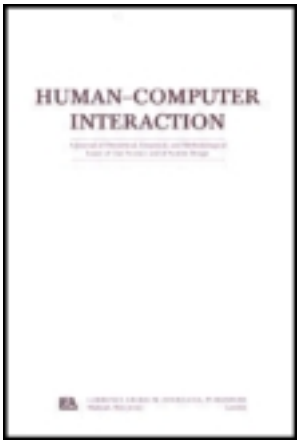

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Friend or Freund: Social Media and Transnational Connections in Berlin

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Friend or *Freund*: Social Media and Transnational Connections in Berlin

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Transnational social media have become entwined in daily life in places like Berlin, articulating and facilitating social relationships at different geographic levels. As media technologies circulate transnationally, the relationship is changing between online communication practices and everyday experiences of place. This article contributes to transnational studies of HCI by rethinking how online practices shape geographic connections in contemporary Europe, especially regional German affiliations, local friendships, and translocal communities of interest. Drawing on ethnographic research with clusters of friends in Berlin and online, I examine how users participated in multiple networks in ways that transformed the meaning and experience of the local, regional, or transnational as spatial scales. This approach to transnational HCI calls attention to the uneven ways in which social media circulate according to implicitly American notions of friendship and sociality. German and other European users contended with Facebook categories that reflected culturally specific American interaction norms, often eliding or overlooking German language distinctions and understandings. The findings highlight how social media encode dominant cultural norms and reshape the experience of the local, global, and transnational in everyday life.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Berlin, as in many other places in the late 2000s and early 2010s, transnational social media have become integral to everyday life. In particular, social network sites (SNSs) like Facebook are increasingly central to articulating and maintaining personal ties and social networks at multiple geographic levels. Numerous studies have examined how SNSs are becoming more integrated into daily communication

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for some users, especially young adults and adolescents (e.g., Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2006, 2011; Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechter, & Espinoza, 2008). Although many studies have examined questions of use, social capital, inequality, and youth development, fewer long-term ethnographic studies address how users outside the United States are taking up and and adapting social media platforms. Yet sites like Facebook and other SNSs have rapidly become popular in many locales around the world (as evidenced, e.g., during the Arab Spring uprisings initiated in 2010). As media technologies increasingly circulate transnationally, how is the relationship changing between online communication and everyday experiences of place? This article contributes to transnational studies of human–computer interaction (HCI) by rethinking how online practices shape geographic connections and place-making processes and how U.S.-specific norms structure online sociality.

This study presents ethnographic data from 11 months of fieldwork conducted in Berlin and online with young adult social media users, to investigate how they participated in multiple communities at different geographic levels or scales. I consider closely the online and offline activities of clusters of friends comprising each other's "core" social network (Young, 2011), called a "friend circle" (*Freundeskreis*). My analysis takes geographic scales such as the local or global as emerging from users' connections and interactions, drawing on work in cultural geography and science and technology studies on scalemaking (e.g., Brenner, 1998, 2001; Escobar, 2007; Massey, 1993; Marston, 2000; Marston, Jones, & Woodward, 2005). In this sense, online activities took place at multiple spatial scales, whether local, regional, or translocal, on the same platforms. These scales did not precede users as preexisting containers of social space, however, but were instead generated in the everyday ways friends and contacts communicated. As products of everyday practices, geographic scales were changing as social media circulated. Social media, for example, took part in connecting users in Europe across locales translocally, transforming everyday experiences of place without circulating globally. The translocal offers a way to reconceptualize transnational linkages on social media in terms of place-making practices. How, then, do Facebook and other social media reconfigure what the transnational means as a

form of social and territorial organization, from the site's architecture to its integration into everyday life?

In approaching social media in terms of scalemaking, that is, how different geographic scales are produced, I consider what it means in these friend circles to talk about the "local" online while participating in transnational, translocal, and regional networks. How were social media transforming spatial scales themselves, as a means of ordering social space? This approach to transnational HCI draws attention to the diverse and sometimes unequal ways social media circulate, shaped by implicit understandings of friendship and sociality on sites like Facebook. German and other European users had to negotiate the category of Facebook "Friendship," which reflected dominant American social norms. For example, key German-language distinctions disappeared on Faecbook, such as between *Freunde* (close friends) and *Bekannte* (friendly acquaintances). Whose "social," then, do social media represent, encode, and reproduce? And what consequence might implicit norms entail for users besides the normative, middle-class American subject? These questions highlight potential inequalities in the structure of social media platforms to suggest how designers could rethink issues of localization and better support multiple understandings of friendship and sociality. Although this study provides an in-depth analysis of users in Berlin and Europe, the findings indicate broadly how social media are affecting the understanding and experience of the local, global, and transnational in daily life.

2. BACKGROUND: SOCIAL MEDIA AND SCALEMAKING

An example from my fieldwork best illustrates the connections explored in this article. Early on, I attended a music festival in western Germany to seek out study participants who used social media to articulate and maintain networks of others with shared tastes. The Internet and digital media have long supported such communities of interest, particularly those described as youth "subcultures" organized around music, fashion, and style (e.g., Boyd, 2008; Bucholtz, 2002; Buckingham, 2008; Ito, Okabe, & Matsuda, 2005; Livingstone, 1998). This particular festival, "Musikfest,"[1] brought together dedicated fans who attended year after year, primarily from Germany but also from the Netherlands, France, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden, and elsewhere. Many attendees were themselves musicians, DJs, or otherwise involved in music production. The event centered on 3 days of electronic dance music, which participants described as subgenres of industrial music. As a subculture—or rather, "scene" (*szene*)—this network of music fans spanned multiple locales across Europe, in a manner I consider translocal, as I detail shortly.

It wasn't until after the festival, however, that I began to appreciate the growing role of social media in facilitating the linkages that comprised this scene. At Musikfest, I had met a circle of fans from Berlin who frequently organized and attended smaller music events closer to home. Returning to my apartment, I discovered that a flurry of

[1]The name of the festival has been changed for confidentiality.

activity had been taking place on my Facebook account, though I had hardly logged in during the festival. I found a veritable flood of "Friend" requests (reciprocal Facebook contacts categorized simply as "Friends," translated as *Freunde* in German), especially from Berliners I had met, first, the affable DJ and promoter Alex; then Zach, another American in Berlin; Sal, an electronic music producer and sound designer; and finally David, who owned a record shop.

This spate included not only Friend requests but also a stream of comments on my Facebook profile and on those of my new acquaintances. Another musician tagged me and others in a video of his performance, and suddenly all the comments on the video were arriving in my e-mail in-box (as per my Facebook notification settings, apparently). A lone acquaintance followed up via e-mail, but the majority of the activity was taking place on Facebook. Over the next few days, attendees began uploading digital photos from the event, "tagging" other users (linking images of them to their name and profile), and commenting back and forth. Facebook, it became clear, was where the action was following the festival, extending friendships and social connections established at the event into the everyday activities of a geographically dispersed network of music fans.

