

# Buying Time: Regime of Temporal Capital and the Telecommunication Vortex of Lebanon

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*“What then is time? If no one asks me, I know: if I wish to explain it to one that asketh, I know not”*

*Augustine, book XI, chapter 14, 239.*

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, as Lebanon’s postwar reconstruction prioritized neoliberal privatization, mobile subscription plans became a symbol of both modernity and exclusion. With monthly fees hovering near 40 USD in a country where the average monthly wages scarcely exceeded 300, telecom giants TOUCH and ALFA rendered connectivity a luxury commodity. For those unable to pay, a workaround emerged: users paid small cellphone shops to “top up” their accounts, only to immediately transfer the credit back to the shopkeeper’s phone. This left users with no monetary credit but retained the temporary validity of their SIM cards. This served to extend the validity of the sim card. These practices, born of economic precarity, sustained a quasi-informal economy of connectivity where time became the commodity and currency of digital survival.

Such quasi-legal practices are not mere anecdotes of Lebanese resourcefulness but symptoms of a deeper structural logic: the commodification of temporality as a mechanism of control in digital ecosystems. Lebanon’s telecommunication giants, Touch and Alfa, ration credits and subscriptions temporally prescribing their services according to a monetized temporal structure. For example, subscribing to a one-month plan costing approximately 40 USD, does not only mean that a user has a predetermined amount of credit, but also this credit is valid, and to be used, within that specific month. Also, if a user fails to renew their subscription after the predetermined deadline, the user will lose their services, their credits, and potentially their line and sim number. It is not a surprise that such technological negotiations within the realm of digitality complicate simple equations of consumption and demand, labor and value. As Hassan (2020) argues, digitality has fundamentally altered the operation of capital and the relevance of basic materialist ideas. From this perspective, I engage with temporality as a distinct variable based on which telecommunication corporations extract surplus value. This paper takes this logic as its premise and asks, how do telecommunication companies ascribe capital value to time? How can this prescribed value of time shape the structure of telecommunication and exploit precarity to extract profit from users? In this paper, I examine Lebanon’s Telcom ecosystem through the lens of chronopolitics, infrastructure, and digitality and propose the framework of Regime of Temporal Capital (RTC) as the neo liberal structure in which telecommunication

companies create a market to weaponize and commodify time to extract surplus value. I contend that, in contexts of infrastructural and economic precarity, such as Lebanon's corporatized telecom landscape, time is not merely accelerated but fractured, rationed, and territorialized. Under the Lebanese neo-liberal model where both partisan politics and corporate interests intertwine, telecommunication companies manufacture scarcity by weaponizing, rationing, and territorializing time not merely as a byproduct of technological infrastructure, but as deliberate strategy of capital control. The regime of temporal capital is driven by the logic of technological and profit acceleration which prioritizes extractive bundles and faster internet over equal accessibility. This logic aims to invest in technological acceleration trapping users in a perpetual cycle of data renewals regardless of consumption, creating a market where time is prescribed monetary value. The regime of temporal capital implements this macro logic according to three modalities: Accessibility: When and how often users can connect (e.g., daily vs. monthly bundles). Connectivity: How long is a connection sustained (e.g., data expiring after 30 days). Velocity: What speed is available, contingent on antenna density in marginalized geographies.

Through these levers, TOUCH and ALFA transform time itself into surplus value, extracting profit not only from data usage but from users' desperation to remain perpetually tethered to expiring networks. Drawing on Hartmut Rosa's work on acceleration and alienation (2010; 2015), Robert Hassan's analysis of the "Digital condition" (2010, 2020) and Marx's critique of alienation and capital, this paper reframes digitality as a site of accumulation and dispossession. It posits that Lebanon's telecom landscape exemplifies a broader Arab condition: digitality is a temporal commodity, where corporate control over "digital time" reproduces class precarity and neoliberal dependency under the threat of telecom-alienation.

Furthermore, this paper stresses the need to consider and critically analyze informal or quasi-legal telecommunication as an essential part of understanding broader regimes of digital capital in the Arab world. Telecommunication markets are constitutively shaped by the entanglement of structural and illicit practices; corporate architecture, even when seemingly contested through informal tactics, actively mold the dynamics of value exchange in quasi-legal markets. Temporality, as both a corporate weapon and a vernacular survival strategy, reveals this symbiosis. In the Arab world, where digital access is often mediated by neoliberal regimes and infrastructural fragmentation, be it governmental and/or corporate, studying temporality exposes how telecommunication networks temporalize precarity—trapping users in perpetual cycles of consumption while extending their logics into the informal sphere. The informal market, far from existing outside capital, becomes a terrain where corporate temporalities are reproduced: expiration dates, renewal anxieties, and speed hierarchies seep into even informal and quasi-legal practices, ensuring capital's dominance over time itself. Within this context, informal practices are not "outside" capital but re-inscribe corporate temporal logics; the two are dialectically linked. Therefore, I refer to such informal and quasi-legal practices as 'off-label' and define them as adaptive and unauthorized tactics that, while operating outside formal regulatory frameworks, remain constitutively entangled with corporate architectures and state power. These practices

paradoxically reproduce the temporal logics (e.g., expiration dates, subscription anxieties, speed differentials) and profit-driven imperatives of dominant telecom regimes, even as they appear to circumvent them. 'Off-label' strategies sustain capital's temporal dominance by absorbing informal markets into cycles of planned obsolescence, deferred access, and infrastructural precarity, thereby extending—rather than escaping—neoliberal telecommunications' control over time, labor, and social reproduction.<sup>1</sup>

## **I.      Digitality, Commodity, Precarity: between acceleration and alienation**

In *The Condition of Digitality* (2020), Hassan contends that digitality is not merely an extension of previous technological phases but a distinct “condition” that has profoundly reshaped capitalism, culture, and human consciousness. Digitality represents a “radical technological rupture,” an emergence of new sensibilities, and a “mutation” within capitalism that transforms it into new logics of consumerism; the very nature of the commodity has been fundamentally altered through digitality. Hassan (2020) speaks of the value of information, the sign as commodity, and pervasive commodification, which penetrates and colonizes almost every register of life, including time, space, thoughts, and actions. Therefore, the critique of digitality should be inseparable from the critique of capital, particularly within contexts of the Arab world as a space that complicates the materialist binaries of public and private, governmental and corporate, or privatization and deprivatization. Lebanon, for instance, with a political system and economic history tarnished by years of colonization, partisan politics, and neoliberal formations, poses additional challenges to understanding the workings and effects of digitality and capital.

As Amel posits, places like Lebanon function under the colonial mode of production (CoMP); “a form of capitalism structurally dependent on imperialism in its historical formation and contemporary development.” (2013, p. 11, 2022, p. 4) Production in colonized countries under the CoMP is a specific historical form of capitalist production that exists within the colonial relation (Amel, 2013). While part of the capitalist system, modes of production under the CoMP differ in both structure and developmental logic. This raises additional questions regarding digitality and modes of production. The telecommunication sector, for example, balances between being a service provider and a product provider: it offers 3G connectivity as well as material SIM cards, antennas, routers, and other hardware. Furthermore, as I will later demonstrate, Lebanon's telecommunication sector is shaped by extractivist logic and international communication corporations that funded its rehabilitation post-1990 war. It remains operated by political elites and mega-corporations, regardless of whether ownership is privatized or claimed by the Lebanese government, as was the case in 2020. Regardless of ownership, the sector is primarily and historically conditioned by imperial capital and Lebanon's colonial

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<sup>1</sup> The use of the term 'off-label' is borrowed from medicine where it refers to the prescription and/or use of a pharmaceutical drug for an unapproved indication or for a use different than what it is originally intended for including the use in a different in age group, dosage, or route of administration (Stafford, 2008).

bourgeoisie, which, as Amel argues, historically facilitated and benefited from economic dynamics that ensured commercial exchange flowed through them (1989).

