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Distilling complexity through metastability and mobilities: the networked learning of Amara

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Keywords

Abstract

Networked learning is defined as learning in which information and communications technology (ICT) is used to promote connections between learners, tutors, community, and resources. Building on this definition, this chapter explores the complexity of the connections on which this definition rests, the mobilities being generated by the relationality expressed within these connections, and the learning practices engendered as a result. The capacity of individuals or systems to generate or learn how to generate a metastability, a state of navigating the largely unmanageable aspects of complexity, "cannot be reduced either to the actions of individual actors or to persisting social structures" (Urry 2016: 59). It is a complexity that resists proportionality or linearity; small changes can generate large structural consequences, and individuals will, intellectually or dispositionally, exert considerable effort towards navigating and maintaining this metastability.

This chapter explores this complexity and metastability through Amara, a composite character personified as a Nepalese woman studying in a postgraduate programme in Europe to illustrate both this complexity and metastability. Drawing on mobilities frameworks, the habitus of Bourdieu is repurposed as disposition; a tendency of an individual to act, react, or think in a particular way based on the relational mobilities through which they move. Disposition is advanced as a necessary addition to the theorizing of mobilities, one that countenances Amara's networked learning practices and the various practices and technologies she uses to maintain her numerous identities and engagements. It encapsulates a range of mobilities: material, communicative, imaginative, and corporeal; and ultimately, it is one that Amara must negotiate to maintain the systems of mobility on which she depends.

Networked learning needs to account for the wider range of Amara's learning activity: across multiple interactional contexts, amongst people and interactive technologies, encapsulating public and private processes; activity that moves between micro (Amara's) and macro (those "immanent to the material conditions of global interdependence") (Braidotti 2013) mobility systems. Amara needs capacity to artfully maintain a metastability as she moves through the diaspora of her own mobility. This chapter explores this through Amara but suggests that a mobilities focus is critical in understanding the networked learning of international students generally.

Networked Learning and Mobilities

The type of networked learning being referenced in this chapter alludes to, and hopefully builds upon, the work emerging from the Networked Learning community itself. It has been positioned as referring to "learning in which information and communications technology (ICT) is used to promote connections: between one learner and other learners; between learners and tutors; between a learning community and its learning resources" (Goodyear 2005). Such a focus on the connectivity of learning through "cooperation, collaboration, dialog, and/or participation in a community" also advances a particular value-structure for the field, along with the a "high-level pedagogical consensus" that such a value structure entails (Jones, Asensio & Goodyear 2000). Despite divergent research agendas in the interim, networked learning maintains an adherence to these largely socially-driven, community-oriented approaches to learning.

Interest in networked learning has generated research specific to pedagogy and practice (Dirckinck-Holmfeld et al 2012); to critical learning (Jandric and Boras 2015); and the spatiality of networked learning either through the architecture of learning networks (Carvalho and Goodyear 2014) or the analysis of learning spaces (Dohn et al 2018). Carvalho, Goodyear and de Laat (2017) identify the impact of these sociomaterial relationships in learning spaces in structuring activities, interactions, and outcomes. This spatial and sociomaterial focus in networked learning research has naturally aligned with a growing body of research in posthumanism and sociomateriality aimed at interrogating the evolving nature of networked learning practices around teacher agency (Misson 2013), teacher automation (Bayne 2015), and the Massive Open Online course (Knox 2016). The research presented in this chapter largely emerges from this growing body of networked learning research, and in particular an emerging theme which might act as a research strand for the field, namely mobility (Dohn et al 2018).

Mobilities and Education

This chapter builds on the oft-referenced 'new mobilities paradigm' in the social sciences by further addressing need to open up all sites, places and social practices 'to the mobilities that are already coursing through them" (Sheller and Urry 2006: 209), and links it more explicitly to networked learning. This is not an especially difficult leap. Mobilities frameworks engage with many of the same research themes as networked learning, in particular a focus on the spatiality and sociomateriality of its construction. These mobilities frameworks are attempts to counteract sedentarist positions in the social sciences and to emphasise that "all places are tied into at least thin networks of connections" and to explore the movements through them (209). Much mobilities research explores the complexities of larger mobilities systems (the car, for example in Sheller and Urry 2000), while this chapter attempts to identify the possible impact of these mobilities systems on individual agency.