Facebook brought together users with shared interests, facilitating a loosely connected online community with members clustered in multiple geographic locales, mainly in urban Europe. The music scene (or scenes) took place through and across these sites, online and offline, and comprised multiple geographic connections. In this sense, I consider it translocal—happening simultaneously across specific places and generating new experiences of place without circulating globally or transnationally. As Zhan (2009) explained in accounting for transnational connections between practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine in Shanghai and California, the translocal is not necessarily "an intermediate scale of circulation conveniently nestled between the local and the global" (p. 8) but instead emphasizes ongoing place-making processes: ""Translocal' is not the same as 'trans-locale' and 'trans-national,' which are suggestive of an ontological and analytical priority of places and practices of 'dwelling' (Clifford, 1992) over place-making projects and processes" (p. 8). Most of the music fans, for example, attended regular music events near their homes, traveling occasionally to festivals or shows in other cities or countries. They identified as participating in a larger music scene or scenes (oriented toward experimental electronic music) that took place in multiple instantiations across these sites. Although translocal connections were not new, social media provided a means for fans to stay in touch on the same platforms where they maintained friendships at other scales.

A growing body of research explores how young adults and others integrate social media into their everyday lives, offering nuanced understandings of what constitutes "use" in online communication (e.g., Ellison et al., 2011; Hargittai, 2007; Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009; Zillien & Hargittai, 2009). Initial studies found that SNS users added offline friends rather than seeking out new contacts online (boyd & Ellison, 2008; Ellison et al., 2006), whereas research since investigates how SNSs support overlapping online and offline worlds (e.g., Ellison et al., 2006, 2011; Subrahmanyam et al., 2008). Ellison et al. (2011), for example, described how college

students they studied articulated social relationships in multiple ways, deploying diverse "connection strategies" (p. 874) to maintain friendships on Facebook. Online communications in this sense comprise diverse practices, such as the "lightweight interactions" that characterize relationships on Facebook and other SNSs. Similarly, Subrahmanyam et al. (2008) analyzed the overlap between college students' online and offline friends, in an innovative study of emerging adults' online worlds. They found that online and offline worlds were "psychologically connected" (p. 421) and located differences between online and offline relationships in the "affordances of the online context" (p. 432), recognizing how users adapt interactions to specific settings.

As a consequence of these affordances, SNS use can strengthen relationships formed offline, as Young (2011) argued, by helping maintain "core networks" of friends with closer ties that "have the potential to be highly influential in decision-making and exposure to ideas, issues, and opinions, being an important source of information" (p. 31, citing Donath, 2007). Ellison et al. (2011), however, also pointed out that close friends are likely to communicate through multiple channels along with Facebook, "because these stronger ties typically use multiple, redundant channels to communicate" (p. 877). Instead, they locate the value of SNSs in their potential for activating "latent" ties, that is, connections between people who have not met but have friends or interests in common. SNSs make it easier to convert these potential relationships into "weak" ties, affiliations that have been linked to greater social capital (Ellison, Lampe, & Steinfield, 2009; Ellison et al., 2006; Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008). The friend circles in my study can be compared to these core networks or clusters, as close friends who communicated regularly through multiple media channels (including Facebook, Skype, instant messaging, text messaging, and voice calls).

At the same time, the friend circles were not necessarily organized around "shared geography," in contrast to college campus networks described by Ellison et al. (2011, p. 876), nor were they grounded solely in shared interests. It therefore warrants closer study to ask what constitutes "shared geography" and how social media become part of place-making practices. For the friend circles I studied, what did it mean to talk about geographic levels such as the local, regional, or transnational as means of organizing social ties? Many scholars have demonstrated that the Internet does not necessarily facilitate global networks, despite its potentially global reach, and that territorial distinctions instead persist online. For the friend circles in this study, social media (especially Facebook) brought together interactions at different geographic scales, including local relationships, regional German affiliations, and translocal connections, into the same online sites. These communication technologies, as a result, call into question what constitutes geographically based connections online and what makes certain interactions local, global, or geographic at all.

Under late capitalism, communication technologies have played a key role in processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization (Appadurai, 1990, 1996; Brenner, 1998) and have often been characterized as expanding the geographic scope of everyday life, from local to national to global. Cultural geographers have proposed, however, that geographic levels such as local, national, and global represent means of ordering social space, produced through social and cultural practice (Brenner, 1998,

2001; Marston, 2000). According to Brenner (1998), "each *geographical scale* under capitalism must be viewed as a complex, socially contested territorial scaffolding upon which multiple overlapping *forms of territorial organization* converge, coalesce, and interpenetrate" (p. 464). The link between capital and geographic organization has become especially pressing in Europe with the ongoing sovereign debt crisis, which was just beginning to unfold during my fieldwork. The Euro crisis has brought attention to whether the project of European integration will succeed as a form of scalemaking—that is, whether the European Union will continue to solidify as an emerging supranational level of organization. This brings to the fore questions of scale for Europeans, as the European Union must be forged economically, politically, and culturally in ways that are reshaping everyday experience. Although communication technologies facilitate global and transnational circulations of media, they also participate in reorganizing local, regional, and national connections, as much scholarship has shown (e.g., Bernal, 2006; Boellstorff, 2008; Miller & Slater, 2000; Wellman & Gulia, 1999; Wilson & Peterson, 2002). Social media that circulate transnationally are bringing together relationships at different scales in novel ways, as this study investigates through fine-grained ethnographic analysis.

Scalemaking processes, moreover, are never neutral. Massey (1993) called into question the role of power in Harvey's (1989) concept of space-time compression, arguing that the "local" and the "global" do not constitute separate spaces. Instead, they comprise different kinds of linkages and interconnections according to configurations of power that shape geographic organization, as "articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings" (Massey, 1993, p. 66) whose spatial dimensions are shaped unevenly by particular "power geometries" (p. 61; see also Dourish, 2006, on space and place in ubiquitous computing). The global, for instance, can take place in the same places as the local but may constitute denser or wider-ranging linkages between people and institutions. In a similar vein, some critics of Brenner question the analytical utility of scale at all. Marston et al. (2005), for example, took social space to be an emergent property of human and nonhuman interactions, influenced by actor network theorists such as Latour (2005) and the work of Deleuze (1994) and DeLanda (2009). This approach allows for the partial connections, contingencies, and "blockages" that characterize all global and transnational "flows" of people and capital (Marston et al., 2005, pp. 8–9).