If, following Hassan's (2020) argument, digitality fundamentally alters the conditions of capital and commodity, how might it reshape other forms of capitalism, such as the colonial mode of production? Moreover, if digitality, as Hassan (2020) also asserts, is driven by capitalist logic, what variables would it generate for corporations to accelerate capital extraction? Thus, not only must we re-evaluate Marxist frameworks to account for digitality's unique characteristics, as Hassan (2020) advocates, but we must also consider how digitality enables commodification and surplus value extraction under the CoMP, which operates in conjunction with global capital. In a digital ecosystem, where services are determined by political and technological infrastructure, what would the variable be for accelerating the extraction of surplus value? Time.

Temporality is a case and point of how such regimes employ digitality to extract surplus value and reinforce capital logics. Hassan (2020) argues that analogue capitalism relied on a technologic rooted in "recognition" to structure time and space. Digitality, he implies, disrupts this analogue temporality and "turbo-charges" capital's preconditions, enabling it to permeate everywhere simultaneously through networked connections. Drawing on Hartmut Rosa's theory of social acceleration (2015), Hassan (2020) contends that as digital technologies accelerate production in culture industries, less time remains for cultivating non-alienated, human-scale cultural expression. I note that this approach to the examination of digitality and temporality is determined by two main trends: one, the consideration of temporality as 'experienced time' which examines ways and potentials digital technologies have alters human and organizations' perceptions and experiences of time. As theorized in *Time and Temporality in the Network Society* (Hassan & Purser, 2007), social, political, and cultural habits of "being" under the "regime of the clock" are transformed as individuals engage in practices of spending, saving, and optimizing time. The second trend is the consideration of temporality in relation to acceleration and alienation, where late modernity and post-modernity are understood as processes of technological, political, and social acceleration (Rosa, 2010; Rosa et al., 2015). While both of these trends offer invaluable contributions to a critical conceptualization of digitality and temporality, I'm interested in extending the analysis to include the duration of connection and access, the reintegration of spatiality within velocity, and capitalist sectors' imposition of rigid temporal structures to accelerate profits and commodify time. This includes prescribing monetary value to units of time (e.g., minutes, days, months) that deviate from, what Hassan and Purser referred to as, the "regime of the clock."

The framework of Regime of Temporal Capital proposed in this paper does not take connectivity and accessibility for granted under capitalist-imposed precarity. Instead, it acknowledges the socio-economic conditions dictating a consumer's entry into the digital realm. Socio-economic precarity becomes a prerequisite for acceleration, as telecommunication regimes determine who participates in accelerated postmodernity, when, where, and under what circumstances. While digital capitalism often views precarity as a byproduct—evident in platform workers'

experiences—I posit that precarity is the primary vector shaping users’ temporal experiences. In Lebanon, the political and socio-economic precarity imposed by the CoMP dictates when and how long subjects can access services from providers like Touch and Alfa, rendering them vulnerable to the temporal regimes imposed by these telecom giants. For instance, an unemployed young adult in an impoverished and overcrowded area using prepaid cards experiences digital temporality differently than the suburban father who enjoys the luxury of subscribing in postpaid services. This perspective re-politicizes digitality, framing Lebanon’s telecommunication sector as an extension of its hegemonic sectarian and neo-liberal system.<sup>2</sup>

Baudrillard famously wrote in *The Consumer Society*: “[...] the age of consumption, being the historical culmination of the whole process of accelerated productivity under the sign of capital, is also the age of radical alienation” (2012, p. 191). When connecting commodity, temporality, and digitality, alienation emerges as a cornerstone of temporal capital regimes. Hassan (2020) defines digital alienation as a “relation of relationlessness” and a “failure to apprehend... the movement of appropriation.” He argues that digitality causes “double-alienation” by severing ties to analogue technology and the natural environment, disrupting the “circle of action” and resulting in a “loss of meaningful involvement in the world” as digital automation grows autonomous and opaque. For Hassan (2020), digital capitalism drives this alienation, restructuring labor, intensifying exploitation, and creating dispossession (e.g., platform workers’ precarity). Rosa (2010) similarly links social acceleration to alienation, positing that rapid societal change clashes with human needs for stability and autonomy. While productive, framing alienation solely as a consequence risks overlooking its role under temporal capital: alienation becomes a threat that compels engagement in perpetual consumption cycles. In Lebanon, alienation manifests as the erasure of digital presence and loss of digital capital (e.g., services, credit) due to insufficient temporal consumption.

In this paper, I approach digitality as a structuring logic that enables and amplifies capital’s extractive tendencies, particularly in historically dependent economies like those under the CoMP. Temporally, digitality adopts acceleration as its core logic, establishing a regime that assigns monetary value to digital time in formal and informal markets. Digitality thus reorganizes social relations by commodifying access, fragmenting temporality, and structuring alienation. In the CoMP, digitality does not merely extend capitalist logics; it reconfigures them through localized control and dependency, creating extraction mechanisms reliant on precarious connectivity, controlled acceleration, and systemic alienation.

## **II. Towards a Theory of Temporal Capital: Conceptual Framework**

Paul Virilio’s work on chronopolitics is indispensable to the discussion of temporality and power. Virilio’s body of literature (2008; 2006; 2005) legitimizes the main premise of my work; the weaponization of time by telecom companies as a deliberate digital warfare against the

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<sup>2</sup> As Amel (1989) argues, in the Lebanese bourgeois state, class hegemony assumes a sectarian character, manifesting as geographic partitioning or partisan negotiations over control of ministries like telecommunications.

precarious subject. He addresses this warfare by accusing acceleration of dissolving the subject, however, I'm interested in further exploring what this 'dissolving' might entail both within the macro logic of capitalism and acceleration, and the micro-operationalization of RTC in the everyday use of technology. At its core, Virilio's argument positions speed as an annihilation of space. In *Speed and Politics* (2006), he argues that modernity's essence lies in the "dromocratic revolution", where speed collapses spatial distance. Virilio writes: "The maneuver that once consisted in giving up ground to gain Time loses its meaning: at present, gaining Time is exclusively a matter of vectors. Territory has lost its significance in favor of the projectile. In fact, the strategic value of the non-place of speed has definitively supplanted that of place, and the question of possession of Time has revived that of territorial appropriation" (2006, p. 149). For him, acceleration is not just technological but existential: it reconfigures power, perception, and politics. His later work, *The Information Bomb* (2005) extends this to digitality, framing the internet as the ultimate "logistics of perception," where instantaneous communication erodes local temporality, producing a globalized "chronopolitics" of control. However, Virilio assumes acceleration is universal, flattening global inequities, ignoring how infrastructural geographies, such as antenna distribution, creates variegated velocities. For Virilio, speed is a singular, homogenizing force; he fails to see it as a commodified resource distributed unevenly across class and space under regimes of late capitalism. My intervention hinges on repurposing Eurocentric theories of acceleration while centering temporality as a vector of harm in Lebanon's telecom landscape instead of limiting temporality to acceleration and velocity. The move for conceptualizing Arab digitalities should not be premised on the critique of Eurocentrism, for we risk speaking within a vacuum characterized by its contextual specificity. Virilio's Eurocentrism is not a flaw but an opportunity to revisit critical theory and expose how the Arab question demands a more nuanced critique beyond a specific field of infrastructure or political economy, towards a more historical materialist chronopolitics.

