

Chapter 7

Doing Fieldwork, BRB: Locating the Field on and with Emerging Media

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Are you online right now? How do you know? Maybe you are reading this in print, but your phone is buzzing, or you are taking breaks to check your email, and will BRB (be right back). Maybe you downloaded the digital edition of this text but are not connected to the Internet at the moment. Or maybe, by the time you read this, Internet access has become truly ubiquitous, and you are successfully tuning out distractions.

I frequently faced this question of when one is “online” while studying social and mobile media practices among several friendship clusters in Berlin in the late 2000s (Kraemer 2012, 2014). But it also echoes questions anthropologists raised in the 1980s and 1990s about the role of communication technologies in changing the nature of the “field” itself (Appadurai 1996; Burrell 2009; Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 1997; Marcus 1995). Globalizing processes, entwined with emerging communication technologies, provoked anthropologists to rethink what constitutes “the field” as a place ontologically distinct from “home.” These questions pushed scholars to look more closely at what makes anthropological fieldwork distinctive, particularly that key (and often underexamined) component of fieldwork, fieldnotes. The first *Fieldnotes* volume (Sanjek 1990a) demystified much about the practice of writing fieldnotes and helped reimagine the field—and anthropology itself.

The current volume revisits these questions by asking how emerging technologies are again transforming fieldwork and the everyday practices

of anthropologists. In this chapter, I examine how social and mobile media—that is, social network sites (Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn), blogs, “microblogging” services (Twitter, Tumblr), and media sharing platforms (YouTube, Flickr, Instagram) and mobile networking, especially on Internet-enabled mobile phones—are remaking anthropological understandings of the field, fieldwork, and fieldnotes. Social media often overlap with mobile platforms, and by “mobile” I mean technologies that depend on wireless networking—cell phones, especially Internet-enabled smartphones; laptops; cellular and WiFi networks; and other portable devices.¹ I address these questions by comparing the binary of online versus offline to home versus field, drawing on work in anthropology, science and technology studies (STS), and information studies to rethink these binaries in relation to place-making practices.

I use one particular day from my fieldwork to illustrate some conceptual and practical challenges for conducting ethnographic fieldwork on and with social and mobile media, but these considerations affect anthropologists and ethnographers studying a broad range of topics. Our research methods must now contend with the reality that digital, networked technologies are integral to daily life both for scholars and the worlds, peoples, and places we study.

The day was March 31, 2010. It was the day before abstracts were due for the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association (AAA). I was more than halfway into a ten-month research stay, based in Berlin, and was deeply steeped in my fieldwork. Early fieldwork anxieties about gathering data were giving way to struggles writing all of my observations down. I was collaborating with a close friend and co-conspirator, Jenny Carlson, to plan our first AAA panel. Over the course of thirty-six hours, I cowrote the panel abstract, maneuvered the AAA’s online system (no mean feat!), wrangled other panelists, and conducted fieldwork on Facebook, with a group of Berliners in their apartment, and with another circle of friends at a music event. I moved between online and offline sites, circles of friends, and “home” or “not-the-field” (which may not always be the same) and “the field,” movements facilitated by email, instant messaging, mobile telephony, and social network sites (see Figure 7.1). So what constituted distinctions between different spaces or settings, and what are some consequences for anthropological fieldwork?

Of course, media and communication technologies are not new to anthropology or ethnographic fieldwork—from letters and photography to

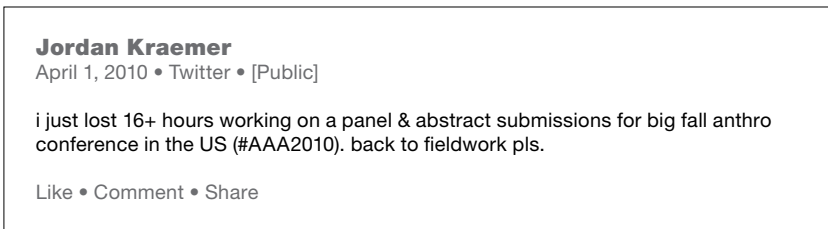


Figure 7.1. “Back to fieldwork pls.”