These debates highlight the importance of examining closely the relationship between emerging media and geographic organization. In addition, they draw attention to power inequalities that inhere in social media platforms such as Facebook. A number of studies have looked at SNS use outside the United States (e.g., Young, 2011; Zillien & Hargittai, 2009) but have not addressed how such users experience communicating on platforms designed in the United States. What happens when services like Facebook circulate transnationally? Researchers have addressed issues of inequality and socioeconomic status in SNS usage, finding that offline differences and constraints shape online behavior (e.g., Hargittai, 2007). Regarding Internet use more generally, for instance, Zillien and Hargittai (2009) found that socioeconomic status correlates with online activities that enhance various forms of capital. They argued

that a "digital divide" persists because, even when users have access to the same equipment, social and structural inequalities are perpetuated online—in part because the norms that inform technology use often become sedimented and reproduce offline differences (pp. 275–276).

In my research, I found that the structure of Facebook often enacted or reproduced culturally specific understandings of friendship and sociality. In this sense, Facebook operated according to implicit norms regarding relationships and interaction that German and other European users had to negotiate. The "social" in social media conventionally refers to greater interactivity in networked computing and online, driven by user-created content in which users maintain profile pages and add others as contacts (boyd & Ellison, 2008; Ellison et al., 2009; Lenhart, Madden, Rankin Macgill, & Smith, 2007). Although many studies have linked social network sites to the production of social capital, defined as the value that accrues from an individual's social ties, it is worth examining further whether the "social" in this sense is universal. Can all users capitalize equally on social capital, or do users in different subject positions benefit unevenly? Whose sociality do "social" media represent or encode, and how might Facebook's design represent the norms of dominant groups, especially given its origin as an elite site for Harvard students? To consider these questions, I draw on insights from science and technology studies, such as Latour's (2005) account of the social as emerging from linkages and associations between human and nonhuman actors. Even as Facebook became popular because of its transnational cachet, it risks standardizing social relations according to dominant American norms.

3. METHODS: FRIEND CIRCLES

This study draws on long-term ethnographic fieldwork I conducted between 2007 and 2010 in Berlin and additional sites in Germany and the Netherlands. Ethnographic methods furnish further insight into what constitutes interactions on social media by providing detailed, situated accounts of daily practice. Broadly, this study addresses how clusters of Facebook users incorporated social media into their everyday lives, including what "offline" connections looked like, the material contexts of social media activities (such as where and with which devices), the conversations they engaged in, and how they understood relationships carried out in diverse settings. I planned to investigate geographic scales and scalemaking as understood and experienced by research participants, to further scholarly analysis on media and geographic organization. Although I draw on categories developed in scholarly literature, I describe geographic distinctions that users themselves articulated. Many of my interlocutors referred to their close friends as their "inner circle," for example, and distinguished between the local of Berlin, regional German ties, and transnational and translocal relationships (though they did not always use those terms). My analysis contributes to rethinking geographic connections and place-making practices by calling attention to how social media bring together—and reconfigure—relationships at multiple scales, including the local, regional, and translocal. In the case

of European and German young adults, this analysis also highlights the complexity of scalemaking in the European Union.

For the study, I recruited clusters of participants who used social and digital media with one another and conducted participant-observation online and offline with 30 core participants and their extended social networks, mainly between October 2009 and July 2010. I took extensive field notes to record everyday activities and interactions, in homes, at social gatherings, at various outings and public places, and occasionally at work settings, as well as on Facebook, Skype, blogs, Twitter, and other instant messaging services. I conducted semistructured and open-ended interviews in English and German with 20 of these participants, using the same set of interview questions. I inquired about the SNSs that participants used, how they spent time on these sites, which devices they used, with whom they communicated, and how they understood their online contacts. Formal interviews were followed in some cases with open-ended discussions, along with numerous informal conversations.

I initially sought out participants whose shared interests brought them together, beginning with the electronic music fans described earlier. Like most frequent Internet users, the majority of participants were in their 20s and 30s and can be considered young adults (cf. Young, 2011). Of the music fans, I identified two clusters of close friends who described each other as their inner "friend circle" (*Freundeskreis*), the most intimate spatial scale I studied. One circle was based in Berlin, though one member lived in Hannover, and members saw each other regularly while communicating over multiple media channels. This circle comprised mainly western Germans in Berlin (especially hip inner districts of former East Berlin) and non-German Europeans, attracted by Berlin's low rents and vibrant music and art scenes. Another circle of music fans lived in the Netherlands, mainly around Amsterdam. These two circles shared music tastes; communicated online together, primarily on Facebook; and saw each other occasionally throughout the year, for example, at music festivals (many had originally met at Musikfest). I visited Amsterdam on a few occasions, but most research with this circle took place online, paralleling users' own communication practices. Both circles also maintained ties locally and on SNSs to a larger network of fans with similar tastes and interests.

In addition, I sought out research participants in Berlin who used social media but did not identify as members of a music scene or youth subculture. Through roommates I initially found online, I became acquainted with a group of young adults whose friendships were organized around shared origins in the eastern German state of Saxony-Anhalt. With a few exceptions, everyone in this network had met in and around Magdeburg, once the capital city of the East German *Bezirk* (administrative district) of the same name. Through my roommates Daniele and Katrine, I was able to participate in a smaller circle of friends now living in flatshares in eastern Berlin. Although friends in this circle shared many tastes and interests, their regional origin shaped the contours of their intimate and broader social networks. This friend circle, including my roommates and nearby neighbors, remained connected online and via other channels to friends and family from the same region living in Berlin, Saxony-Anhalt, and occasionally elsewhere (such as friends traveling abroad). Facebook helped keep this group connected to geographically dispersed contacts with shared

regional origins but, like the music fans, also became important to maintaining other ties, such as friendships with foreigners (*Ausländer*) in Berlin.

By studying social media ethnographically, I was able to situate diverse online practices in the contexts of participants' daily lives and relationships (and vice versa). To analyze my data, I developed thematic codes to track and identify recurring patterns in my recorded observations and compared interview answers on a spreadsheet. I grouped together similar practices and responses, such as which platforms respondents used with whom, how many of their online contacts they had met offline, how they described these relationships, and how they viewed friendship. With my preliminary findings, I began to rethink how local and transnational linkages created experiences of space and place, in conversation with existing literature. The data also called into question how Facebook reflects and reproduces culturally specific conceptions of friendship and sociality, leading me to investigate further how my respondents navigated these differences.