Rosa (2015) argues that social acceleration is a fundamental characteristic of modernity. He identifies three key dimensions of this acceleration: technological acceleration, acceleration of social change, and the acceleration of the pace of life. These dimensions are interconnected through a "circle of acceleration," where each fuels the others. Modernity, according to Rosa, is characterized by a constant drive to increase speed and efficiency across all aspects of social life. This leads to a sense of time scarcity and can result in the paradoxical state of "frenetic standstill," where despite increased speed, nothing fundamentally changes. Rosa's framework provides a crucial understanding of the macro-level forces driving the intensification of temporal pressures in contemporary society and can help understand the capitalist logic driving this acceleration, however, it remains limited in its micro implication on infrastructure, users' close engagement with technology, and more importantly, the workings of non-western frameworks as those operating under the CoMP which this paper is concerned in engaging with. Rosa (2015) notes that the "time-economic imperative" and particularly the logic of acceleration run through various forms of capitalist production. He argues that this logic drives the admired flexibility and variability of capitalism. Following the argument of Barbara Adam, Rosa stresses the argument

of "commodified time as a consequence of capitalist economic activity". Technical and technological acceleration is driven by the economic logic of maximizing the amount of salable goods or services produced per unit of time. While this applies to the telecom sector, it is further complicated by the fact that telecommunication companies are not only interested in maximizing the number of salable services per unit of time, but also accelerating the duration and validity of use of such services, extending the effects of this acceleration onto users' engagement with technologies and technical services.

Judy Wajcman's (2015) work offers a critical engagement with the relationship between technology and the acceleration of life in digital capitalism. Her critical and feminist approach to STS acknowledges the pervasive discourse of high-speed, networked society, however, she emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between time and machines, arguing that technology is not a neutral force but is shaped by political and social factors and, in turn, shapes social practices and our experience of time. This is a key point in my approach to acceleration not only as a defining feature of late modernity, but a major component of user behavior under capitalism. As Wajcman argues, it is key to highlight the uneven distribution of the effects of technological acceleration. The "intense phase of time-space compression" brought about by digital technologies does not affect everyone equally, and theories of social acceleration often overlook the role of resources and choices. In her critique of digital capitalism, Wajcman writes that technology operationalizes the world in particular ways, opening some options while closing others, thus influencing consumer behavior and temporal experiences. This perspective is crucial for understanding how the macro-level accelerative tendencies identified by Rosa manifest unevenly in everyday life, particularly in relation to access to and control over technology.

However, there remains a point often taken for granted within the work on digital temporalities. The emphasis on velocity and acceleration often overlooks the importance of temporality in relation to access, connection, and material infrastructure within spatial and geographical positionings. When discussing the Arab world, it becomes crucial not to assume that users possess the same experience of accessibility and connectivity when it comes to telecom networks and internet connection. While the logic of acceleration would still apply under the capital regimes of the Arab world, it is often complicated on the micro level in relation to the political, socio-economic, and infrastructural precarity. The argument of speed over space pioneered by Virilio should be revisited when discussing the logic of infrastructure and antennas and the rationing of the later by telecommunication sector that prioritizes profit over equity. I resort here to the work of Starosielski's (2015) which brings a crucial material dimension to the understanding of acceleration by focusing on the undersea network that underpins global communication. Starosielski argues that narratives about cables tend to oscillate between "connection narratives" and "disruption narratives," both of which obscure the continuous and often invisible work involved in maintaining global connectivity. These narratives contribute to a perception of seamless and instantaneous communication, which in turn fuels the expectations and demands of an accelerated society. The seemingly effortless acceleration of digital

communication is contingent upon a vast and labor-intensive material infrastructure, which is often rendered invisible in discussions of speed and connectivity. This is crucial for the case of Lebanon where infrastructural precarity is intrinsic with quotidian life. This approach not only re-introduces the significance of spatiality in relation to digital infrastructure, but also helps in overcoming the binary of connection and disconnection by introducing the period of each.

Together, these three theoretical approaches allow for the examination of systemic pressures driving the intensification of time in modern society, the critique of the quotidian temporal experiences and patterns of consumption based on power and monetary value, which is intertwined with social and economic imperatives, and the critique of seamless accessibility and connectivity to digital networks that underpin the temporal demands of capital. Following this rationalization, I argue that the Regime of Temporal Capital (RTC) is a structural logic in which telecommunications monopolies weaponize time as a commodity to govern digital participation under conditions of socio-economic and infrastructural precarity.

### **III. Tracing Temporality: Methodological Framework**

This study employs a multi-method qualitative approach, integrating document analysis, ethnographic fieldwork, and autoethnographic participation to interrogate Lebanon's telecommunication landscape as a site of temporal commodification. The methodology triangulates corporate policies, user tactics, and institutional practices to map the infrastructural, economic, and social mechanisms of the Regime of Temporal Capital (RTC).

First, I conducted a critical document analysis of Touch and Alfa's publicly available policies on data and internet bundles. This analysis targeted the temporal dimensions of their offerings, specifically how duration-based plans (e.g., prepaid, postpaid, one-week, one-month, six-month, and annual packages) codify accessibility (frequency of connection), connectivity (duration of access), and velocity (speed tiers). By cross-referencing pricing structures with expiration clauses, this phase revealed corporate strategies of temporal rationing. Second, I conducted field observation across 12 cellphone shops in Beirut (Ashrafiyeh, Hamra, Burj Hammoud, Downtown), Saida, and two rural villages in South Lebanon (Maghdousheh, Ghazzyeh). This was intended to map spatial disparities in service provisioning, observe the advertisement of 'off-label' services, and observe negotiations of 'off-label' practices (day charging). Third, I did autoethnography to mirror user tactics and document affective dimensions of temporal precarity, as well as engage in negotiation with shop owners. This involves direct participation in "day charging" transactions, negotiating prices and expiration terms, and calling TOUCH's customer service (111) to interrogate policies on SIM validity, credit expiration, and informal practices. Fourth, I conducted three interviews with two users who engage in the 'charging of days' to inquire about the reasons for doing so, and another in-depth interview with a mid-level employee at Alfa with 8 years' experience working in sales and at the Network Operation Center (NOC), the department responsible for processing, flagging, dispatching, and managing network failures.