film and audio recordings, anthropologists have been recording their subjects and observations since Boas and Malinowski (see also Bateson and Mead 1962; Brady 2002; Mead 1956), not to mention writing letters to family, colleagues, and mentors back “home” (Sanjek 1990c). Fieldnotes represent a key medium through which anthropologists inscribe ourselves and our work, as intermediate texts between interacting with research participants and their worlds and more final forms of “writing up.” But fieldnotes also serve to make the field a certain kind of place. Social and mobile media are remaking these practices in multiple ways, providing new platforms and formats for creating field materials and bringing relationships and interactions from different parts of life into closer proximity. In this chapter, I consider specific capacities and entailments of emerging media² that reshape fieldnotes and the field, including challenges in recording activities on social media, managing disparate audiences and social worlds, and conducting fieldwork when one can never fully disconnect from “home.” Thinking through these issues and their consequences offers new insights into long-standing issues in anthropology and ethnography on the nature of the field, fieldwork, and the texts we produce.

Making Online and Offline Worlds

Anthropologists and other scholars have been grappling for some time with questions of how to conceptualize the Internet, virtual worlds, and digital media. How should we even denote interactions or communications that involve networked computing technologies: digital? virtual? online? Rethinking binaries such as “online” and “offline” offers a means to reconsider the relationship between “the field” and “not-the-field” (which may not always not be “home”) as places in the making.³

Social and mobile media can be considered a subset of digital, networked communication technologies, where “digital” differentiates binary encodings (literally, a discrete code made up of ones and zeros) from analog formats (see Lévy 2001: 33–43). I use “social media” to refer to networked communication platforms that are organized around interlinked user profiles or pages, depend on users to create content or share media, and articulate participants’ “social networks” (boyd and Ellison 2008; Ellison, Steinfeld, and Lampe 2007), that is, linkages between users.⁴

In describing these approaches, I consider specific and material qualities of mobile and social media, such as their capacity to be enmeshed in everyday practice.⁵ Mobile devices, for example, integrate practices such as checking email or Facebook into other daily activities. Users often fit online activities into little gaps throughout the day, stretching and contracting experiences of time in a way Rattenbury, Nafus, and Anderson (2008) describe as “plastic.” Other scholarship attends to the multiplicity of connections that social media facilitate, such as Madianou and Miller’s (2013) conceptualization of polymedia, to theorize how users move between platforms, applications, devices, and other communicative modes (see Figure 7.2).⁶

Social and mobile media, then, affect everyday social worlds by allowing users to switch rapidly between conversations and contexts. This rapid movement can risk “context collapse,” a situation in which one social world impinges on another (boyd 2014: 31–32). But users also manage audiences and publics through practices such as linguistic code switching (Kraemer 2012: 149–157). Worlds can collide without blurring or merging. In fieldwork, too, emerging media bring into close proximity people, places, and activities considered “in the field” with those we associate with “home.” As with online worlds, the “field” must be constructed as a kind of place. These boundaries are not necessarily dissolving—on the contrary, we as fieldworkers continue to reconstitute them. I was “in the field,” for example, when I was chatting online with those whose practices I was observing, recording, and analyzing; other times, I conversed with colleagues, friends, and family from “home.” Yet when I began discussing my fieldwork experiences with my panel co-organizer, our chatlogs became part of my field record in ways that complicate these distinctions. Fieldwork takes place across (and constitutes) diverse sites and spaces, and I therefore propose attending to this plurality of encounters, technologies, activities,



Figure 7.2. Connection strategies and polymedia: switching between audiences and platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

and actors. Just as possibilities are proliferating of communicating, interacting, and engaging through emerging media, so are new means to lurk, disconnect, or withdraw, which are equally important in constructing experiences of place.⁷ To explore these, I next recount examples of how I navigated the field and not-the-field, as well as the field materials that constituted these spaces.