In my analysis, I draw on anthropological approaches to call attention to cultural specificity in social media, from language practices to the different subject positions that shape everyday experience. This perspective makes it possible to reconsider whether online sociality can be considered similar across diverse contexts or whether "social" media index dominant norms and privileges. Literature on social media often elides the distinction between "social" in the broad sense of connections between people and in the narrower sense of peer friendships. Insights from anthropology and science and technology studies (among others) remind us that culturally contingent norms and practices shape how technologies are developed and adopted, which in turn influence the social changes they effect (Latour, 1993; MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999). Anthropological studies of social media, then, are well situated to address questions of online inequalities, what constitutes use and nonuse, and how culturally specific values and practices affect which technologies become widespread—shaping, and perhaps redefining, lived experience. Although the findings in this study are not generalizable, they call attention to the categories we deploy in analyzing emerging communication technologies, from spatial scales to the construction of the "social" in social media.

4. ETHNOGRAPHIC FINDINGS: SCALES OF FRIENDSHIP IN BERLIN

4.1. Inhabiting the Local Online

Although the circle of music fans in Berlin participated in the translocal music scene described earlier, their daily activities were shaped by ways of living specific to Berlin and the scale of the local. Most of these music fans equated "local" with Berlin, including friends living in eastern and western Berlin neighborhoods and websites that provided information about music events in the city. As a form of place-making, however, I consider the local to comprise historically and culturally

contingent practices, norms, and aesthetics that informed life in Berlin for those I studied. In this, I draw on literature on scalemaking and on Michael Lambek's (2011) anthropological treatment of the local as a perspective not necessarily commensurate with the global scale:

> A more appropriate opposition to the local than the global might be the everywhere and nowhere of objectivist Enlightenment thought, the ideal of escaping the particular, the specific, the immediate, or the immanent. That is, the opposite of the local may be the abstract or transcendental universal. In this respect the local describes the human condition, down here on earth. It exists at many levels of inclusion and scale. (pp. 199–200)

Daily practices at the independent record shop owned by David illustrate how interactions online were often rooted in the local of Berlin. David, a French expatriate, had been living in Berlin for many years but had only recently opened the store, which specialized in electronic dance music and catered to Berlin's sizeable DJ population. The shop was popular with music enthusiasts and DJs beyond the circle's niche music scene, and had recently moved to a new location in the eastern Berlin neighborhood Prenzlauer Berg, which had been renovated extensively since reunification. Alex, a club promoter, DJ, and student, was working at the shop part-time, and Sal and Viktor, electronic musicians, occasionally performed free shows there to promote the store and their music. I volunteered there for a short period to observe the everyday context of online activities beyond group outings and music events.

Like many places in Berlin, the store adhered aesthetically to a postwar shabby chic, with unfinished concrete surfaces, plain crates for CDs and vinyl, bare fluorescent lighting, and secondhand furnishings. This look capitalized on romanticizing the East German past, repurposing GDR-era décor while leaving in place the architectural decay of the Cold War years, from bullet holes to cracked and worn concrete. This sensibility can be linked in part to "Ostalgie," nostalgia for life in the former East (Berdahl, 2000; Boyer, 2006), but it also marked spaces as uniquely Berlin, sedimenting the postwar past and locating associated structures of feeling as particular to the affective life and history of the city, particularly as experienced by younger, mostly White, middle-class residents. David and his co-owner had outfitted the shop sparely, with crates of records and CDs under displays of CDs cases, posters, and band T-shirts; two listening stations; German-language music magazines; and event flyers. On the front counter sat an older white iMac computer, where David or Alex often worked, beyond which was office space and storage, usually cluttered with additional stock. Alex usually brought in his own laptop, however, instead of using the iMac that doubled as the store's catalog and register.

On days I was there, I observed customers coming through at a leisurely rate, from DJs and other regulars living in Berlin to visitors from diverse locales such as Hungary, Israel, the United States, and Japan. One afternoon, for example, a well-known dubstep producer originally from the United Kingdom stopped by to discuss an upcoming show she and Alex were organizing. It was therefore necessary for staff to speak English as a lingua franca among cosmopolitan expats as well as

German. During shop hours, Alex and David were frequently using their computers to stay in touch with friends and other contacts, to promote events, and to coordinate get-togethers on Facebook but also on Twitter, blogs and other websites, and via instant messaging. Music events comprised the primary locus for seeing each other, along with meeting for group dinners, or at bars, galleries, and other public places. But events and outings never happened entirely offline, as participants incorporated mobile technologies into these encounters, often checking e-mail, SMS, or Facebook.

As described earlier, the pervasiveness of networked communication technologies presents a challenge for theorizing the sociality of everyday encounters. At times, users distinguished between online and in person (*persönlich* 'personal') or occasionally "IRL" (in real life, a longtime Internet designation for offline happenings). In these cases, "online" usually denoted communications or relationships conducted at a computer, such as on social network sites, through e-mail, or via instant messaging. Some activities, however, were not framed as online or offline at all, such as brief forms of communication enabled by mobile phones. Quickly checking Facebook or e-mail on a handheld device was rarely described as being online. Marc in Amsterdam, for example, explained how he and his close friends communicated continuously throughout the day rather than initiating discrete conversations:

> Instead of phoning, we now keep in contact the whole day. Chat has changed—you don't really say good-bye anymore. . . . We now have small bits of conversation, if you want to, you can spend an hour chatting, but it's more organic now. It used to be that nobody's only online, but now everyone's continuously online.

He attributed this both to the shift to high-speed Internet access and the popularity of phones with web access, especially smartphones: "Cable, of course [brought about] a mentality shift, in that a computer is always on. A lot of people just leave the computer on all day—and integration with the phone, that helps." Online communications, from this perspective, took place continuously, especially with close friends over multiple channels. These activities were being incorporated into everyday ones, rather than comprising a separate space (cf. Dourish, 2006).

Social and digital media did not necessarily blur or fade the lines between online and offline, but they brought everyday encounters onto Facebook or Skype. They also brought local connections into the same online spaces where users articulated translocal networks. In rethinking the spatiality of the local, Lambek (2011) argued that "local" often indexes cultural specificity in distinction to the abstractness of the global, indicating a shift from away from contrasting the particular to the universal:

> Turning the anthropological object from the particular to the local is, in one sense, a shift in weight from the singular to the specific. But more than this, it can index a shift from the specific as an instance of culture, with all its density, texture, and incommensurability, or from the specific as an instance of society, with the implications of autonomy and perhaps holism, to the specific as mere location on the homogeneous grid. (p. 205)

He argued that "local" is often used to refer to a specific position on an otherwise homogenous grid of empty space, as realized, for example, through global satellite imaging, Google Earth, or even the structure of the Internet. He proposed instead recouping the particularity of the local, not as a scale at all but as a set of contingent place-making practices with particular temporal rhythms and spatial dimensions: "I take the local to be constituted by the activities of its inhabitants, operating within specific traditions in some conjunction with one another" (Lambek, 2011, p. 216). The local in this sense comprises particular activities, rather than as a means of organizing space, and can be inhabited through such activities: "In other words, the indexicality of the local means both that it is not fixed in space or time and that it can be invoked and inhabited at many levels of inclusion" (Lambek, 2011, p. 200). Comparable to Marston et al.'s (2005) critique of scale as an analytical category, Lambek's approach indicates how particular, locatable practices constructed the local in (and of) Berlin, in ways that often became sedimented in places.

