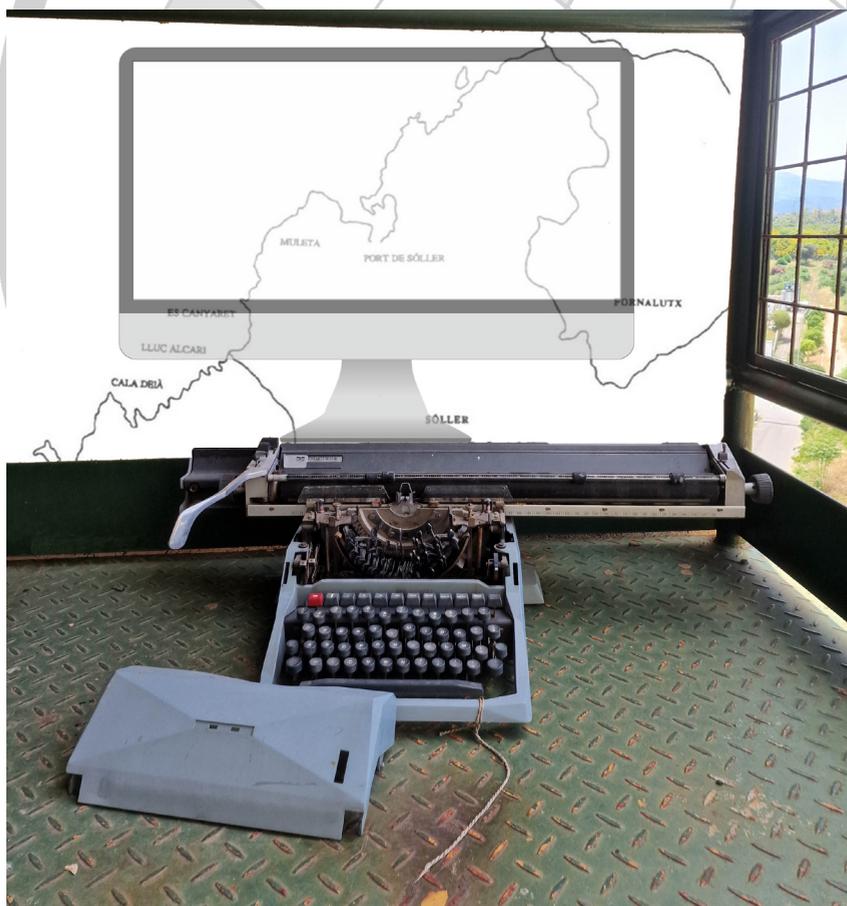


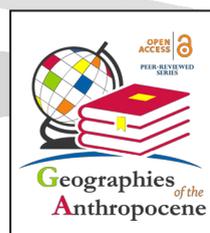
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES AND SOCIAL MEDIA: NEW SCIENTIFIC METHODS FOR THE ANTHROPOCENE

Gaetano Sabato, Joan Rosselló (Editors)



Preface by Javier Martín-Vide

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Information Technologies and Social Media: New Scientific Methods for the Anthropocene

Gaetano Sabato, Joan Rosselló

Editors



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*Information Technologies and Social Media: New Scientific Methods for the
Anthropocene*

Gaetano Sabato, Joan Rosselló (Eds.)

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2. Mediated subjects and interconnected days. Facebook as fieldwork

Stefano Montes¹

Abstract

I investigate digital information and the everyday by primarily concentrating on Facebook and on the connections taking place between myself – a user who is also an anthropologist – and some other individuals on the net. I draw on my activities and I take into account the ethnographic aspects involved in these activities associating daily life and social media. I show how the digital world questions the traditional conception of place-based ethnography and tends to turn field research into a more reflexive phenomenon. In this perspective, I focus on Facebook considering it a field site resulting from the intersection of the human and the digital. Ultimately, I'll try to show how the digital world has impacted ethnographic methods of research and, at the same time, some essential concepts such as simulation, technology, interaction, identity, authorship and the everyday itself.

Keywords: ethnography, everyday, simulation, interaction, identity

1. Language and metalanguage as mediating concepts in information technology

Whether we like it or not, digital media and individual lives have become more and more interconnected. Individuals spend a considerable amount of time on social networks while at the same time living in what is the so-called real life: the passage from a social medium to real life – and *vice versa* – is nowadays not as discontinuous as it was in the past. The everyday has increasingly become less linear and the digital more embedded in our daily actions (Hine, 2015). The question to ask is how this happens, more particularly, in specific contexts, and how face-to-face interactions between people and digital technologies intermingle, then, by this resetting our ways of being at home in the world (Jackson, 1995). Here, I'll investigate digital

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technology and the everyday life by concentrating, above all, on Facebook and on the connections taking place between myself – a user who is also an anthropologist – and other individuals interacting with me. Given the requirements demanded by a short essay, I'll restrict myself to some examples covering a few representative aspects of a single day in my life, preliminarily discussing some important points concerning the intersection between language and metalanguage in information technology. Concretely, I'll draw on my activities and I'll consider the ethnographic aspects – the linguistic and metalinguistic functions of it – involved in these activities associating daily life and social media. Among other things, my purpose will be to show how the digital world questions traditional anthropological conceptions of place-based ethnography and how it tends to turn fieldwork into a more temporal and superposed phenomenon. I'll focus on agency and on the temporal aspects related to the use of Facebook by framing it as a conception of fieldwork that results from the intersection of the human and the digital, in order to draw attention to those aspects of exploration and method rather than a more conventional focus on alienation or recreation. Ultimately, I'll try to show how digital information and social media have impacted ethnographic methods of research and, in the meantime, essential concepts such as knowledge, interaction, simulation, daily life and technology itself.

First, I want to make an admission that is, in my perspective, also a metalinguistic formulation for future research: digital technology affects how we experience the world, how we change it and how we are changed by it. We cannot think anymore of a 'real' world totally separated from the digital; at the same time, we should be attentive to the ways in which digitization transforms our world and leads us to see reality in different ways. The matter in question is the very idea of change – what does 'change' mean? – in relation to information technology and in relation to understandings of the term 'human' (Turkle, 2009; Horst, Miller, 2012; Whitehead, Wesch, 2012). Anthropology must respond to these epistemological dimensions of digital life, apparently far from the classic exoticism that characterized the discipline, above all because – I believe – one of its most important duties is constantly resetting the boundaries that constitute 'the human' and welcoming those elements which, in many cases, had previously remained in the margins. This principle is obviously applicable, well beyond social media, in many other domains and has a wide-ranging intercultural validity. As Whitehead notes in more general terms: "it is not what makes us different from or the same as other animals

(non-humans) that is significant but rather what experiences we include or exclude as relevant to our attempts to live” (Whitehead, 2012, p. 226).