Thirty-Six Hours in the Life of a Fieldworker

These issues came to the fore that day in March 2010 when I was struggling to balance fieldwork with the demands of submitting a conference panel. My account of the following thirty-six hours illustrates the kinds of field-notes I generated as I moved between media, sites, and encounters and the places constituted through them.

The final AAA deadline was April 1, and I had spent most of the day working in my apartment. The apartment itself had become part of my

fieldwork as my roommates maintained ties to a circle of friends from the same region of eastern Germany. In my research, the regional emerged as a key geographic scale that was often enacted through social and mobile media.

I was working at my laptop in the afternoon when I received an instant message from Jenny, my panel co-organizer. She was working on her dissertation prospectus from her home in Austin, Texas, where it was still morning. Our conversation in some sense took place out of the field (though not necessarily at my “home”); for example, when we referenced professional activities:

jenny: Hey!!

jenny: How goes

jordan: GOOD MORNING

jordan: good!

jenny: I am looking at all the emails

jordan: i have my abstract drafted, just need to edit, which i will do tomorrow.

jenny: I have to do this today too

jordan: i'm just now trying to tackle the session abstract

jenny: I know!

jenny: Wanna workshop it?

Our chat also became a record of fieldwork, akin to fieldnotes, as we turned from discussing the abstract to reflecting on my ongoing fieldwork. As our conversation progressed, I moved my laptop into the kitchen so I could begin cooking dinner. I was preparing foods for Passover, the Jewish holiday, which led to discussing my experiences in Germany as an American Jew:

jordan: what was REALLY interesting was going to a German-Jewish seder on monday

jenny: ??

jordan: in Schöneberg

jordan: and they were like, Friedrichshain, where's that? we're Wessies

jenny: I know

jordan: no one here says Wessies.

jordan: or Ossies.

jenny: I know. . . . I find that Ossi and Wessi is only invoked
ironically in regard to cultural artifacts

jordan: another interesting thing was watching *Inglorious Basterds* a
few months ago, with my German friends

This led to discussing fieldnotes themselves:

jenny: I hope you took fieldnotes on that

jordan: i take fieldnotes on EVERYTHING

jenny: are you a scratch note/jot note person?

jordan: it's so time consuming

jordan: i have a notebook for handwriting but i type almost
everything up longform for better future use

jenny: OKAY. But point being. . . . *Inglorious Basterds*

As this conversation was taking place, I was moving between other media and interactions, launching Skype with my partner in San Francisco and coordinating plans with other contacts in Berlin. Instant messaging provided a space for me and Jenny to reflect on our work as we were conducting it, while producing a record that became part of my field materials. Even within a single format, our conversation moved quickly between topics and language registers, just as online chat made it possible to jump between the field and not-the-field, bringing online conversations into the space of the kitchen.

The following day, we ran into technical difficulties submitting the abstracts, exacerbated by the fact that one panelist, also conducting fieldwork, did not have Internet access during the day. She asked her boyfriend to use her computer as her intermediary while she talked him through the process over the phone:

*doris*⁸: are you online? This is kinda urgent!

jordan: yeah, i'm here

jordan: the system looks like it's back up for me

doris: Hey Jordan. This is not Doris; but her boyfriend. Doris is out
in the boonies with no net access. She wanted me to get in
touch with you about the AAAS [sic] stuff

jordan: Hi!

doris: she is in fact on the phone with me.

jordan: great

Like me, Doris was straddling the field and not-the-field (but again, not “home”) to upload her abstract while contending with infrastructural limits to Internet access. Her boyfriend was similarly positioned both in and out of the field while accessing her IM account and wrestling with the submission system. Our chat linked us across fieldsites and brought us momentarily “out” of the field—even as the field exerted its presence by hampering our ability to communicate.

Along with these conversations, I was engaged simultaneously—or perhaps, in rapid succession—in chats “in” the field. A friend of my roommate’s, Claudia, messaged me on Facebook to coordinate cooking a meal. She had moved to Berlin in the past few years, around the same time as many of her friends from rural Saxony-Anhalt. She reached out to me over Facebook chat because Daniele would not be home when she wanted to cook:

Claudia: jordan—when will you be home tomorrow evening?