Facebook and other SNSs articulated translocal connections, but the local of Berlin remained central to organizing everyday activities on Facebook. As Lambek suggested, the Internet may represent and reflect a globalizing, homogenized conception of space, yet it was also possible to inhabit the local online. In one sense, David's record shop operated as a nexus for translocal music scenes, bringing together customers, musicians, promoters, flyers, and merchandise from multiple locales while promoting music and events online in ways that circulated translocally (and transnationally). But the store remained a locus for the local scale—or more accurately, a local scale—of Berlin, grounded in aesthetics that connected the space to the city's history and to particular music scenes and nightlife. The music fans, moreover, were never solely online—they were always also connecting and communicating from somewhere. The shop became a site that brought together relationships at multiple scales, generating and supporting both local and translocal connections. Although these interactions were specific to this particular store and friend circle, they illustrate how social and digital media can bring together relationships at different scales, reconfiguring how those scales are experienced, as I describe next.

4.2. Configuring the Translocal

For these friend circles, Facebook was central to articulating relationships at multiple spatial scales in ways that were transforming geographic connections and experiences of place. Among the electronic music fans, music tastes shaped and informed networks that spanned locales across Europe and, to a lesser degree, the United States. Fans in Berlin and elsewhere attended music shows with close friends and other like-minded fans near their homes while seeking out new music and hanging out on social media. Many had been using SNSs before Facebook, (including Myspace, LiveJournal, and the German Studi.vz, as detailed later on), as well as earlier platforms like discussion boards and chat rooms. SNSs, however, seemed better at integrating online activities into everyday practices (Ellison et al., 2009; Ellison et al., 2006), such as posting "status" updates, reading and commenting on others' updates, and

discussing offline encounters. Social media may be popular precisely because they support this integration (cf. Rattenbury, Nafus, & Anderson, 2008, on computing temporality as "plastic").

Shared music tastes informed the friendships and connections Alex and others sought out, although many did not identify with a particular subculture in the sense used by the Birmingham school (Hall & Jefferson, 1993; Hebdige, 1979; see also Thornton, 1996). As Marc, a Dutch music promoter in his late 20s, explained, "Music, everything revolves around music, electronic music of course. The music scene, of course, the DJing, the [event] organizing, helping other people organize." Marc used Facebook simultaneously for pursuing music interests and for communicating with close friends, mainly other fans in Amsterdam:

> I use my Facebook like a general thing. I will add people—I don't know—if there's a connection. Facebook, it's maybe 60% [contacts also known in person], maybe more. Almost like 70%. If I know a person, maybe I'll meet them later on through a music festival. People I don't know well, but have heard of—maybe I'll meet you later. It's great for expanding your contacts. To accept a request—I have to recognize a name, or look at friends in common. I'll give someone a chance if we have common friends.

He used Facebook to keep up with those he had met through friends or at festivals but would add strangers (potential or "latent" ties in the literature on social networking) if he recognized their name, such as a music producer, or if they had friends in common. Shared participation in the same scenes determined whom Marc considered a potential friend—not all latent ties were necessarily equal. The music scene constituted a translocal community of interest in this sense, comprising friends and strangers with shared tastes and practices that generated belonging (cf. Bucholtz, 1999; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

As I discovered following Musikfest, Facebook provided a central site for this translocal networks of friends and contacts to "hang out" (cf. boyd & Ellison, 2008; Ito et al., 2008), from posting status updates and commenting to adding new contacts and sharing digital photos and videos. Music events intensified these activities, as with the proliferation of Friend requests; photo tagging; and online discussion before, during, and after Musikfest. Moreover, Facebook brought together relationships at multiple scales through features such as the News Feed (cf. boyd, 2008). By 2009, the News Feed had become a central feature, tracking and publicizing user activities, including those intended to be visible like posted links, photos, and status updates, but also actions like profile changes (such as one's romantic relationship status) or adding new Friends. This contributed to articulating users' relationships and provided further opportunities for interaction and engagement, especially informal ones that solidified connections initiated elsewhere.

Facebook brought both intimate and casual relationships into the same spaces, bringing together local and translocal social networks—that is, networks at multiple spatial scales. Marc distinguished between contacts at different geographic scales by contrasting his "contacts abroad" to his close "inner circle" of primarily Dutch

friends. Closeness, for him and others, correlated with frequent socializing, offline and across multiple media channels (especially text and instant messaging and frequent Facebook commenting), and most music fans maintained a few geographically distant but affectively close friendships. Marc explained, for example, how he had initially used Facebook to communicate with his "music friends—people you go out with, partying, who share the common interests of music." But Facebook quickly became a site for "daily stuff" like chatting and making plans, in a way that contributed to "maintaining friendship" that wasn't "really focused"—precisely the sort of lightweight interactions described by Ellison et al. (2011). Music tastes, then, contributed to articulating and extending a web of friends and contacts that took place translocally but not globally. Although Marc, like many of my interlocutors, perceived his online networks as "all over," spanning the globe, he quickly qualified this by explaining that most of his contacts lived in Europe or the United States.

As a result, music fans like Marc in the Netherlands and Alex in Berlin came into greater contact with friends and acquaintances regardless of their closeness, geographic or affective. Fans observed each other's activities and interactions in the same spaces where they maintained relationships with their closest friends, bringing transnational, translocal, and local connections into sites of everyday practice. Facebook in this sense represented its own spatial scale by assembling interlinked friends and contacts across locales. By facilitating translocal linkages alongside connections at other scales, social media contributed to reconfiguring everyday experiences of space and place, including what it meant to talk about the "local" scale of Berlin.