Mobilities frameworks are largely non-representational and concerned with the relationality of "bodies and objects and conjoined metabolisms of bodies and space" (Lefebvre 2004). They present utility in understanding the "dynamic intersections of people, objects and places, interfaces of the social and spatial" (Waterton and Watson 2013) that permeate networked learning. Such approaches naturally emphasise the material relations that exist between humans and non-humans (Fenwick et al 2011), the mobilities that course through these relations, and the new networked learning spaces created as a result.

Mobilities approaches are typified by a structural typology consisting of five mobility types: mobility of objects, corporeal mobility, imaginative mobility, virtual mobility and communicative mobility (Urry 2007). What this chapter is primarily concerned with is corporeal mobility (the movement of individuals physically); virtual mobility (the mobility experienced online by internet users); communicative mobility (person-to-person communication modalities connected to movement); and the effects of these on imaginative mobilities, the representation of mobility as elaborated and broadcasted by the media (Fortunati and Taipale 2017) and personified in the actions of individuals in these networked learning spaces. This typology foregrounds the diversity of mobility being experienced by networked learners: one can be decidedly mobile virtually while being decidedly

immobile corporeally and communicatively. Endless permutations exist in the emergence of these mobilities, in any number of temporal sequences.

Emerged and emergent technologies such as the mobile phone and the automated systems and artificial intelligence (AI) increasingly used to structure these relational mobilities 'introduce a significant break in the way individuals, groups and society as a whole conduct their everyday activities, as well as add new dimensions to our understanding of the social world'; these shifts have cascading "practical and epistemological implications" (Hesse-Biber 2011: 4). The immobilities posed by relational mobilities are offshoots of the "material inequalities in the distribution of communication technologies" (Chouliaraki 2012), as well as in the types of mobility being expressed therein. The social and material interact in a complex set of evolving relations generating a diverse set of mobilities and immobilities.

By way of example, the types of mobilities being expressed through forced displacement and refugee populations has been critiqued through a mobilities lens in Gill, Caletetrio and Mason (2011) as a "last-ditch attempt to exercise agency – often regrettably and from a position of deep insecurity. "The lack of an end point or destination, the constant movement from one location to another and the persistent uncertainty about the future" are validations of Adey's (2010) critique of mobility being expressed as "linked to freedom and liberty' (2010) and a rebuke of antiquated positions of an innately positive mobility seen as progress, freedom, and change (Cresswell 2006). Mobility is seen in this chapter largely through a sociomaterial lens as a result of existing or shifting relations generating a further relationality. It is neither liberatory nor positive in and of itself, but rather effects a particular structure for networked learning, a structure that has significant impact on the agency of networked learners. Much of this is illustrated in this chapter through Amara and the mobilities she experiences partly due to her identity as an international student.

Methodologies and Mobilities

To illustrate these mobilities, this chapter advances a composite character, Amara, who rather than representing a wholly fictitious persona, is a distillation of networked and mobilities practices gleaned from the author's own research largely in development contexts from 2005-2018. This research largely focused on identifying and documenting lived accounts of networked learning practices, largely through ethnographic methods and largely through mobile technology in Ghana, South Africa, Tanzania, and Nigeria in sub-Saharan Africa; and in Bangladesh, Nepal, India in South Asia across several projects with INGOs primarily around mobile learning in low resource contexts. In South Korea, further research was conducted with university students in relation to mobile learning and intersections with history and literature (Gallagher 2015); and in Cambodia with civil society organisations looking at gender inclusion. Research emerging from these projects was coupled with research conducted through the Centre for Research in Digital Education at the University of Edinburgh largely around the networked learning practices of online students in the UK and throughout Europe (best typified spatially by Bayne, Gallagher, and Lamb 2014; and regarding practice in Ross, Gallagher and Macleod 2013).

