

The cultured traveller

Three theses on cultural capital and the taste for disconnection in tourism

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ABSTRACT

This chapter starts out from previous research showing that people in possession of greater amounts of cultural capital are more sceptical of new media technology and more inclined than others to withdraw from media in time-spaces of leisure and vacationing. To get at the underlying sociocultural mechanisms behind such findings, the chapter provides an overview of historical and contemporary patterns pertaining to how cultural capital plays out in relation to tourism and (new) media. Three main theses are presented, linked to representational, connective, and logistical media affordances, respectively. First, I argue that cultural capital generally fosters a predisposition for the “authentic” and thus rejects mass-circulated tourism imageries. Second, cultural capital sustains the safeguarding of personal boundaries and thus works against open-ended connectivity and mediated intrusions into the “tourism-world”. Third, cultural capital feeds from a sense of independent navigation in foreign places and thus shuns certain forms of (mediated) guidance. Altogether, the three theses highlight the significance of cultural capital as a counterforce to digitalisation, and as a vector of the disconnection turn.

KEYWORDS: tourism, digital disconnection, cultural capital, mobility, media affordances

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Introduction: The distaste for connection

In 1979, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu published one of the century's most influential books on human behaviour. Its full title, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (English translation; Bourdieu, 1979/1984), captures the essence of Bourdieu's argument. Based on extensive empirical work, surveys as well as ethnographic accounts, he showed that people's preferences – their tastes and distastes for different things (including practices, places, other people, and various social phenomena) – largely stem from their social background and play a key role in marking out the boundaries between privileged and not-so-privileged groups in society. What an individual prefers, as well as *how* different practices are carried out, reveals something about that person – whether intended or not. Whether one is interested in rugby or golf, or prefers bacon or oysters, plays into the symbolic games that continuously define “high” versus “low” status. In addition, Bourdieu argued, people's preferences vary in a “horizontal” dimension, depending on whether they are in possession of economic or cultural capital. The latter refers mainly to educational achievements and the power to manage the circulation of meaning, as opposed to money and material properties (economic capital), in society. By means of advanced correspondence analyses, Bourdieu and his colleagues could map out an entire social space, depicting what kinds of preferred practices were associated with which social positions. In higher positions, the tastes among business-people and managers were found to differ from the tastes of artists and university professors. Further down in the hierarchy, the preferences differed among industrial, social, and cultural workers.

In principle, it is possible to analyse any kind of human practice according to the Bourdieusian framework. In *Distinction*, examples can be found ranging from eating habits and dress codes to variations in the taste for different composers and newspapers. Over the years, other researchers have implemented Bourdieu's ideas in relation to a variety of social fields, as well as in different countries (see, e.g., McKinnon, 2017; Prieur & Savage, 2013; Prior, 2013). Regardless of which practices and properties are in focus and how they are related to one another, the important thing is that tastes – and distastes – are not guaranteed by nature. They are socially shaped, as well as classified, especially in relation to the tastes of more privileged groups. If certain activities become “too popular”, or if certain goods lose their exclusivity, it means that those in higher positions have already moved on to other means of distinction. Typically, these processes occur without much reflection. People in general do not think very much about why they like the things they like, or why they sometimes adjust their preferences. It is a sociocultural dynamic that somehow seems “natural”.

In a previous study, conducted as part of the longitudinal research project “Measuring Mediatization”, I and my colleagues wanted to explore whether

