**Synopsis for initial exam paper for Software Studies**

**Overall idea**

The overall idea of my exam paper is based on an interest in the social medias and the growing influence they have on our society, personal lives, and especially the way it can affect a person’s self-esteem. My thought is to first of all look at the historical evolvement of how everyday communication has changed ever since the social medias started emerging. Then I will look closer at some of the key points of the social media such as metrics and data capturing, which I find play a big role on some of the biggest social medias we see today (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.).

**Definition of problem(s)**

The overall problem I want to address is still a bit unclear to me and of course depends on where my further study of texts takes me. In my study I will look at some different questions, and here I have tried to list these and give an explanation of why I find these relevant.

* *How has the use of social medias changed over the last decade?*

The reason I want to include the historic aspect of the social medias is to create a good foundation for understanding the major impact it has had, and to in some way underline this. I also find that there are some very rapid changes taking place right now – for example the shift from everyone being on Facebook, to everyone now being on Instagram and in part, Twitter. To understand these changes and where the society and use of social media is headed I find it necessary to have an understanding of where the society is coming from.

* *What is the current debate about Facebook collecting data about, and does it have an impact? (#DeleteFacebook)*

As of now, I find it very interesting to look at how the most popular social media is (partly) shifting from Facebook to other platforms such as Instagram and Twitter. I also find the current debate about the enormous amount of data that Facebook logs about its users to be very interesting, and if possible (since this is still very new, and not something that has been researched yet) will try to see if this has an influence on which social medias are used.

* *How has data capturing changed social medias and our society in general?*

Through the debate about Facebook I will of course take a more general look at the data capturing that we see (and don’t see) on the social media platforms. I will try to look at how the data is being used by the social media, and other parties. I find that we see a big change in commercials on the internet – both in content and placement, and this is obviously a result of the data being collected about us when we are online. We do now not only see commercials on banners at the side of a page, but now we are confronted with one product after the other by people we follow on Instagram or campaigns and companies that our friends like on Facebook and so on.

* *Why are metrics on the social medias becoming such a big part of our identities?*

In relation to a lot of data being collected about us, our opinions are increasingly being put into boxes and merely transformed into simple numbers representing likes and followers. These numbers are for some a foundation for income, by again advertising for products and companies on for example Instagram. The income is then of course based on these metrics of likes and followers. But the metrics are not just affecting economy, they are also on a more personal level contributing to how people see themselves and especially how people see themselves compared to others. All of these numbers make it a lot easier for people to compare their own success or “likability” to others. Even though the likes don’t necessarily mean something to the person giving it, it can make a big difference to the receiver, or the way others perceive the person who has received likes.

**Sources**

The list of sources I plan to use is far from complete. This is in part because my focus of the exam is not completely clear yet, but also because, as I mentioned earlier, some of the issues I plan to address are being debated just this moment, and new articles will very likely appear in the near future, so I will of course try to include this.

The sources I know I am going to use are:

* *Benjamin Grosser, ”What Do Metrics Want? How Quantification Prescribes Social Interaction on Facebook,” in Computational Culture no. 4 (2014).* [*http://computationalculture.net/article/what-do-metrics-want*](http://computationalculture.net/article/what-do-metrics-want)

This is of course a text addressing the issue of metrics, and will play a big part in my attempt to answer the last question listed above.

* *Gerlitz, Carolin, and Helmond, Anne. “The like Economy: Social Buttons and the Data-Intensive Web.” New Media & Society 15, no. 8 (December 1, 2013): 1348–65.*

This is a text concerning both data capturing and also the concept called “The Like Economy”, which I find will be a big help in my attempt to answer the question about metrics. In addition to this it can help shed light on the development of the social medias – it focusses on Facebook in particular.

**The next steps**

My next steps are simply to make my idea more tightly targeted. I don’t think I will be able to study all of subjects/questions above in depth in the exam paper, so I will have to cut something out. I believe I will have to look deeper into the subject and find out what is most relevant and what is not. Through the study of the subject I believe I will also in a natural way find a clearer idea for my exam paper.

I will also have to keep an eye on the current debate about Facebook and try to get the information I need from this case.