The digital is a matter of intellectual reflection and, simultaneously, it represents an integrated level of daily life lived through personal experiences and stories. As a matter of fact, the digital reconceptualizes most of our notions and practices. Experience itself, often thought as a first-hand tool to apprehend reality, cannot be conceived in the same terms as it was in the past; symmetrically, bodies are dematerialized through media and, therefore, seen in a more unusual and fragmented way. The peculiar fact is that social scientists use the digital – as much as peers in any other profession – but they are also asked to work, in theory and in practice, on the mechanisms founding and formulating these spheres of social life. Actually, even “work practices are instances of social virtuality” (Garsten & Wulff, 2003, p. 5). At the same time, any social virtuality demands a scientific exploration of parallel practices, contributing – I hope – to “a science of singularity; that is to say, a science of the relationship that links everyday pursuits to particular circumstances” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 9). Independently from one’s own profession, it is difficult today to avoid the digital. In concrete terms, no matter the practice or activity, we are all – some more, some less – immersed in a virtual world superimposed upon daily life. Let’s face it: the digital world influences people’s decisions, individual agencies, and even collective emotions. People can see each other, interact, and exchange viewpoints both on-line and in the material world, uninterruptedly passing from one level to another or even superposing them. Daily life is so permeated with the digital that it would be extremely difficult to live, nowadays, in the same way we do if we were compelled to give up digitization altogether: the conception itself of daily life has changed overall and produced cultural tendencies, over the years, that are important to take into account theoretically by several disciplines and scholars. We are ‘always on’ and, as a consequence, we are entitled to ask what kind of individuals we are going to become in the future and what the real cost of being constantly online is (Baron, 2008).

Media are pervasive in daily life: this is a fact. Not only, then, do people socialize through social media but they also work, shop and pay their bills online, in which daily individual and social interactions change depending on the context. Ordinary and extraordinary, as well as linguistic and metalinguistic levels of life, in short, are associated through the digital. We watch movies and listen to music on-line, taking for granted that we have computer games, use cameras and cell phones, switching from one tool to another without even thinking of separating these activities and implicitly

accepting the fact that digital technology is part of ‘what we are’: an essential and integrated layer of intrinsic human living, implying a different conception of old notions and producing new ones. In short, we are mediated subjects through mediated objects and reformulated concepts. Even the idea of community itself – once thought as a concrete and visible aggregation of people living on a circumscribed space – is, in our present time, transformed by the information technology in a more imaginary and virtual entity. What is implicitly targeted, through the media revolution, is not only the language of common actions and the concrete actions that we accomplish daily, but also the metalanguages usually utilized by scholars to define theoretically their disciplines dealing with media studies. How can we possibly speak, for example, of context or simulation and even of the very notion of technology in the terms brought forward by the media revolution? This is a field of comparative research that will seriously engage scholars in the following years and, among others, linguistic anthropologists working (i) on the interrelations established in some disciplines between languages and metalanguages and (ii) on the reformulation of metalanguages implicitly adopted everyday by common people.

On this aspect, Jakobson’s remark is clear: “A distinction has been made in modern logic between two levels of language, ‘object language’ speaking of objects and ‘metalanguage’ speaking of language. But metalanguage is not only a necessary scientific tool utilized by logicians and linguists; it plays also an important role in everyday language [...] we practice metalanguage without realizing the metalingual character of our operations” (Jakobson, 1960, p. 356). The metalingual function orients the addressee toward the code both in specialized languages and in ordinary expressions, and this has to be taken into account in media studies. In practical terms and in the everyday, having the possibility to resort to different media and various technological tools is an advantage that cannot be denied. What is often said by various scholars, in contrast, is that information technology sucks up energy and draws the attention of individuals disproportionately, leading to alienation and detachment from material reality. They are not only talking about an unstable relationship established between digital world and material life. The problem is, above all, the apparent neutrality of the media and the Internet. The initial idea, in fact, was that the Internet and social media would simplify access of information to the public and would result in a greater democratization of knowledge. According to Hindman, on the contrary, the information giants – among others, Google and Facebook – control the time spent online and also make large profits, enriching themselves at the expense of users: their survival depends on stickiness (the

ability to seduce users and to keep them glued to the screen for a long time). According to Hindman, the Internet holds the potential to restructure political life, one with merely a semblance of democratic engagement: “the digital attention economy increasingly shapes public life, including what content is produced, where audiences go, and ultimately which news and democratic information citizens see” (Hindman, 2018, p. 5). The immediacy of the information can be misleading, therefore, with respect to the actual agency that the users would have and with respect to their insufficient ability to choices between the range of proposed information. In other words, people devote their attention to media in a passive way, seduced by the system, without having a real choice as the information giants structure messages in such a way as to create a sort of addiction. Furthermore, to make matters worse, the immediacy of the information and the ease with which we can obtain it, however positive it may seem at first glance, often become an obstacle if one wants to verify its reliability and avoid the circulation of false news.

These are important issues, not to be overlooked in any case, on which we – anthropologists, among others – will have to continue to reflect over time in order to observe the evolution of the various types of information, to keep pace with the main paradigms and to escape from a manipulative logic exerted from above. From my point of view, a point remains central concerning information and manipulation: much of its influence depends on the amount of time users spend on social media and on the social pedagogy that should accompany it to prevent any excess and to avoid the ‘stickiness effect’. Regardless of whether it is online or *in vivo*, information is imbued with persuasion to the point that one of the most important functions identified by Jakobson, in his time, in his well-known communication scheme, is precisely the conative function: a function that focuses on the recipient of the message to convince him of the goodness of the message. Jakobson is very careful to clarify the idea that the different functions in his communication scheme – including the conative one underlying the persuasive mechanism – are mixed in various ways in actual messages; the variety and composition of functions should be, therefore, a starting point for any good pedagogy concerned with learning online communication in a proper way. As Jakobson recalls: “Although we distinguish six basic aspects of language, we could, however, hardly find verbal messages that would fulfill only one function. The diversity lies not in a monopoly of some one of these several functions but in a different hierarchical order of functions” (Jakobson, 1960, p. 353). In essence, the dangers concerning the alienation from reality and the dangers concerning the circulation of false news online

pre-exist the internet and information technology. Instead, they should be connected to enduring issues of human linguistic capacity. These dangers are obviously more exasperated now due to the fast increase in digitization and to the accelerated circulation of messages online; that said, a common ground remains: the importance of teaching and learning information technology to discern the variety and strength of the different communication functions and to recognize manipulative effects latently working in different messages.

Just to give a concrete example regarding gaming in my personal life, as a young man I spent a certain amount of time in the game rooms which, currently, are frantically replaced by online games: in both cases, much depended – and still does depend – on the amount of time devoted to recreation and games. Whether it is an in-person game or an online game, little changes from this perspective, showing that the question of information must be faced by taking into account the persuasive power contained in the messages and on the basis of the rhetoric that often accompanies it in a surreptitious and manipulative way. As for the circulation of fake news, the danger is always present, obviously, and many people can fall into the trap of manipulation. Today, however, the positive side is undoubtedly the ease with which scientific information can be found; until a few years ago, in fact, it was impossible to have all this amount of information in ordinary circuits. The more general result is that, on the one hand, the danger is alienation or unwitting acceptance of false news; on the other hand, there is instead an extraordinary possibility of interaction through social media that was impossible, in the past, in the light of old technology. If it is true, then, that different forms of recreation are available online today, favoring the possibility of falling into the manipulation of attention, it is equally true that recreation – even in the form of a simple individual game – can take the unprecedented form of positive knowledge: constructive, more interactive and educational. What shall we do then? An answer could be the implementation of constant education – at school, in university and in other places dedicated to collective learning – in social media and information technology. Just as one learns to write at an early age, so one should be able to learn, from the beginning of his education, to grapple with information technology and social media.