### **IV. Telecommunication in Lebanon – Microcosm of Partisan Neo-Liberalism**



The telecommunications sector in Lebanon has long been characterized by inefficiency, high costs, and political entanglements, making it one of the most controversial industries in the country. Often dubbed Lebanon's "oil," the sector historically stood as the third-largest revenue generator, contributing over USD 1.2 billion to the state treasury in 2016. Despite its significance, it has been plagued by pseudo-bidding, corruption, and sectarian favoritism, which have disproportionately affected marginalized communities and exacerbated socio-economic inequalities. The 2019 banking and financial crisis, stemming from chronic political and financial mismanagement, further weakened the already fragile telecom infrastructure.

In 2023, Lebanon's Court of Audit published an extensive report revealing how successive governments and telecom ministries squandered USD 6 billion between 2010 and 2020. The audit exposed that while the telecom sector generated USD 17 billion in revenue, only USD 11 billion was transferred to the state treasury. The missing USD 6 billion was allegedly lost to corruption, political favoritism, and nepotistic recruitment. Currently, six ministers are under investigation for corruption.

#### **a. Historical Overview**

The Lebanese telecommunications sector traces its origins back to 1959 with the establishment of the Ministry of Post, Telegraph, and Telephone. Regulatory laws were first implemented at this stage, attracting foreign investment from major players such as Ericsson. By 1972, the government created Ogero Corporation to manage and maintain 250,000 direct exchange lines, aiming to increase Lebanon's telephone penetration rate, which stood at just 7% at the time.

As Lebanon's war ended, the government faced a stark choice: rebuild its telecom sector as a public good or privatize it for quick revenue. In 1991, Investcom, a subsidiary of the Mikati Group, launched the country's first Advanced Mobile Phone System (AMPS). The same year, Sotel acquired a monopoly on network switching through its subsidiary Libanpac. Rehabilitating and expanding infrastructure became the responsibility of foreign companies such as Ericsson, Siemens, and Alcatel. A contract worth USD 430 million, signed in 1994, enabled Lebanon to transition from analog switching systems to digital technology. I understand this instance as the birth of digitality in the telecommunication sector in Lebanon.

The government moved quickly to introduce the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) as cellular phones were seen as an attractive alternative to landlines. In 1993, a tender was launched for two mobile operators, with contracts awarded in 1994 for ten years (extendable by two years). This created a duopoly: Cellis, owned by France Telecom (67%) and Investcom (33%), and LibanCell, which had a more opaque ownership structure, with stakeholders including Telecom Finland International (14%), the Saudi Almagani (20%), and various Lebanese investors (66%).

The World Telecommunication Development Report estimated that, by 1996, Lebanon had more than 30% Cellular subscribers of total telephone subscribers, 200,000 cellular users already,

more than any other Arab state. Two years later, they were more than 350,000. By 2009, Lebanon had 1,816,262 landlines and 4,890,534 mobile users, achieving a relatively high penetration rate for both services. However, telecommunications infrastructure remained unevenly developed, with urban areas receiving significantly better service than rural regions. In 2016, when residents in the capital could start dreaming of lightning-speed, fiber-optic connections, 300 villages in Keserwan, Batroun, Nabatiyeh, and the Bekaa had no access to the internet whatsoever, due to the absence of a fixed telephone network. Mobile phone outages were frequent in remote areas, not least due to power cuts.

The 2019 economic crisis only worsened the telecommunication sector's failures. Telecommunication services and internet access weakened in peripheral areas. By mid-2020, disruptions and disconnections became frequent and widespread leading to January 2021 when areas like Nabatiyeh and Aley witnessed major outages. Even central neighborhoods of Beirut had their share of outages during a negotiation between Ogero and the government over resources.

#### **b. The Duopoly of Exploitation: Touch & Alfa**

Touch (formerly MTC Touch) and Alfa are Lebanon's two main mobile operators. Touch was established in June 2004 when the government contracted Zain Group to manage one of Lebanon's two mobile networks. Alfa, originally branded as Cellis, emerged as Lebanon's second state-owned mobile operator and was initially managed by France Telecom.

The country's two mobile phone operators launched 3G services in November 2011 and 4G services in May 2013. Such progress was followed by repeated, unfulfilled pledges to cover Lebanon's territory entirely. As part of the Lebanon Broadband 2020 plan, full 4G coverage was expected by 2018, and 5G by 2020.

In May 2020, amid Lebanon's worsening economic crisis, the government took back control of both mobile operators in preparation for re-tendering their contracts. During this interim period, the Ministry of Telecommunications assumed direct operation of the services. In January 2024, the Audit Bureau condemned Touch's unlawful outsourcing of A2P messaging services to In Mobiles, citing significant treasury losses and demanding contract termination. Despite this, Touch maintained the service under "business continuity" pending rebidding.

Lebanon's telecom sector lags regional and global benchmarks in terms of affordability, internet speed, and accessibility. According to a 2023 report by Ookla, Lebanon ranked among the slowest countries for mobile internet speeds, trailing behind Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia. The country also has some of the highest mobile data costs in the Middle East, making internet access a luxury for many Lebanese households.

The COVID-19 pandemic worsened disparities: students reported e-learning disruptions, families juggled multiple subscriptions, and impoverished households abandoned services entirely. Migrant workers and gig economy drivers (e.g., Toters/Uber) highlighted affordability and

coverage gaps. Criticisms also targeted restrictive policies like line expiry, lack of data carry-over, and opaque fees.

### **c. Off-Label Markets**

While much of the existing literature and reports have addressed the exploitation and systemic corruption within formal governmental and corporate telecommunication structures, little attention has been given to Lebanon's informal and illicit telecommunication practices. These practices, which developed and operated in parallel to—and often in response to—the formal structures, can be traced back to the early days of digital infrastructure in Lebanon as a reaction to the exorbitant pricing imposed by telecommunication companies. For example, during the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990), numerous informal providers emerged, operating through the installation and manipulation of illicit telephone networks for local and international communication. Functioning similarly to public payphones, these providers were commonly known as “centrales.” Such clandestine strategies, which I term “off-label” practices in this paper, are not inherently egalitarian or democratic. On one hand, they can reflect neoliberal tendencies, as seen in the case of illegal satellite terminals—a venture from which former Prime Minister Najib Mikati notably profited. On the other hand, they may take more radical forms, such as citizens refusing to pay bills entirely when providers lacked enforcement mechanisms.

More recently, practices like “buying days” have proliferated in Lebanon. This involves prepaid cards sold in collaboration with cellphone shopowners, who negotiate discounted rates for recharging without credit, guaranteeing the temporal validity of the SIM card. Additionally, as an Alfa company interlocutor noted, building owners often rent their rooftops to telecom companies for antenna installations. Since these installations require electricity generators to maintain connectivity during power outages, some individuals siphon electricity from the generators for personal use, leading to network disruptions, delays, or breakdowns. When complaints arise, operators dispatch repair personnel to resolve the issue. However, technicians must then negotiate with building owners to cease electricity theft—a process that occasionally escalates to violence, as observed by my interlocutor in several instances.