Bourdieu's theory could also be used to explain people's preferences regarding digital disconnection. In the 2019 survey, distributed to a representative sample of the Swedish population, my colleagues and I included questions about how people felt about their own smartphone use, as well as whether or not they preferred to be disconnected in certain places and at certain times. We then applied the type of multiple correspondence analysis developed by Bourdieu and his colleagues to construct a social space and plot our respondents' generalised statements into this space. Some of the most interesting findings, which are presented and discussed in a recent book chapter (Fast et al., 2021), concern the role of cultural capital. We found that cultural capital corresponded with a sense of digital unease. People who possessed cultural rather than economic capital tended to agree that they were stressed by their smartphone, that it disrupted their work, and that they used it too much. Expressed differently, we could identify a certain distaste for digital connection among those with cultural capital, at least inasmuch as it was experienced as a source of disturbance. We also found that people with cultural capital were more inclined to keep their mobiles muted and to disconnect from digital media while on vacation and when in nature. They expressed a taste for establishing zones of disconnection in certain time-spaces of leisure. These orientations should not be taken as elite tastes, however. Rather, they are associated foremost with the "cultural middle classes". Higher up in the Bourdieusian social space, our study revealed other distinctive practices, such as having routines for regulating one's smartphone (non-)use and disconnecting from digital media while visiting friends. In lower social positions, our respondents' answers concerning digital disconnection were more neutral, indicating that the issue was not considered particularly important.

There are many things one could look deeper into here. In this chapter, I want to concentrate on the observed correspondence between cultural capital and the taste for disconnecting while on vacation and in nature. The reason for such a focus is that the findings fit into a pattern that I have also observed in previous research on digital media practices in the context of tourism and travelling. In general, people who we might think of as "cultured travellers" seem more sceptical of using digital media extensively while travelling for leisure, that is, in tourism, and more prone to seek out ways of resisting such technology. For example, in a study of "alternative" tourism – urban exploration and ruin tourism – we found a division between individuals who shared and exposed their experiences and whereabouts extensively online and those who were concerned about keeping their activities, as well as the places they had visited, more private, even secret (see Jansson, 2018; Jansson & Klausen, 2018). The latter group regarded connective media as a threat to authenticity and more genuine place experiences. Even though the study of alternative tourists was qualitative in nature, and thus could not operationalise cultural and economic capital in any statistical sense, it was possible to interpret the different attitudes to connective media in such terms.

In light of such studies – and several others that I discuss in this chapter – my aim here is to explore what the taste for disconnection (or, distaste for connection), especially in the context of tourism and vacationing, is fundamentally about. How can we make sense of the cultural middle classes’ stronger inclination to disconnect in leisurely contexts? This problem can be broken down into two specific questions that will guide the discussion. First, based on what is known about the predispositions (tastes) associated with cultural capital, what could be expected that these groups desire from leisure travel? Second, given their travel-related preferences, which affordances of digitally connected media do these “cultured travellers” feel a need to counter or withdraw from?

My chapter takes the form of an essay – an attempt. In what follows, I conduct a systematic exploration of historical and contemporary patterns pertaining to how cultural capital plays out in relation to tourism *and* (new) media. I consider Bourdieu’s original analyses of these matters, as well as more recent studies that shed light on the nature of cultural capital in relevant contexts. Three main theses are presented, each one linked to a particular type of media affordance and its particular shape in our digitalised world. Before presenting the three theses, I consider what an affordance is, and how the idea of media affordances can help in understanding the ambivalent experiences of modern tourists in general, and the “cultured traveller” in particular.

Media affordances as environmental conditions of leisure travel

Ever since its early days, modern tourism has been accompanied by an ensemble of media that travellers have customarily used before, during, and after their journeys. Travel brochures, catalogues, and magazines have contributed to plans and visions. Maps and guidebooks have helped tourists find their way. Postcards and telegrams have been sent and photos have been taken. More recently, such functions, and many others, have been digitalised, “platformed”, and integrated into mobile devices. Communicative resources that used to be spread out in space (travel agencies, post offices, phone boxes, etc.), and sometimes available only at particular times, are now continuously available via a smartphone or computer. People are turned into “digital wayfarers”, as suggested by Hjorth and Pink (2014), planning their routes and interacting with others near and far and generally “on the go”. This also means that “touristic” media practices seem less distinct or exceptional than they used to do. Navigating, texting, and sending pictures are things that people do on a daily basis, as a matter of routine. The “digital mundane” (Maltby & Thornham, 2016) is carried over into the (most often) more extraordinary spaces and activities of tourism (Jansson, 2020), and this, as will be shown, has consequences for how people experience their journeys.