As simple as this solution may seem, it is still an important decision with radical potential for institutions today, especially if information technology is going to be taught, productively, as the study of the interconnected aspects relating (i) to the communication of various languages and registers, (ii) to the manipulative force inherent in messages and (iii) to the

construction of shared as well as situated knowledge. In short, to understand the role played by social platforms and media, and favor their correct learning, a decisive step forward should be the implementation of their use in educational institutions, accompanied by metalinguistic analyses in different perspectives (Kent & Leaver, 2014; Cohen, 2002). A parallel, albeit essential, step to take should consist in facing media realities through the prism of the language and metalingual functions not only to better defuse the potential dangers implied by manipulative messages, but also to concentrate on emerging forms of conceptualization in everyday and scientific discourses.

As stressed by Hine in her original research on systematics: “communication is constitutive of the scientific endeavor, and yet the diversity of disciplines means that each may operationalize its communication in a quite different way” (Hine, 2008, p. 151). That’s why, while giving so much importance to the various functions summarized by Jakobson in his communication scheme, I finish this section by emphasizing the importance of the metalingual function. As I previously wrote, with regard to Jakobson, all functions are essential to varying degrees, not least the conative function which sums up, precisely, the persuasive orientation exerted on the addressee. On the long run, however, in order to better understand the issues relating to the reformulation of concepts, still underway following the media revolution, I believe it is a priority – also with respect to ethical and interpersonal issues (Ploug, 2009) – to focus on the metalingual function both in scientific and everyday discourses.

2. Simulation as a positive and negative element

Information technology has certainly placed a strong emphasis on simulation, perhaps a less central phenomenon in the past, which actually deserves close theoretical attention now because of its extensive and intercrossed usage. Of course, simulation was an integral part of daily life in the past and was involved, for better or for worse, in the most common interactions. Someone who simulates is, most simply, an individual who does not tell the truth but, simultaneously, is also someone who reconstructs, somehow, an absent context that can be useful and even recreational: two opposite meanings, then, are inevitably and perhaps inextricably associated in the same concept. To simulate means to imitate and reproduce, but also to pretend and lie. The question is consequently complicated and has always accompanied man’s abstract thinking

concerning the relationship to be established between the model and its realization or between the plan and the corresponding action: whether it is art, cinema, philosophy, or the more specific imagination of an individual, simulation remains anyway central. Even in the most banal daily life, people make projects and try to carry them out, making implicit connections between various forms of planning and practical implementation, between general models taken as guiding principles and concrete acts realizing the model. With the advent of information technology, this aspect – the possibilities offered by simulation in relation to personal and collective agency – has become even more important, particularly amplified, and the subject of criticism by some scholars or, on the contrary, of praise by many others. Fundamentally, the reason for the criticism is that simulation, thanks to digitization, allows people to create such an important reality effect that it seems to transport the individual into the *in vivo* context. We are all so immersed in the technological simulation that, in some cases, we are no longer able to effectively distance ourselves from it or distinguish between different levels of emerging reality: not only do we mix them, but we are also caught in the circle of messages that suck our attention and blunt our will.

At this stage, one of the questions to ask is whether we shall continue to distinguish the ways through which reality presents itself to us, at different levels, or we shall adapt ourselves to the mixed flow of information without paying attention to its mixing, giving therefore undisputed attention to the market offers. Answers, from different specialists, apparently differ. From an anthropological point of view, it can be said that simulation involves an adhesion based on implicit belief and on a suspension of knowledge of people who become less attentive to the construction of messages. Basically, the immersion in technological simulation allows us many advantages – for example a better possibility to interact with others on the long distance – but it is also considered, too often nowadays, as a sort of normal substitute for reality and accepted as such, even when one should instead maintain a level of attention aroused towards various types of manipulative information. In this regard, there are conflicting and various opinions; some of them are important to be taken into account, more analytically, for several reasons, not least to better concentrate on their reformulation of metalanguages: such as, for example, simulation or technology. In her studies on media technology and anthropology, a scholar who has kept a careful but wary attitude is Sherry Turkle. Over time, her volumes on technology and its relations with human beings have taken into consideration various aspects of the problem allowing her to maintain an

epistemological distance, but at the same time allowing her to immerse herself in the subject thanks to interviews, theoretically suggesting a more attentive use of information technology. In *The Second Self*, Turkle clearly shows that the computer is not, as we might naively think at first glance, a mere tool; more than this, it is a constitutive element of our life and imagination. A computer serves not only to do something quickly, but also to define how we think and act in the world by imagining ourselves and the others, our feelings and intersubjective relationships.

The result of Turkle's anthropological work reveals what, in the first instance, might seem surprising: users consider the computer as an object that is unstably placed between the animate and the inanimate: if, on the one hand, users claim to know that the computer is an object, on the other hand they intuitively assign it meanings that place it in close relationship with their feelings and, therefore, allow them to consider it an animated extension of their own Self. In other words, the computer is not seen so much as an object as a real part of an individual, with a humanity core connecting it to society. This means that people attribute values to the computer that are projections of their own way of seeing and that these projections are integral part of their personality acquired by closely coming to grips with technological objects: "the advent of the computer has taken our relationships with technology to a new level. Computers, with their reactivity and interactivity, stand in a novel and evocative relationship between the living and the inanimate. They make it increasingly tempting to project our feelings onto objects and to treat things as though they were people" (Turkle, 1984, p. 287). She reaches the conclusion that digital technology affects how we experience our world and how we consider ourselves and, more importantly, some objects as mediated subjects. As a result, agency and self-awareness become less closely interconnected while the distance between subjects and objects is reduced.

In *Alone together*, Turkle focuses again on the relationships existing between technology and humans, insisting on the importance taken in recent times by connectivity and its capability in terms of accessing virtual interactions. Notwithstanding this positive side, Turkle shows people's dissatisfaction with virtual relations and the better convenience of real and true interactions. Turkle's thesis is that even though cell-phone technology has become more and more refined over the years and social media are proliferating all over the world, ironically people are alone and socially disconnected from each other, further manifesting their unsolved vulnerability. Turkle's conclusion is a clear warning against the tensions introduced by technology: "Online, we easily find 'company' but are

exhausted by the pressures of performance. We enjoy continual connection but rarely have each other's full attention. We can have instant audiences but flatten out what we say to each other in new reductive genres of abbreviation. We like it that the Web 'knows' us, but this is only possible because we compromise our privacy, leaving electronic bread crumbs that can be easily exploited, both politically and commercially" (Turkle, 2011, p. 280). On this basis, although fascinated by technology, we should always keep a watchful eye on its concrete achievements and on its counterproductive, or even deleterious in some cases, effects that come to the surface in the long run. The whole matter can be summarized as follows: trust in technology has to be great but it shouldn't be blind.