The telecommunications sector in Lebanon is far more than just an economic entity; it is a materialization of the country's political history, shaped by nepotism, partisan politics, and capitalist accumulation. The management of telecom companies, intertwined with elite networks and sectarian power-sharing, has not only facilitated corruption but also deepened socio-economic precarity. As a result, telecommunications—ostensibly a tool for connectivity—has paradoxically become a site of alienation, where citizens are burdened with exorbitant costs and inadequate services, reinforcing a broader sense of disillusionment with the state. Beyond existing critiques that focus on corruption and mismanagement, it is imperative to introduce an analysis that prioritizes temporality—examining how delayed infrastructural development, fluctuating tariffs, and technological stagnation intersect with broader patterns of economic and political instability during a time when post-modernity is characterized by acceleration (Rosa,

2013). Studying Lebanon's telecom sector through this allows us to examine how state institutions operate, fail, and evolve within a neoliberal framework that prioritizes private interests over public welfare, and to expand our consideration of telecommunication critique to include the markets and temporal structures government and corporate companies impose outside Western contexts.



A closed cellphone shop in Saida advertising a deal for ‘charging days’. Ad reads: “MTC & Alfa year in days and only for 1,800,000 L.L.”

## **V. How does the Regime of Temporal Capital operate?**

Telecommunication companies, such as Touch and Alfa in Lebanon, design their prepaid services and bundles in ways that influence users' temporal consumption patterns. By structuring data, SMS, and call packages with specific validity periods and non-accumulative allowances, companies effectively rationalize time and organize consumption temporally. By considering temporality as the main nexus, I analyze the collected material in relation to digital participation, neo-liberal logic of acceleration and extraction of profit, user's engagement with data plans and technologies, infrastructure, and socio-economic context of Lebanon. I argue that the Regime of Temporal Capital operates on the macro and micro level. The macro level is driven by the telecommunication corporations' logic of profit and can be understood through the vectors of acceleration, alienation, and precarity. The micro level exemplifies how telecommunication corporations operate by enforcing a distinct digital temporality to implement the macro logic. The micro level operationalizes temporality through three interdependent modalities; accessibility (when one connects), connectivity (duration/how long one stays connected), and velocity (what speed is available, where). I expand on these formations below:

### **1. The Macro Level: The Logic of Acceleration**

The macro-level of RTC operates through the logic of profit and technological acceleration and it can be understood through the analysis of how the RTC prioritizes technical acceleration over technological equity and its effects on precarity and alienation.

The acceleration of telecommunications in Lebanon operates through two interlinked mechanisms: the drive for technological speed and the drive for profit extraction. Instead of prioritizing equal access to networks, investment is poured into ever-increasing internet speeds—3G, 4G, 5G—justifying price hikes while leaving entire regions disconnected. This mirrors the accelerationist logic of digital capitalism: rather than expanding infrastructure to marginalized areas, the focus is placed on faster internet for those who can already afford it. Touch and Alfa's rollout of 5G trials in Beirut (2023), while rural areas lack 3G, exemplifies this logic. By marketing "faster" services (e.g., fiber-optic upgrades in affluent neighborhoods), firms create artificial obsolescence, pushing users to upgrade plans despite unmet basic needs. Corporate investment flows into speed upgrades, instead of community needs.

Profit acceleration is intrinsic to the logic of the telecommunication sector. Once a user is part of the network, they are constantly expected to consume whether or not they are using the services. This where temporality is operationalized. Services are rationed on a temporal basis. In the case of a pre-paid line, users must 'recharge' their line within a specific time period, this ensures a constant flow of profit to the telecommunication company. Prepaid plans like Touch's "Monthly 10 GB" (20 USD) or Alfa's "6-Month Validity" bundle (60 USD) lock users into cycles of renewal. Failure to reload before expiration triggers a 7-day grace period, after which SIMs are permanently deactivated. This temporal rationing creates a subscription treadmill: users must continually repurchase time to avoid digital erasure. Also, short-term passes like Alfa's "3-Hour Social Media Bundle" (1.50 USD) or Touch's "Daily Unlimited Calls" (2 USD) cater to users needing intermittent access, forcing them to repurchase time repeatedly.

Acceleration also materializes in the informal economy of telecommunication. Observations in cellphone shops reveal a system in which "charging days" are sold at fluctuating, opaque prices. There is no fixed rate for extending one's connectivity—rather, it is determined by the shop owner, the user's bargaining power, and the store's own access to credits. A user can buy "days" (which extend the SIM card's validity but do not include credit) or "dollars" (which add credit but do not extend validity), a forced binary that ensures perpetual recharging. The more days one purchases, the lower the cost per day—pushing users to spend more upfront to mitigate future costs, further entrenching them in the logic of consumption.

Rosa discusses how the capitalist economics of time "forces" an escalation of the intensity of consumption analogous to that in the production process. He argues that the compulsions and promises of growth and acceleration are inherent in the capitalist economy and shape modern society and its form of life in an ever-intensifying way. He refers to the "escalatory principles" of growth and acceleration anchored in the capitalistic economic system. Similarly, telecom companies' setting temporal limits encourages more rapid consumption decisions and actions

within a defined timeframe, contributing to the heightening of the pace of life by increasing the number of "acts of need-satisfaction per unit of time". The threat of missing the deadline, and potentially losing service, credit, or sim number intensify this pressure, which eventually lead to more consumption. The imposed deadlines create a sense of urgency and reinforce the feeling of time scarcity.

Precarity describes how RTC weaponizes instability to trap marginalized users in dependency. SIM card laws requiring Lebanese passports formalize exclusion for refugees and migrants. Infrastructure neglect in overcrowded or high-risk areas (e.g., Bekaa Valley) further entrenches precarity: antennas stolen or damaged are rarely replaced. The Alfa employee's account of an antenna stolen in Bekaa—and never replaced—highlights how marginalized regions are deemed unprofitable. Users in these areas face perpetual disconnection.

Geographic precarity compounds this exclusion. According to an Alfa employee, antennas are installed across Lebanon to ensure network coverage, but in reality, infrastructure maintenance is subject to economic and security concerns. An anecdote from the Bekaa Valley illustrates this precarity: when an antenna was stolen, the company deemed it unprofitable to replace it. In other cases, antennas on private buildings are exploited by landlords siphoning electricity from the generator, leading to confrontations where repair workers are threatened at gunpoint. In such instances, the company may simply withdraw service rather than address the root of the problem—leaving entire areas in digital limbo.

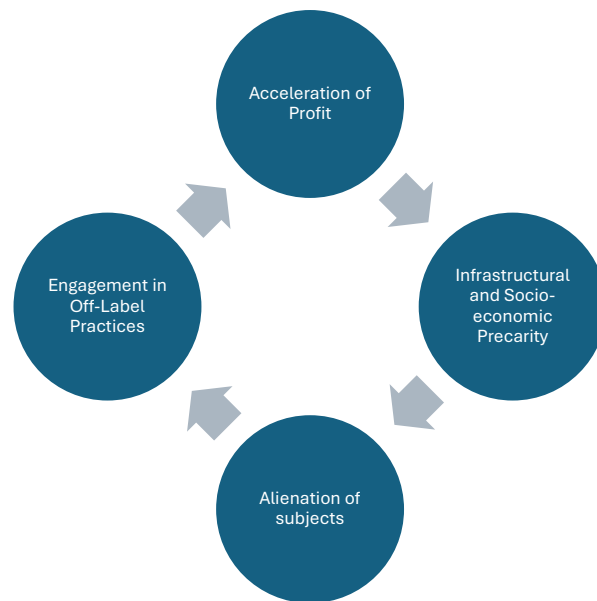
Security concerns further entrench the precarity of connectivity. Repair workers, outsourced to private firms, sometimes refuse to enter certain neighborhoods deemed "unsafe." Here, the economic, geographic, and political dimensions of precarity converge: areas with poor infrastructure, high poverty rates, and limited state presence suffer from degraded service, reinforcing cycles of disconnection and economic marginalization.

