

Working paper

**Blogging as a research tool for ethnographic fieldwork**  
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*Abstract*

*This presentation argues that blogging emerges as a new research tool for the ones conducting ethnographic fieldwork. Moreover, I argue throughout my paper that new media with a particular emphasis in blogging will have even larger consequences for the discipline of anthropology. In order to substantiate my main argument I focus on these issues: a) Blogging might be a remedy to the anxiety of being in 'after the fact' that is shared by many anthropologists. Blogging takes place in the present tense while actively engaging with 'the fact'; b) blogging brings immediate feedback c) not only from the limited scholarly circles but from a wider public/audience d) which exposes the ethnographer to a much more effective issue of accountability. Moreover, e) blogging urges to see motives in a more regular sense, thus creates a strong sense of regularity f) that forces the ethnographer to produce on a regular basis g) with a constant appeal to narrate what would normally remain fragments of fieldnotes. In addition to depending on scholarly sources of interest, this paper exploits the presenter's own experience of blogging during his fieldwork.*

Ever since I started my doctoral study in anthropology, I have inevitably been thinking about the discipline's now long lasting self-reflexive mood. My department's particular position certainly leads my thinking to large extent, but I tend to believe that my own background in sociology and the emerging social phenomena all over the world with the increased pace of affairs would certainly lead me to a self-reflexive mood anyway.

This essay focuses on a new media tool: (web) blogging. I don't mean to be argumentative in grand scales but I would like to imply that this new media tool might have larger consequences for the discipline of anthropology. Blogging could be a tool for the public presence of the discipline. I intend this essay to be a contribution to Eriksen's well written recent work on the public visibility of anthropology (Eriksen, 2006). But first of all, I would like to argue that blogging emerges as a new research tool for the ones, like me, who conduct ethnographic fieldwork. I had started blogging with the advice of one of my professors. My dissertation topic is in its broadest sense focuses on senior-level Turkish journalists who mediate the European Union to Turkish public sphere during Turkey's membership negotiations. I have to admit that effectiveness of blogging increases with such a journalistic topic.

Lorenz from [Antropologi.Info](#) is one of the anthropologists who spared much effort on the relation between new media and anthropology. He is the one that inspired this piece of work. I rely on his [interviews with six prominent new media related anthropologists](#) in addition to my own experience of blogging and a brief survey of the literature on blogging. As one commenter in the [Savage Minds](#) points out, those interviews are inspiring but not limited to blogging. I will attempt to shape and limit the discussion in terms of blogging. Furthermore, since I specialize on journalism during my fieldwork, I was better at finding a literature on blogging and journalism. In fact, one can easily claim that there are fewer sources that focus on anthropology and blogging. In any case, I would like to point out that although this literature speaks of journalism, they help to develop my arguments. Hence, there is a heavy reliance on journalism and blogging.

In the following four parts I will suggest the validity of blogging as a research tool in anthropology by focusing on some significant aspects of this medium. The first part focuses on blogging as a personal development tool and the place it occupies in between the personal and the public space. The second part deals with the feedback and audience potential of the blog. The third part concentrates on the narrative and writing resourcefulness blogging may bring and the final part will argue that blogging maybe a remedy to the 'after the fact' problem of the discipline.

## PART 1

In Savage Minds, Rex produces an excellent post, entitled as [C. Wright Mills on blogging](#), in which he applies one of the latter's texts (On Intellectual Craftmanship) to blogging: He had changed none of Mills's original language except for replacing 'journal' and 'file' with 'website' and 'blog'.

“.....that the most admirable thinkers within the scholarly community you have chosen to join do not split their work from their lives..... You will have often noticed how carefully accomplished thinkers treat their own minds, how closely they observe their development and organize their experience. The reason they treasure their smallest experiences is that, in the course of a lifetime, the modern individual has so very little personal experience and yet experience is so important as a source of original intellectual work. To be able to trust yet to be sceptical of your own experience, I have come to believe, is one mark of the mature worker. This ambiguous confidence is indispensable to originality in any intellectual pursuit, and the file is one way by which you can develop and justify such confidence.

By keeping an adequate blog and thus developing self-reflective habits, you learn how to keep your inner world awake. Whenever you feel strongly about events or ideas you must try not to let them pass from your mind, but instead to formulate them on your blog and in so doing draw out their implications, show yourself either how foolish these feelings or ideas are, or how they might be articulated into productive shape. The blog also helps you build up the habit of writing. You cannot “keep your hand in” if you do not write something at least every week. In developing the file, you can experiment as a writer and thus, as they say, develop your powers of expression. To maintain a blog is to engage in the controlled experience.”

**Blogging occupies an interesting place between the personal and the public. The moment one starts blogging, s/he becomes public.** What might miss in the above text is this overlapping moment. The consequences of this overlap are more than I can deal with here. However, I would like to highlight some crucial consequences. The fieldwork is a rite of passage for the would-be anthropologists. This rite of passage is now publicly available. A personal development in the terrain of 'care of the self' (Foucault, 1988) evolves in the eyes of anonymous audiences. Because of the nature of new media, one can never be sure of his/her audience unless s/he explicitly closes the site to all strangers. The site/blog would then become a closed-circuit affair and I guess this is somewhat against the nature of this medium...

A brief look at the personal character of blogging in this context/ of the intersection of public and private is provided in the following paragraphs. This literature survey includes some of the arguments I will state later and I should also add that my literature survey focuses on those works that discuss the relations of journalism and blogging whose implications for anthropology, I believe, are fruitful.