It is undisputable that new technological devices seem to be a promise of positive change in our daily lives. The question to ask is whether this is the norm in general. The promise does not always turn out to be a happy fulfillment because "there are all kinds of circumstances that capture and overtake technical interventions" (Greenfield, 2017, p. 326). In *Radical Technologies*, Greenfield takes into consideration different forms of technical innovations to show the advantages and disadvantages of their concrete contribution. In his conclusion, he takes as a paradoxical example the tetrapods – concrete breakwaters – that the Japanese have deposited on the coast of Niigata to stop the erosion of beaches. Over time, the tetrapods have proved a failure because they accelerate the erosion of the coast but continue, however, to be produced because they represent a sort of subsidy that the Japanese state has been granting to the concrete industry for years. Greenfield warns against the gap existing "between technoutopian claims about what some emergent innovation 'might' or 'could' give rise to, on the one hand, and anything it has actually been seen to do on the other" (Greenfield, 2017, p. 328). Basically, it could be said that it is good to rely on technology and on the promise of future prospects; at the same time, it is equally important to take into account the political and economic factors that are closely related to the technological dimension and which, in turn, orient it one way or another.

It is, then, a question of looking at technology without dissociating it from the political and economic orientations that accompany it in a sometimes disguised way. In addition, one more reason to look at the mixture of technology and political orientations without dissociating them is the fact that digital platforms produce enormous amounts of capital that is accumulated and managed by a few platform owners. In this regard, Ji overtly speaks of platform imperialism (Ji, 2015). In short, simulation brings forward several multi-layered matters – it has a metalinguistic function –

that are important to discuss in one way or another, above all comparing perspectives and disciplines. A central point is that technology cannot be considered as a neutral factor, independent from any political perspective. Simulation itself, in addition, is an open concept that can lead towards neutral immersion or, inversely towards political and disguised interferences. In this sense, a wary attitude is important: “Simulation demands immersion and immersion makes it hard to doubt simulation” (Turkle, 2009, p. 8). Even though watchful towards some aspects concerning immersive simulation, we cannot deny either the advantages coming along with technology and social platforms. On opening the volume summarizing the comparative results of field research on social media carried by his whole group, Miller points out that the intent of their work is not taking into account platforms but their contents analyzed and faced with a positive attitude. Miller’s perspective is therefore different from the ones embraced by the aforementioned scholars.

Miller doesn’t think that “face to face communication is richer or less mediated than communication employing digital technology, or that we are losing cognitive abilities such as long-term attention spans [...] There is no such thing as unmediated, pre- or non-cultural sociality or communication. Instead, we should recognize that whatever we do with new technologies must be latent in our humanity [...] This theory does not claim to adjudicate on whether any new capacity to send memes or selfies through social media, for example, is either good or bad. It just acknowledges that this has now become simply part of what human beings can do, as has driving a car” (Miller, 2016, p. 8). Human features, of course, are changing in time and are the result of the variation of cultures, contexts, and even technology. This point made by Miller has to be sharply stressed: societies are in movement and even anthropology has to be considered as a dynamic discipline. Rather, an objection that could be made to his viewpoint is that driving a car – the somewhat metaphorical example given by Miller – is also the result of political and economic factors allowing people to do so on roads where signs are in use and where respect is imposed by rules that can also be transgressed. All these aspects cannot be ignored: what has become, over the years, a habit is not necessarily a positive acquisition or a transparent means devoid of ideology or manipulative constraints coming from a dominant group. To end this section, I think that different perspectives should be combined to study information technology and these perspectives need to be fruitfully compared and usefully integrated. What is also undeniable is that, thanks to social media, people are able to communicate and socialize but also to question somebody else’s ideas, affirm their own

ideas, circulate false news, and build economic empires on the shoulders of others who are certainly more vulnerable than rich and powerful people. Socialization is just one aspect manifested in the interaction taking place in social media; other aspects are equally important: disagreement, offence, conviviality, intimacy, and so on. The digital world is interesting to me for all these conflicting, but also converging and debatable, features. My interest is also more general, applicable to other fields – strictly speaking even outside social media – having to do with “the way in which we construct, wittingly or unwittingly, horizons that determine what we experience and how we interpret what we experience” (Crapanzano, 2004, p. 2).

That said, social media can be a stimulating subject of reflection and an appealing way of conducting fieldwork in a hybrid way, one neither classical or obsolete. Analyses, theoretical applications and even short field research addressing simulation in order to better frame our lives should be welcome. Isn't simulation a multiple horizon projecting ourselves in the experience lived in the immersive and fleeting present, but also demanding a level of interpretation used to recover what has been experienced and already become part of our past? Immersion in the present is indebted to what we did in the past and to the projects we plan to carry out in the future. In social media, maybe even more than in other fields, the “user interacts across differentiated temporalities, and inhabits various temporal regimes” (Barker, 2012, p. 195). What is relevant, generally speaking, is this moving back and forth in time that is constitutive of specific processes but, more essentially, also of the way knowledge and subjectivities actually take place.

3. Media realities and reflexive research

Summarized and briefly discussed a few central points – advantages and disadvantages – concerning the digital world, it is now useful to further investigate the question by taking as a reference a few examples from my real life and from the interconnections established by myself with other individuals on Facebook, a social media site that I turned into a real and true ethnographic field site. This demands a preliminary section, albeit integral in my perspective, to reflect on some epistemological aspects related to (i) anthropology and a subfield named auto-ethnography and to (ii) fieldwork and its different conceptions. Reflecting on these aspects is also important to better focus on the notion of subject and its investment – Turkle would say, talking about social media, of immersion – in contemporary anthropology.

Regarding the first point, the question to ask is to what extent an individual has the right to speak in the first person, referring to himself and to his own life history, without losing sight of the collective scope of his question, by writing an auto-ethnography that touches on the relationships existing between notions such as identity and otherness. The question is delicate and has to be faced while keeping in mind that, in anthropology, there are different orientations depending on theoretical belongings and personal inclinations. A good starting point is made by Augé: the “thing that interests the ethnologist most is the relationship. In the first place, for him, there are at least two subjects who meet, not just one” (Augé, 2018, p. 19). In a reflexive and auto-ethnographic stance, above all dealing with social media, this statement can be amplified and subjects multiplied: besides two subjects who meet and interact in flesh and blood (the anthropologist and his other, as recalled by Augé), the anthropologist also interacts with his own perspective, eventually reformulating it as if it was in a mirror, at the same time reformulating the virtual alter-ego possibly implemented through social media. Social media, in short, are a sort of mirror through which an anthropologist can observe himself and the same time the others who, in turn, observe themselves and the anthropologist. Dealing with media, in fact, people’s subjectivity is more fragmented and multiplied: subjects narrate various stories to each other, implicitly recounting the relationships established over time with themselves and with others. If anthropology “is about raising awareness” (Hastrup, 1995, p. 181), this multiplication of identities and stories can certainly be usefully decentering.

