly focused on alternative architectures and the development of new concepts: Another social network is possible.

'Even building a castle in the air requires a good architect.'

Karel Jonckheere

There are always more beginnings, further back in time, parallel links, connections, tips, rumours, and readings. As the eulogies for Bernard Stiegler commence, we must take care to not let his magisterial philosophical opus overshadow both the overtly technical and political aspects of his legacy; a life dedicated to the philosophy of technology that ran parallel to the invention, introduction, and eventual domination of planetary life by the internet. One connection that is all too easy to overlook is Stiegler's engagement with what is at stake in the development of digital social networks. In contrast to most other intellectuals, Stiegler engaged these networks both on the plane of philosophy and that of running code. This question of social networks has become evermore pressing as Google, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter and other platforms collectively known as 'social media' rapaciously enveloped the totality of our collective existence. At the present moment, Facebook has already absorbed nearly a third of sentient life as *friends*. In 2010 when Facebook was still a new phenomenon, Stiegler presciently asked:

But what does this term mean here, 'friends'? To what type of

relationship does it refer, and how do digital relational technologies implemented by social networks affect the relation known as ‘friendship’?[1]

Parallel to Stiegler’s work, in order to grasp what might be called the originary thinking of social networks, another origin story should be unconcealed: the birth of the global digital social network itself as a gesture of friendship in resistance to the shock of neoliberal capitalism. At the dawn of the Internet in 1994, from the most unexpected of locations – the mountains of the Mexican Southeast – the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN), otherwise known as the Zapatistas, seized the city of San Cristóbal de las Casas with the slogan ‘Another world is possible!’ protesting against the ravages of neoliberal capitalism. For decades, the Zapatistas, usually via Subcomandante Marcos, sent out communique after communique to the world, poetically asking for solidarity. Surprisingly, the world responded, forming the alterglobalisation movement that called itself a ‘network of networks’ – a phrase also used at the time to describe the internet.[2]

This loose network collectively decided to descend from the digital realm into the all-too-concrete streets in 1999 to organise massive protests against the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle in the United States. Yet the most important moment ended up not being the press centre itself, but the creation of the Indymedia open-publishing web platform, which allowed any person to upload text and photos to the website without permission. This hybrid concept of ‘tactical media’ allows information to be instantly displayed to the whole world and soon led to a network of interlinked proto-blog websites synthesised as the *indymedia.org* website. Strangely enough, the anti-capitalist Indymedia could claim to have invented the ‘status update’ in response to the American corporate media not covering any protests against global capitalism. There was an underappreciated feature of this original form of social media that would be key to Stiegler’s analysis of new forms of social networks: the status updates were not united into a stream by virtue of their creation by the same individual, but they were rather created as a collective timeline formed for the all-too-practical shared task of supporting protests: collective techno-individuation by design. Nonetheless, despite the origins of social media as a way of bypassing

censorship, the anti-authoritarian principle of open publishing was soon to be inverted, turning social media into a technology of mind control.

The profit-making potential of users forming digital social networks did not go unnoticed by Silicon Valley venture capital, and for good reason: what Pierre Musso calls *network ideology* comprises the unarticulated theoretical underpinnings of Silicon Valley. Under this ideological perspective, top-down corporate 'networks' are rolled out without a purpose except to accelerate their own growth. Musso argues that network ideology is not new, but instead, the concept of the network is merely a renewal of a certain positivist philosophy of Saint-Simon from the dawn of the industrial era, when the followers of Saint-Simon imagined that a vast network would unite all of humanity, abolishing archaic national and religious boundaries via the proliferation of new industrial interconnections in the forms of canals and railways.[3] One can easily see the similarity with Facebook's mission 'to connect the world'. Two years before Indymedia began, a social networking site called SixDegrees – named after the long-standing and empirically persistent theory that each individual in the world is connected to everyone else by, at most, six degrees of separation – created a new kind of website where individuals created personal profiles and then could explicitly list their friends and send them messages. Like Indymedia, SixDegrees allowed status updates, but crucially, these status updates were bound to the individual rather than a collective group.

As the anti-globalisation protest movements around Indymedia were crushed by a global wave of 'anti-terrorism' hysteria after September 11th 2001, Mark Zuckerberg launched Facebook in 2003. While SixDegrees and other simultaneous efforts like Friendster failed to achieve the exponential growth beloved by Silicon Valley venture capital, Facebook immediately began going viral. Although Zuckerberg has been thought of as a maladjusted misfit, it should not be forgotten that he was studying a dual degree in computer science and psychology. Facebook itself was based on the ultimately shrewd psychological premise that had hitherto been unexploited: everyone wants to be like – and friends with – the up-and-coming American ruling class of Harvard.