Kirk and Borders (2005) lists three markers of blog-speech that are all related to the very personal character of blogging citizens: First of all, blog-speech is short and emotive. Kirk and Borders argue that the style of blog communication has its roots in the journalistic tradition: The titles of entries resemble the headlines that capture the attention of readers. If the readers are interested in the title, they decide to read the rest. However, the emotive tone of the content radically differs blogs from traditional journalism: 'Although Big Media does "human interest" stories—but this is mere sensationalism. There remains the essential failure to connect politics to the human, to us; a failure to tell us why and in what ways any of it matters to us.' Kirk and Borders (2005) continues: 'Blogs take up this important slack'. Although their article relates to blogs about political campaign coverage in the US, I would like to emphasize that it has a wider point of application. The latter reminds us a second marker of blog voice; the use of blogs acts as a motivational tool. Whatever theme one blogs about, continuous feedback and new contact emergences make him/her continue to blogging. If the interest does not include any public opening, one's motivation to continue may not be as powerful as there is during blogging. Finally, blogging provides a participatory outlet. This is related to the previous markers. However, Borders emphasize the participatory aspect in both authors and audiences for a cause. Political campaigns are in his mind but this can be extended to acts of participations to myriad numbers of social events.

Wall (2005), in her work that focus on the relation of blogs and journalism, demonstrates two ways of personalization: First of all, this is achieved particularly through providing opinions and personal comments. Secondly, for some bloggers, the personalization comes through providing original information on real world happenings: "On Sgt. Stryker, John Stryker writes about being a soldier stationed in Iraq. 'Awake at that point for 36 hours, I was almost too tired to care when a dozen artillery and mortar rounds exploded around the mobile howitzers I was travelling with' (Stryker, 2003 in Wall, 2005)."

Mattheson (2004) also emphasize the personal and links it to the discussions of public sphere: "There is thus also a claim to a particular authenticity of the personal, of 'people in their natural dialect, writing from the gut (complete with warts, typos and feelings), saying things that wouldn't

normally make it through the newsroom editing machine' (Lasica, 2002a quoted in Mattheson). These comments reflect the value placed on individualism and gut instinct in newsroom culture (Harrison, 2000 quoted in Mattheson), as was evident in the way in which many US journalistic commentators responded to CNN's decision to force one of its correspondents, Kevin Sites, to stop writing a weblog on the 2003 Iraq War (Mernit, 2003 quoted in Mattheson). Such statements also represent an assertion of the value of the personal in the public sphere, a social and cultural change with much broader contours (see, for example, Fairclough, 1995; Discourse Studies, 2001 both quoted in Mattheson) and which echoes much of the enthusiasm for homepages in the 1990s (Cheung, 2000 quoted in Mattheson), as well as discussions about the potential for electronic democracy (Dahlberg, 2001)."

MacDougall (2005) concludes as such: "Whatever their stated purpose, Web logs (or blogs) are funny things. Like no other communicative form, they blur the distinction between what is public and what is private, between the individual and the group, and between fact and fiction. But in addition to all of this, and particularly when devoted to political news, blogs open up the potential for a diverse set of perspectives that can broaden the public's knowledge base and essentially flatten the hierarchical feel of traditional, mainstream news outlets."

Personal experience has been increasingly embedded in recent anthropological production but this is still inscribed after the experience/ after the fieldwork part done and it is subject to varying levels of filtering during the phase of writing. I assume that since the publication of Malinowski's diary, the personality of the ethnographer is well visible (not necessarily in a positive manner) and anthropologists are not unfamiliar and uneasy with their own personal accounts, but this public/private act of blogging in the immediacy of experience is a challenging epistemological moment. A radical and sometimes mutually exclusive separation of personal and field notes are challenged at the moment of writing in this manner. The idea of a depressed and lonely ethnographer is lost and s/he shares the immediate feelings and raw ideas with an audience whose boundaries are hard to estimate. This of course will gradually lead to the formation of a new subject-position. It is never like writing for oneself. A more open self, not necessarily extrovert but certainly public-conscious self is dictated as long as one needs to maintain a successful blog. A public-conscious writing and thinking from the very beginning of the fieldwork has a transformative impact on the fieldworker's subject positioning.

In my early months, my colleagues and class mates were the best long-distance supporters in my depressed days. After three years in Houston, not Istanbul but I was transformed and I only felt a little

relief that I was back home where I lived most of my life. Although I was grateful for their support, this did not alleviate my anxieties. When I stopped blogging sometime towards the end of Summer 2004, I received an email from a political science professor from Spain. It was about 10 days after I had stopped. He was asking why I stopped and he told me that he sorry to lose a good source of news on Turkey. He had a project funded by Spanish Foreign Ministry and he arrived Istanbul a little later and we met. He was friendly, sort of fatherly and he taught me some of blogging tools before he left. This was both a technical and personal encounter and it was one of the very first motivating moments. Another major crisis in my rather long fieldwork occurred [when I had learnt that](#) I could no more postpone my mandatory military duty in the Turkish Army (the Army does not recognize PhD work in US as an official excuse after the fifth year). This was in November 2006 and I was supposed to start my 5-month duty in three weeks. In this world shattering moment, I happened to receive messages from readers whom I had no idea about. It was one of the moments when I had a better sense of readership all over the world. Not a big one, but a loyal/regular readership. It was again emotional support but I had also got some tips. Both online and offline tips at this period helped me to prepare a strategy to postpone my duty for a longer period. At this time of writing (May 2008), I still can postpone the duty without falling into a legal problem.