I suggest that we think of this development not just as a technological matter but as an environmental transformation, where communicative

possibilities are reorganised and extended (Jansson, 2022a; Madianou & Miller, 2013). In his theory of affordances, Gibson (1979/2014) considered the human life environment as a structure of resources that individually and together offer people opportunities to act in particular ways (or prevent them from doing so). We may here think about natural resources like water that can be used for drinking or cleaning as well as human-made artefacts and tools that are designed for particular purposes. A drinking glass is designed to hold liquids and to be held in a human hand, while a fence is designed to prevent human bodies from accessing a certain place. The interaction between artefact and human body and perception is crucial here. Even subtle material differences may shape affordances. For example, as Gaver (1991: 80) noted, while “thin vertical doorhandles afford pulling”, flat horizontal ones afford pushing. In this way, all material elements – including media (e.g., Gaver, 1991; Hutchby, 2001; Nagy & Neff, 2015) – hold affordances that are sometimes more discernible and available to some people than to others, due to uneven material access or because of cultural differences or variations in skill and experience. Likewise, affordances are not set in stone: A newspaper is produced for conveying information, but one can also use it to sit on or as a (not very efficient) shelter from rain. The affordances of a smartphone seem increasingly difficult to overview and depend on which apps are downloaded to the device and whether it is properly configured, charged, and connected to the digital infrastructure. Even if disconnected, a smartphone can still be used as a torchlight.

What kinds of affordances did the media environment, and particular technologies, offer to tourists before the digital age? In what ways did different media enable people to communicate? I answer this question with reference to a triadic categorisation of affordance types, or registers, that I have elaborated and introduced in my previous work on “geomedia” (see especially Jansson, 2022a). I can then discuss these types in more detail to distinguish the consequences of digitalisation and platformisation in the context of tourism.

The first type is representational media affordances. This is the capacity of media to provide engaging and adequate representations of people, places, events, and ideas through which human beings can make sense of the world and other people. Tourism has often been closely associated with such affordances, characteristic of visually oriented media like travel brochures, advertisements, postcards, and tourism photography. This is not to say that a postcard holds *only* representational affordances, given that it (re)presents a view from a particular place; a postcard also connects people. But it is part of an ensemble of cultural techniques that have historically shaped the so-called tourist gaze (Urry, 1990/2002) and thus played (and still play) into people’s desires to *see* things on their journeys (see also MacCannell, 1973). Other such techniques for visual consumption include sightseeing busses, tour guides, cameras, staged vantage points, museums, and various exhibition spaces.

Second, there are connective media affordances, which refer to the ability of media to link people together across space and time, responding to the human desire to get in touch and stay in touch with others. We may here think of telephony, telegraphy, and letters, as well as other postal services, as media that are particularly biased towards such affordances. In tourism, these media enable travellers to contact friends and family back home to share information about where they are and what is happening during the journey, as well as to communicate with fellow travellers, travel bureaus, and so forth. We may also think of the phrasebook as a medium that is predominantly connective in nature as it sustains people's efforts to share information with others across language barriers.

This leads to the final affordance type: logistical media affordances. They refer to the ability of media to "arrange people and property into time and space" (Peters, 2008: 40). More concretely, logistical affordances enable navigation in space, as well as coordination and orchestration of various activities and flows of people and things in time and space. Accordingly, logistical affordances do not directly concern the communicative exchange between people, but rather provide the conditions for such exchange to occur. In the context of travel and tourism, one may immediately think of maps, guidebooks, and timetables. But there are also clocks, signposts, tickets, and passports, as well as other types of travel documents, which help people get around and reach their destinations or appointments in a punctual and efficient way. While many such media also entail representational affordances, such as the map that is also a representation of space, we should think of logistical media as predominantly infrastructural in nature, as Peters (2008, 2015) has argued.

