



# ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH IN THE DIGITAL AGE AND METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

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VON MKHMARKETING



# What to expect...



BY CHRISTIAAN COLE



Assumptions:  
Digital Mediality

BY ZZ BOTTOM



Digital Modes Of  
Ethnography

## Structural characteristic of online communities

- Technical infrastructure / leading metaphor
- Rules and guidelines
- Sociographic structure
- Communication structure



Proposition:  
Structural online-  
ethnography

Discussion

# Assumptions: Digital Mediality

Digital Network Media are a new mode of media,  
**transforming all of the media environment** and thus the  
media as a whole

The media environment seems to become a **more complex**  
media architecture compared to the state of former **uni-  
directional mass media**

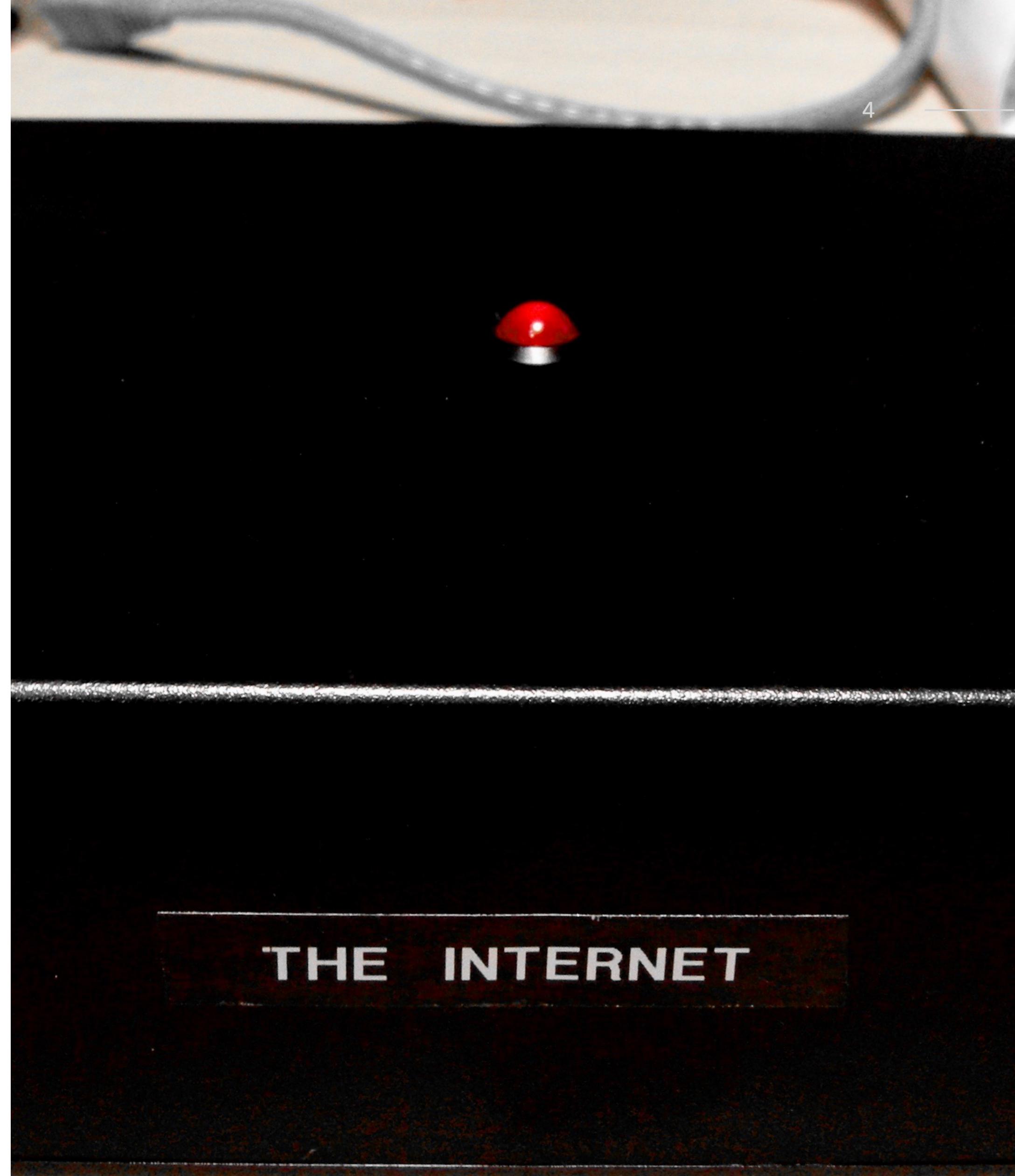
The Internet is the **main technical platform** and basis of  
digital media (currently), it is also **a culture** and incorporates a  
**multitude of cultural values**