## PART 2

**Blogging brings immediate feedback; not only from the limited scholarly circles but from a wider public/audience which in turn exposes the ethnographer to a much more effective accountability.**

I am quite certain that any new ethnographic inquiry that takes place in a modern society will overlap with some other disciplinary inquiries. However, not only social scientific audiences, but even segments of 'lay audiences' will be interested in these inquiries. For instance, my dissertation in its broadest terms focuses on journalistic representations of Turkey and European Relations. Not only many anthropologists would challenge how anthropological my project is, journalists would keep an eye on my work constantly, and political scientists, at least, would be suspicious about the project. No doubt that I would also be exposed to scholars of communication and journalism. And mere citizens, by virtue of beings citizens whose futures might possibly be affected with the course of membership negotiations would challenge my ideas positively or negatively. In fact, the current nature of academia sheds new lights on the inner workings of

any discipline, but under normal conditions, any product/publication goes through substantive editorial processes. What is new with the blogging is that your writings are mostly unedited/unintervened except your self-control. Instant publication precludes many mediators/gatekeepers and conveys one's work with much less obstruction to a wider net-based community that is unhindered by the traditional gatekeepers.

*[This is of course a little bit ideal portrayal of blogging. Increasing number of anthropologists misunderstand the nature of blogging as it is observed here:*

### [Anthropology in Public](#)

Posted by [Strong](#) under [Public Anthropology](#)

In connection with [this debate](#) at Savage Mind (SM), I noticed these observations at [Open Anthropology](#):

I wonder if much of what we as anthropologists engaged in blogging are in fact engaging in *public anthropology*, or simply *anthropology in public*. I will not be naming names, and take the charge that I am criticizing a “straw man”, to avoid any unnecessary skirmishes (I have enough battles on my hands already)—**from what I have seen, most anthropology bloggers are in fact writing for an audience of anthropologists online, and the discussions, even when vibrant, retain a private quality. Sometimes the posts that are published fit in with narrow professional concerns that they could only be of very limited interest to a wider audience, apart from members of that audience who are curious to gain insights into academic professionalisms.** We are not *generally* communicating anthropology to non-anthropologists, or drawing on non-anthropological blogs in our own conversations, or producing an anthropology that is less self-consciously anthropological because it is too immersed in the give and take of a public debate to pause and ask aloud: “I wonder what Ralph Linton would have said about this?” Some of us seem to be too busy trying to impress professional, even senior colleagues, as if blogging were a shortcut to professional prestige previously gained through print publications, knowing the “right people” and having the “right pedigree”, and lots of hand shaking at conferences. The tone of assessments can resemble that found in the comments of anonymous peer reviewers in print journals, that is, sometimes rather elitist and haughty: “overly simplistic”, “spurious argument”, “specious”, “outmoded dichotomy”, not a good way to invite dialogue. **In other words, it's as if “work” has followed me “home” when I read some of the blogs, when in my case I often seek a break, a refuge, and a space for doing something different,**

or something that goes against the norms of the workplace. Otherwise, the question I would be directing to myself is: what's the point of blogging when there's beer and television?

Well, as noted [here](#), there may be no divide between beer and blogging. And blogs are the new TV: on demand, interactive! Yet, I wonder if any of us here at SM recognize ourselves in Maximillian's description? Two responses. Yes!: This online world is so open, dynamic, multi-media-ed, polyvocal, synthetic, syncretic, hybrid, assembled, contemporary – in short, so very 2.0 – it seems like anything is possible, and anthropological discourse could work in this environment in inventive new ways and draw in whole new audiences. On the other hand, readers of Anna Tsing are people too, we *are* a public. Do we not count? Does all writing on the web have to be snappy and quick, tilted toward a general audience? Maximillian has captured something here, to be sure, but what I notice often elsewhere on many anthroblogs is simply collation of interesting articles about, say, hormones and risk taking, from the New York Times. Newsflash: *we are all reading the New York Times online*. We all saw that article. One thing I like about SM's sometimes arcane discourse is precisely that it remains rooted in literatures that I find fascinating and that I frankly don't really see discussed elsewhere on the web (could be my own fault though).

To continue with my ideal type portrayal: However, this condition increases the level of individual responsibility for the blogging anthropologist. One of my earliest expositions to a lay public happened through a discussion on Kardak island crisis (see more: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kardak>) between Turkey and Greece. I had summarized news related to former Greek PM Simitis' book that included a section on the crisis. My post was quoted in in an online discussion forum and then I began to have more nationalist readers. This was a relatively passive encounter but Armenian genocide debate remained to be more contentious. I had spent incredible time to be neutral. Danish Cartoon crisis was just another one I had to be involved in one way or another. However, a relatively direct accusation came just recently. A neo-con blogger implied I was anti-American while I was a student in Texas... I felt quite helpless at that time since this accusation came without any evidence. I sincerely could not figure out how he reached such a conclusion. Since my research topic is involved in politics significantly, I am prone to be involved in any regional crisis. As the blog gains a wider audience, the responses also become more varied. In one year's time, I got to meet new people/professors in the academia (not particularly in anthropology), journalists (mostly Turkish), graduate students, Turkey lovers through blogging and some of my students

have become regular readers. The scope of my writings broadened not only due to the growing readership but the audience was certainly an important motivational factor. The blog has also become an ice-breaker and I used it to further my first time encounters in the offline world. But I mean not only personal encounters. Every encounter is a dialogic moment when I had to recalibrate my ideas. In strictly professional terms, this may not be needed. As long as your advisor and your readers do like what you write, you will pass but this does not help the ethnographer in dealing with other and larger audiences.

