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## **The Online-Offline Nexus: Social Media and Ethnographic Fieldwork in Post- 3.11 Northeast Japan**

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### **Summary**

In Japan as well as in other countries social media is now part of daily life. During fieldwork, researchers are confronted with decisions to be made concerning the engagement in social media activities in the course of ongoing research, or with their informants in general. Taking experiences from several years of ethnographic field research in Northeast Japan after the March 2011 earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster as examples, this paper analyzes the opportunities and challenges regarding the use specifically of Facebook in fieldwork. I argue that social media can become a tool for building rapport and enacting reciprocity, as well as for providing informants with agency. At the same time, challenges regarding privacy, the distribution of information, and possible influences on ongoing research projects have to be kept in mind. Therefore the usage of online tools should be extensively discussed among scholars, while ethics boards have to consider the interdependence of online and offline social dynamics — so as to incentivize greater reflection on this issue among researchers.

**Keywords:** 3.11 Japan, social media, fieldwork, anthropology, Tohoku, digital ethnography, Fukushima, disaster

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