Facebook went viral first in Harvard and started spreading from one elite institution to the next. To support such hypergrowth, Facebook required investment funding to scale. One investor that made millions earlier with PayPal, Peter Thiel, saw in Facebook a capitalist enterprise whose engine of representation and then imitation – *mimesis* – was theorised by his own philosophical master René Girard as the hidden truth of civilisation. So it should come as no surprise that Thiel wrote the first check to Mark Zuckerberg. Thiel's reasons for doing so were atypical for investors: according to Thiel, there is an existential crisis at the heart of the West and a new techno-social *katechon* would be needed to stave off a coming apocalypse.

In contrast to the vacuous idealism of the neo-positivists of Silicon Valley, Thiel had written at least one serious philosophical treatise, 'The Straussian Moment,' in which he claimed that the liberal individualism of the *homo economicus* had reached its endpoint and would be destroyed by the more explicitly political threats from opposing civilisations, namely Islam and China.[4] Although many have claimed Thiel to be a neoreactionary, he ended his thesis on the disturbing vision that Strauss was not sufficient, citing Strauss against Strauss: 'The Straussian project sets out to preserve the *katechon*, but instead becomes a "hastener against its will". No new Alexander is in sight to cut the Gordian knot of our age.'[5] Contra the title of his own essay, for Thiel the Straussian moment is already over. Thiel turns to Girard, as 'the new science of humanity must drive the idea of imitation, *mimesis*, much further than it has in the past', where 'it is not overly reductionist to describe human brains as gigantic imitation machines'.[6] According to Girard, there is a core problem insofar as any human 'desires being, something he himself lacks and which some other person [the 'model'] seems to possess. The subject thus looks to that other person to inform him of what he should desire in order to acquire that being.'[7]

Facebook accelerates this elementary process to the speed of light, funnelling its power through a platform that Thiel calls a 'doubly mimetic' loop, where a person that broadcasts what Stiegler would call digital tertiary retentions – likes, posts, photos, video – in turn creates cascades of imitation, and so attracts ever more imitating subjects. In complexity theory this is called 'the rich get richer' without irony, and this cycle of *mimesis* unbound on a planetary scale

serves to formalise the relationships of power, re-inscribing all social relationships in a template created by Silicon Valley engineers. Via first seeding this global experiment in *mimesis* within the Western ruling class at Harvard and Oxford, slowly but surely Facebook absorbs every social class into its endless hall of digital mirrors, inevitably spawning an attempt at the total digitisation of all human relations. With over a quarter of all sentient life being part of this empire of networks, the networked *katechon* had arrived to reinvigorate Saint-Simon for the 21st century, harnessing the all-too-human desire for status.

The spread of digital social networks to countries on the periphery of the West seemed to validate simultaneously both the anti-capitalist hypothesis of Indymedia and the capitalist extremism of Thiel, as the unrestricted and uncensored spread of news and connection led to widespread leaderless insurrection in 2011 against the hopelessly corrupt pre-digital regimes of Ben Ali of Tunisia and Mubarak in Egypt during the Arab Spring by a population that seemed – at least to the West – to want to copy the forms of life of Western democracies. Facebook seemed to be the harbinger in digital form of a new networked society, a hope on the part of the newly emerging digital natives that a Western-style democracy that they desired, could be reborn in their own countries. However, things got out of hand. Western democracy did not fulfil the needs for human dignity expressed during the Arab Spring, and a wave of state and Islamic counter-revolution led these social movements to be crushed or descend into civil war. In an echo of the anarchist roots of Indymedia, these Facebook-driven protests spread even into the heart of the West with the M15-Indignados movement in Spain and Occupy Wall Street in the United States. Bernard Stiegler was concerned over the 2011 movements of Arab Spring and Occupy, not due to their lack of success, but rather their lack of theoretical development. In his Paris office, in the Institut de la Recherche et l'Innovation (IRI) opposite Centre Pompidou, Stiegler asked 'What are they reading? Have they written anything?' Although Facebook seemed to fuel these revolutionary social movements, no new Marx articulated a systematic vision of a post-capitalist or radically democratic society, and or even Subcomandante Marcos of the Zapatistas was limited to poetic communiques. Instead, there was only a stream of status updates, images, tweets, and livestreams of endless meetings and

protests. For a reason that seemed to elude the participants of these social movements, a genuine new form of society seemed stillborn.