Among the interviewees of Lorenz, Friedman says blogging “has been highly rewarding. Although the number of regular readers on both sites is low compared with some of the major blogs (hundreds, as opposed to thousands, of visitors each day), most of our readers are interesting thoughtful people, and the discussion and exchange has been rewarding (well, most of the time ...). Personally, my blogging has changed a lot over time. Initially my personal blog was almost purely political. However, over time a number of truly wonderful political blogs emerged that were able to keep on top of the latest developments much better than I can. This freed me up to write more about personal and cultural interests. Now, with Savage Minds, I also have a forum to talk about more professional interests. I’ve also enjoyed meeting some bloggers in person, such as when I met with Taiwanese bloggers in Taiwan this summer.” Grzonka states that she “got no static personal website yet. The experiences with my blog are all positive so far. I got networked quickly, which means being read, being referred to, being quoted, being blogrolled, being commented by a variety of people on my blog, being emailed and finally being mini-researched myself. \*smile\*”

And Dale says:

“My blog(s) are a mix of anthropology and other topics, and it seems to me that it is much easier to get feedback on the stuff I write about which is not “anthropological”, that is, mostly, politics. Now my political views is flavoured by my interest in anthropology, of course, so in that respect it gets out there. However, feedback from anthropologists has been limited...” while Tad says “I have not had a lot of feedback but experiences have been positive. My students like being able to access handouts and images after class hours. My blog has generated some discussion on a few points. The most positive things to come from my website and blog are simply getting to know or know about a wider circle of (generally) young anthropologists. Without my participation in these discussions, I would not be aware of research going on in parts of the world that are outside of my research areas.”

The literature on blogs emphasize the audience agency. Although my survey is interested in journalism, observations there fruitful for my own purposes: In this context I would agree with Robinson (2006) who

says 'Readers are key sources in the blog world'. Even if the multi-authored blogs are ignored, one can see the one-man blogs already use their readers as sources and co-authors. Traditional journalism can be thought, and is indeed it is already, without direct audience participation but this is not imaginable for blogging. Each reader has the potential to contribute to the creating of the story. Some news sites dedicate entire blogs to reader input. So Robinson says 'Citizens thus have the opportunity to react not only to what has been written in the blog, but to 'repair' what the print publication published.' Wall (2005) goes further to demonstrate technicalities of audience participation in addition to emphasize the aspect of 'relation'. She states that many of the blogs she studied cultivate a relationship with the audience. Most of the standard blogging software includes a link at the end of each post labeled 'comments' or some other word inviting response. Here, audiences can link to other readers' responses as well as post their own. Wall quotes: 'For example, Bob (2003 quoted in Wall, 2005), a visitor to The Command Post, writes: 'Allied warplanes are intruding into Iranian airspace to execute air strikes against Basra and Baghdad regions. Iranians responding with anti-air artillery fire.' Thus, 'Bob' becomes not just a visitor but a contributor updating the site with information.' Sometimes a post produces so many comments that this amount of commentary itself becomes an event. For instance, Wall gives the example of Daily Kos that 'received 1754 comments over a 4-day period, although in other cases, no one responded to a blogger's post....' (2005).

In addition to comments, 'The blogs that link to this post' or 'trackback' options relate bloggers each other. Services like *Technorati* calculates the popularity of a blog not only according to the number of visitors but also to the number of links connected to the particular site. Therefore, and in most of the cases, citizen bloggers start a dialogue between each other or a blog post is distributed to the blogosphere through linkages between blogs. Wall (2005) says that this situation provides a sort of virtual town hall but one that can be and often is anonymous. Reader comments or other bloggers' reactions creates an extended discussion and makes a blogger's contribution public. She says 'Like many chat room discussions, the comments ranged from the vitriolic to the thoughtful.

As stated above, hyperlinks then are important not just as part of a changing story form but in order to help establish credibility. Indeed, where bloggers promote social networks, mainstream media are more likely to place commercial content (Wall, 2005). *Technorati* Blog Search Engine, that could not yet be defeated by Google Blog Search, assess the blogs not only due to their visitor numbers but also and even more importantly to the extent that they are linked. For instance, although my blog, [Erkan's Field Diary](#) receives more daily visitors (240) than two of my friends ([Di](#): 75, [Murat](#): 45) because of the level of connectivity, I am ranked way below than the latter in [Technorati](#). [These statistics belong to two years

ago and since then I have changed my address and daily visits I receive reached 1200 according to Sitemeter .

‘Links’ is a significant section for bloggers. In addition to hypertextual connections within the post bodies, explicit connection to friendly sites cannot be ignored. I am keen on classifications: “EU Related Links” consist of mainly links to mainstream media, think tanks or governmental sources. Besides EU bloggers like *Europhobia* and *A Fistful of Euros* are also added here. As my interests and connections grew, I have formed new folders of links: “Cyberculture”, “Football”, and “Cool Links” in addition to a huge list of “Blog Etc” in which mere bloggers and personal websites are listed. There are several blogger directories such *Bloglar Alemi* and *Blog Kardesligi* in Turkish and *Blog Shares*, *Bloggers Blog*, *Blog Rankings* etc that are mostly found in these blogs. The new RSS code to subscribe makes it easier to follow blogs and *Bloglines* and *Google Readers* are quick to provide tools to bloggers. All these links connect a fieldworker to a larger audience. Not always one can attract attention from a wider audience but there appears an opportunity. Therefore, in order to be up-to-date with happenings, I developed a series of online sources which in turn created attention and provided off-line opportunities of connection. Here is a list of online services I rely on: “*Bloglines*, *Google Alerts*, *Yahoo Alerts*, *Google’s Related Pages service*, *EU Observer*, *EurActiv*, *ABHaber*, *EMM*, *Turkish Daily News*, *The New Anatolian as the English language Turkish Newspapers*, *Hurriyet*, *Turkish Digest*, *TurcoPundit*, *Turkish Torque*, *Amerikan Turk*.”