(vgl. McLuhan 2001, Castells 2009, Jörissen 2014, Holze 2017)



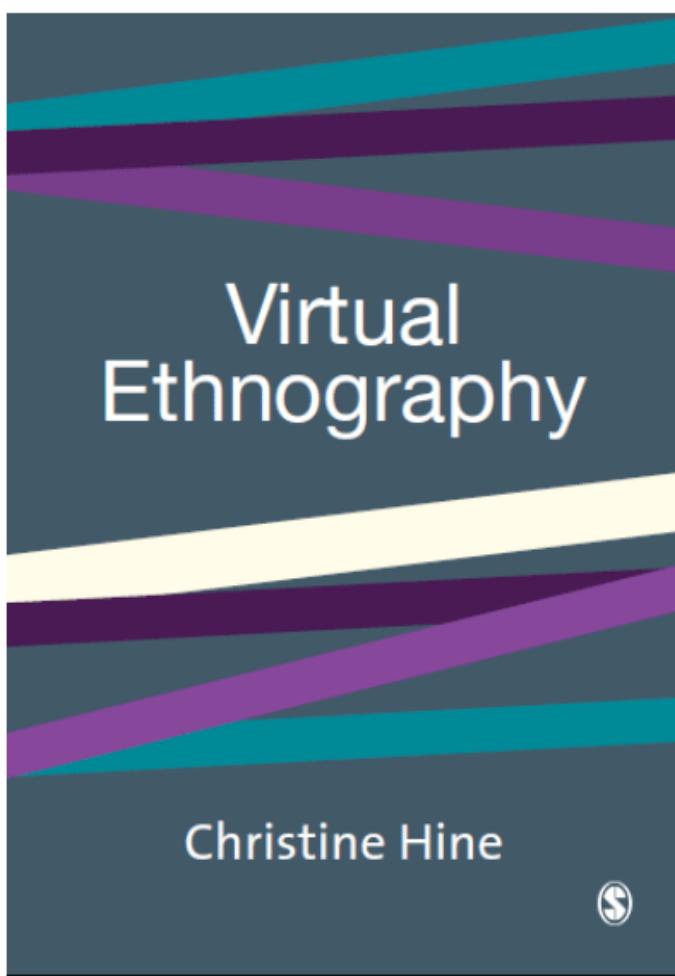
# Digital Anthropology & Virtual Ethnography

- The Internet as a virtual space: „Is ‚the virtual‘ experienced as radically different from and separate from ‚the real‘? Is there a boundary between online and offline?“ (Hine 2000)
- Initial mapping out of the cyberspace: How do identity, authenticity and sociality work there?
- First wave of research focused on „Rupture and transformation“ (Coleman 2010, p. 489)