As mentioned, affordances are sometimes ambiguous: They provide certain action opportunities, on the one hand, but may also impose limitations or even obstacles to action, on the other. For example, while signposts in a city help tourists find their way to a particular site or sight, they may also close off other options and hinder people from having alternative experiences. Likewise, analogue media like telephony or telegraphy were never free of charge, but could be expensive to use and thus exclude certain travellers from access. They could also be associated with social and moral obligations to stay connected and thus have an impeding effect on the tourist's sense of freedom. Hence, even before digitalisation and platformisation, one could think about the media environment – in tourism as well as otherwise – as a relatively complex constellation of affordances that not only invited people to communicate but also set limits and sometimes caused ambiguous feelings due to economic restraints, moral pressures, technology scepticism, and so forth. As I now turn to the analysis of contemporary travel conditions, we will see how such ambiguities escalate and sometimes lead to counter-measures, such as deliberate disconnection or media withdrawal.

Reasons why cultural capital may foster disconnection in leisure travel

There is no doubt that the number of options as to when, where, how, and for what purpose a person may use media technology while travelling has multiplied. Madianou and Miller (2013) refer to this as “polymedia”: a condition where there is not just a number of technological options to choose from but also a relatively limited and stable economic cost, typically associated with a digital subscription allowing a certain amount of data traffic. Whereas this condition implies that one particular device, notably the smartphone, enables different affordances to interweave as “digital wayfarers” (Hjort & Pink, 2014) navigate, take photos, chat with friends, and so forth, during a trip, it is analytically helpful to distinguish how alterations in *each* of the affordance types affect the travel experience. In this way, it can be assessed which significant desires and values linked to cultural capital might be threatened – or at least experienced as threatened among certain travellers – and thus why cultural capital may foster disconnection practices in tourism. I now introduce three theses, based on previous research, that capture these dynamics.

Thesis 1: Cultural capital fosters a predisposition for the “authentic” non-staged, and thus rejects mass-circulated tourism imageries

Cultural capital is a resource that it takes time to accumulate and which is therefore more available to those with a privileged social background, or habitus. In his work on cultural capital, Bourdieu (1979/1984) put emphasis on the desire for “pure” aesthetic experiences. He described the “pure gaze” as an orientation grounded in the autonomous artistic field, where form in itself is a source of desire and concern – as opposed to popular, or “ordinary”, tastes that “expect every image to explicitly perform a function” (Bourdieu 1979/1984: 4). A sign of cultural capital, then, is a person’s ability to enjoy legitimate culture (i.e., culture that is *classified* as having a deeper aesthetic quality and meaning) in a “natural” manner. The symbolic power of “good taste” has a greater social impact if the person is able to seek out the “right” type of culture and converse around it without any obvious restraint or sign of effort. Likewise, there is a corresponding distaste for the non-authentic, the mass produced, and the popular, let alone that those rich in cultural capital can sometimes “afford” to diverge from the legitimate taste (which can also make them seem more interesting and open-minded).

Bourdieu’s thinking about the “pure gaze” can be related to more distinctive forms of travel. Historically, it is easy to find examples of how the “pure gaze” has contributed to the shaping and classification of different types of leisure travel. In his 1961 book, *The Image*, American historian Daniel J.

Boorstin (1961: 77) lamented “the lost art of travel” and argued that mass culture had replaced any real, first-hand experiences of foreign places with a search for experiences shaped by media representations. The *traveller*, understood as someone that was “working at something”, had been replaced by the pleasure-seeking *tourist*, who bought a ticket “to make pleasant and interesting things happen” to them (Boorstin, 1961: 85). According to Boorstin, the entire world of tourism was staged in order to fit common understandings of “the picturesque”, or “the beautiful”. As such, he defended the type of distinctive, conservative taste that was subsequently unpacked by Bourdieu and exposed as a source of social dominance. Boorstin’s perspective reverberates with the worldview of those “cultured”, upper-class travellers who, in the second half of the nineteenth century, dominated organised leisure travel and for whom it was vital *not* to get caught in the pre-ordered (i.e., inauthentic) visual schemes of the “picturesque” (Austin, 2007).