I should finally add that increasing authority of one's blog produces more access. In my own case, I remember being introduced to a chief editor by one of the columnists. The latter showed my blog to the former and he immediately asked my contact information (Alas, because of the change of ownership in that newspaper, I missed an opportunity of a good positioning) It is also amusing but also an issue of credibility that before you mention your blog, some interviewees already know it. This happened at least twice. As the authority of the blog increases, its visibility also increases in net searches. It is highly likely that a user who searches about Turkey and European Union issues will find my blog.

### **PART 3**

**Moreover, blogging urges to see motives in a more regular sense, thus creates a strong sense of regularity that forces the ethnographer to produce on a regular basis which in turn produces a constant appeal to narrate what would normally remain fragments of field notes.**

One of the best expressions of what I want to argue here can be found in Cicilie's account: "After I started I have noticed that blogging sharpens the attention, just like taking a lot of photos (and probably painting) does; One starts to see motifs everywhere, and then one has to reflect on how to make the motif into a story so other people can understand what you want to tell them (in [Cicilie among the Parisians](#); a blog from Cicilie Fagerlid's fieldwork in Paris that contains many observations in this vein).

In connection to the previous section multi-vocality and multi-authorship potential of blogs should be emphasized here. I agree with Kirk and Borders (2005) who names blogs as 'social narrative'. Some of the issues are already mentioned below. Here referring a more technical aspect, they quote from Kaye Trammell, a professor at Louisiana State University, who wrote her doctoral thesis on the political content of blogs (Glaser, 2004 quoted in Kirk and Borders, 2005): 'She states that most of the beginning blogs included links to other sites, and blog editors often included additional comments. Weblog editors may provide context for an article by juxtaposing it against other articles or related subjects. Considered in this constructed context, the message may take on additional meaning or lead the reader to conclusions contrary to the reader's initial suppositions'.

A further aspect of the social narrative, according to Kirk and Borders, is the study of how a message chains out in a population. The social activism of bloggers promotes "democratic self-expression and networking" (Kahn and Kellner, 2004). As blogs and those who monitor them become more sophisticated, their impact may become increasingly clear. Tracking conversations occurring in the blogosphere provides real-time insight into the rise and fall of conversation topics and the intensity of that discussion. As part of the social structure, blogs invoke the voyeuristic element of communication into the mix. As one reviewer writes, "People like to peek into others' lives" (Jensen, 2003 quoted in Kahn and Kellner, 2004).

I can explicitly declare that in my thesis writing process feedback and audience in general will shape what is written. I aim or already aimed to transform blog as a device to gather collective ideas on Turkey-European Union relations.

In addition to the integral role of hyperlinks, which is given more space in the following section, blogging allows several other formats to be used. For instance, Robinson (2006) mentions minute-by-minute blogs that recount a specific event as it unfolds. The entries by themselves are mundane, but, as Robinson argues, when taken as an entire entity, a new form of newswriting seems to be occurring. As a specific example, Florida Today's space reporter in January 2003 who blogged on NASA's Spaceship Columbia mission is cited. The blog's target is a very specialized audience but once the shuttle blew up, this blog

became 'news' in the traditional sense of action. In that case, "the climax is hidden among the clouding of weather patterns. On one level, the communicative model of news has suddenly become postmodern because meaning is obscured and a-contextual, and narrative of the event is essentially absent. On another level, perhaps this new form could also be considered intertextual as the blogger here is presuming readers' additional knowledge of the event from other sources such as television and radio. Either way, the format explodes the inverted pyramid of a comprehensive retelling of an event according to a traditional sense of importance that has hitherto been determined by journalists." I have mostly explored the interconnectivity of sites in blogging, but the impact of hyperlinks on the written text itself should also be noted. With the collapse of inverted pyramid model, the news itself resembles traditional storytelling with multiple entry points and several endings. All traditional no-nos (Superlatives, first person, contractions, questions with no answers, answers with no questions) are used without hesitation (Robinson, 2006). In Wendland's terms "blogs are indeed supplying various interpretations of the day's news, 'unfiltered' and 'unedited' (2003 quoted in Robinson, 2006). Mattheson (2004) says "The problem of journalism is rarely self-criticism, but more a difficulty in finding alternative modes of news writing that do not unravel its power to tell authoritative stories.

In my case, I started like lamenting about being in the field, my initial failed attempts in field contacts, my unceasing depressive mood... Later, I began to add links to news sources and began to use my blog as a chronicle of related news events and commentaries. Last fall, I decided to make my blog a web source to those who are looking for information on my thesis topic. Until then, I was kind of anxious whether I should limit myself to purely fieldwork themes or do more. I guess the nature of blogging and my own personal interests won the decision making process and I gradually personalized my blog, I mean in addition to my research topic, I write about my hobbies, that include soccer, music, literature and a new research topic already emerged: cyberculture... Now I blog more related to these topics...