By inhabiting the local online, fans such as Alex and David introduced local information into translocal networks on Facebook. This was particularly evident when they promoted events in Berlin online, often igniting discussion from friends well beyond the vicinity of the city. In May 2010, for example, Alex organized a dubstep show with his friend Pascal. Pascal, an interior designer and DJ, was in his mid-20s and had grown up in West Berlin but now lived in Kreuzberg (a hip but historically marginal neighborhood at the eastern edge of the former West). He and Alex availed themselves of translocal connections to bring in dubstep producers from the United Kingdom to perform, and promoted the show through various online and offline venues. The sizeable crowd that attended, however, consisted mainly of fans living in Berlin. On the day of the show, Pascal updated his Facebook status to remind his contacts about it, linking to the event's official Facebook "Event" page. He specified, in English, "we're on at 11pm. dont [*sic*] be late!" Two users "liked" this update (clicking on the button labeled "Like" in English and "Gefällt mir" in the German-language version, which translates to "it pleases me"). A third person lamented not being in Berlin to attend. Alex posted about the show as well, reiterating "we're on from 11pm." Pascal "liked" Alex's update, as did their good friend Erik in Hannover.

The following day, both Pascal and Alex posted on Facebook about the show's success, garnering further comments and "likes." Some came from friends in their circle, but others I didn't recognize, and not all lived in Berlin. For example, when Pascal wondered rhetorically, "playing good music, being paid and drinking for free. what could be better?" a contact quipped in reply: "If I was there?" He commented

in a familiar, casual way that suggested a close relationship with Pascal. But even friends with close affective ties often had to infer from Facebook what had happened offline, rendering additional context necessary to understanding online exchanges. This context helped reinforce the boundaries of local relationships online, rather than blurring local and translocal interactions. Although geographically distant friends and contacts could follow and participate in conversations referring to events in Berlin, they were excluded from understanding fully what had taken place. Close friends, meanwhile, might catch up over other channels such as instant messenger, staying more informed about one another's lives than casual acquaintances. These practices helped create and reinforce relationship distinctions that Facebook otherwise glossed, as I address in the discussion.

Although local relationships were not subsumed to translocal ones online, neither were offline networks simply reproduced. Facebook brought together connections at multiple scales in ways that changed what it meant to talk about the local. Although the local could be inhabited online, translocal relationships were also integrated into everyday experience and daily practice. Facebook in these instances became its own spatial scale, as when users described encounters "on" Facebook, at the interstices of local, translocal, and transnational connections. Like Massey's (1993) "articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings" (p. 66), Facebook helped articulate local and translocal connections in everyday spaces, such as the record shop or music events, while supporting relationships grounded in the contingent localness of Berlin.

In contrast, interactive websites like blogs were rarely described as social spaces—instead, they were more similar to articles on news websites. As Alex explained:

> The thing is—what I find interesting about Facebook is that it allows you a certain amount of micro-blogging and you know, I consider my posts to be some kind of micro-blogging, because I get the same feedback from my friends, which are the people I would like to talk to, and not to some disperse audience. . . . I considered starting blogging, [but] I'm not actually that keen on writing down opinions, you know, like I'm not a blogger.

Alex preferred Facebook over other social media, like blogs or Twitter, because of the opportunities for feedback and friendship maintenance:

> The most interesting thing about Facebook is that it's the first time that social interaction with my friends moved, basically, into the cloud, you know? Like . . . this Newsfeed is a dispersed way of communicating—you don't communicate, but you still get the information, and you know that the other people get the information. . . . I know that it's a more efficient way to get my message through, which is mostly silly kitten videos or, you know . . . But, I still know that it's the most efficient way to address the people. . . . I wouldn't be able to do that on Twitter.

As others have argued, Facebook supports social relationships through these lightweight interactions such as "silly kitten videos" that, although humorous

and lighthearted, solidified friendships among a dispersed network of local and translocal contacts.

Although Facebook differs from earlier SNSs like Myspace or LiveJournal, it certainly is not the first to foster local and translocal relationships, nor is the translocal new as a form of place-making. Translocal music scenes have incorporated digital media into everyday relationships since before social media or Web 2.0, such as bulletin boards, web discussion forums, electronic mailing lists, and file sharing services. Even before these technologies, music fans circulated homemade zines and mixtapes through the mail. But Facebook differs from earlier media in important ways, requiring little technical knowledge (Ellison et al., 2009; see also Zillien & Hargittai, 2009, pp. 275–276), while advocating a starkly different approach to online privacy and identity (boyd, 2008). Facebook has also become much more popular, especially among young adults. Combined with its integration into daily life, these factors meant that the music fans and their extended networks spent much more time online "continuously," as Marc termed it. These dispersed music fans embraced Facebook because it expanded their networks of friends and contacts while connecting them to local happenings in places like Berlin. The interface between local and translocal in consequence transformed lived experience and reconfigured the everyday as a site of scalemaking.

4.3. "Now Everyone Is On": Regional Affiliations Online

Along with local and translocal connections, Facebook supported friendships and relationships shaped by regional German affiliations rather than consumer tastes. This became apparent during my research with the circle of friends from Magdeburg, now living in Berlin. Formerly an East German administrative district, Magdeburg and its environs had been reorganized since reunification, combined with a neighboring district in the new state of Saxony-Anhalt. The core friends in this circle came from small towns and villages in this rural region and maintained ties with a broader network of family and acquaintances from the same area. In their late 20s, my roommates Katrine and Daniele had moved to Berlin after studying and working in the regional capital, where a number of their friends still resided. Katrine and Daniele had found an apartment together in Friedrichshain, in former East Berlin, not far from their close friends Jörg, a music journalist; his roommate Dieter; Sabine, also a music journalist; Kirsten, a health care worker; and Milo, a graduate student. Many of these friends lived together in shared apartments and often visited friends and family in Magdeburg while staying in touch over the phone and on Facebook, Myspace, and Skype. The core friends also visited one another's homes together regularly, often meeting in Jörg and Dieter's kitchen for weekly get-togethers. Although they did not consider themselves members of a particular music scene, they shared tastes in popular music, especially indie rock, and frequently went out together to shows and nightclubs.

Shared origins at the regional scale, however, informed their friendships and social contacts more than shared tastes. Katrine and Daniele, for example, largely relied on their friends Sabine and Jörg to recommend upcoming events or new

album releases. Through Berlin's nightlife, however, Daniele became acquainted with Nathan, an American interning in Berlin, and a few British friends of his, forging transnational linkages as well. Nathan introduced Daniele and her friends to Facebook, which she began to use to keep in touch with *Ausländer* (foreigners) she met in Berlin. She had been using Myspace and the German Studi.vz (pronounced Shtudi-fau-tzed) until meeting Nathan, as she recounted: "Everyone had been using Studi.vz, MySpace, etc., before, but then I began to use Facebook with foreigners in Berlin, because it was easier to stay in touch with them." As a result, Facebook then "spread" to her friends and contacts in Magdeburg, as she explained: "At first, not many others were there—now everyone is on."

