

# Social Media «Technicity»

## What to look for in the APIs?

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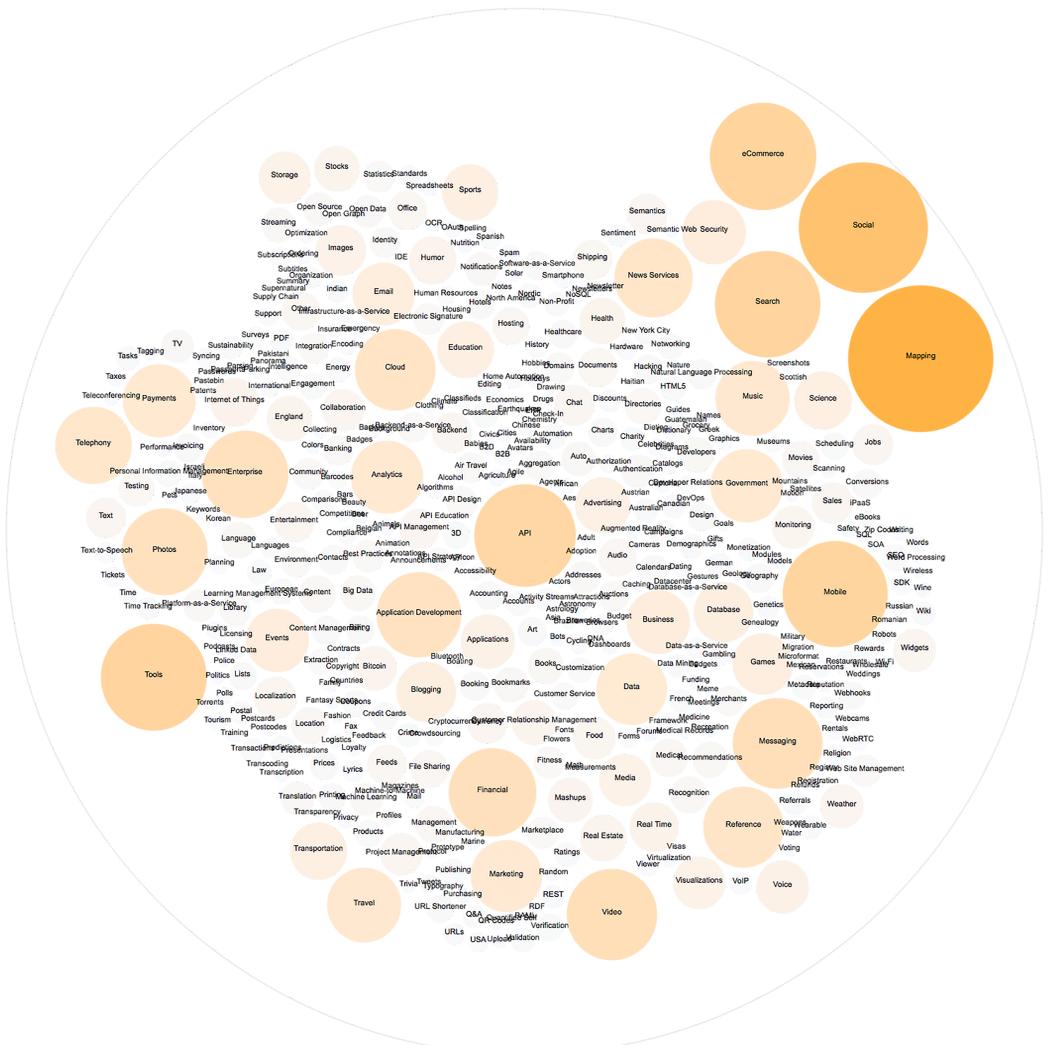
After social media we hold the assumption of perceiving society from a different perspective; posts, hashtags, memes, links are not only «natively digital object» (Rogers, 2013), but also objects of critique and analysis, indicators as means to sort content. The emerging focus on social media technical structure (Rieder et al., 2015; Helmond, 2015) seems to be a novelty among social scientists or journalism studies. Added to this, the studies of social media using data collected from Application Programming Interface (API) as an emerging trend. The proposal of grasping social media «technicity» (Bucher, 2012; 2013; Rogers, 2013; Rieder et al., 2015) through observing APIs changes and analysing its affordances and limitations bring a new research world that is still uninvestigated. This paper proposes to inquire (and identify) what APIs features are to take into consideration in social media platform studies. To do so, we followed four steps: **i)** presenting the concept of «technicity» and its importance (or impact) on the way we investigate social media; **ii)** a brief contextualization on API concept, history, main features, economy, and current studies; **iii)** introducing the politics of social media APIs and inquiring what kind of pressure do social media platforms, such as Facebook, receive to limit the data that is allowed to third parties access; **iv)** establishing guidance on what to look for in social APIs. We expect to bring attention to social media technicity and shed light on what APIs aspects should be taken into consideration, as a means to unfold this work field for new media studies in social science and journalism.