Free personal blogging tools are a bit minimalist. If one wants to do changes in the layout of the blog, s/he will need to gain some knowledge of html and CSS codes in addition to possible hardware needs. Every bit of knowledge produces more possibilities of layout and writing techniques. After upgrading my blogging software and changing layout, my daily visitors increased by 100 %. But what is more important is that individuals have the power to experiment with any kind of writing and visual representation and the knowledge that s/he will receive feedback for what s/he experimented sooner than later.

But I feel like shifting away from the main objective of this part. Inherently chronological order of blogging software is a strong tool of regularity. It is likely that a regular blogger like me will feel anxiety if regular

posting ceases. This means that something might be wrong with the fieldwork itself. In order to produce, you have to be ever more alert, sensitive and also ready to write. This again seems to be an ideal type portrayal but this is most of the time what I felt about my fieldwork/blogging experience. Whatever happened, I found blogging the sign of my continuing existence in the fieldwork. With advanced tools which are all available for even users with not much technical expertise, the existence in the field could be narrated in the most resourceful way (from different writing techniques to audio-visual possibilities of representation). When all my willpower to interview or to intervene stopped, I could still continue with the flow of news and commentaries as a service to all interested parties.

## PART 4

**Finally, blogging might be a remedy to the anxiety of being in 'after the fact' that is shared by many anthropologists. Blogging takes place in the present tense while actively engaging with 'the fact', with the emergent phenomena unlike the later edited institutionally accepted monographs most of which become outdated.**

The same literature I focused discusses real time engagement of blogs in terms of news production: Communication and technology theorists contend that the Internet will change journalism and the nature of news (Barnhurst and Nerone, 2001; Singer, 2001 all quoted in Robinson, 2006). Maynard (2001) describes internet news as 'less a series of "discrete" meals . . . Rather, it's a robust, all-day buffet, containing fast food, junk food, fine dining and everything in between'. Tom Koch proposes that the online abilities of journalists allow them to 'redefine the form of news in specific and of public information in general' (1991). Weblogs, in particular, could become an ultimate form of news. Wendland (2003 quoted in Robinson, 2006) notes that blogging consists of 'news that is happening now almost in real time – not filtered, edited, or delay delivered, as with traditional media'. MacDougall (2005) says **this near-real-time open accessibility of blogs makes them a collaborative form of news and information quite distinct from a newspaper's letter to the editor or op-ed piece.** (emphasis mine)

Despite its possible factual problems related to unfiltered nature of posts, citizen can immediately upload news and commentaries. In some especially extraordinary cases, citizens are quicker to respond: Subway bombings in London, Tsunami disaster in Southeastern Asia are just two recent significant examples. Borders also underline this aspect of blogging pointing out the 'new options such as hyperlinks, synchronous activity, and immediacy': "The line between journalism and other forms is blurred

by the many news-related weblogs maintained by people who are not employed as journalists” (Mattheson, 2004).

Bloggers do not aim to challenge traditional media and rely upon them on many aspects but that does not exclude producing immediate comment or breaking news. Before receiving traditional media input, bloggers immediately started posting on the results of Eurovision 2006. BBC was quick but some bloggers were quicker. Without any filtering process, blogs acted in real time. One could see similar situations where traditional media do not aim to cover or can not react as quickly as they intend. Disaster situations or football game results are just two more examples. Emotional, purely personal content might also be as affective as breaking news. I once had to stay at home and would utter my anxieties about the bird flu epidemic, which was to be quoted in Financial Times (9 January 2006, Back Page).

Under normal conditions a fieldworker will keep his field notes to himself or to a limited audience. A process of publication takes too long and in most of the cases, those field notes or anthropologist's remarks on a topic lose their actuality. If we just keep in mind the scarcity of anthropologists who are involved in public engagements, even most of the senior ones do react after the fact. Blogging could provide an immediate engagement and powerful immediate feedback can shape the output in a much more productive way.

In this context I would also mention that Real time attributes goes hand in hand with non-linear potential of new media and hence the blogs. Some scholars had already seen the possibility of a new form of postmodern journalism developing online (e.g. Landow, 1997; Murray, 1997; Wall, 2005 all quoted in Robinson, 2006). For example, Murray (1997: 282) attributes 'kaleidoscope powers' to the computer: 'The ability to see multiple patterns in the same elements, might also lead to compelling narratives that capture our new situation as citizens of a global community.' Hyperlinks are a certain part of new media structure that 'allow readers to change endings (and even extend them indefinitely), establish a nonlinear story format and bring in other authors (Landow, 1997). Quoting from Wall (2004) Robinson (2006) argues that blogs could be classified as postmodern news in the tradition of New Journalism, in which a stable version of truth (or at least traditional notions of journalistic form) no longer exists. Although a modernist line of critique can harshly oppose this relativism, I would like to think of this non-linearity a potential of resourcefulness for a fieldworker's anthropological writing.

