**Social Software**

I want to investigate the concept of social software, and how websites/apps have a growing tendency to improve and extend our possibilities for both personal and impersonal interaction, but also how companies as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc., ends up framing, controlling and dictating the manner of interaction with other people, and how this might differ from a more traditional form of real-life face-to-face communication.

Before social media we had electronic mail, which was a kind of replacement for letters and packages, internet forums which replaced debates in halls, notes/questions on public boards and nowadays the different kinds of chat-functions replace some of our face-to-face interaction. Can the chat-function replace this? And what is the difference between chatting and talking?

The social software enriches people with new ways of communication and interaction through a medium - which before the existence of the personal computer would’ve consisted of letters, notes, telegraphs and telephones. The interaction through software has grown huge and it could seem that is used by some people just as much as traditionally face-to-face interaction. The software is owned by companies, which sets the standard of so much interaction, and tries to mimic the real-life interactions through the use of symbols, icons, chats and posts, but can a standardized library of smileys really mimic the true facial expressions? And the use of messages on a chat really mimic a face-to-face message? Or a letter? Is it easier to be honest, cruel or non-caring in a chat with a person? Is it correct to let a minority manage the framework for the interactions of the majority?

Questions and problem settings:

* What are the immediate advantages of different kinds of social software?
* What are the immediate disadvantages of social software?
* Are the existence and vast use of social software having an influence on how people interact with each other – not only through a software medium, but also in face-to-face interactions?
* Is the use of cameras (facetime, skype, etc.) naturalizing the interaction through the software-mediums?
* Is there a growing tendency towards a naturalization in interaction through a software-medium? (through use of Emoji, Smileys, Voice recording, FaceTime, Skype, etc.)

To write this paper I’m going to use a number of sources - of which I have found four so far. The following sources are only mere suggestions and could easily be swapped out, since there is such a vast number of sources concerning social software and their effects on society:

*Benjamin Grosser, “What Do Metrics Want? How Quantification Prescribes Social Interaction on Facebook,” in Computational Culture no. 4 (2004). http://computationalculture.net/what-do-metrics-want/*

* This article looks into how people judge their personal worth from the quantity of friends, likes and notifications on Facebook, which also can affect their self-esteem (which is a very connected to social interactions).

*Richard Stallman, “Why Software Should Not Have Owners”, https://www.gnu.org/philosophy/why-free.html*

* Why software should not have owners. The owners set the framework for our interactions and our lives. How social apps and websites influence our daily living and how they to a certain degree dictate the ways we interact with each other.

*Oren Soffer, “The Oral Paradigm and Snapchat” in Social Media + Society, July September (2016)*

* This article looks at the social software Snapchat which is a quite different form of interacting through a software medium, because of the picture or video that is send to the receiver. This is the kind of naturalization of interaction through software I have mentioned above.

*Joanne Meredith & Elizabeth Stokoe, “Repair: Comparing Facebook ‘Chat’ with Spoken Interaction” in Discourse & Communication 2004, Vol. 8(2) 181-207.*

* This article discusses the differences between chat and oral conversations. How talk and laughter does not ‘leak randomly’ into a conversation in a chat but is carefully planned out and thought about.

One of the first steps towards writing this paper would be to find some more sources, which investigates the use of social software, the elements of it (chat, wall, posts, albums, etc.), the effects of its existence and the companies owning them. Another likely task would be to narrow down my subject for the final paper, so I will end up getting a more focused and less diffuse result. This could be done by looking solely at the chat-function on Facebook, the story-function on Snapchat or the tweets on Twitter. I believe that this process of narrowing down and focusing on a more limited subject will come naturally when I find, read and analyze more sources. Furthermore, it would be interesting to look in to Goffman and see if there is any contend which can be used to analyze the social behavior in and around social software.