As such, what is presented in this chapter in the form of Amara is the distillation of a secondary analysis of the outputs emerging from this research, an analysis that foregrounds the mobilities exhibited in these educational contexts and the range of practices needed to manage them. Hence mobilities focus presented here in this chapter, which involves interrogating the evolving nature of networked learning practices, the spatiality of these practices, and the entanglements generated between these and larger sociomaterial systems required an explicit focus on mobility itself. How mobility it is enacted, how it evolves, how it is maintained, what further mobilities and immobilities are accelerated as a result (Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006), and how that impacts agency required, insofar as possible, a methodological emphasis on networked learning practices and their employ in broader systems of mobility.

As such, this chapter echoes Thompson's (2013) conviction that critique and creativity work in tandem methodologically: "the critical side is operationalized through cartographies of the power (potestas) relations at work in the production of discourses and social practices…the creative side enlists the resources of the imagination…for the purpose of learning to think differently, inventing new concepts and actualizing alternatives to the dominant humanistic vision of the subject" (2013: 341). This pairing of creativity and critique methodologically is needed precisely as any emergent analysis would be "in transit", moving on, passing through, creating connections where things were previously disconnected or seemed unrelated, where there seemed to be "nothing else to see'" (Braidotti 2002:173). Attendant mobilities methods have included interactional and conversational analysis, mobile ethnographies, textual, pictorial, or digital diaries, computer simulations, imaginative travel using multimodal methods, the tracking of affective objects, and more (Adey et al 2014:16); speculative methods abound, blurring "boundaries between research, design and teaching" (Ross 2016) and allowing research to "engender new kinds of analytical orientations and tackle different questions" (Enriquez 2013). Many of these methods are inherently messy or incomplete precisely due to their "not-yetness that comes with working with emerging technologies in education" (Ross 2016).

Analysis becomes a highly subjective interpretation *in motion*, one furthering the complexity of the entanglements of networked learning; the separation of subject and object is no longer tenable (Hayles 2006). Further, the author posits that the separation of the social and material in a mobilities context is largely untenable. We are left methodologically with relationality, mobilities, and the practices enacted therein, an entanglement that largely evades an agential cut or categorisation as an imbrication that can be reverse engineered (Bratteteig and Verne 2012). In this position, agency "is not an attribute, but the ongoing reconfigurings of the world" (Barad 2003: 818).

For this chapter, and for narrative coherence, this involved a distillation of the complexity and depth gleaned over years of research into a composite structure, a personification of a large cluster of interrelated practices and implications within a single individual or group of individual characters. The motivation for this distillation is largely to identify the myriad number of practices engaged routinely by individuals within larger systems of mobility and how these practices structure one another in relational pathways; and to surface what was routinely presented in my research: that individuals will exert considerable effort to maintain the diversity of their personal systems of mobility, the aforementioned metastability.

Yet there are risks involved with such an approach. Characters or personas of this sort are inherently reductive: individuals are not presented holistically but rather as sets of data deemed adequate to represent their pertinent characteristics (Clarke 1994). Characters or personas naturally carry with them Global North underlying epistemologies (Cabrero et al 2016) roundly critiqued when employed as is (Dearden and Rizvi 2009), and marginally received when adapted to derive further knowledge in particular contexts (Cabrero et al 2015). "A lack of cross-cultural validity, local relevance, and designerly liability make personas prone to false or oversimplified representations in depicting local populaces" (Cabrero et al 2016). I would concur with the considered critique presented in these cautions.

In this chapter and as an address of these critiques, I elect to present composite characters not as design scenarios, which are inherently solution-oriented attempts to resolve or dissolve complexity, but rather mobilities scenarios, where the emphasis is surfacing complexity of mobility, and the practices generated to manage it. The character presented in this chapter exists as a means of foregrounding the mobilities involved in networked learning and the practices of managing both networked learning and mobility itself. It is an attempt to distill complexity into practice, to identify the typologies of these distilled practices, and to identify the typologies of mobilities expressed through these practices. The use of a character in this chapter is not designed to present a coherent narrative across the different modes of data, nor to critique specific sociocultural traits, nor to generalise about any particular population. It is designed to enact the mobilities that my research

identified consistently. It is an imperfect, yet necessary, methodological device. As such, what follows is the story of Amara, a composite character.