Mattheson (2004) is less assertive but instead of using a meta-theoretical label, he calls this heavy use of hyperlinks a journalism of connections. He has similar thoughts on the nature of journalist authority,

however, he is more specific: '[This heavy use demonstrates that] what is happening in the world cannot be channelled exclusively through one news text. Instead, the weblog can be thought of as claiming a more contingent authority in its use of these multiple links. There is thus a mesh of authority, in which the site's use of the article vouches for the text's value, while the status of the Washington Post, Human Rights Watch or the quality of the reporting and writing reinforce the weblog's authority' (ibid). He then argues that, this kind of journalism is a journalism of linking rather than pinning things down, that is situated within a model of knowledge-as-process rather than knowledge-as-product. Accordingly, Pavlik writes: 'This represents a new form of journalism that places stories in a much more historical, political and cultural context. 'The fact that massive repositories of information are only a few mouse clicks away offers a richness of hypermedia that sets it apart from traditional media,' conclude Fredin and David (Pavlik, 2001: 16, quoting Fredin and David, 1998: 35). Linking is also used in traditional journalism but here, Matheson argues, hyperlinks are integral to the way in which meaning is constructed: 'The news weblog genre's reliance on writers' idiosyncratic choices – 'our pick of online reads', as the Guardian weblog sums up its status – and their practice of directing users away from the sites to other news or information sites (Blood, interviewed in Gallagher, 2000) make the genre considerably less inwardly-focused than conventional news.'

Matheson (2004) goes further to contrast blogs with 'another thread of development in online journalism, personalized news services (Lasica, 2002b), which do a similar job to the weblog in *helping users to cope with the huge and increasing amounts of material available online*. However, "if the risks associated with journalists' stereotypical news values are replaced in such services; it is with the risk of individuals not extending beyond preconceived world views. *Part of the weblog's appeal to critics and users appears to be that it has the potential to disrupt such cognitive structures*. The news weblog's particular mix of a heavy dependence upon hyperlinks to a wide range of different kinds of text, its chronological rather than hierarchical organization of material on the page and its less rationally codified pages mixing news and opinion, domestic and foreign themes – its move, in short, away from 'the established vocabulary of newspaper authority'.

Responding to emergencies is a challenge for the fieldworker who normally postpones more analytical interpretations to the write-up period. This extends writing back right into fieldwork phase. It makes the interpretations assemblages that might evolve into different patterns of interpretations. My ideas on Kurdish question varied sometimes radically. This could be observed in my blog posts all over four years. In understanding anti-Americanism in Turkey, I have renewed my arguments several times, I have

proposed new defenses for the hysterical anti-Orhan Pamuk discourses and of course I have had myriad of ever-changing ideas on Turkey's positioning on the EU membership process.

## As a Conclusion

A recent piece by Andy Guess covered an academic meeting on new media and anthropology and he stated that. "... the implications of the Internet's openness and availability", "the issue of control" were mentioned and the panel speakers were quoted to state "while new media can foster participatory ethnography and enhance access, the panel seemed to suggest, it can also provide innovative means of investigating subcultures — and rich source material in and of itself..." (2007)

However, the role of blogging and new media in general is still contested in terms of academic authority. A recent post by Maximilian Forte highlight this. After quoting from another piece from Andy Guess in *Inside Higher Ed* titled, "[Blogs and Wikis and 3D, Oh My!](#)" (09 May, 2008)

... Scharf - keeping in mind the varying quality of blogs - said that he made sure to clarify his blog's intent and high standards by displaying awards that it had won and a prominent list of expert contributors "so that people were getting the sense that this was a very serious [effort], that these experts were well-qualified to be saying these things."

he [argues](#):

Personally, I am a bit dismayed by the last paragraph. It relies on an **appeal to authority** as the basis for evaluating the credibility and validity of statements posted on blogs, which is a poor way to make a logical argument in any context simply because authorities can also be wrong....

Justifications for blogging continue in other spheres, too. A reliable blog that sits in between European Union politics and new media argues here ([Does blogging matter? The world has it say and we have ours](#)):

Relating this to Brussels, the influence of blogs is one question we are increasingly having amongst ourselves and with others. There are a number of points that we keep coming back to that we thought might be worth sharing:

1. Blogs are helping to shape the communications environment in which work

Data from the likes of [Ipsos MORI](#) suggests that 1 in 5 Europeans are indeed reading blogs (Italy apparently comes top with 27% of Italians having read blogs). And while we have (currently) no data to quantify the numbers of policymakers, stakeholders and political media in Brussels reading blogs on a daily basis, if such actors reflect the population then blogs as a form of communication could be influential in shaping the debate around issues in the future. The number of journalists, Commissioners and MEPs that are blogging themselves would suggest that there at least some of the same are reading blogs. (Yes, we know, we need “facts, only facts” in terms of the levels of such readership. We are working on it.)

2. Blogs can be used to amplify your message

Monitoring blogs will of course only tell you what’s going on, not what to do about it. However, it has already struck us (and thankfully some of the people we work with) that in some cases bloggers focused on specific issues of relevance to the policy debate may be fertile ground for what is known as “Online Editorial Outreach” for public affairs purposes. It’s the online equivalent of media relations with some subtle but important differences. Bloggers of course are not journalists...and there are some best practices we have developed as a company that take this into account.

In any case, seeking out expert bloggers, often with decent day jobs, that can amplify an organisation’s message online could prove useful in a public affairs context where policymakers and those that influence them go online to find information and insights. Noise in the blogosphere may become as much a part of the mood music to policy debates in

Brussels as articles in the FT. Is it going to change a vote, probably no. Is it going to help make people more receptive to a message, perhaps yes.

3. Blogger influence is more likely to be about quality rather than quantity

When thinking about monitoring or indeed outreach, it's the quality of the bloggers and their posts that is important rather than the sheer numbers of readers. Who are they, what do they know, how often do they post, who comments and who links to them? All questions to ask. On some of the obscure EU issues we love, the numbers are not likely to be great but the influence may be.

In this suggestive paper, I do not mean blogging to substitute any existing methods or practices. However, this is a tool that cannot be ignored to do some experimenting in the field.