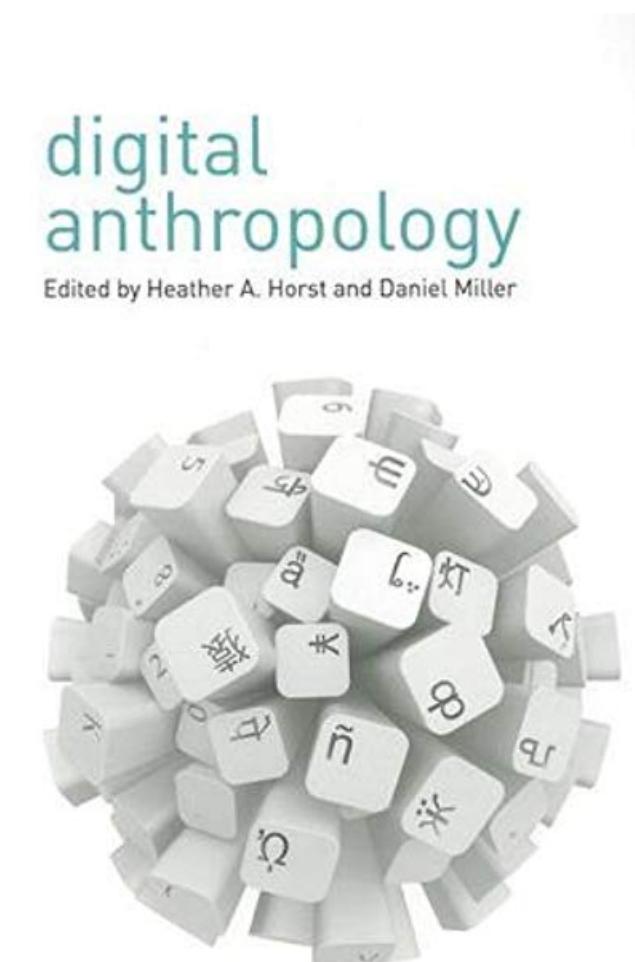


# Virtual/Digital/Online/Cyber Ethnography or Netnography?

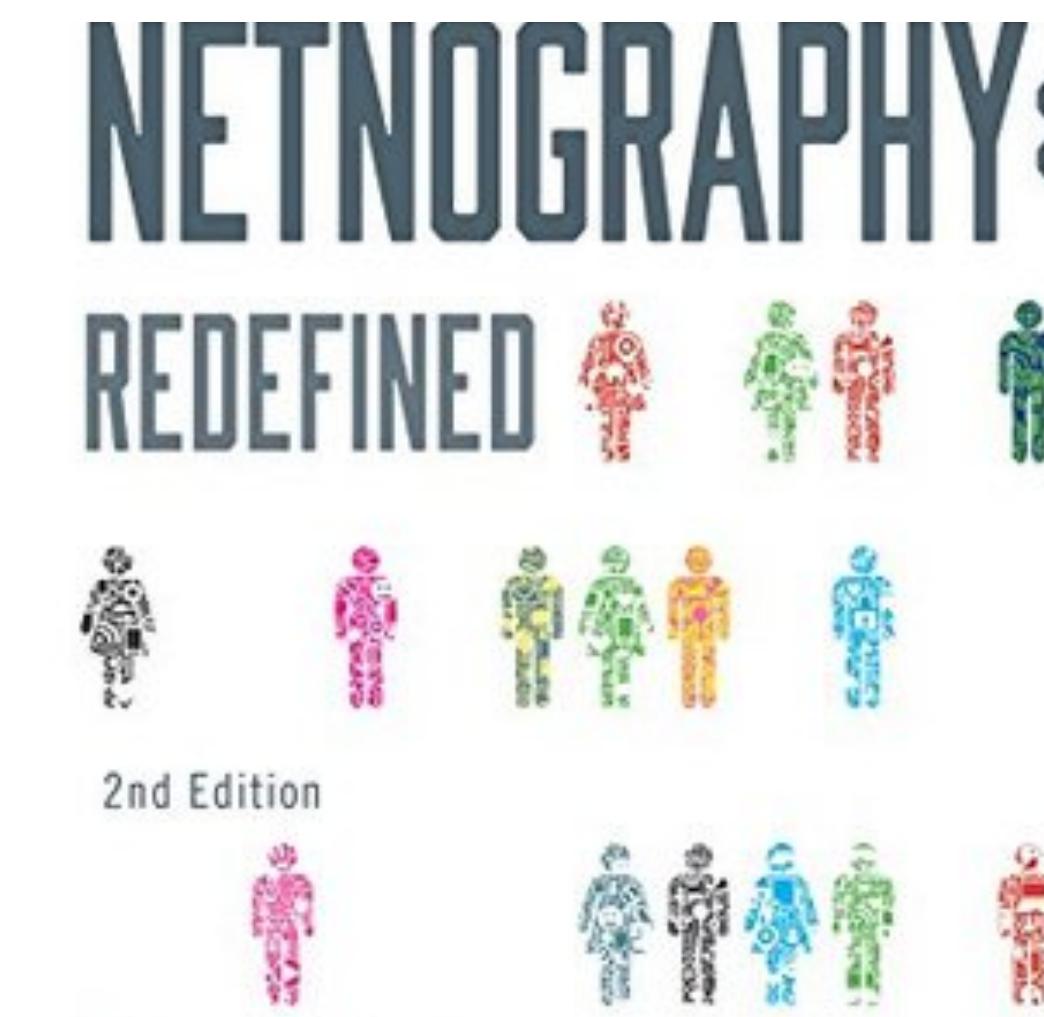
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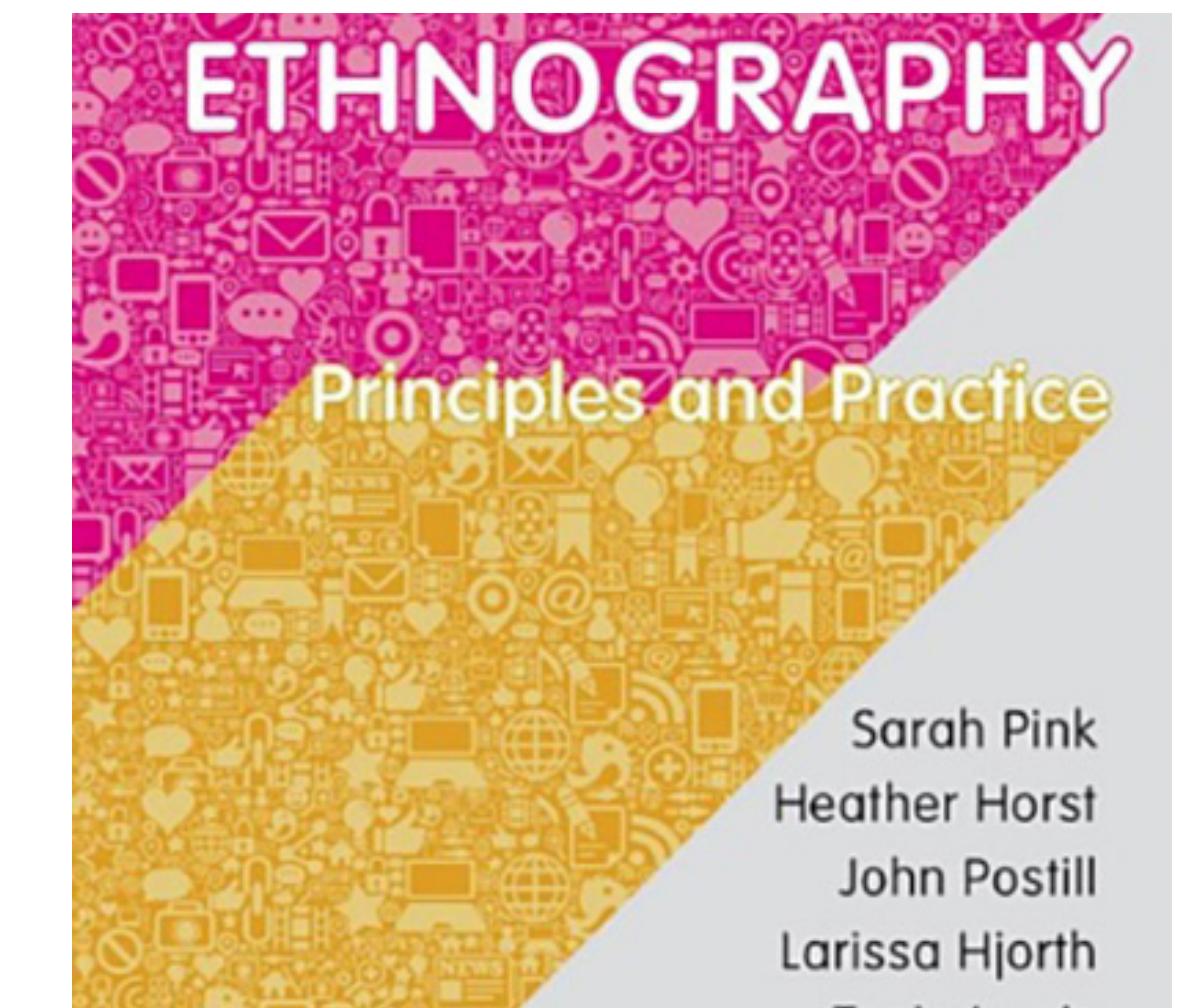
**Virtual Ethnography**  
HINE 2000