It must be problematised whether it is empirically correct to describe mass tourists as people that only, or predominantly, travel to consume extraordinary – but “pre-packaged” – sights. As MacCannell (2001: 31) argued, alongside the conventional “tourist gaze” there is also a “second gaze”:

I could summarize the central finding of all the research I have done on tourists as follows: the act of sightseeing is itself organized around a kernel of resistance to the limitations of the tourist gaze. The strongest indication of this resistance is the desire to get beyond touristic representation.

Still, while MacCannell articulated an important point, if we follow Bourdieu’s theory of taste and sociocultural classification, the mere fact that there is in society a deep-seated *view* of tourism as linked to artificial mass culture (as we saw) forms a backdrop to distinctive practices among those with more cultural (and oftentimes also economic) capital. Among privileged groups it thus feels natural to seek out places, activities, and forms of leisure travel that are different from those represented in popular media and heavily marketed vacation packages. Ultimately, as Munt (1994) argued, this boils down to a refusal to consider oneself a tourist.

What are the digital threats to such a “cultured” approach to travel? It is fair to say that mobile platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TripAdvisor in some sense provide a counterweight to the imagery and promotional culture of the tourism sector per se. Individual travellers hold the power to circulate alternative images and even challenge dominant representations. As research shows, tourism-related sharing practices are often diverse in terms of style and content, entailing staged representations of typical tourism sights and events alongside backstage oriented glimpses of, for instance, the frictions, toil, and trouble of getting around in foreign places (e.g., Cassinger & Thelander, 2021; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Schwarz, 2021). The new platform economy is also characterised by digital entrepreneurs in the business of distributing “alternative” tourism experiences, especially via platforms that

enable people to rent private accommodation, consult local guides, or even have dinner in private homes (e.g., Jansson, 2019; Molz, 2013; van Doorn, 2020). Nevertheless, while such imageries feed into the counter-tourist desires among certain travellers, especially in the cultural middle classes, there is now also an even greater risk of “hyper-mediation”. More and more places and activities are deemed symbolically contaminated and “inauthentic” among those with cultural capital (which does not mean that they become less authentic in any objective sense of the term; see, e.g., Wang, 1999).

From this perspective, the current revolution in representational affordances widens the scope of cultural standardisation and, accordingly, underpins a growing distaste for connective platforms among “cultured” travellers. The development does not only invoke more fine-grained distinctions among tourists in terms of which channels and platforms to use before and during their journeys; it also makes disconnection seem like the ultimate solution for steering clear of the clichés and imageries of mass tourism and thus reclaiming a “pure gaze”.

Thesis 2: Cultural capital sustains the safeguarding of meaningful personal boundaries and thus works against open-ended connectivity and mediated intrusions into the “tourism-world”

Let us now consider the consequences of escalating connective affordances. The fact that anyone with a smartphone or access to other digital devices can keep numerous connections open at the same time, more or less without interruption, does not only mean that travelling becomes more fun and secure, but that the tourist can instantaneously share a picture or ask for advice or guidance from friends and acquaintances regardless of location. There are also moments of “context collapse” (Marwick & boyd, 2011), digital “decapsulation” (Jansson, 2007), and “anxieties of control” (Leszczynski, 2015). What these phenomena have in common is that they actualise the risk of connectivity turning into intrusion. This risk has grown exponentially with the spread of digital platforms that not just enable but spur, even force, people to engage online for the purpose of circulating profitable data (e.g., Karppi, 2018; van Dijck, 2013).

Context collapse means that different communicative realms comeingle on digital platforms, especially on social media. Thus, it is difficult for the tourist to use Instagram or Facebook solely to reinforce travel related experiences; there is also much else going on that may be impossible to avoid. Potentially, when accessing such platforms, or just having a glance at one’s smartphone, the world of work and everyday matters collapses into the “tourism-world” (Zhang & Zhang, 2022; see also Cohen, 1979). This is also what “decapsulation” refers to: the sense of failure or frustrations when a particular sought-after spatial, sensory, and emotional experience, such as undisturbed vacation in a foreign setting, gets interrupted by external events that one cannot control (see

also Jansson, 2020). Here, we may think about the advertisements and push-notifications regularly targeting media users, telling them what kind of advice, service, or entertainment they “might be interested in” at the moment based on previous online (trans)actions and the possibility to trace where devices are located. Such automated messages may not only disturb; they also add to the anxiety of being watched or followed, that is, a fractured sense of privacy (e.g., Leszczynski, 2015; Swanlund & Shuurman, 2019; Zuboff, 2015).