From my point of view, fully agreeing with Augé, the scientific nature of a work does not fail if an individual speaks in the first person, staging his own existence and relationships with different subjects and perspectives. Difference in perspectives and descriptions is anyway more valuable in anthropology than homogeneity and conformity. As recalled by Bateson: “Two diverse descriptions are always better than one” (Bateson, 1979, p. 156). This is a suitable step to take in order to reveal the – often implicit – assumptions relating to the adoption of a point of view which, in the final analysis, always has to do with the enunciation of the Self and the inclination of an individual during his decentering research and existence. In other words, we must ask ourselves if we can trust an ‘I’ that shows himself without veils and claims to be included in his own research both as a subject and an object who accept to be decentered or multiplied. I think so! Here, above all, the problem concerns the – obsolete – way in which we sometimes consider the ‘I’. Some scholars think that the ‘I’ is represented by an individual who, from a sort of balcony, observes the world that passes

in front of him, under his eyes, and becomes an objective spectacle; in reality, the 'I' is also what is behind the balcony, even embodied in the observer. As Lévi-Strauss points out, "in a science in which the observer is of the same nature, as his object of study, the observer himself is a part of his observation" (Lévi-Strauss, 1987, p. 29). Lévi-Strauss is not alone in suggesting this inclusive perspective. It is particularly interesting here to mention the various ethnographies of daily life written by Marc Augé. Over the years, many of his ethnographies have had to do with the exploration of the subjectivity of the anthropologist in everyday life, grappling with his objects of study and with himself at the same time.

Just to give some examples and show the breadth of the subjects touched upon in a reflexive key by Augé, one should think of the metro, the homeless, and old age: *In the Metro*, Augé mixes autobiography, memory and analysis of a place in order to show the different layers composing daily life (Augé, 1986); in *Journal d'un SDF*, he imagines the life of a homeless to take into account notions such as identity, being and relationship (Augé, 2011); in *Everyone dies young*, he studies old age as a physical burden and time as an element that can be squandered in life. These are just some examples showing the variety of themes taken into consideration by Augé. But beyond the themes themselves, and their importance in each specific case, what really matters is that Augé considers the exploration of these themes as an opportunity to reflect on the subjectivity of the anthropologist and to question the ways in which an individual can observe reality without keeping himself outside of it, observing himself in the developing action and inside it. A central point, therefore, is the analysis of oneself and the relationship established with the other, whoever that other may be: this becomes extremely important, in media studies, if we think of the possibility of multiplied and invented selves interacting online and offline. Reflecting on the conditions delimiting the representativeness of anthropological work and its objects to study, Augé proposes a possible direction of research, toward ethno-self-analysis: "We cannot rule out the possibility that the anthropologist, following Freud's example, might care to consider himself as indigenous to his own culture – a privileged informant, so to speak – and risk a few attempts at ethno-self-analysis" (Augé, 1995, p. 39). Unlike Freud, however, the ethno-self-analysis proposed by Augé is based on a diversity of spaces that reconfigure methodology in time and culture: the Freudian space, thought of as a sort of a 'generalized sofa', is replaced – in Augé's perspective – by several spaces producing meaning in different cultural contexts.

To summarize the hypotheses formulated by Lévi-Strauss and Augé, and amplify their scope, if one claims that anthropologists must study life in its entirety, that must include themselves as subjects who observe and become the objects of their own dynamic observation: they must study ‘their outside’ and ‘their inside’, the process and the result of their research, regardless of the exoticism of the place where the research is carried out. For anthropologists, in a way, focusing on the (existential) becoming should always be essential. As far as life is concerned, a typical ‘Western’ perspective tends to see it as a series of objectives to be achieved, neglecting the becoming itself and the more specific aspects linked to process. Instead, “life is not confined to fixed points or locations but lived along lines, and that as they go along together these lines – rather like melodies in musical counterpoint – continually differentiate themselves from within the texture of their polyphony” (Ingold, 2022, p. 6). More than lines, maybe, I would prefer thinking of intertwining stories and experiences, as well as encounters of memories and textualizations producing plots. Whatever the metaphorical support used is (lines or plots), the fact remains that it is important to take into account a perspective focusing on becoming and on counterpoints, especially if one observes the place occupied nowadays by the media in our life: we are constantly immersed in the media while the simulation processes connected to them constantly mix, for better or for worse, with everyday reality. Paraphrasing Merleau-Ponty (Merleau-Ponty, 1945), it could be said that the ‘I’ is also embodied by the media – through the media – and by the relationships created by media communications: the most important consequence is that the subject is less centralized nowadays and more and more intermediated by online and offline interactions. Through our interconnected days, we become intermediated subjects while our roles are substantiated by social media which allow communication but also construct identities and subjectivities.

All this, in a nutshell, applies to the first point: the right of the individual – and of the anthropologist as a dynamic and multi-perspective subject – to speak about themselves in the first person, also transforming his own life into an auto-ethnography taking into account interactions with other individuals offline and online. The other point to consider here concerns the way of conceiving fieldwork in relation to one or more places. What is fieldwork? How and where should this be done? Should it be made in a distant and exotic place? Or should we, on the contrary, focus more on the everyday (Stewart, 2007; Das, 2020)? My answer is that fieldwork should be done, everywhere, without neglecting the life of the anthropologist itself, their movements, their interactions offline and online, ‘here’ and ‘elsewhere’,

from the inside and from the outside. In the past, a central dichotomy – built though spatial categories – was instead the following: the house (where one returned) and the exotic place (where one did research). As Sontag effectively points out: “For the anthropologist, the world is professionally divided into ‘home’ and ‘out there’, the domestic and the exotic, the urban academic world and the tropics” (Sontag, 1966, p. 56). It is no longer possible to think of fieldwork in dichotomic terms: the division conceived between life (lived at home without research) and the exotic place (where research is carried out).