Amara and Her Mobilities

Amara is an expat Nepalese women currently studying in Europe for a postgraduate degree. She is on a meager scholarship from the Nepalese government that covers her housing and receives a partial stipend as well through an international NGO based in the capital Kathmandu who specialise in international student mobility. Amara learned about these opportunities through her undergraduate coursework at her university in Kathmandu.

She routinely connects to her communities in her home in Nepal largely through mobile technology: her former classmates, her extended family, her immediate family, her former faculty at her Nepali university, and occasionally to schools or organisations showcasing her example for subsequent generations of students.

In her host country, she works 20 hours a week, the maximum allowed by the host government, to support herself. She works in the library and tutors when it is available, work that she largely discovered online. When she has the capacity, she remits money home to her family using her mobile phone through one of the many services available in Nepal largely to service remittances from overseas Nepali workers.

Her local government leaders praise her and fully expect her to return home on completion of her studies to improve local conditions, provide, possibly, the same mobility for others that she currently enjoys. She has met with an immigration lawyer to explore permanent residence, yet makes no mention of this to her communities at home.

Amara navigates her administrative, legal, and other duties associated with her mobility: the visas, the government and local council registration, the rent and utilities, taxes, the public transportation card, the meetings with supervisors and subsequent reports to ensure she does not run afoul of immigration law. Amara has a note on her mobile phone with all her important information, an insecure but accessible tether to all these communities: passwords, telephone numbers, bus routes, wire transfer information, rent payments, and renewal dates.

She navigates the uncertainty and fragility of her existence amidst a rapidly shifting political landscape in Europe. Amara sees the contrast in the welcoming invitations of her university website extolling the virtues of being an international student, and the rise of populist parties and their attendant electioneering emphasising a nativist discourse of "self-interests, intolerance and xenophobic rejection of otherness" (Braidotti 2013). She lives, at times uncomfortably, in this juxtaposition.

She engages with and manages her academic and professional identities through the tropes of practice: papers, symposia, lectures, discussion boards, and mobile messaging application chats with her peers. Amara engages with and manages her personal and identities through the practices of familiarity: as Nepali, as family member, as potential role model, as economic actor both in Nepal and her host country. Amara engages with and manages her imagined identities, largely manifested in the digital: the maintenance of her professional profile online, her growing network of like-minded people and their attendant actors of mobility (visa and immigration lawyers, recruitment agencies, and visa sponsorable employers), all orchestrated, insofar as possible, to mobilise towards an imaginary of her own design.

Amara oscillates between the considerable effort to maintain these identities and engagements with sanctuary and solitude: time in her small flat alone, a walking playlist she listens to on her commute, rest, away from the necessity of speaking a second language. The idea of assimilation from "a standpoint of identification, of a unitary self" into any one of these identities is not explicit; the task for Amara "is to survive in the diaspora" (Haraway 2016) of her own mobilities. Amara is

cosmopolitan amidst a chaotic "multi-faceted, affective cosmopolitics of embodied subjectivities grounded in diversity and radical relationality"; she resides in a "transnational community" as her "historical location" (Braidotti 2013: 171). Mobility, broadly defined, is the attendant circumstance of her condition.

It is in the orchestration of these identities and practices that forms such an important tenet of Amara's existence. Amara orchestrates these identities and practices in a relentless process of adjustment in the pursuit of metastability a process historically shared structurally amongst larger "relatively fixed and self-correcting social structures" (Urry, 2016: 59). Her communities, her responsibilities, her emerging identities as an academic, a professional, an autonomous adult all enact on and are enacted by the social structures through which she moves.