Bernard Stiegler himself refused to use Facebook, or let anyone he organised with use Facebook due to its toxic effects. Yet contra Girard, Stiegler recognised that the young were attracted to social media not just from blind imitation, but in search for something far deeper. As put by Stiegler,

Yes, it is the young adults who develop the social networks, and who find in these technologies a way to reconstitute what they miss so dearly: namely, a *philia*. But a young adult needs the gaze of another young adult, of a peer – and that is exactly what these networks provide.[8]

Where Thiel posits the force of blind imitation as the driver of social media addiction, Stiegler rebukes by positing the need for the fundamental feeling of love. Yet this kind of love – *philia* – goes beyond the more obvious digital reproduction of friendship (*philotēs)* and the reputation that comes from attention (*kleos)* in terms of 'likes' on Facebook, and is rather the well-spring of solidarity between beings. As these social movements hit a dead-end in their own ability to transmute their desire for *philia* into the revolutionary thought

needed for true political change by the end of 2011, Stiegler began to ponder a disturbing possibility: what if digital social networking platforms like Facebook were themselves causing this inability to think? Are live websites and apps with their never-ending updates preventing us from thinking as such? It is into this void that Bernard Stiegler voyaged in order to restore a new form of politics for the hyper-industrial era.

The core of Stiegler's philosophical approach to social networking can be found in *Technics and Time, 2: Disorientation*,[9] another one of many beginnings. While most scholars return to the first volume of *Technics and Time*, for emerging critics of social media like us, the inspiration was the second volume's chapters on 'The Genesis of Disorientation' and 'The Industrialization of Memory'. Let us recall the state of internet critique in the early 2010s, where there were surprisingly few voices coming from inside European academia, as European academia was – and to a large extent, still is – caught up in a form of "offline romanticism" that preached rejection of technics. Instead, agenda-setting came from outside, mostly from the United States, not Europe. The main references at this time were Nicholas Carr's *What the Internet is Doing to the Brain* (2010), *#digitalvertigo* by Andrew Keen (2012), Jaron Lanier's Y*ou are not a Gadget* (2011) and Sherry Turkle's *Alone Together* (2011). Carr shared an important reference with Stiegler, namely Maryanne Wolf's history of the reading brain, *Proust and the Squid* (2008). While these American thinkers themselves failed to generate a new philosophical and political framework, here we can see a counterforce in the making, albeit slowly. Systematising the latent concepts in Wolf and Carr, Stiegler came to the forefront, where a special role for Derrida's pharmacology was put on the table to prevent easy and lazy solutions. The task was, and still is, to work through the digital and prevent any form of European offline romanticism that would merely preach 'digital detox' as a weekend therapy. The growing consensus in the circles around Stiegler was that a 21st century philosophy of technology had to be deeply ambitious if it wanted to create new digital models for the development of genuine thought.

From early on, it was clear that a call for a collective exodus was not going to be enough; we needed to combine a radical critique of social media with the development – and roll out – of alternatives, based on

entirely different values such as collaboration, community, discussion and organisation instead of the collection of ‘friends’ and ‘likes’. This alternative to Facebook would not be a platform to update disindividuated ‘users’ but networks for goal-driven groups and projects, hearkening back to tactical media and Indymedia. In contrast to the ‘German’ obsession with privacy, the idea was to develop an epistemology that would facilitate the move from ‘profile’ to ‘project’ as a core organising principle. Preaching a healthy offline life wasn’t enough. From early on, it was clear that we would fail to unleash critiques and alternatives unless we would get a better understanding of the underlying habits such as information addiction, short-circuited attention, distraction, which were clearly leading to a collapse of the retentions that form cultural memory.

Social networks are not just there ‘to keep up with the Joneses’ and lurk over the private lives of your former schoolmates and ex-partners. Socials, as they are called in some countries, still have the larger potential, promise, buried deep inside them, namely to organise social life. The way to do this was to emphasise the role of digital tools in the process of self-organisation. There is more to networks than status updates, mainstream news and memes. Networks have the potential to take over crucial functions that until recently have been centralised – and controlled – by social institutions such as the village, church, and party. However, the ad-driven extractive design of current social networks, shows that the latter are not interested in self-organisation. The only thing these are interested in is ‘engagement’ (with ad-related content). They already own and administrate your network. This is where the ‘organised networks’ concept stepped in, networks that fight the exploitation of ‘weak links’ and ‘likes’ by ‘friends’ in favour of sustainable, small units, based on ‘strong links’ as developed by Geert Lovink and Ned Rossiter in 2005 and brought together in *Organization after Social Media.*[10] Such strong links generated not merely one-off event-based movements, but long-term commitments to networked communities.