Here, temporary or partial disconnection from digital platforms may be an attractive solution for keeping up boundaries around the experience of “being away”. In line with this reasoning, Fan and colleagues (2019) found in a study of Chinese tourists abroad that those who were most keen on getting “immersed” in the foreign environment – that is, to learn about it and engage with local people and their customs – were also less likely to spend time on social media platforms. Rather, they tended to restrict their use of digital media and tried to minimise their contact with people back home. Similarly, Doerr (2021) found in a study among young people engaged in hiking and nature tourism that their use of smartphones was informally banned and considered a threat to the secluded experience of wilderness. No surprise, then, that the commercial discourse surrounding digital detox retreats, as a form of media-free tourism, largely revolves around the (presumed) need among modern, busy individuals to “disconnect to reconnect” – with place, other people, as well as one’s inner self (Enli & Syvertsen, 2021; see also Syvertsen & Karlsen, Chapter 15 in this volume).

While there are studies that have recently examined how knowledge workers (e.g., academics and artists) handle digital intrusions in work – showing that such measures as going offline or turning to analogue technology are closely linked to creative ideals and a desire for work–life balance (see, e.g., Bagger & Lomborg, 2021; Fast & Jansson, 2019; Karlsen & Ytre-Arne, 2021) – there is no study that explicitly investigates how cultural capital plays into people’s coping with such intrusions in the realm of tourism. Likewise, the question of cultural capital has not been explicitly addressed in studies of disconnected tourism or “digital detox tourism” (e.g., Stäheli & Stoltenberg, 2024; Zhang & Zhang, 2022). If we consult other sources and research that has previously tried to depict what characterises the values and lifestyles of people with cultural capital, however, strong indications can be found that the strive for distinction is also a strive to control boundaries and steer clear of intrusive technologies. In the 1990s, for example, research in the media ethnographic tradition showed that cultural capital was often associated with the rejection of certain types of popular media, notably commercial television. This resistance was due not only to the quality of the programmes (or, the outspoken lack thereof), but also to the intrusive nature of commercial flows and the type of distractive and fragmented mode of consumption that they fostered (see Hirsch, 1992; Jansson, 2003; Moores, 1993). As such, the

satellite dish became an ambiguous signifier in the media landscape, something that people with “good taste” would rather not put on display (Brunsdon, 1996). Likewise, new connective innovations like the mobile phone caused frustration among people with cultural capital – not least the annoying ways in which these devices were used by *others* engaged in private conversations in public spaces (Jansson, 2001).

Additional clues can be found when turning to the tourism literature. In their characterisation of the aforementioned “disconnected immersive traveller” (which is one of six ideal types identified in their study), Fan and colleagues (2019: 7) associated this type with a desire for self-improvement *and* a desire for “understanding otherness and experiencing local cultures”. In other words (and in contrast to what they call “digital detox travellers”, who more actively interact with fellow tourists), this is a typically cosmopolitan value orientation that is found among social groups with higher education levels and cultural capital (e.g., Igarashi & Saito, 2014; Jansson, 2016; Prieur & Savage, 2013, 2015). The authors also referred to Cohen’s (1979) classical analysis of different modes of tourism experiences, arguing that the desire for local immersion and media withdrawal resonates with an experimental mode of experience actively *opposed* to the scripted journeys of mass tourism. In this way, the attempt to resist over-extended connective affordances – through partial disconnection, various forms of spatial and temporal restrictions, or a romantic (re)turn to analogue media (see Adams & Jansson, 2023) – turns into a new, post-digital way of establishing distinction vis-à-vis the “golden hordes” and their less cultured, less differentiated journeys (Munt, 1994).