After joining, she began using Facebook more often, and soon purchased a new laptop. The faster, lighter machine in turn made it easier for her to spend more time online. At home, she frequently chatted with friends such as Sabine and others in Berlin and Magdeburg, using Facebook's instant messaging feature, along with posting updates and viewing friends' photos. Unlike many of the music fans, Daniele and Sabine posted primarily in German, occasionally switching into the regional Saxony-Anhalt dialect they usually reserved for home and close friends. Jörg, in contrast, was more conversant in English and kept in touch on Facebook with indie musicians and record labels, many in the United States and Canada. He posted in both English and German, depending on the context, and maintained a personal music blog, mainly in English. With his close circle of friends, though, he preferred German, sometimes slipping into dialect and using regional slang. Switching between languages in this way made it possible for him to move between audiences or networks at different geographic scales (such as the regional or transnational) on the same online platforms.[2]

For this friend circle from Magdeburg, Facebook became a site where friends could hang out and keep in touch while connecting to transnational (and translocal) networks, from indie music producers to *Ausländer* in Berlin. Facebook made these interactions visible on the same web pages (especially through the News Feed). Simultaneously, Facebook supported the regional connections linking Katrine, Daniele, Sabine, and Jörg to friends back home or abroad—those Daniele described as "friends from home" (*Freunde von Heimat*, the homeland) and "people who are traveling." Jörg's former roommate Kirsten, for example, was traveling for 6 months in New Zealand and Australia. She and Daniele chatted regularly over Facebook, whereas Kirsten circulated photographs from her travels. One evening, Daniele and Katrine were hanging out on their living room sofa, browsing some of Kirsten's newest photos on Facebook. Katrine exclaimed to Daniele, "echt richtig cool Bilder!" (really cool pics!). Facebook thus helped maintain and strengthen friendships based in regional ties, among friends living in Berlin or traveling abroad.

In this sense, multiple territorial distinctions could be enacted and articulated online. These regional affiliations corresponded to a long history of regionalism in Germany that has shaped identity and social relations (Staab, 1993; see also De Soto,

[2]For further discussion of code switching as scalemaking, see Kraemer (2012, pp. 149–157).

2000). For this circle, regional eastern German origins linked them to their families in Magdeburg, connecting them in enduring ways. Even as regional ties shaped their online networks, Facebook helped solidify local and transnational connections, such as with Nathan. Yet regional identities were not equally important for all the German users in my study—Erik in Hannover, for example, also grew up in eastern Germany but shared interests played a more important role in shaping his friendships. In addition, although Daniele and Katrine became close with Nathan, they maintained few, if any, relationships with western Germans outside of work. Facebook facilitated interactions at local, regional, and translocal scales but did not necessarily reproduce offline networks. At the same time, it remained a site for interacting with peers, including friends and acquaintances, rather than family. Although Facebook supported regional ties for the circle from Magdeburg, it did so according to a culturally specific construction of friendship that was often at odds with how German and other European users experienced and articulated social relationships, as I discuss next.

5. DISCUSSION: TRANSNATIONAL SOCIALITY ON FACEBOOK

For these friend circles, social media brought together everyday relationships at multiple spatial scales in ways that reconfigured experiences of place. Geographic distinctions not only persisted on sites like Facebook but also emerged through social media practices that brought encounters at different scales into novel configurations. At the same time, transnational social media structured online activities according to implicit norms regarding friendship and sociality, shaping how friends and contacts could communicate. In this discussion, I consider how social media represented and facilitated culturally and geographically specific understandings of the "social." How did implicit norms affect possible interactions on sites like Facebook, such as adding new contacts or reciprocating friendship overtures? Many Germans and other Europeans contended that they viewed "friendship" differently from Americans, while acknowledging that these differences reflected common stereotypes.

In investigating this question of sociality in social media, I follow Latour and others in taking the "social" as something that emerges from particular linkages and associations. For Latour (2005), the concept of the "social' is not some glue that could fix everything . . . it is *what* is glued together by many *other* types of connectors" (p. 5). Social connections result from linkages between users, technologies, and associations, according to contingent histories that account for the cohesion they produce. These assemblages, to borrow language from science and technology studies, produce the social, in the sense of collectivity and group cohesion, rather than resulting from it as an a priori force (just as spatial scales are produced by everyday practices, rather than preceding them ontologically). The "social" in the term *social media*, however, refers specifically to user-centered Internet platforms, indexing interactivity, content creation, sharing, and networking (Lenhart et al., 2007). The social here describes

how social media, especially social network sites, articulate and make visible certain kinds of social ties (Ellison et al., 2009; Ellison et al., 2011).

The social in this latter sense entails assumptions about what constitutes collectivity and connectedness, for example, emphasizing mutual peer relationships (although social media can be used in professional contexts, they are usually framed and marketed as sites for friendship). Such assumptions rely on culturally and historically specific understandings of friendship and sociality, as social ties are constructed and experienced differently in different cultural contexts. Among those I studied, it became clear that their understandings of friendship were often at odds with the norms implicit in Facebook's architecture. Many users in the United States, of course, differentiate between Facebook Friends and "real" or "actual" friends (boyd, 2008; boyd & Ellison 2008; Ellison et al., 2011). But Facebook's structure reflects and encodes dominant U.S. constructions of the social and sociality. As boyd, Hargittai, and others have shown, offline inequalities often reproduce themselves online. Particular social media platforms like Facebook may become popular precisely because they articulate dominant understandings of the social.

Although German and other European users valued Facebook for its cosmopolitan cachet, they had to negotiate the U.S.-based norms that structured its category of "friendship." They used Facebook because they felt it kept them better informed than older platforms such as Myspace or Studi.vz, especially about life in cosmopolitan Berlin. Daniele, for example, detailed how she had used Myspace in Magdeburg but switched to Facebook after moving to Berlin. Facebook spread slowly to her friends back in Magdeburg, whom she characterized as "behind the times." Many had also maintained an account on Studi.vz, which restricted membership to German university students. Unlike Facebook, however, it had never acquired the same elite status, and users like Alex (the DJ in Berlin) depicted it as outmoded and parochial. He had not deleted his account but used it only occasionally to keep informed about former acquaintances: "I had a Studi.vz [account] from, like, the first day [of] university, but I don't use it at all anymore. I'm only in there to keep track of people I'm actually not interested in any more. . . . But I'm still curious about the possibility to look at what they are doing."[3]

Jörg, Daniele, Alex, and their circles of friends associated Myspace and Studi.vz with the past, with former friendships and relationships, while valuing Facebook's transnational (and translocal) reach. But the categories and norms that informed their social relationships differed from those Facebook emphasized. This contrast was most visible in the terminology German-speaking users employed to differentiate social relationships. German (and other European) users did perceive Facebook as a site for leisure and personal relationships, separate from work or family. But many of my interlocutors were pursuing careers that overlapped significantly with their personal interests, such as Sal, Niels, and Viktor (all professional musicians) or Sabine and Jörg (music journalists). As Sabine explained, she used Facebook to "keep in touch with people," mainly "friends and colleagues—that is, a few who are also friends."