In parallel, the *Unlike Us* network was initiated by our Institute of Network Cultures with Korinna Patelis. The *Unlike Us* network published an ambitious research program in July 2011 with the aim to formulate a new critique of the political economy of social media, in line with Stiegler’s thinking. The idea was to go beyond the ‘Facebook

revolution' and so critique the – at the time – hardly known data economy of advertisements, as well as to formulate alternatives to Facebook. This network of artists, designers, coders and researchers set out to deconstruct the rapid growth of the (emotional) dependency of the Silicon Valley social networks that quickly invaded the 'app space' of the newly arrived smartphones. As both the digital network and the social itself were hijacked, soon even our dearest friends had no awareness of any other way how to communicate with others except via Facebook. In response to the dangerous closing down of the networked mind and the sale of private data for political and advertising purposes, some of us signed up for the first protest-departure of 50,000 Facebook users in 2010. The premise at the time was that the hundreds of millions of Facebook users could potentially still move on to a different and less toxic platform, as flocks of users had done before, moving from homepages to blogs to Orkut and MySpace. In this way, Facebook could merely be a staging point in a longer journey to something better … but its 'stickiness' was already being felt.

Amidst the post-financial crisis years, opposition had to be organised. At this moment, another *Unlike Us* conference was organised in March 2012 in Amsterdam. Everyone attuned to the looming monopoly of Facebook attended, from those who sought to nationalise Facebook like Francesca Bria to those who sought its complete destruction, like Julien Coupat. The next year, Stiegler spoke at the third Unlike Us conference in Amsterdam and outlined his philosophy of social networks as the 'new political question'.[11] Social networks are another form of grammatisation where the social relationships themselves are discretised as digital representations, in the same manner as language itself discretises phenomenological retentions into the tertiary retentions of writing thirty-thousand years ago. However, the transformation of social networks into digital ternary retentions leads to disruption and control hitherto unimaginable.

Beyond Foucault's notion of biopower, Stiegler theorised that 'in the years to come, we will witness the combining of digital technologies with neuromarketing, this combination will increasingly overdetermine all other human realities, it will therefore constitute a neuropower that via digital retentional technologies will conjoin biopower and psychopower in the core of the cerebral organ itself, the brain.'[12] Capitalist firms can employ social networks to monitor behavioural expressions as 'big data.' Going beyond surveillance, to control, Stiegler later explains that:

those digital networks referred to as 'social' channel these expressions by subordinating them to mandatory protocols, to which psychic individuals bend because they are drawn to do so through what is referred to as the *network effect*, which, with the addition of social networking, becomes an automated herd effect, that is, one that is highly memetic.[13]

Self-production 'in the form of personal data' allows status updates, a form of digital tertiary retentions that 'short-circuit every process of *noetic différance*', as capitalist firms can for the first time in history '*intervene in return, and almost immediately, on psychic secondary retentions* […] *to remotely control, one by one,* the members of a network – this is so-called "personalization"' and so 'annihilate the protentions' as to destroy the possibility of the future itself.[14]

In pharmacological fashion, where the selfsame toxin may also serve

as its own cure, Stiegler posited the remarkable thesis that: ‘social networks radicalise the risk of regression even further, and yet such networks also open up new possibilities, possibilities for individuation psychical and collective individuation.’[15] Just as Stiegler’s time in prison led him to reflect via note-taking on philosophy and so commence his own individuation, ‘the self-profiling function could of course be an exercise in reflexivity for the person practicing it’, a sort of ‘auto-ethnography’ or at least ‘auto-sociography’ that would foster individuation.[16] This insight provokes the question raised by Indymedia: what if these new kind of notes, the status update, could be re-attached to something besides individual profiles to restore the original promise of social media?