Critiques of such a position question the capacity of either Amara or these social structures to generate equilibrium, emphasising the largely unmanageable aspects of complexity, a complexity that "cannot be reduced either to the actions of individual actors or to persisting social structures" (59). This complexity resists proportionality or linearity; small changes can generate large structural consequences, a "metastable" condition: Amara will exert considerable resources towards navigating this metastability. Her mobility is often non-linear, nor progressive, nor always welcome, but nonetheless remains a chronic condition of her existence.

Amara is engaging this routinely on multiple fronts: her academic work, her paid employment, her meetings with immigration lawyers, her updates to her community leaders in Nepal, her family remittances and calls home. These are not activities linearly assembled towards one conclusive end for Amara; they are actors in a larger system of mobility, actors that Amara routinely assembles and disassembles based on her own perception of need, desire, and in response to movements within the larger social systems of "global interdependence" (Braidotti 2013: 171) which she moves through.

However, Amara's practices are emblematic of a system which is loose enough to evolve, adapt to both individual and structural change, or to be re-orchestrated to respond to a further mobility. If we broaden Amara's system to include one, if not all, of her learning communities, we are left with a set of systems that responds to a structural dynamic where elements, if not realities, of stability are present. It is through this dynamic that we see an evolving position of networked learning emerge, one that attempts to incorporate structural instability and stability, organisations and communities, materiality, relationality (how Amara organises these actors in her systems), intent and disposition. Movement in these systems is nonlinear; "there is thus no distinction in complexity thinking between states of equilibrium and growth states – all systems are dynamic and processual, with new structures developing and others disappearing in ways that are often difficult to anticipate" (Urry 2016: 62). Amara experiences growth and equilibrium states simultaneously, as do the systems she works through. It is a form of agency, insofar as that is possible in such a highly interdependent set of mobilities.

Materialities and the Networks of Mobility

Amara is both privileged in her capacity to enact an academic mobility owing to her role as an international student and disadvantaged in this role as an 'other' whose mobility is constrained by her visa status: in this transnational mobility, humans cross borders far less easily than flows of culture and media (Braidotti 2013: 310). The corporeal mobility that Amara enjoys is strictly defined and delineated; the imaginative mobility that this corporeal mobility engenders or fulfills is less so.

The materiality of this mobility circulates through Amara's systems both as an agent and an artifact. The passports, forms, stamps, and signs of Amara's mobility are both symbols of mobilities and evidence of their enactment; the timings associated with them structure the mobility itself. The need to renew a visa, for example, will dictate Amara's capacity for mobility in a particular timeframe; the need to renew a passport will structure that visa renewal. Mobilities are constructed through careful

sequencing of roles, identities, material, and time; these mobilities are mobilised through an orchestration of practices. The role of technology in managing and enacting these mobilities is critical to understanding the mobilities themselves. Amara is dependant to some degree on her phone, her laptop, the electricity required for both to run. They allow her to engage her network, to negotiate and maintain her mobility, and ultimately to survive in this diaspora.

Castells suggests networks 'constitute the new social morphology of our societies, and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power, and culture …the network society, characterized by the pre-eminence of social morphology over social action' (1996: 469). It is in this emphasis on structure over social action that we see Amara's situation most readily revealed. Amara places great emphasis on the maintenance of her system of mobility, rather than in her capacity to perform a specific action. Deliberately or dispositionally, Amara orchestrates, insofar as possible, actors, identities, material, and systems towards maintaining her capacity for mobility.

This is not the linear sequencing of activity towards a deliberate outcome although that is indeed present: Amara wants that advanced degree in economics and she can clearly articulate her imagined identity. This negotiation is Amara aligning herself with the chaosmosis of Guattari (1995), the "vital processes of transformation alongside and with a multiplicity of human and non-human others" (Braidotti 2013: 452-458). Amara maintains her mobility rather than enacting a specific outcome; the network in which she engages provides the foundation from which "the vital processes of transformation" are engaged towards an imaginative mobility, what she wants to be. This imaginative mobility towards imagined communities "includes future relationships that exist only in the learner's imagination as well as affiliations – such as nationhood or even transnational communities" (Kanno and Norton 2003). Amara manifests a gravity towards these imagined communities: her decisions, the maintenance of her metastability, deliberate activity, her intent, and her disposition are all, in some way, attuned to her future communities. Amara is maintaining and moving through a larger system of mobility propelled, to some degree, by a projection of an imaginative future.