Thesis 3: Cultural capital feeds from a sense of independent navigation in foreign places and thus shuns certain forms of (digitally mediated) guidance

In their classical study of museum and art gallery visitors, Bourdieu and Darbel (1991) demonstrated how cultural capital fosters, and is expressed through, a seemingly natural “love of art” (which is also the title of their book). In their surveys, the aforementioned “pure gaze” was found to be accompanied by a desire among culturally privileged groups to navigate freely in exhibition spaces, that is, without any additional instructions or recommended paths. The opposite was true among less experienced visitors, who requested signage, concrete guidance, and information about the art pieces and their meanings (thereby revealing their lack of cultural capital). This underscores that cultural capital is associated with autonomy as a core value; the “cultured” person is somebody who does not only search for authenticity (Thesis 1) and keep up clear boundaries around the self (Thesis 2) but also prefers to navigate independently in the cultural and material geography.

Again, much resonance can be found with Bourdieu's findings when considering the history of modern tourism. Similar attitudes can be found among those privileged travellers that once regarded organised mass tourism as a threat to the distinctiveness of travelling. As Austin (2007) showed in a study of late nineteenth-century travelogues, the "cultured" traveller did not want to be confused with the "ordinary" tourist (who was at this time also a relatively new figure), and one way of marking this difference was to avoid more obvious signs of being guided, or (even worse) disoriented. Getting lost in foreign terrain, or, more generally, being identified as someone lacking spatial and navigational ease, was experienced as a "touristic embarrassment". Around the same time, as Koshar (1998) showed in an analysis of late nineteenth-century guidebooks, the Baedeker guide was explicitly designed to help the traveller *resist* various commercial temptations, that is, to avoid being lured into various "tourist traps" and steer clear from places actually "not worth seeing" (according to these cultivated standards). Similar things have been observed in studies of more recent tourism phenomena, such as backpacking and other types of "alternative" travels. Iaquineto (2012), for example, found in a study among backpackers that they often felt that the Lonely Planet guidebook made destinations "too popular" and less exciting to visit – thus indirectly steering these tourists to *other* places.

The digital threats to independent navigation and wayfaring stem from the accentuated logistical affordances that come with locative media. While guidebooks and tourist maps were designed to steer travellers to certain places – whether historical sights, restaurants, or department stores, and especially if published or commissioned by commercial stakeholders – they did not adapt to the individual. Today, locative media and artificial intelligence enable automated prescription (Jansson, 2022b). Getting around with an app like Google Maps, for example, does not only make navigation easier and more efficient due to the fact that the map is place-contingent (meaning that one's position is always "in the middle") (e.g., Abend & Harvey, 2017; Calvignac & Smolinski, 2020); it is also an activity that is shaped by the user's previous activities and engagements inasmuch as they are digitally captured (including browsing history, online transactions, geo-tagging, etc.). Based on such data, which are automatically gathered and computed by the platform and inherently interlocked with the overall Google universe, the user receives tailor-made prescriptions – which are at the same time calculated *predictions* of consumer behaviour (Zuboff, 2015) – regarding *where* to go in the first place. As Abend (2018: 104, citing Theilman et al., 2012) argued, "the egocentricity that prescribes the experience for the end user is used for commercial interests here and geomedial becomes part of much broader efforts to control and steer the 'dwelling in the web'". As such, the propensity of platformed logistical media to *steer* people goes beyond material geographies and influences the autonomy of people to decide about their whereabouts – whether at home or away, as everyday dwellers or tourists.