**1.** Technicity considers technical objects or technology itself as mediators; it is “technology considered in its efficacy or operative functioning” (Hoel and van der Tuin, 2012: 187) “into the research process, demanding not only mastery in purely technical terms, but also an appreciation of technical forms and functions on the level of methodology” (Rieder et al., 2015, p. 2). The *technicity of social media platforms* is used to *govern participation* (Bucher, 2012).

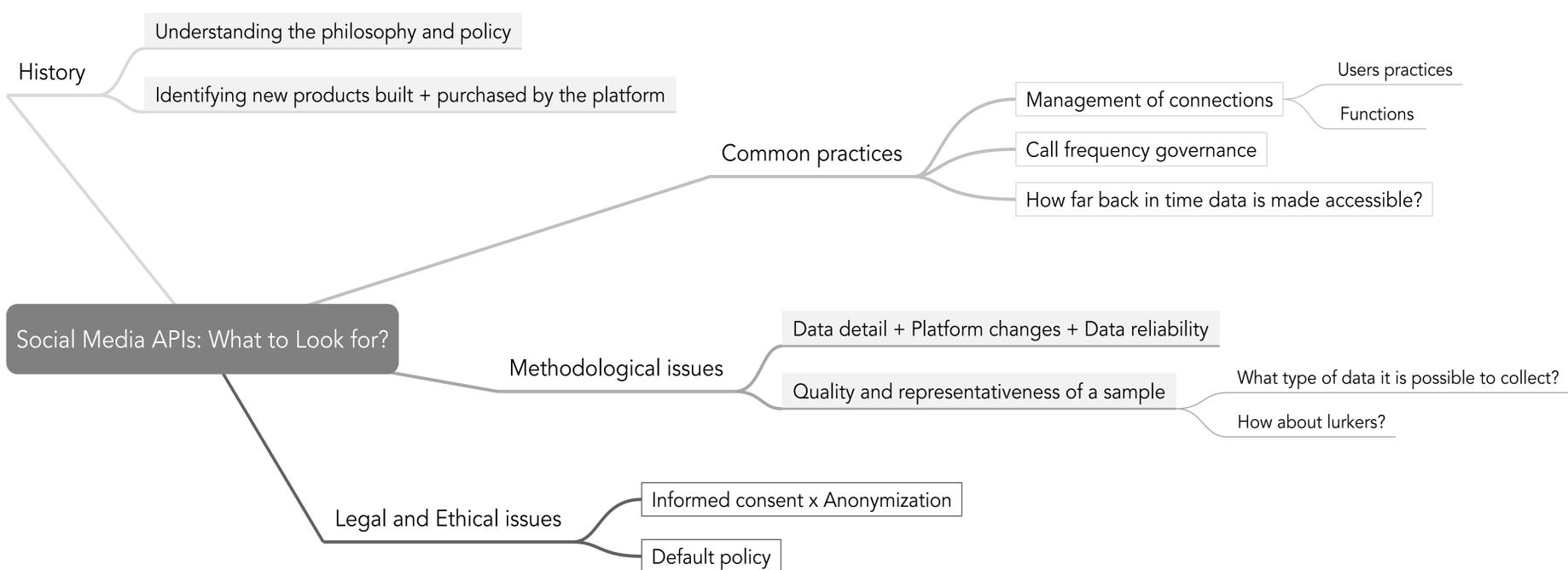
**2.** APIs have been the most common pathway for researchers and third-parties to study social media technicity. “An API is an interface provided by an application that lets users interact with or respond to data or service requests from another program, other applications, or Web sites” (Murugesan, 2007, p. 36). API principle: *interoperability*. *The APIs policy* define what third-parties can or cannot build, use or consume; meaning they are not neutral systems. Such position *affects socialization and define social media as we know and use it*.

**3.** What are the rules, norms or business model of an API? *How are connections managed?* What kind of pressure social media platforms receive to limit users data access? How is call frequency governed? What information is collected (or shared)? *How is content moderated?* How can different study objects be explored?

**4.** The technicity of APIs matters on social media platforms studies. Four core aspects should be taken into consideration:



API Ecosystem  
[Data retrieved from programmableweb.com – more than 14.590 APIs registered in February 2016. Data visualization by Janna Joceli – tools: Text Ripper, Excel, Raw]



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