#### **Cited web pages and blogs:**

AB Haber: [www.abhaber.com/](http://www.abhaber.com/)

Amerikan Turk: <http://americanturk.blogspot.com/>

Antropologi.info: <http://www.antropologi.info/blog/anthropology/>

Blog Kardeşliği: <http://www.blogkardesligi.com/index.php>

Blog Rankings: [www.blogrankings.com/](http://www.blogrankings.com/)

Blog Shares: [www.blogshares.com/](http://www.blogshares.com/)  
Bloggers Blog: [www.bloggersblog.com/](http://www.bloggersblog.com/)  
Bloglar Alemi: [www.bloglaralemi.com/](http://www.bloglaralemi.com/)  
Bloglines: [www.bloglines.com/](http://www.bloglines.com/)  
Cicilie among the Parisians: <http://antropologi.info/blog/cicilie/>  
Di: <http://womanwandering.blogspot.com/>  
EMM: [www.einnews.com/](http://www.einnews.com/)  
Erkan's Field Diary: <http://frazer.rice.edu/~erkan/blog/>  
EU Observer: [euobserver.com/](http://euobserver.com/)  
EurActiv: [www.euractiv.com/](http://www.euractiv.com/)  
Google Reader: [www.google.com/reader](http://www.google.com/reader)  
Google Alerts: [www.google.com/alerts](http://www.google.com/alerts)  
Google Related Links: [www.google.com/relatedlinks/](http://www.google.com/relatedlinks/)  
Hürriyet: [www.hurriyet.com.tr/](http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/)  
Savage Minds: <http://savageminds.org>  
Technorati: <http://www.technorati.com/>  
The New Anatolian: [www.thenewanatolian.com/](http://www.thenewanatolian.com/)  
Turkish Digest: [www.turkishdigest.com/](http://www.turkishdigest.com/)  
Turkish Torque: [tork.blogspot.com/](http://tork.blogspot.com/)  
TurcoPundit: [turcopundit.blogspot.com/](http://turcopundit.blogspot.com/)

**A list of anthropology sites and blogs (which is by no means complete)**

### **ANTROPOLOGI.INFO**

[Antropologi Blog Newspaper](#)  
[Afarensis-Anthro, Evolution, Science](#)  
[AlphaPsy](#)  
[Anthropologist Community \(Live Journal\)](#)  
[Anthropology of Food](#)  
[Anthropology Matters](#)  
[Anthropology Review Database](#)  
[Anthropology Works](#)  
[Antropyton](#)  
[Berkay Dincer's Archeology Links](#)  
[Blogs in Anthropology](#)  
[Boas Blog](#)  
[Center for Anatolian Ethnography and Textile Studies](#)  
[Center for Ethnography](#)  
[Cicilie Fagerlid](#)  
[Closer](#)

[Contraposicion](#)  
[Critical World Blog](#)  
[Crossroads-blog](#)  
[Culture Groove](#)  
[Cultureby-Intersection of Anth and Economics](#)  
[Denise Carter](#)  
[Dienekes' Anthropology Blog](#)  
[Digging Digitally](#)  
[Elina-becoming an anthropologist](#)  
[Ethnodigitography](#)  
[EVIFA ? Virtual Library of Social Anthropology](#)  
[Golublog-Alex](#)  
[Hot Cup of Joe- blog](#)  
[International Rhetoric Culture Project](#)  
[Intute Anthropology](#)  
[John Hawks Weblog](#)  
[Keywords- Kerim](#)  
[Laboratory for the Anth.of the Contemporary](#)  
[Matter Out of Place](#)  
[Nomadic Thoughts](#)  
[Rune in Brazil](#)  
[Story of My Home](#)  
[Tabsir- Insights on Islam and the ME](#)  
[Tak-The Old Revolution](#)  
[Thomas Hylland Eriksen](#)  
[Wanna be an anthropologist blog](#)  
[xirdalium](#)  
[Yann Klimenditis' blog](#)  
[Linguistic Anthropology Blog](#)

[After Culture journal](#)  
[Anthropologica](#)  
[Anthropology 2.0](#)  
[Antropoloji.net](#)  
[Blogazonia](#)  
[Comunidade Imaginada blog](#)  
[Critically Cultural](#)  
[Cultural Anthropology - journal](#)  
[Culture Matters blog](#)  
[Daniel G. Bates](#)  
[Dark Matter Journal](#)  
[Digital Ehtnography](#)  
[Ethnographic Database Project](#)  
[Intute Social Sciences Blog](#)  
[Islam, Muslims, and an Anthropologist](#)

[John Postill blog](#)  
[Jon Henrik in Ifugao blog](#)  
[Julian Hopkins blog](#)  
[Locating Ethnography](#)  
[Museum Anthropology blog](#)  
[Network of Concerned Anthropologists](#)  
[Neuroanthropology blog](#)  
[Northern Waterways](#)  
[Omertaa: Journal for Applied Anthropology](#)  
[Open Anthropology blog](#)  
[Open Range Anthropologist](#)  
[Radical Anthropology Group](#)  
[Remixing Anthropology blog](#)  
[Samarkeolog](#)  
[Sarapen](#)  
[The Ethnographic Thesaurus](#)  
[The Megacities Project](#)  
[The Memory Bank](#)  
[Türk Halk Bilimi \(Turkish Folk Studies\)](#)

[Understanding Race](#)  
[warauduati \(blog\)](#)  
[WebnographY](#)  
[World Anthropologies Network](#)

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