[3]Comparable to the practice of "Facestalking" among Australian users in a study by Young (2011, pp. 26–27).

Only the American Nathan clearly divided his online activities into separate realms of "work and play."

The same users did assert a clear difference between friends and family, reserving Facebook for friends (and occasionally siblings or cousins) while using services like Skype or e-mail with parents and grandparents. As Marc insisted, "No family [on Facebook]—I don't want family being on my social networks. I want to keep it separated. It's for friends." Alex spoke daily with his mother over Skype, to help with a family business, but contended,

> I would never friend—befriend—my dad or my mom on Facebook. My mom strangely has it, but she doesn't use it. Well, I think she joined it because a friend of hers told her, but she didn't do anything with it. But I know, for example, my mom is using, like, a business-related social network.

Marc and Alex preferred to keep their family members, especially their parents, separate from their "social networks" online, instead communicating through other media channels. Marc admitted, though, that in his friend circle, families typically lived nearby and remained very "integrated" into their lives, adding, "If you need help, you go to your parents—your parents remain in very close relation, actually."

These experiences may still be similar to how many users in the United States interact with friends, family members, and work contacts on Facebook. When describing peers, however, it became more evident how German-language distinctions differed from Facebook defaults. Whereas Facebook lumped all contacts under the rubric of "Friendship," German-speaking users employed a large and precise vocabulary to denote a multiplicity of relationships. Facebook has since implemented subgroup options such as "Acquaintances" and "Close Friends" to improve privacy management, and allows family members to indicate one another. Yet these subgroups do not mostly affect how users interact and still reflect common English-language distinctions, parallel to the binary that other studies have identified of Facebook Friends versus "real" or "actual" friends (boyd & Ellison, 2008; Ellison et al., 2011).

In contrast, German speakers separated *Freunde* (close friends) from *Bekannte* (literally acquaintances, but used more often), with no intermediate term equivalent to the English "friend." As Niels, one of the music fans, reflected, a *Freund* entailed an enduring bond with particular expectations and obligations: "Would you help them move? Let them stay over?" David acknowledged the common stereotypes of Americans as more gregarious and superficial, which he summed up as "geographic clichés." But German speakers defined a *Freund* more narrowly than the English "friend," which must always be qualified to specify the nature of the relationship—a close friend, a friend from school, a work friend. German speakers instead employed precise terms such as *Arbeitskollegen* (coworkers) and *Kommilitonen* (fellow students), or the slang term *Kumpel* (comparable to "mate" in British English) for relationships somewhere between *Freund* and *Bekannte* (used in casual conversations but rarely in interviews).

Freundschaft furthermore denoted an enduring relationship that entailed regular, frequent contact. If I had not seen a friend such as Alex or Sabine after 1 or 2 weeks,

they would chide me gently or express concern for not having contacted me. One such evening, for example, Alex exclaimed over Skype chat, "I was worried that I hadn't contacted you recently! :(" Appropriate contact could include hanging out individually or in a group or chatting one-to-one over instant messenger. Facebook and Skype provided additional venues for maintaining friendship and were never described as alienating or isolating. As Niels explained, Facebook made possible "Freundschaft erweiterung"—extending friendship—while serving simultaneously as a "*helper tool* für real Freundeskreis" (a "helper tool" for the real or actual friend circle), linking his closest circle of friends to a "larger circle" online. Instead of characterizing offline friendships as more "real" than online ones, Niels and others described social media as expanding their circles of friends and contacts.

Facebook's architecture did not determine online interactions but encoded presumptions about how users understood and defined friendship, how friendship operated as a category in everyday life, and how relationships could be initiated and enacted online. Facebook, like most SNSs, offered a single broad category for mutual relationships without regard for distinctions that mattered to many German (and other European) users, even in the German-language version of the site. On the one hand, Facebook became popular because it integrated contact with close friends into the rhythms of everyday living while linking friend circles to translocal, regional, and transnational networks in cosmopolitan Berlin and beyond. But on the other hand, as a transnational platform, it standardized relationships under the rubric of "friendship." The "social" of social media indexed and articulated a dominant American understanding of friendship and sociality. This raises further questions about how other users must negotiate and contend with these assumptions, particularly those in the United States and elsewhere who do not fit the profile of the elite, predominantly White and male American. Do transnational media risk universalizing social interaction according to American (or other) norms? These issues merit further attention from scholars and designers alike to consider how platform design could better take into account social and cultural differences.

6. CONCLUSION

As social media circulate transnationally, they call into question how social relationships at different geographic levels are experienced and understood. In this article, I have drawn on extensive ethnographic research in Berlin and online to illustrate how social media practices shaped and reconfigured these spatial scales, such as the local, regional, or transnational. Among core networks ("friend circles"), social media brought together relationships at different scales into the same online sites, making them visible to one another. As the most popular platform, Facebook was key to reorganizing the scales at which users connected and communicated online, particularly by integrating online activities into everyday ones. For electronic music fans in Berlin and elsewhere, Facebook helped expand and extend networks of

contacts translocally—that is, spanning multiple locales and generating new experiences of place that were not necessarily global. Shared music tastes informed but did not limit the contours of this translocal network. Translocal connections, moreover, took place alongside local ones—where the local refers to the contingent specificity of lifeworlds in Berlin (and other local sites), not to its size or scope. The local of Berlin could be inhabited online as well as offline, and remained central to organizing everyday activities and interactions.

Local and translocal connections intersected online, however, in ways the changed the meaning of both. Online activities increasingly became part of everyday ones, experienced as continuous rather than discrete. On Facebook, friends and contacts could observe and participate in interactions at these different scales, bringing together the local and translocal in ways that had not been possible previously. Along with generating local and translocal connections, social media supported regional German affiliations that were specific to the context of postunification Germany. For the circle of eastern Germans in Berlin, Facebook made it possible to stay in touch with a network of friends from the same rural region. At the same time, friends in this circle perceived Facebook as connecting them to the hip, cosmopolitan lifeworld of Berlin, such as facilitating new friendships with *Ausländer*. Although many users valued Facebook for its transnational reach, the site itself depends on specifically American understandings of the "social." Examining how social media circulate transnationally highlights its implicitly American construction of sociality, which shaped how German and other European users communicated and interacted (and which they had to work around). Even as Facebook became a transnational site, bringing together connections at multiple scales, it remained the product of decidedly national interaction design, encoding and universalizing a dominant American conception of friendship.

NOTES

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