Even more radically than Sontag, Clifford, closer to us in time, deconstructs this dichotomy – taken for granted by some scholars – by reflecting on the journey and its epistemological importance in anthropology: “Dwelling was understood to be the local ground of collective life, travel a supplement; roots always precede routes. But what would happen, I began to ask, if travel were untethered, seen as a complex and pervasive spectrum of human experiences? Practices of displacement might emerge as constitutive of cultural meanings rather than as their simple transfer or extension” (Clifford, 1997, p. 3). According to Clifford, Malinowskian-type field research (departure, arrival at the exotic place where research is done; return home, after research, where anthropological work stops) turns out to be an epistemological model based on the elision of journey. I believe, following Clifford’s example, that the discontinuity established between travel (a displacement) and home (a familiar place) must disappear and life must become a dynamic subject of anthropological research in its entirety, in any place, regardless of the exoticism or familiarity concerning the place. Life is itself a fieldwork. Life is a field of continuous observation and interaction at home and elsewhere: in a street, on a sidewalk, at the supermarket, in a waiting room, on an airplane, and so on. Furthermore, to better investigate life, it is necessary to integrate more and more, in anthropology, interactions taking place online and offline, in one’s own mind and in real and true communication. In short, we resolutely need to move from fieldwork (meant as a delimited place) to travel – as already pointed out by Clifford – and from travel to the joint hybridization of life and information technology. To be inclusive and effective, an ethnography cannot ignore anymore the impact of technological culture and social media. In this perspective, taking a social medium as an object of study is undoubtedly important to better deepen knowledge of daily life and, at the same time, to discuss the ways in which anthropology can be poured into this, with its specific methodologies and perspectives.

As far as I'm concerned, I've been dealing with Facebook for quite a while (Montes, 2019). I opened an account to better understand the interactions taking place online and the processes associated with knowledge creation concerning information technology. Facebook is a platform with multiple possible uses. There is a lot to say about it and I am enthusiastic about the possibility concerning the production and reception of meanings: "This is what is so valuable about Facebook: the indeterminate meaning of so much of what it is, and what it does. This indeterminacy allows us users plenty of space to make things mean what we want them to. If there's anything humans are good at, it's creating meaning through social interactions" (Wittkower, 2010, p. 22). In the next section, I will give a few examples taken from my personal use of Facebook, highlighting above all the power of production of syncretic texts allowed by this platform and the effect that these texts have on the idea of interaction, as well as on the presupposed principles that should define interaction and the individuals taking part in it. I agree with most scholars hypothesizing that digital media constantly transform the sense of some concepts such as, for example, everyday life, communication, participation, reception and identity. Is this so bad anyway? From my point of view, the becoming of concepts in time and space is unavoidable. We should accept it and discuss it, scientifically, focusing on the relationships being established between the different metalanguages used, in the past and in the present, both by scholars and ordinary people.

Nobody has a privileged perspective that is able to apprehend a total universe and every point of view is subject to the dynamism of time. As Bateson writes: "data are not events or objects but always records or descriptions or memories of events or objects. Always there is a transformation or recoding of the raw event which intervenes between the scientist and his object [...] Moreover, always and inevitably, there is a selection of data because the total universe, past and present, is not subject to observation from any given observer's position" (Bateson, 1972, p. 15). If we keep in mind this aspect, brilliantly stressed by Bateson, any research – independently from the specific topic tackled – is autoethnographic: it inevitably focus on the process of transformation and selection brought forward by the subject observing and participating.

4. The everyday and Facebook

The auto-ethnographic aspect of this paper begins when I created a Facebook account, some years ago, to share information primarily regarding seminars and conferences. Later, realizing the influence that Facebook might have on myself as an anthropologist, I began to take a closer interest in this social platform and its users, by posting both written texts and photos, with the aim of understanding which forms of specific interaction could take place among interlocutors, as well as between written and visual texts. Little by little, my occasional practice became a sort of personal diary and turned, afterwards, into proper field research that focused on both the everyday and social media. But before I could turn my attention to social media, my primary interest now, my time on Facebook had already been taken up by the everyday: an everyday intended not so much as a boring routine as a tangle of actions and thinking to focus upon. How do we think and act in our daily life? And how is the cognitive dimension specifically associated to the pragmatic dimension? Unfortunately, the everyday has not always been a central field of study in anthropology, and answers are difficult to give in any case, maybe due to the fact that we are so immersed in the temporal flow that it is difficult to capture the everyday's fleeting and ordinary dynamics. But isn't precisely for its elusiveness that it is interesting to immerse oneself in its challenging exploration? It is obviously easier to observe what is exotic or flashy than what is hidden by habits and routine. Nowadays, what's worse, it is even more demanding to accomplish a thorough anthropological exploration of the everyday because of social media: social media are integral part of the everyday, contributing to transform it into an interactive and immersive entity. Like it or not, digital media and persons have gotten closely intertwined in recent years. People live online and, simultaneously, in the so-called daily life: we are so much included in this invisible intertwining that, often, we don't realize how rapidly our everyday is conceptually transformed and how much strength digital media have acquired, technologically, in our present time. This applies to me both as an anthropologist and common person: even though I try, in an ethnographic key, to observe Facebook as an objective medium, I am myself included in its transforming and immersive network.

I have several research interests – difficult to say what is only contained in the sphere of anthropology and what is strictly personal – combining the everyday and social media: the interweaving of individual will and cultural orientation, the translation of direct experience into texts, the connection between writing and image, the relation between literature and its

conceptualization. These interests are, more generally, connected to the meanings people give to life. In order to better grasp the meaning of life, in my opinion, research has also to be oriented towards the study of everyday practices, by emphasizing the ways in which, in life, chance and projects meet or collide and are carried out by single individuals. I think that a partial displacement from an anthropology focusing on culture to an anthropology focusing on life/existence would be fruitful. That said, a point is certain: it is easier for the extraordinary events to catch scholars' attention; ordinary events, instead, tend to be easily overlooked and taken for granted. Another point of friction is that anthropology has been more concentrated on exotic peoples and places since its beginnings. Needless to say, there are good reasons to focus, today, on our own societies. As Perceval recalled in his own time, an endotic anthropology would be pertinent to give weight to the usually neglected common things of the everyday and look at our way of life in a different perspective: "We sleep through our lives in a dreamless sleep. But where is our life? Where is our body? Where is our space? How are we to speak of these 'common things' [...] What's needed perhaps is finally to found our own anthropology, one that will speak about us, will look in ourselves for what for so long we've been pillaging from others. Not the exotic anymore, but the endotic" (Perceval, 1997, p. 210). Therefore, a first step should consist in studying, without prejudices, ordinary events and everyday life for their own richness displacing attention from faraway people (Bégout, 2018; Sheringham, 2006).

In the past, in anthropology, the tendency was to focus on the notion of culture taken as a conceptual gate for the analysis and interpretation of faraway societies. The field of daily existence and the meanings produced by people, for this reason, were often overlooked to the advantage of a more generalized whole meant to be culture. Of course, there are important exceptions, more recent in time, concerning anthropologists foregrounding persons and their existence independently from their geographic belonging (Piette, 1992; Jackson, 2005; Jackson, Piette, 2015). Besides more recent studies, a less visible anthropological line of thought has crossed the story of the discipline with respect to the notion of existence. For example, a remarkable scholar who comes to mind, back in time, is Van Gennep and his *Rites of passage*. In his conclusions, Van Gennep explained that, by studying rituals, his intent consisted precisely in grasping the meaning of life: "life itself means to separate and to be reunited, to change form and condition, to die and to be reborn. It is to act and to cease, to wait and rest, and then to begin acting again, but in a different way. And there are always new thresholds to cross" (Van Gennep, 1960, p. 189). I am specifically

referring to Van Gennep because his original text belongs to the foundations of modern anthropology and he is primarily known for his theory on ritual, but much less for his effort to define the meaning of life. This means, in short, that there has been an attention, since its beginnings in anthropology, to the notions of existence and life, but more implicitly and sporadically. Other examples could be given, but what counts is that an implicit attention to this subject has never been transformed, in the past, into a persistent and coherent subject to focus upon. A text which, more than others, deserves a place of its own – setting a precise direction in the study of existence in its ordinary aspects – is *The Practice of Everyday Life* by de Certeau.