Disposition and Mobility

There has been reference in this chapter repeatedly to agency, intent, and practice, all in some way suggesting a deliberate, intentional activity or structure in an otherwise relational sociomateriality. This holds true for Amara, who is apt to act in this network and through her mobilities deliberately. However, in such an interdependent relational sociomateriality, agency as an manifestation of "the ongoing reconfigurings of the world" (Barad 2003: 818) is not exclusively a deliberate act. Indeed it is an emergent property, one that naturally blurs the boundaries between the tacit and explicit. Networked learning is largely concerned with both.

Habitus is presented to address this blurring. Habitus is the evolving personality structure of the individual, a composite set of schemata, sensibilities, tastes with their own defining logic yet resisting any mere caricature as being a product of a conscious or slavish devotion to rules or the mere obedience of a governing entity or instructional agent. Habitus is positioned by Bourdieu (1977) as follows:

> "systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively "regulated" and "regular" without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor" (16).

This chapter notes the "disposition" being both "durable", "transposable" and "without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends" as it provides a needed parallel to Amara's context

described thus far. Amara's context is highly interactional and generally ephemeral as described earlier in regard to mobilities research: both the individual systems (Amara's generally) and the social systems (largely outside Amara's control) are persistently shifting, forcing on Amara the need to manage her mobility within these shifts. Context collapses and reassembles routinely, yet habitus sheds light on their governing dynamics. Amara acts within her mobilities often dispositionally, rather than as explicitly purposeful. She interacts because she is disposed to, rather than exclusively in response to pressing need or predefined purpose. Amara's imagined communities, for example, exert a structure on her activities beyond a predefined outcome; she is aligning herself with what she perceives these communities to be, however opaque they might appear to her in the present, adopting and employing traits she associates with those communities in the process. A turn of phrase or rhetorical strategy, a particular technological practice, a newly identified extra-curricular activity all incorporated into her system of metastability, all provide a means of evidencing the type of networked learning which Amara presents: a maintenance of a set of mobilities and a gravity towards an imaginative one.

Amara's practices, as such, are reproducing the context in which they are being enacted and responding to the opportunity provided by the context itself. The practices and materials needed for Amara to complete an essay for her subject are largely emergent from the context itself: that of the university, of the discipline, of her role as a graduate student, of her emergent professional affiliations. The complexity and mobility of Amara's existence are largely emergent from the contrasting elements that inform Amara's practices: that of an international student, of a woman, of a Nepali citizen, a family member, a friend, a prospective permanent resident in a host country, of a future member of an imagined community. In short, "the life world of the individual framed both as challenge and as an environment and a potential resource for learning" (Kress and Pachler 2007: 22). Amara's networked learning emerges from this frame.

This provides an opportunity for networked learning and the mobile technology through which many of these practices are enacted as a means of structuring and evidencing the transformation of habitus itself. Spatial connections between previously disparate fields or activities begin to appear potentially through Amara's mobile screen: reminders of visa applications and assignments on her lock screen, discussion groups for economics, for potential residents in new countries, for a Nepali international student group all lay side by side in WhatsApp. Recent missed calls from her mother, from a recruiter, and from her landlord all demand attention. All of these emerge from often discrete strands of practice, from identity, and ultimately entangled strands of mobility.

This entanglement is encapsulated in Kress and Pachler's (2007) position of networked learners such as Amara as being "constantly mobile, which does not refer, necessarily, to a physical mobility at all but to a constant expectancy, a state of contingency, of incompletion, of moving toward completion, of waiting to be met and 'made full.'" Networked learning, when broadened to include a learning state of expectation, contingency, and lack of completion, is useful for exploring the movements through mobilities as this chapter attempts to do, the ones that Amara routinely experiences and manages to some degree. It provides a foundation from which to observe engagement and interaction across spaces and technologies of mobility.