Claudia: [I] want to cook at your place, but dani doesn’t come home
til half past nine

Jordan: all day long, at the most

Claudia: will you be home at 7pm?

Here, indexical words pointed to the space of my apartment (“your place”) and upcoming times (“tomorrow evening”). I misunderstood which day she wanted to cook on, however, which led to miscommunication:

Claudia: ja! see you tomorrow

Jordan: oh wait

Jordan: you mean today or tomorrow?

Claudia: tomorrow

Jordan: ACHSO [OH OKAY]

Claudia: from 7

Jordan: nevermind! :)

Jordan: no problem.

Jordan: i'm cooking THIS evening. i didn't understand.

Claudia: ok.

In this sense, our chat took place “in” the field, both because Claudia was one of my research participants and because we referred to spaces and times where I conducted fieldwork. While I was chatting with Claudia, a potential interviewee in the Netherlands, linked to networks of electronic music fans I was also studying, messaged me to schedule a meeting over Skype. My fieldsite in this sense did not constitute a single geographic place; it could span multiple locales over the same media platforms.

I reproduce these chatlogs here to illustrate how “the field” was made online. But they also offer multiple possibilities for “creat[ing] our own documents” (Sanjek 1990b: xii), as a record of fieldwork and a space in which to reflect while “in” the field. The field here emerged out of the attention I brought to particular people and activities; that is, when I was observing and recording (see Jackson 1990: 16–17; Lederman 1990: 88–89). As one interviewee told Jackson in her study of anthropologists’ relationships to their fieldnotes, he took breaks from fieldwork by not taking notes: “‘Sometimes I don’t take notes on purpose. Around here I use it as a protective device. My way of turning off’” (Jackson 1990: 17). But even attention breaks down as a rubric to delineate the field, because I often made observations without taking notes or created fieldnotes unintentionally when I thought I was just chatting with a friend from “home.”

When Claudia arrived to begin cooking, I returned to my chat with Jenny to let her know I would have to go shortly:

jordan: people are arriiving here in an hour so i can't keep doing
this

jordan: sorry

At this point, I shifted from working at the computer to spending time in the kitchen with Claudia, Daniele, and their friends before leaving to meet with another fieldwork circle of friends later that evening. This did not necessarily mean going “offline,” however, as I remained connected via mobile phone to the Internet (and to text messaging). Alongside the friends from Magdeburg, I was conducting fieldwork with a circle of DJs, music producers, and their friends, most of whom lived in Berlin. They participated in broader networks of electronic music fans that I considered trans-local; that is, taking place across locales. “Translocal” here indicates not

just linkages between places but dynamic connections that create new experiences of place (Zhan 2009: 8), and, like the regional, emerged as a key form of scale-making. A DJ and music promoter named Alex had messaged me earlier that day via Skype, his preferred messaging platform for close friends, to coordinate meeting later at a music show. I want to describe next two key moments from the evening that illustrate moving between modes of communication, media, and places.

That evening, a Friday, a well-known music project was heading the bill at Berghain, a nightclub that has come to symbolize Berlin's postunification nightlife and licentious club culture⁹ (Rapp 2009; see also Borneman and Senders 2000). Saturdays were notorious for kicking off multiday dance parties fueled by repetitive techno and less licit intoxicants. But Friday nights were calmer affairs, with live performances that attracted a specialist crowd of self-described "music geeks." When I arrived, the crowd was milling about before the set began. Another friend proposed that we "get into position" or "into place"—that is, find a good spot to hear the music before the floor became tightly packed. We made our way forward shortly before the lights dimmed. A wall of deep, droning sound washed over us and the crowd surged forward, hemming us in on all sides. Eventually, the relentlessly vibrating bass and tight quarters overwhelmed my commitment to fieldwork, and I snuck away to the bar. Reflexively, I checked email on my smartphone for updates regarding our conference panel. Just as I had moved between chat conversations in and out of the field in my apartment, I switched from participant observation to email with fellow panelists.