In this text, de Certeau opposes the tactics of humble people and the strategies of the powerful. He considers the everyday as the basis for a social transformation brought forward by common people and their creative tactics. He makes a distinction between tactics and strategies: tactics are the daily actions through which the weak manifests his autonomy from the dominant forces; strategies, instead, operate through the system, imposing rules onto the common man. What is extremely interesting is that tactics are creative and represent the basis for a transformation of the daily life of common people. This is even more interesting if we consider that, at the time in which de Certeau lived and wrote, information technology had not yet had this great diffusion and many social media did not even exist. Above all, when de Certeau was doing his research, there was no such amplified intersection between the everyday and media practices. Since de Certeau's time, then, a new horizon of studies has opened up, but his research still remains an example for at least two reasons. Firstly, because he advanced the idea that daily practices have a creative level that can also be a way to evade and even fight impositions from above: in his volume, alluded, more specifically, to different and common practices such as walking, talking, reading, residing, cooking, shopping. Secondly, de Certeau also remains a good example for the weight he gives to the everyday hero, to his elusive and yet inventive practices, capable of removing the force of orthodoxy. In this regard, just to give an example, it is useful to pay attention to what de Certeau says concerning the practice of reading: "Reading is thus situated at the point where social stratification (class relationships) and poetic operations (the practitioner's constructions of a text) intersect: a social hierarchization seeks to make the reader conform to the 'information' distributed by an elite (or semi-elite); reading operations manipulate the reader by insinuating their inventiveness into the cracks in a cultural orthodoxy" (de Certeau, 1984, p. 172). What applies to the practice of

reading, also applies to the other practices already considered by de Certeau in his research, such as, for example, walking or cooking.

The main point to stress today, while keeping in mind social media as a focus, is that, in order to understand and even produce culture, it is also necessary to 'make room' for the common person in his many – online and offline – ordinary activities. Isn't, then, Facebook an opportunity to concentrate on the common man and on the present daily life? In his own time, de Certeau's research already reformulated daily life: he praised the common man opposing to power and he focused on apparently less meaningful activities. Nowadays, social media and information technology give a new impulse to this research more based on the ordinary than the extraordinary and the exotic. There are many ways to take Facebook into account and different perspectives are obviously desirable to understand such a complex tool as a social platform. Maybe one of the anthropologists who has worked the most in this field, in recent years, in an ethnographic perspective, is Daniel Miller. His research on Facebook has been carried out alone or with other scholars. More particularly, Miller focused on the specific uses of Facebook in Trinidad (Miller, 2011). Miller also adopted a comparative perspective – involving several field researchers, operating in different countries – in order to analyze the reception of Facebook in several societies (Miller *et al.*, 2016). Miller also took into consideration the images posted on Facebook to better understand the function they perform in different cultures, showing that, more than a generalized referential effect, the image often fulfills the role of communicating the users' subjective experiences (Miller & Sinanan, 2017). As far as I'm concerned, instead, I privilege the investigation in the first person, observing and participating in a more auto-ethnographic key, by taking into account the Self has a fundamental element for the success of research (Coffey, 1999; Collins & Gallinat, 2010).

The first thing to stress is that I am a mediated subject and anthropologist. I mean, by this, that I have recourse to social media but, at the same time, I am a subject whose agency is the result of my being also acted by social media: I carry out my role as a subject and I am substantiated by social media and by the different roles taken in my interaction with other people. In my perspective, it is not a pure question of communication or sole socialization, but also of processes of constructing identities and subjectivities. To put it simply, the 'I am' and the 'I do' are closely intertwined with the 'I think' and 'I feel' in a process of dynamic becoming and interacting with other people. This has advantages and disadvantages: I am myself an insider in Facebook with first-hand

information concerning myself, obviously, but I also have to construct my own changing field site, adapting to it (Gupta, Ferguson, 1997). In a way, I am freer than an ethnographer being compelled to work in a specific circumscribed space; at the same time, my role, depending on circumstances and interactions, is more unstable and more subject, for better or for worse, to different contexts: I am home and it is a field site; I am outside, walking, and this is also a field site where I have the possibility to connect myself independently from specific spaces, while the everyday itself is also within reach any time. Every moment is the right moment to observe and participate. One only needs to be willing to do it. Today, for example, I got up, had a coffee and casually glanced at Facebook. I began to scroll through the pages and, all of a sudden, I saw a photo I posted some time ago: someone shared it without my authorization. I'm glad that someone – PG – shared it on Facebook in his group specifically created to circulate beautiful photos. What is, then, the problem? My name is not shown: the name of the author. This isn't the first time this user shared my picture without attaching my name. I asked PG – a friend on Facebook – why she didn't care to put the names of the authors on the photos she shared. The answer was: it would be a further waste of time and energy. In some respects, she is not wrong: in the group she created, what counts is the beauty of the photos – the reception by other people – and not the attribution of the photos to a specific author. It is as if PG said: let's get to the point, to what interests us, leaving the author's production and intentions in the background.

It's not the first time that this happened. Some time ago, a photo of mine was chosen by an online artist as a model for her watercolor. In this case, my name was expressly associated with it and I was delighted to see 'my art' recognized. It remains that, by allowing sharing, Facebook creates a circle of references in which, for the most part, the author is not central or, anyhow, is not a connecting element between production, product and reception. More generally, these are two examples – among others – confirming the existence, on social platforms, of a paradigm of thinking based on the modification of the relationship we usually have with works in terms of reception and production in real life: on Facebook, basically, it is not so much the author who is the origin of the creation process that matters as much as the circulation of images and messages. These examples have a close connection with another interesting debate that took place in anthropology concerning the place to be assigned to the author-ethnologist in the production of his works. More particularly, Geertz dedicated a work to this topic: how anthropologists write and what persuasive power their writings possess (Geertz, 1988). Geertz remarked

that the anthropologist who writes conveys a content – his experiences in the field, the interactions he had with natives and his resulting ideas – but also a capacity to persuade the reader. This persuasive force exerted by the anthropologist on the reader is the result of the anthropologist having been directly on location and having had direct experience of the facts he narrates. In what, then, more exactly, lies the authenticity of the anthropologist's story? In his being the author of a text that tells his lived experience proving it. The specific analyses made by Geertz of various anthropologists refer to Foucault's hypothesis according to which the author, in the history of Western culture, is not always present in his writings – regardless of whether it is literature or science – and, consequently, is not given a fixed value of origin and authenticity for what he produces (Foucault, 1969). For Foucault, more precisely, the author is a discursive function and not a stable element that would invariably produce authenticity in every culture and time.