Precarity is not an unintended consequence of Lebanon's telecommunication system; it is embedded within its logic. The distinction between pre-paid and post-paid plans reinforces economic stratification—only those with stable jobs and bank accounts (and crucially, valid passports) can access post-paid plans with unclear but more forgiving terms. Meanwhile, pre-paid users—those already in precarious economic positions—must constantly renew their credit, subjected to rigid and exploitative time constraints.

If precarity governs those who struggle to stay connected, alienation is the condition imposed on those who fail to comply with RTC's demands. The fear of being cut off from the network is pervasive—users engage in off-label practices not to challenge the system but to avoid exclusion. "People go to the store where they believe they can get the best deal," an interlocutor noted; anxiety over disconnection fuels a market in which users must navigate opaque pricing and informal transactions just to maintain basic connectivity.

Through the macro level, acceleration, precarity, and alienation intersect. Acceleration drives precarity (5G upgrades in Beirut divert resources from rural antenna repairs, exacerbating connectivity gaps). Precarity fuels alienation (migrants denied legal SIMs and therefore further alienating subjects from participating in the network). Alienation reinforces acceleration (precarious users have to buy costly short-term passes and/or engage in off label practices both of which accelerate corporations' profit margins and temporal market dependency). This interplay sustains RTC's extractive power, ensuring time itself becomes surplus value.

The Macro Logic of RTC:



## 2. The Micro Level: Temporal Fracturing and Extraction

The micro-level of Lebanon's Regime of Temporal Capital (RTC) operates through three interdependent levers—accessibility, connectivity, and velocity—that fracture time into monetized units (minutes, hours, days, months). These levers structure how users engage with digital networks, transforming time into a commodity under corporate control. At the individual level, access to telecommunication networks is constrained by temporal mechanisms that determine when, how long, and how fast one can be connected. The purchase of a SIM card, the validity of credit, and the ability to remain within the network's temporal framework are all conditioned by economic and bureaucratic barriers.

### A. Accessibility

The temporal windows during which users are granted access to networks.

The moment of connection itself is not guaranteed. Individuals must first gain access to a SIM card, an act that is now mediated by legal and bureaucratic controls. A new regulation mandates that to purchase a SIM card, users must provide a passport—effectively excluding entire populations from connectivity, particularly undocumented persons and migrant workers.

Telecoms ration access through prepaid bundles (daily, weekly, monthly), forcing users to “buy time” to enter the digital sphere. This creates a divide where those who cannot afford sustained access are excluded from critical digital lifelines (e.g., job platforms, emergency services). Accessibility governs *when* users can connect, enforced through temporally segmented subscription plans.

## **B. Connectivity**

The duration and reliability of sustained network engagement.

Once inside the network, connectivity is measured in time. Telecoms artificially curtail connectivity through data expiration, throttling, and service interruptions, keeping users in a state of precarious readiness to re-purchase access. Users rush to renew bundles before expiration, not due to data needs but to avoid temporal dispossession.

Connectivity dictates *how long* users remain connected, with corporate policies weaponizing duration to stratify access. Postpaid plans (e.g., Alfa’s “Postpaid 50” at 50 USD/month) offer uninterrupted connectivity for elites with bank accounts, while prepaid users face fragmented access.

Infrastructure neglect amplifies this precarity. Interviews with Alfa’s former NOC employee revealed that rural antennas servicing overcrowded areas (e.g., Ghazzyeh) are often deprioritized during outages. One user described rationing data to “10 minutes a day” to stretch a monthly bundle, effectively reducing connectivity to a time-bound privilege.

Service plans often dictate different prices to various times of the day. Calls and SMS conducted during what is deemed “peak time” costs more than those during “non peak times”. This installs a logic that dictates what time of the day a user must connect to the network.

When users can access the network (accessibility) predetermines if/how long they can connect (connectivity). This is directly shaped by Touch and Alfa’s structure whereby accessing the network, a user must have prescription that determines how long they can do it, this prescription has monetary value, usually the longer it is the cheaper it is. This also relates to precarity, as lower income individuals, as expressed by my interlocutors, are more likely to subscribe to shorter plans due to scarcity of resources, which, given the accelerated nature of subscriptions, once the time period of their plan has finished, they must ‘recharge’.

## **C. Velocity**

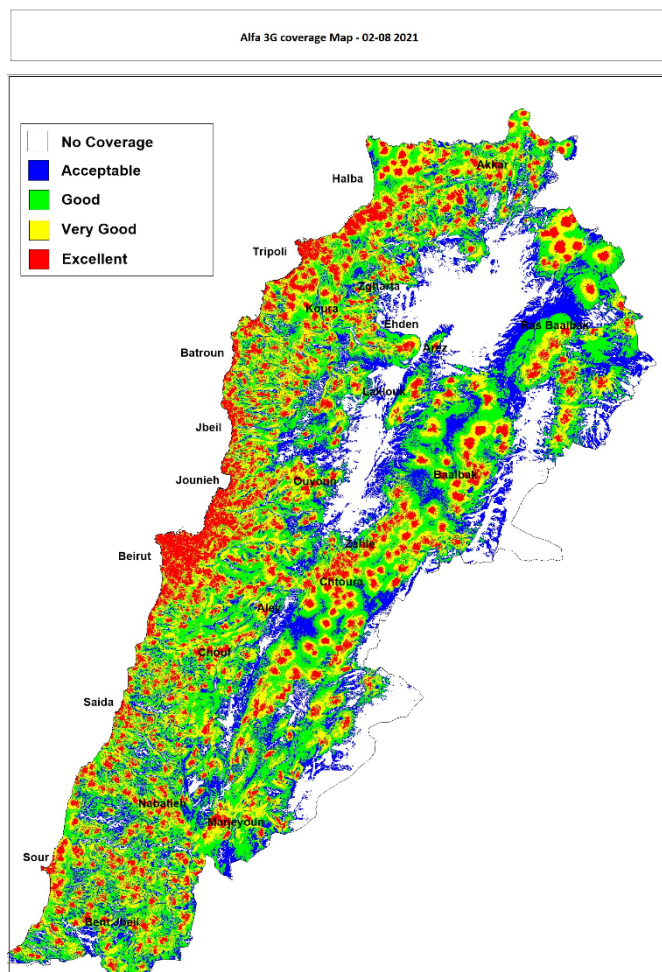
The speed and latency of data transmission, contingent on spatial proximity to infrastructure. While telecoms claim universal speed, velocity is stratified by geography (e.g., antenna density in affluent vs. marginalized areas). Overpopulated areas experience slowed speeds, reinforcing economic and geographic hierarchies. “If an antenna is designed to support 100 users, it won’t provide the same service if 1,000 are connected,” an Alfa employee noted. This is not simply a technical failure but a calculated prioritization of capital investment—where infrastructure is



designed to accommodate profit rather than equitable access. Touch and Alfa advertise “nationwide 4G,” yet throttling and antenna overloads in marginalized regions (e.g., Akkar, South Lebanon) reduce speeds to 2G levels.