Amara experiences such contingency and expectation acutely; she is relatively comfortable in her diaspora (Haraway 2006). Amara is attempting to be one-with the vital processes of transformation alongside and with a multiplicity of human and non-human others, as comfortable as possible amidst the chaosmosis (Guattari 1995). She is signalled to action amidst this through a dispositional cue: a pang of anxiety, a reminder, a message, a hint of something emerging and something passing, the end of term, the latent guilt of knowing she might not return home, a professional future, and so forth. There is a dispositional metastability amidst the chaos.

Amara has some capacity to artfully manage her movement through these systems, and through the diaspora of her existence, and disposition provides a means of both expanding and evidencing research capacity to identify this phenomenon, particularly in complex and shifting mobilities

systems. Without habitus and its attendant disposition, networked learning in this context is reduced to monitoring shifts in practice, activity, and context. With the inclusion of disposition, we enact a fuller picture of learning: the material, the intellectual, the dispositional, and the social, one that begrudgingly begins to present the mobilites manifest in Amara's practices.

Yet habitus has received significant criticism, particularly as it is often perceived to be deterministic and objectivist (King 2000). Beyond being a trait that this chapter is attempting to avoid and to which much research is subject, determinism refers to the critique that habitus provides disposition in relation to fields without agency, suggesting the lack of capacity to shift or enact significant transformation within a habitus by either the individual or the field (Butler and Shusterman, 1999). This determinist critique neglects moves in the social sciences towards posthuman positions, where human agency is situated within a larger landscape of actors, human or nonhuman, all generating systems of activity. As Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) suggest: "… a habitus is neither compelled by the field (as in structuralism), nor freely chosen by actors (as in rational choice theories or phenomenology). Thus, habitus is the hinge between objectivist and subjectivist accounts of human action and helps to explain the intransigence of social change" (97).

It is in this balancing between individual and structural forces that habitus provides utility for the position advanced in this chapter. It provides a definition that accounts for disposition, the reaction to and maintenance of mobilities structured by both the system and the individual, to counter the deliberation of constructivism, or the execution of deliberate activity for learning. Rather than positioning either as deterministic, a turn towards habitus and disposition merely reinforces the assumption that both exert control over activity in varying measures; the "intransigence of social change" doesn't negate the potential for individual transformation within a system or community. Amara is bound within a mobilites system yet has agency within those parameters.

Moving Towards Networked Learning Research Agendas

Amara wakes one Saturday morning. She needs to study, to call her family in Nepal, she needs to pay her rent online, and schedule her upcoming administrative duties: a visa needs renewed, but first her passport renewal. Aligning these takes careful consideration. Amara begins doing her laundry for the week, finishes her chores, reflexively searches a job site that she receives weekly alerts from as well. She is going to meet her friends later in the day but after completing her tasks she decides to go for a walk. She starts down her urban street, turns left, then left again, and then right, lost in the recorded lecture she is listening to on her phone. Her path is chosen whimsically, yet she concludes the walk near the university library, a familiar destination. Her mother sends her a text. With an hour to wait before she meets her friends, she sits on a bench with her back to the campus and watches the sun set in front of her, as the dulled anxieties of a Sunday and encroaching responsibility seep into the day.

Further research is needed to account for these practices that Amara, and the research base from which she emerged, exhibits and how they function interdependently. Some of these practices are explicitly directed towards networked learning; some provide a functional metastability to engage in that networked learning; some work imaginatively to structure a further set of mobilities for the future. The mobilities expressed by networked learners are further complicated by larger structural relationalities outside the individual, relationalities that Amara experiences acutely: renewal dates, visa applications, and xenophobic sentiment sitting alongside discourses of student mobility and imaginative possibility. Many of these mobilities are evidenced and structured through the technology in which they are expressed, representing a significant strand of future research for networked learning.

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