Yet this switching was never seamless. I felt conspicuous in the dim, smoky bar, staring at a brightly lit screen. Although this has become a norm in many places, it was still unusual there. I walked down to the ground floor, where I found a quiet spot on a couch to take handwritten notes. A few moments later, I was interrupted by a man in his thirties, with short hair and a trim beard. "Hallo? Hallo? Are you doing homework?" he asked. I debated how to reply. "No, I'm taking notes," I said finally, and explained that I was an anthropologist, which led to a longer conversation until he excused himself. The moment illustrates, on one hand, how note-taking can disrupt fieldwork, as others have commented (Sanjek 1990c: 96; Clifford 1990: 51). Both checking my mobile phone and taking notes could provoke curiosity, even suspicion, because such actions stood outside the bounds of context-appropriate behavior. On the other hand, moments of

disruption and disconnection could spark unexpected, and potentially productive, encounters, as I discuss next. Afterward, I eventually returned to my apartment—where I still had to finalize my conference presentation title, briefly switching “out” of the field once more.

Colliding Worlds and Strategies for (Dis)Connection

Digital communication technologies do not dissolve boundaries between field and home, but they can bring disparate worlds into close proximity. This entails numerous challenges for conducting fieldwork on and with emerging media, three of which I want to relate regarding fieldnotes and place making. First, I found it difficult to write notes while “observing” on Facebook and similar platforms, so I developed alternative means for creating field records of social media activities. Second, it was often awkward to conduct fieldwork on the same social network sites I used with friends and contacts from “home”; I had to negotiate these usages. Third, although it is technologically possible to study social media practices from a distance, it is surprisingly hard to conduct this research without “being there” (Lederman 1990: 88–89) to observe the everyday contexts of social and mobile media. I want to discuss the first two of these in more detail, to suggest reframing the issues of connection and disconnection as forms of attention that constitute the field. I hope this will shed light on the third challenge.

Initially, I envisioned taking fieldnotes while observing activities on Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms—literally sitting at my laptop and switching between Facebook and a word processor—yet was quickly stymied. Alongside my detailed daily fieldnotes, I have a lone document titled “Facebook/Social media notes,” which remains blank. I was able to describe visual content on user profile pages and popular media (such as news and streaming television sites), and I often wrote about events or exchanges that happened on Skype or Facebook or over mobile phones. But I found it difficult, for example, to report on the stream of posts and actions that constitutes the Facebook News Feed, until I discovered screenshots.

At first, I saved pages on Facebook as images, preserving how they looked but sacrificing the ability to copy, paste, or search for text. I found it more effective to save entire webpages—all HTML, links, and image files—to my computer, which allows me to retrieve pages later in a web browser (although elements sometimes break or expire when sites change

their architecture). I could then save pages periodically and analyze them later as documents or stills. My difficulty recording social media practices in real time may reflect ways people use Facebook, checking it periodically throughout the day rather than spending sustained periods of time there. But screenshots provided a snapshot that became part of my ethnographic record, like a photograph—an ethnographic still life I could return to and analyze in the context of daily fieldnotes, interview transcripts, and other data (compare Edwards 1997 for a discussion of the material entailments of photographic stills in anthropology).

This leads to the challenge of maintaining disparate social worlds with people back “home” and those in “the field.” Facebook, like other social media, can make visible relationships from different parts of people’s lives, especially through the News Feed, which aggregates the activities of one’s Friends according to proprietary algorithms. I had to decide whether to create a new Facebook account for my research, which, with few contacts, might appear suspicious or artificial—outside the bounds of usual sociality. There are ethical advantages, however, to identifying as a researcher, and anthropologists have historically found that participants adjust to their presence. A separate research profile, moreover, might signal that I did not consider those I met in the field to be “real” or “actual” friends (cf. Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe 2011: 878) and required deciding in advance who were potential research subjects. I addressed these issues by creating instead a separate “Group” on Facebook for interlocutors in Berlin and other sites. This group allowed me to browse status updates and activities in one place without making the group’s boundaries visible to other users—or disconnecting from my existing network.