Velocity is further monetized through tiered pricing. For example, Alfa’s “Turbo 4G” (15 USD/week) promises high speed but throttles after 5 GB, forcing users to buy supplementary bundles. This throttling mirrors Rosa’s “social acceleration,” where technological promises trap users in cycles of expenditure.

Lebanon's telecommunication system does not merely provide service; it enforces a temporal regime of connectivity that governs who can access networks, for how long, and at what speed. The temporal segmentation of credit, the forced acceleration of consumption, and the deliberate alienation of marginalized groups all serve a single purpose: to maximize profit through the controlled temporality of access, connection, and speed.



## **VI. How Much is Time? The Birth of Temporal Market**

Connectivity in Lebanon does not unfold in a neutral temporal space—it is structured by a temporal regime of capital that dictates the conditions of engagement with digital networks. This regime is not simply about speed or efficiency; it is an infrastructure of control, one that enforces acceleration, precarity, and alienation through the commodification of time. The logic of this system is rooted in the neoliberal accelerationist imperatives, the technological operationalization of everyday life, and the infrastructural entanglements of capital (Rosa, Wajcman, Starosielski).

In Lebanon, where telecommunication operates under a state-sanctioned duopoly, access to the network is determined by who can afford to keep up—both financially and temporally. The segmentation of mobile plans, the expiration of credit, and the bureaucratic obstacles to acquiring SIM cards are not incidental features but the very mechanisms through which a politicized economy of temporality is enforced. Here, time is not a neutral measure but a vector of harm, a tool that disciplines users into continuous consumption while disproportionately excluding those already marginalized by economic and political structures. What emerges is a capitalist architecture of temporal discipline, one that rewards those who can afford to keep pace while dispossessing those who cannot.

The most insidious function of the temporal regime of capital is its weaponization of time as a vector of harm. As Rosa and Wajcman argue, acceleration is not merely about moving faster, it is about the unequal distribution of temporal control. In Lebanon, telecommunication policies reinforce structural exclusions by making access contingent on continuous temporal consumption. The regime of temporal capital does not only shape and influence how people experience time, it also (1) establishes a distinct temporal structure based on capital defined by concepts like ‘minutes’, ‘days’, ‘validity’, ‘grace periods’, etc. in relation to a specified capital determined by a distinct monetary value, (2) operates through an understanding of ‘social acceleration’ where individuals are constantly ‘pressed for time’ trying to negotiate their place within the temporal structure of that regime through alternative ways of consumption.

RTC transforms time into a surplus value extracted from users. This regime manufactures scarcity not through data limits alone but through temporal rationing, alienating users from their capacity to control digital time and trapping them in cycles of perpetual consumption. RTC possesses corporate control over temporal infrastructure (antennas, bundles, throttling) enforces alienation, dependency, stratification, and dispossession. Migrant workers and undocumented individuals are often denied SIM cards due to ID and passport requirements, cutting them off from essential communication networks. Their exclusion is not simply economic but political. Accessibility becomes a temporal privilege (when am I able to access a network?) granted to those who fit within the state’s regulatory framework. Geographic inequalities further entrench these exclusions. Rural areas and Palestinian refugee camps are often deprioritized in infrastructure investments, reinforcing a spatialized digital divide wherein certain populations are

systematically excluded from high-speed connectivity. Time, in this context, is not a neutral measure but a mechanism of enforced precarity, a means of disciplining users into continuous consumption while rendering certain populations perpetually vulnerable to disconnection.

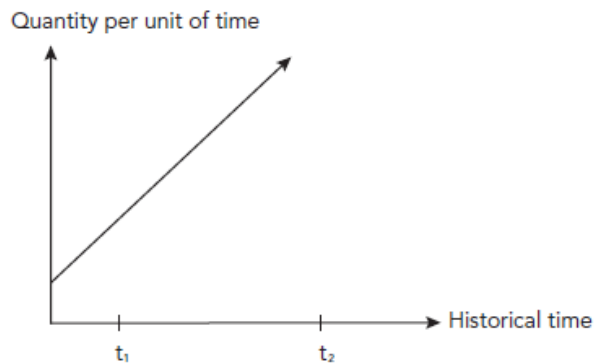
Off-label practices, such as “charging days” or “buying dollars”, emerge as adaptive tactics for users to circumvent the temporal rigidity of Lebanon’s telecom market, yet they paradoxically reinforce corporate control over temporal capital. These practices involve users paying small shops to temporarily “top up” their SIM validity—often transferring purchased credit back to the shopkeeper—to retain network access without monetary balance. While users gain fleeting relief from expiration threats, the practice benefits both informal vendors and telecom giants. Shopkeepers profit by reselling the recaptured credits and determine the price of ‘days’ to precarious individuals such as undocumented migrants or those seeking smaller, cheaper bundles, effectively creating a secondary market. Telecom corporations like Touch and Alfa, meanwhile, extract surplus value through mandatory SMS fees (0.10 USD/transfer) required for credit transactions, ensuring profit even from informal exchanges. Crucially, off-label markets do not subvert the temporal regime but reproduce its logic: expiration temporal deadlines, renewal anxieties, and speed hierarchies persist, binding users to cycles of dependency. By absorbing informal practices into their architecture, through fee structures and temporal constraints, Touch and Alfa ensure that all connectivity, formal or quasi-formal, remains governed by their monetized temporal framework. Thus, off-label practices sustain a quasi-informal economy where time itself, as dictated by corporate temporal brackets (days, weeks, months), becomes the currency of survival, reinforcing users’ reliance on a market whose value and rules are unilaterally determined by telecom monopolies.

While Rosa discusses the “temporalization of time” as a feature of late modernity where the timing of activities becomes more flexible and decided within time, we see here under RTC the imposition of rigid, linear, clock-based time by telecom monopolies which render the only to make such temporality flexible is by paying for its flexibility. In an attempt to absorb off-label practices, Touch and Alfa introduced recently new functions allowing users to buy “credits” or “days”. Users can buy extra days to extend the validity of their plan for 1USD/Day, available only for 5 days, this can be seen as a strategic manipulation of temporal structures to drive economic activity. This remains significantly different than the off-label practice performed by cellphone shops where the extension of validity is based on a plan that can range from 10 days to a year. By creating artificial time constraints, the telecom sector aims to accelerate sales cycles and potentially increase overall consumption. This logic of acceleration, and according to Rosa, is driven by “the economic motor of capitalist enterprise”, which inherently relies on the acquisition and exploitation of time as a “competitive advantage”.