Although ‘there are all kinds of socio-technological networks, and Facebook is only one instance of them’, Stiegler did not believe that social networks by themselves could achieve anything much, as ‘the real issue is about the arrangements of social networks with social groups (since a social network without a social group is equivalent to a mafia)’.[17] So rather than attach profiles and status updates to atomic individuals, an alternative model puts the collective group at the center of the social network, in order to foster the transindividuation of each of its participants with each other and the group as a whole, a point brought up in Unlike Us by younger researchers of IRI at ‘Unlike Us’[18] and supported by Stiegler: ‘As Harry Halpin and Yuk Hui have shown, this requires the implementation of a social networking technology based on the Simondonian model of individuation rather than on Moerno’s sociogram.’[19]

This concept was brought down to earth through the founding of a coding effort called simply ‘Social Web’ under Stiegler’s direction at IRI to build software that would serve as a support for transindividuation within a group. With the help of various interns, Harry Halpin took the lead in designing a prototype ‘anti-Facebook’, based on the open-source social networking codebase Crabgrass created by the anarchist collective Riseup.net,[20] one of the few remaining vestiges of the work of the founders of Indymedia. Crabgrass featured the ability to create small, invite-only groups where the entire group shared a single timeline of status updates. The group could then use a range of tools such as wikis, forums, and

multimedia file-sharing to accomplish their goals, whatever they may be. However, these groups were limited to those centralised on a single server. By virtue of building on the open standard XMPP,[21] a standard of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF)[22] for decentralised messages,[23] IRI's Social Web allowed individuals share, discuss, edit, and even index via tagging both text and multimedia across different groups spread across different servers. The eventual goal was that indexation and categorisation of multimedia objects could be done collectively via the integration of tools like *Lignes de Temps*[24] for the collaborative creation and metadata-based annotation of text and video. As the hindsight given by the abrupt digitisation of communication during the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrates, Stiegler had considerable foresight in envisioning a superior form of collaboration beyond the ineffective videoconferencing typified by Zoom. The goal was nothing less than the transformation of both the social web and the semantic web into what Stiegler named a *hermeneutic web* based on the archiving of digital tertiary retentions. This new hermeneutic web was envisioned as a digital agora of discussion and debate to create infinitely-long protentions, dis-automating Facebook by breaking the stranglehold which the idiotic 'Like' button had on our relationships, both to media and to each other.

This 'proof-of-concept' produced considerable excitement, including Stiegler and IRI's participation in the largest study of open-source innovation in Europe and increased funding for digital social innovation.[25] Via the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), [26] Halpin then bootstrapped a new set of protocols – the W3C Social Web standards – in order to allow diverse groups to form an open-ended 'network of networks' against the closed world of Facebook. Yet without continued financial support, Stiegler did not have the capacity to employ the talented programmers needed to mature his alternative social web against the seductively easy-to-use software of Silicon Valley. Stiegler's attempt to influence protocol design via dialogue with the inventor of the Web, Tim Berners-Lee, ground to a halt as the W3C itself became increasingly controlled by platforms like Facebook and Netflix via backing Digital Restrictions Management (DRM). This led Harry Halpin to step down from the W3C, so the W3C Social Web standards descended into bickering over technical details of the metadata formats. As the W3C was reduced to a mere

mouthpiece of Silicon Valley, the W3C Web annotation standard needed to accomplish Stiegler's plan to collaboratively index content also failed to be supported by any of the major browsers. Yet this is not to say that elements of Stiegler's vision were not realised on a global scale.

Parts of the W3C Social Web standards are the foundation of the interoperable Fediverse, which today forms a loose network of resistance to Facebook.[27] Lastly, the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) revelations caused the Social Web project at IRI to change direction dramatically. Halpin and Stiegler joined together to create a new European Commission-backed project, NEXTLEAP,[28] to create a new encrypted group-based protocol called Message Layer Security (MLS) at the IETF.[29] MLS is designed with the group as the first and foremost unit rather than the individual, and includes group-based encryption to resist surveillance. Yet Stiegler's vision of a group-based Web is perhaps even so compelling that the group-based MLS protocol is now planned for deployment not only by open-source hackers, but also Google and Facebook. However, we can hope that the possibility of transindividuation opened by these Stieglerian protocols retains its ability to subvert the hegemony of Silicon Valley's narcissistic individualism.