I continued posting updates to all of my Facebook Friends, but this led to awkward moments. A German-speaking friend complained that she had trouble understanding my posts in English, but I risked alienating, or at least discomfiting, friends from “home” when I wrote in German. One, for example (see Figure 7.3), quipped “bless you” in response to the name of a central plaza, Gendarmenmarkt—a humorous response that may have belied discomfort.

Sometimes, I switched between German and English to target different audiences, a strategy many of my interlocutors used. At other times, I posted the same update twice—with notable variations. For example, one Sunday I posted in German about relaxing and enjoying soup my roommate had cooked:

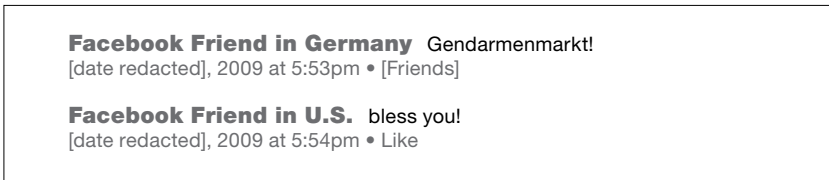


Figure 7.3. “Gendarmenmarkt!” “bless you!”

broccoli soup from my roommate, now on the couch. Totally nice Sunday. (*broccoli suppe meiner Mitbewohnerin, jetzt auf den Couch. Ganz schöne Sonntag*)

I then followed with a second post:

which is to say, delicious broccoli soup thanks to my roommate, now couch time. also got in my first real bike ride, to and from a Jewish café in Mitte to buy matzah.

This latter addition seems aimed at a different audience, friends back “home,” perhaps because I associated the Jewish holiday more with my personal life.

The encounters in Figure 7.4 illustrate the awkwardness, disconnections, and disjunctures that often characterize moving between places and worlds on social media. Facebook could create online spaces at multiple geographic levels simultaneously—translocal linkages, local rhythms of living, regional ties—but this switching was never seamless. Just as checking email or taking notes at a club marked my behavior as inappropriate, moving between social worlds on Facebook generated moments of discomfort and sparked encounters between friends from “home” and those in “the field.” In this sense, the field became a spatial scale of its own, as I will discuss next. I therefore suggest reframing connection strategies for moving between media in the field as strategies for (dis)connection, to encapsulate ways in which we manage attention by pulling away, sneaking off, or putting down the notepad—to write, reflect, or just catch a break. To shift attention away from one place is always to take it somewhere else, and therefore it plays a key role in constituting the field as a place.



Figure 7.4. Difficulties moving between “the field” and “not-the-field.”

Final Words: Digitalia as Marginalia That Produce the Field

What it means to do fieldwork is changing as emerging technologies bring us into closer contact with “home” while we must navigate a shifting “field.” It is no longer practical to conduct fieldwork in isolation, if ever it was. Still, because these shifts also affect the people and worlds we study, to be immersed in our fieldsites now includes these movements between spaces and places, across media and encounters. Fieldnotes occupy a central position in constituting the field as a place (or multiple places), even as emerging media provide new platforms and possibilities for creating field materials. In this chapter, I have considered how social and mobile media are transforming fieldwork by turning to accounts of digital materialities, connection strategies, and polymedia to emphasize plural and diverse practices that include media technologies. These approaches seek to account for ways that people move between media and other modes of engagement without dividing them into online or offline. Yet binary distinctions can create online and offline worlds as spaces in their own right, comparable

to the ways in which anthropological fieldwork can create the “field” in opposition to “home” or “not-the-field.”

In this vein, I have recounted myriad materials I generated over thirty-six hours of fieldwork, which included handwritten notes; chatlogs with friends, colleagues, and research participants; a Twitter post about my conference panel; screenshots of Facebook; and, of course, “headnotes” (Ottenberg 1990: 144–146), recollections that helped flesh out my notes when I typed them up later and continue to inform my ethnographic writing. Some I created intentionally (my daily field log and Facebook screenshots), but others emerged as digital marginalia—“digitalia”—that became invaluable sources of data.