**Digital Anthropology**  
HORST & MILLER 2013



**Netnography**  
KOZINETS 2015



**Digital Ethnography**  
PINK ET AL. 2016

# Increasing complexity



**Virtual Communities**  
RHEINGOLD, HAFNER, MAROTZKI



**Virtual Worlds / Games**  
BARTLE, BOELLSTORFF, JÖRISSEN



**Social Media**  
KOZINETS, PINK, POSTILL



**Online / Offline**  
MILLER & SLATER

# Structural Online Ethnography

- 
- research in early virtual communities on the WWW (Marotzki 2003)
  - updated for current forms of online communities/social networks
  - used especially by our students for a first time ethnographic experience
  - systematic approach to get *into the field*

# Structural characteristics of online communities



- Technical infrastructure / leading metaphor
- Rules and guidelines
- Sociographic structure
- Communication structure
- Information structure
- Presentation structure / identity management
- Participational structure
- Online/Offline relations

# Benefits of the approach

- 
- Provides an initial way of entering the field
  - Enables exploratory mini or preliminary ethnographies
  - More suitable for teaching purposes
  - Can serve as a course framework for online ethnography
  - Can be mixed/extended with other methods  
(interviews, focus groups, discourse analysis, ...)



THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION!



@yodahome



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# Imagery

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