We will end this saga about Bernard Stiegler's foundational work on the 'social media question' with an outlook on organisation. The concept of an organised network ('orgnet') is close to the way Stiegler worked with others in his various networks from Ars Industrialis to the Digital Studies Network, namely to avoid creating 'weak ties' and instead create (more or less) sustainable networks, built on 'strong ties.' This way of forming networks was originally theorised – and practiced – by communities that built and maintained 'social networks' in a distributed, federated manner that followed a 'Dunbar's number', namely the controversial thesis that there are approximately one hundred and fifty productive, sustainable social connections in a community,[30] in opposition to the hypergrowth model of the extractive social media platforms – which are at this point little more than advertising companies – that push individuals to try to achieve thousands, millions of 'friends' and 'followers' in order to become an 'influencer'. In opposition to the secretive economy of data mining which only results in a proletarianisation of the nervous

system, there remains an open conspiracy of subversive philosophical engineers that work on software alternatives and educational models that counter disorientation in order to overcome the crisis of pedagogy.

While a thorough study on Stiegler's possible – and real – contribution to organisation studies ('organology') is yet outstanding, we should acknowledge his very real political activism, in this case, his role in Unlike Us and his work at IRI in the period 2011-2014, concerning the core concepts and concepts of future social media architectures. Stiegler called for the creation of 'politicised communities of friends in the social networks' where it should be perfectly feasible 'to go on the networks in order to counter any of these very same networks that stand in the way of their concretisation as a process of psychical, technological and collective individuation' and so the circles around Stiegler were working 'to establish spaces of critique, with the aim to invent a much needed political technology'.[31] The goal was nothing less than the rebirth of autonomy as the foundation of noöpolitics, a politics of knowledge capable of surpassing capitalist short-term thinking:

The challenge of social networks is to transform the neuropower that operates on brains and on societies that have been conquered by the science-technology industry, an industry of retentions, into a noöpolitics of societies who emphasise this neuropower on themselves and by themselves, and so ensure that in the era of digital tertiary retentions and neuroeconomics, psychic and collective individuation is politically reimagined.[32]

This noöpolitics would then restore the long circuits of transindividuation through the generations that attract the young to Facebook, to make sure that alternative architectures of the social would facilitate intergenerational exchange. The challenge was – and still is – to design networks in which young adults are enabled to find their path toward adulthood, transforming from minors to adults in the process, a thing that has become extremely difficult in an age where adults themselves have become so dramatically infantilized.[33]

Despite its breadth of vision, Stiegler's social web has not yet managed to bring into being the digital 'republic of letters' that

Stiegler hoped. Why did Stiegler's work for another social network not spread via some network effect, like Indymedia and Facebook before it? Perhaps because, as Subcomandante Marcos is claimed to have said, 'another world is possible, but only on top of the corpse of capitalism'. However, this is an all-too-easy answer, as the perennial question of revolution returns: how to drive us through and beyond the mimetic social engineering embedded with Facebook, to break through the *katechon* so that we can realise 'an unredeemed promise', namely that 'within the image of the global social network there is a picture of the possibility of a unified world', and so 'the world itself'.[34] The answer lies in the fact that Stiegler's work on the Social Web at IRI came too early, for it was only a *supplement.* The digital social network cannot serve in the place of the human social network. A technical prosthesis cannot force into being a new world, in the same way, that great thinkers like Stiegler are *untimely,* coming too early for the schools of thought and social movements that only all-too-late take up the path that has been blazed for them. Being must come into its fullness in the world on its own rhythm and time, and some attempts may be like tender shoots before the last frost.

Stiegler did plant the seeds for another social network to be realised one day. An integral part of Stiegler's life, work, and future legacy are the numerous groups in which he played a leading role. This spectre starts at IRI and proceeds to *Plaine Commune* and Ars Industrialis, to the *Pharmakon.fr* website and the Épineuil-le-Fleuriel summer school, and finally to the Association of Friends of the Thunberg Generation and the Internation network. These initiatives can be seen as 'school-making' experiments, in between the non-profit model, proto-social movements, research groups, and avantgarde congregations that are open to a variety of philosophic, activist and artistic misfits – as long they were not shy to debate and think through the deep questions of this epoch without an *epokhē,* together. These clouds of activities have yet to be described in detail, and given a prominent place inside Stiegler's legacy. Here we tried to map only one episode and encourage everyone to write up similar stories and create one, two, many new organised networks.

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[1] Bernard Stiegler, 'Five Hundred Million Friends: The Pharmacology of Friendship', trans. Daniel Ross, in Joel Goldbach (ed.), *Umbr(a): Technology*, Buffalo: Center for the Study of Psychoanalysis and Culture, 2012, pp. 59-75, p. 59.