Foucault's hypothesis is also applicable to Facebook, a social platform in which the tendency is to blunt the effect of authenticity – or artistry – of works circulating on the net: in other words, the circulation of written messages and images doesn't always require an authentication by a producer. Facebook is in fact based on a communication model that dilutes the function of the addresser – or producer – to the advantage of the function concerning the addressee. It is as if, on Facebook, all the addressers of message were on an equal position with respect to a generalized competence and with respect to the right to speak and receive messages; reception doesn't require, in its turn, an origin guaranteeing the authenticity of the message. Not only, on Facebook, are the relations between public and private domains reset but, more specifically, are also reconsidered the usual communication functions. This is possible, I suppose, because spatial and temporal barriers – usually associated with *in vivo* communication – are dissolved on Facebook, a platform where users have greater freedom and can say things that, in face-to-face interaction, wouldn't be accepted. The notion itself of identity, as consequence, becomes fluid: the more decontextualized the communication, the greater the orientation towards a fluid identity or, in principle, less rigid roles. Along the same lines, I enjoy myself inventing, from time to time, some alter-ego who speaks in my place. Today, for example, I posted a photo of mine in which I portrayed myself, from below, with long, dangling hair. I am the subject in the photo, but I maintain that it is Attanasio, an alter ego of mine. I wrote that Attanasio had long hair last year because he was already on vacation, he

went to the beach and relaxed, but now that he is at work, he is very tired and his hair suffers.

There is something true about what I wrote on Facebook, but this is not the point; the fact is that, by using an alter ego, I can also joke around, perhaps freely exaggerating, at the same time interacting with my friends and maintaining a contact with them (the so-called Jakobson's phatic function). Of course, users' reactions are different in some cases: those who know that Attanasio is my alter ego joke about it and make fun of me, pleasantly interacting with me; those who don't know about it put up memes of astonishment and distance themselves from the post. This is a game I often play on Facebook – a game that I enjoy a lot. In some respects, this game has to do with the question of authorship and identity that I previously took into account. What's the use of inventing some alter egos? What's the need? My various alter egos allow me to have a more playful life and, at the same time, to contemplate other forms of identity or, however, to soften some rigid features of my own personality. As a matter of fact, becoming someone else is not only a way to have fun. It is also a communication strategy demanding adequate reception. If I joke around on Facebook, the addressee of the message has to adapt himself interacting along the same lines: I joke and I expect the addressee – when it is his turn – to start joking too. It is a mode of address that demands significant precision. It is not a coincidence that I am overtly referring to play: playing and joking are ways, for children, to learn flexibility (Bateson, 1972). If, for a child, play is essential in order to learn to be flexible, it is equally important, for an adult, to keep on playing in order to maintain flexibility, as well as to have the opportunity to play other roles, or to abandon routine for a moment.

More generally, social media give this possibility to play with flexibility because they blur distinctions and force us to rethink – often implicitly – notions such as identity, subject, seriousness or play. On closer inspection, even in the real and true world different roles intersect (for example, I am a teacher, a father, a researcher, and so on); in digital platforms, however, this effect is amplified. If used correctly, then, Facebook helps to ask the old philosophical question relating to identity – who are we really? – in new and even wittier ways. Obviously, having this possibility doesn't mean that everyone, without distinction, always makes use of it or would like to make use of it. But, beyond differences and given different situations, what counts here is that some important notions – such as authorship, subjectivity, identity and interaction – are usually brought forward by Facebook. To talk about it, in this essay, I followed, for strategic reason, the course of my own day. During my day, another element – apparently meaningless – has to be

remarked: I took some notes and I posted them on Facebook. This is something that I often do. What does it mean more particularly? The fact is that I also use Facebook as if it were a paper notebook: I post on Facebook ideas – in the form of short notes – that come to my mind and which I want to use, sooner or later, in some longer essays; sometimes, alternatively, I post a few lines – as a reminder – to write down a fragment of the day that I want to recall in the future and on which I want to work. Basically, instead of using a real notebook I directly use Facebook. Why? Is there some greater meaning beyond convenience? Firstly, it is playful to write down some ideas and to unintentionally recall them, from time to time, by scrolling down Facebook. Secondly, by publicly posting some notes on Facebook I can interact with other users and better reflect on what I intended to write. This is an advantage, compared to a paper notebook, because I can modify what I think and rewrite it on the basis of the feedback that I receive from others reading my posts. Basically, on Facebook, interactions with friends are fun; furthermore, interactions are a means, for me, to be critical about my own ideas and writings. Having continuous feedback, using a real notebook, wouldn't be possible. Facebook, instead, always allows different interactions with users, who can comment and, in turn, receive answers, in a sort of enriching and fertile dialogue.

At this point, I think time has come to conclude. To end, I would like to emphasize the fact that, to write this essay, I followed the course of my day. I used this strategy to connect the everyday and Facebook. I also did this to give some examples concerning significant notions permeating Facebook, a social platform become, for me, an object of auto-ethnographic study. My whole essay has, in any case, an auto-ethnographic orientation, with respect to the way I deal with languages and metalanguages, with the polysemy of some concepts such as simulation and technology, with media realities and reflexive research, with the everyday and its connection with Facebook itself. Rather than making a difficult summary, here, as a conclusion, of the questions addressed – somewhat distorting the linear ethnographic orientation that I adopted – I prefer, instead, ending with a quote by an anthropologist who precisely refers to the ethnographic methodology and its relationship with the human. I share his viewpoint: “the issue becomes whether ethnographic methodology can perpetually recuperate the human among those marginalized and expanding groups of quasi-humans (the virtual, digital, criminal, insane, and insurgent), or should it relinquish its role in policing those borders to reconceptualize the existing results and future strategies of the discipline? The answers must be ‘yes’ [...] But we are not there yet” (Whitehead, 2012, p. 227).

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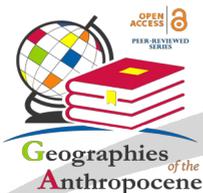
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The development of technology during the Anthropocene has affected science and the ways of “doing science”. Nowadays, new technologies help scientists of several disciplines by facilitating knowledge and how to manage it, but also allow for collaborative science, the so-called “Social Science”, where everyone can be a scientist and be involved in providing data and knowledge by using a computer or a smartphone without being a specialist. But is it really that simple? Actually, the daily and integrated use of different digital technologies and sharing platforms, such as social media, requires important reflections. Such reflections can lead to a rethinking of epistemologies and scientific paradigms, both in human geography and social sciences. This volume titled “Information Technologies and Social Media: New Scientific Methods for the Anthropocene” includes 10 chapters exploring some changes related to the way to do science with a multidisciplinary approach. From classroom experiences to the use of Citizen Science, from Artificial Intelligence use to how Social Media can help researchers, the book reflects on the ICT influence during the last few decades, exploring different cases, complementary perspectives and point of views.

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