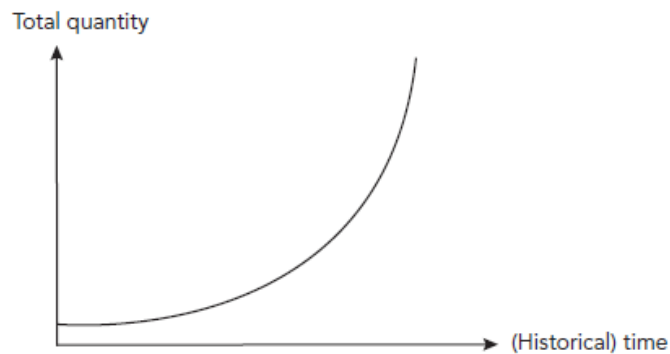
While explaining his theory of social acceleration, Rosa proposes two main graphs in order to the understanding of acceleration of production in relation to time. Rosa defines acceleration as “an increase in quantity per unit of time”. His graph shows an upward trend in the “Quantity per unit of time” as “Historical time” progresses, illustrating the increasing rate at which a certain

quantity is being produced, communicated, or transported. Rosa adds that acceleration also occurs in continuous processes of "production", leading to exponential growth, meaning the quantity increases at an increasingly rapid rate over time. This example would describe the acceleration logic of telecommunication companies as they employ temporal structure to increase profit margins. However, I propose here a third interpretation of acceleration as experienced by precarious individuals participating in the off-label practices. In this case, users accelerate time by 'purchasing' it, while the credit value or quantity of their 'data' tends to remain the same as they must send it back to the shop owner in exchange for a cheaper price. I illustrate this argument through the graphs below.

Rosa's graphs of: (1) Acceleration as Increase in Quantity Per Unit of Time and (2) Exponential Growth as a Result of Acceleration of Continuous Processes.

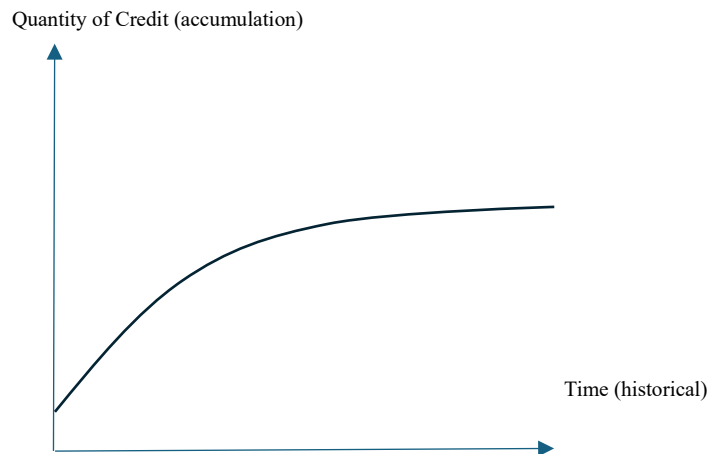


2.1. Acceleration as Increase in Quantity Per Unit of Time



2.2. Exponential Growth as a Result of Acceleration of Continuous Processes

My graph of temporal acceleration of off-label practices: Exponential growth of accumulated 'time' as a result of acceleration of the process of recharging phone line validity under precarity



As Rosa points out, while technological acceleration involves processes of production and communication, they are “noncontinuous and do not inherently lead to growth”. For instance, the ability to travel faster does not automatically mean we will travel more frequently. In the example I propose above, the acceleration does not mean that users will use their phones and services more, however they ensure that there is an acceleration of accessibility, meaning they can access the network more and, as one interlocutor explained, someone can reach them if “something happens, god forbids”. Acceleration here pertains also to the acceleration of profit of telecommunication companies as the data/credit of users remains constant, indicating that the profit is generated in relation to time. And therefore, prescribes time a surplus value that can be extracted.

Beyond economic exclusion, the temporal regime of capital produces a profound sense of alienation, in line with Rosa’s broader critique of modernity. The acceleration of digital consumption does not lead to greater control over time but rather an intensified sense of disempowerment. The perpetual need to renew one’s accessibility, to anticipate expiration dates, and to navigate opaque pricing structures fosters a condition of temporal anxiety.

Hassan (2020) extensively argues regarding the need to consider our own nature as 'analogue beings' in contrast to the digital. This speaks to existential question over the concern of time and acceleration as discussed by Virilio and Rosa. Besides the fact that we need to prescribe to several temporalities, social acceleration often leads to a sense of dread as we constantly feel that we are out of, or pressed on, time (Rosa). I would add here that a anxiety also arises upon the realization that our agentic temporality, the temporality which we prescribe to as 'analogous beings', comes to clash with the temporal logic of telecommunication corporations. Users rush from place to place, within a predetermined amount of time, engaging in negotiations that may or may not eventually lead to the possibility of exchange between monetary value and temporality predetermined by the logic of off-label markets and shaped by the larger temporal logic instilled

by telecommunication companies. This sense of anxiety is directly related to precarity as users who possess the luxury of a bank account and stable job can avoid this cycle through the post-paid service. In the logic of post-paid service, extraction takes place systematically and automatically at the end of each month. It still ensures high profit margins for telecommunication companies, as users would still have to prescribe and pay for data and internet bundles, however the mode of payment is simplified through bank extraction. One logic expressed by an interlocutor regarding why they prefer pre-paid over postpaid subscription is the ability to control expenditure. Post paid subscriptions would charge any additional data consumed, be it internet or calls and SMS, directly to monthly bill.

For many, disconnection is not just an inconvenience but a threat to social and economic survival. Access to mobile networks is essential for work, but also a necessity during uncertain times. In the context of potential war, accidents, road closures, electricity cuts, slow bureaucracy, disconnection becomes a form of economic and social exclusion. Users engage in workaround economies and off-label practices not to challenge the system but to temporarily evade its disciplinary mechanisms.

## **VII. Conclusion**

The regime of temporal capital is a capital structure of control established and sustained by telecommunication monopolies and neo-liberal and partisan politics that aims to operate and weaponize time as a vector of harm against people with political and socio-economic precarity under the threat of alienation. This regime is operationalized on the macro and the micro level. The macro level operates within the understanding of neo-liberal modernity as acceleration and alienation which aims to loop users in a perpetual cycle of temporal consumption, and the micro level intends to establish a temporal structure that dictates the use and engagement with telecommunication networks through connectivity, accessibility, and velocity. In the case of Lebanon, the regime of temporal capital operates under the hegemonic sectarian system, as delineated by Amel, by surpassing any difference and distinction between corporate and governmental ownership. It moves beyond the understanding of public and private ownership, as it establishes a regime of temporality that dictates consumption and market value aimed to commodify temporality and use it as a surplus value to benefit elites.

At its core, the temporal regime of capital in Lebanon's telecommunication system is not an anomaly but a manifestation of neoliberal modernity's broader logic. The blurring of public and private ownership in Lebanon's telecom sector ensures that temporality itself is commodified for elite benefit. The Lebanese state, despite nominally owning the telecom infrastructure, has outsourced its management to private entities, creating a hybrid public-private system designed to maximize rent-seeking rather than public service. This model allows elites to extract surplus value from digital consumption while maintaining plausible deniability over price hikes, network failures, and accessibility issues. Here, I note that the drive for acceleration functions as a mechanism of control and harm within the specific political economy of Lebanon.

Time, in this system, is not a neutral medium but a commodity, a weapon, and a mechanism of control. The temporal regime of capital operates by structuring access through temporal consumption, where connectivity is a function of one's ability to keep pace with arbitrary expiration cycles. In this sense, Lebanon's telecom system is but a microcosm of neoliberal accelerationist logic, one that reveals how capital's control over time itself has become a central axis of power in the digital age. The struggle over connectivity is thus not just a struggle for access but a struggle over the right to time itself.

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