[2] Donatella Della Porta & Lorenzo Mosca, 'Global-net for global movements? A network of networks for a movement of movements', *Journal of Public Policy* (2005), pp. 165-190.

[3] Pierre Musso, 'Network Ideology: from Saint-Simonianism to the Internet,' in José Luís Garcia (ed.), *Pierre Musso and the Network Society,* Berlin: Springer, 2016, pp. 19-66.

[4] Peter Thiel,'The Straussian Moment', in Robert Hamerton-Kelly (ed.), *Politics and the Apocalypse,* East Lansing: Michigan University Press, 2007, pp. 189-218.

[5] Thiel, 'The Straussian Moment', p. 207.

[6] Thiel, 'The Straussian Moment', p. 209.

[7] René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred,* trans. Patrick Gregory,

Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1979, p. 146.

[8] Bernard Stiegler, 'The Most Precious Good in the Era of Social Technologies', trans. Patrice Riemens, in Geert Lovink & Miriam Rasch (eds.), *Unlike Us Reader, Social Media Monopolies and their Alternatives*, Institute of Network Cultures, Amsterdam, 2013, p. 16-30, p. 28.

[9] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 2: Disorientation*, trans. Stephen Barker, Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2009.

[10] Geert Lovink & Ned Rossiter, *Organization after Social Media*, Colchester: Minor Compositions, 2018.

[11] Bernard Stiegler, 'Social Networking As a Stage of Grammatization and the New Political Question' (conference presentation, dated 22 March 2013); recording available at: <https://vimeo.com/63803603> (published 11 April 2013).

[12] Stiegler, 'Social Networking As a Stage of Grammatization and the New Political Question'.

[13] Bernard Stiegler, *Automatic Society Volume 1: The Future of Work*, trans. Daniel Ross, Cambridge: Polity, 2016, p. 36.

[14] Stiegler, *Automatic Society Vol. 1,* p. 38.

[15] Stiegler, 'Social Networking As a Stage of Grammatization and the New Political Question'.

[16] Stiegler, 'The Most Precious Good in the Era of Social Technologies', p. 22.

[17] Stiegler, 'The Most Precious Good in the Era of Social Technologies', p. 28.

[18] Yuk Hui & Harry Halpin, 'Collective Individuation: The Future of the Social Web', in Geert Lovink and Miriam Rasch (eds.), *Unlike Us Reader: Social Media Monopolies and their Alternatives*, Institute of Network Cultures, Amsterdam, 2013, p. 103-116.

[19] Stiegler, *Automatic Society Vol. 1,* p. 142.

[20] The codebase is available at: <https://we.riseup.net>.

[21] Extensible Messaging and Presence Protocol (XMPP) is an open communication protocol for instant messaging.

[22] The IETF is the leading Internet standards body. It develops open standards through open protocols.

[23] Peter Saint-Andre, *IETF RFC 6120 Extensible Messaging and Presence Protocol (XMPP) Core*, published May 2011, and available at: <https://datatracker.ietf.org/doc/rfc6120/>.

[24] The *Timelines*-tool is available at: <https://www.iri.centrepompidou.fr/outils/lignes-de-temps-2/>.

[25] Harry Halpin & Francesca Bria, 'Crowdmapping Digital Social Innovation with Linked Data', in Fabien Gandon, Marta Sabou, Harald Sack, e.a. (eds.), *The Semantic Web. Latest Advances and New Domains. Proceedings of the 12th European Semantic Web Conference*, Berlin: Springer, pp. 606-620.

[26] The Consortium is an international community that develops open standards to ensure the long-term growth of the Web.

[27] Cf. 'Fediverse', *Wikipedia*, available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fediverse>.

[28] The project's website is located at: <https://nextleap.eu>.

[29] The technical sheet is available at: <https://datatracker.ietf.org/wg/mls/about/>.

[30] Patrik Lindenfors, Andreas Wartel & Johan Lind, '"Dunbar's number" deconstructed', *Biology Letters* 17/5 (5 May 2021), available at: <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rsbl.2021.0158>.

[31] Stiegler, 'The Most Precious Good in the Era of Social Technologies', p. 29.

[32] Stiegler, ‘Social Networking As a Stage of Grammatization and the New Political Question’.

[33] Stiegler, ‘The Most Precious Good in the Era of Social Technologies’, p. 29.

[34] Hui & Halpin, ‘Collective Individuation: The Future of the Social Web’, p. 116.