Rather than divide these materials into “online” and “offline,” I want to call attention to how they created “the field” and “not-the-field” as places. The field could be on Facebook, when I observed participants’ activities and took screenshots. It was also constituted through attention to my informants’ daily activities, whether cooking or attending a music show. Online and offline worlds did not merge, but Facebook brought together diverse scales and spheres of social life, for me and for those I was studying. The field, in consequence, came into more immediate, even dialectical, relation with “home” or “not-the-field,” as I moved between conversations with colleagues, family, research participants, and friends (categories that were rarely static), on Skype, mobile phone, Facebook, in my apartment kitchen, or at a concert. The space of my apartment in Berlin, in effect, became multiply constituted as both “in” and “out” of the field, as did the space of instant message conversations.

As I have argued elsewhere (Kraemer 2014), emerging media reshape experiences of place partly by bringing different levels or scales of social life into new configurations (compare Tsing 2005: 57–58). In this sense, the field represents a spatial scale that was made through the field materials I generated, and their particular medium—digital, analog, verbal, or otherwise—shaped particular experiences of place. Emerging media, as I have said, make it possible to alternate rapidly between settings and contexts. These possibilities are never determinative, as technologies are taken up in culturally specific ways that cannot be predicted from their affordances alone.

New modes of connectedness, I have argued, also generate new possibilities for disconnection. I do not suggest that mobile phones or social media are simply sites of distraction and isolation, as I found that this was rarely

the case. But switching between media could disrupt or interrupt a field-work encounter, thus shifting attention from instant messaging to my apartment or from a music show to email. I have therefore suggested that we reframe connection strategies as strategies for (dis)connection, to encapsulate how we manage attention—and our field-making practice—by turning elsewhere. Movements between sites, media, and contexts constructed everyday encounters as much around moments of disconnection as around moments of connection—moments that could equally elicit new encounters, new experiences of place, and new entanglements between the field and not-the-field as places in the making.

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Notes

1. DeNicola (2012) has noted that these technologies are increasingly characterized by their locatability as much as by their mobility.

2. I use “emerging” to account for how such technologies are still developing and being adopted in contingent ways, without emphasizing a binary between “new” and “old” because today’s “new media” may quickly become tomorrow’s old hat.

3. My approach is informed by literature on the materiality of information (Blanchette 2011; Dourish and Mazmanian 2013; Hayles 2004; Rosner et al. 2012) that considers material qualities of digital technologies to be inseparable from their meaning, use, and consequences for social life. These approaches call attention to specific practices that constitute “online” and “offline” without implying that these spheres are blurring or collapsing, as Tom Boellstorff (2012) has shown. Similarly, “the field” and “not-the-field” are not collapsing or merging but must each be created as places. Fieldnotes remain key to this field-making practice, even as social and mobile media are transforming their practice.

4. But I would caution against conflating social networks, social network sites, and broader social worlds. Miller and Horst note that one feature of anthropological approaches to digital culture are our units of analysis: “where some disciplines prioritize collectives, minds, individuals and other fragments of life, anthropologist focus upon life as lived and all the mess of relevant factors that comes with that” (2012: 4).

5. Material qualities are not necessarily fixed, though—instead, as Hayles has argued, they are a component of media that derive from “the interplay between a

text's physical characteristics and its signifying strategies" (2004: 67). Although digital texts can appear as stable (albeit dematerialized) objects, our experiences of them depend on qualities specific to their physical encodings (and decodings).

6. Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe, for example, describe diverse ways through which college students manage social relations both on and off Facebook in terms of "connection strategies," to emphasize the "overlapping nature of online and offline interactions" (2011: 876). Madianou and Miller (2013) coined the word "polymedia" to account for media environments in which people navigate (and generate) social relationships by switching between media modes and platforms, whether these be voice calls, videochat, Facebook updates, or direct messaging.

7. It is interesting to note how many of the latest popular platforms (such as Snapchat and Post Secret) revolve around secrecy, anonymity, and temporariness.

8. Not her real name. Names of research participants are also pseudonyms.

9. Berghain has received a good deal of sensationalist coverage in the U.S. media as well (see, for example, Rogers 2014).

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