There are two things here that could explain (at least to some extent) why people with cultural capital feel a certain distaste for being connected while travelling. First, the whole sense of independent navigation – and exploration – is threatened by datafied logistical systems that provide various recommendations. People may feel steered, even *followed*, as much as they feel guided, as they are nudged to visit particular places, accept commercial offers, and participate in automated ratings of tourism related services (Jansson, 2022b). Second, as these systems work in the same way across different realms of social life – which is also to say that they are commercially imperfect – they tend to generate a sense of *sameness*. When tourists come to a foreign place, especially a larger city, they are largely exposed to the same kinds of recommendations as always; think, for example, of major international brands and franchises related to, among other things, retail and restaurants. In addition, tourists are automatically entangled with the “flexible spatial arrangements” of the platform economy (Richardson, 2020a). In addition to navigational platforms like Google Maps, this includes not least services provided by global platform companies like Airbnb, Uber, and Deliveroo, whose operations depend on the combined circulation of people *and* data (e.g., Pollio, 2021; Richardson, 2020b; Stabrowski, 2017). Altogether, the possibility to encapsulate genuine experiences and textures related to a foreign place and culture is undermined by commercial guidance that generally revolve around the same services that are available across different societies and contexts.

Again, this means that the boundaries of the “tourism-world” (regardless of what it contains) dissolve. The logistical horizons of mass tourists, business travellers, local inhabitants, and others, converge – and as such meaningful distinctions blur, “selective unplugging” (Zhang & Zhang, 2022) may come as a solution to those concerned with protecting their cultural capital.

Concluding discussion: The disconnection turn as a neo-romantic movement?

I have in this chapter advanced three theses in an attempt to capture why cultural capital, as shown in previous research, fosters a disposition to disconnect from media in leisure-oriented travel. It should be stressed, again, that this exploration is somewhat speculative in nature. Even though my theses are grounded in previous research, there is still a need to further validate their claims. This is in line with the essayistic ambition of the text; what I have sketched is a framework that can be operationalised in future research. Furthermore, the three theses together provide new insights that contribute to the wider debate in disconnection studies as to how different forms of deliberate media withdrawal are linked to social and symbolic power and contribute to the overall pushback against digitalisation.

Here, I want to stress especially the importance of authenticity and independence as moral values that mediate between cultural capital and

digital disconnection practices. The striving for “authenticity” – regardless of what people and organisations exactly put into this slippery term – has been recognised in previous work on digital detox (see Enli & Syvetsen, 2021; Syvetsen & Enli, 2020). It is also one of the most debated concepts in tourism studies (e.g., Olsen, 2002; Wang, 1999). As a rule – while this can be theoretically problematised – mediations of all kinds stand in the way of people’s authentic experiences. The more mediated something gets, the more its (perceived) authenticity is undermined. Likewise, the more mediations there are, the more difficult it is to feel that one is free to follow one’s inner desires and impulses and discover things that are “true” to one’s identity and preferences. Of course, this is all a matter of social construction, as Bourdieu has shown. Social life as such can be understood as a structure of mediations where symbolic meanings and values are exchanged and classified. Nevertheless – and precisely therefore – the emphasis on authenticity and independence that distinguishes the values of “cultured” travellers reveals how tourism-related disconnection practices are part of a larger symbolic battlefield. The desire to counter certain digital media affordances (as outlined above) is at the same time a matter of following one’s inner compass (that is, *habitus*) and invoking cultural distinctions pertaining to travel and tourism (as well as to media technologies and practices). Inasmuch as disconnection practices in this context are recognised as distinctive markers (including anything from rejecting social media during one’s vacation to travelling without a smartphone), there is also solid ground for new trends to emerge – such as the “digital detox retreat” – which at the same time contribute to the social normalisation of connected lives. We are largely dealing with dialectical processes.

In a historical perspective, the theses I have presented suggest that the sociocultural roots of digital disconnection can be traced to deep-seated value structures of modern society. As shown, the “taste for disconnection” is not entirely new, even though media affordances have been transformed. The articulations of cultural capital that we have discussed here in relation to tourism resonate with historical patterns of “cultured” travel. Such forms of travel stand in opposition to mainstream consumer culture and popular tastes, while at the same time playing a key role in defining a sort of “avant-garde” precisely in relation to the mainstream. As Colin Campbell (1987) argued in *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*, consumer culture emerged not just through the industrial revolution and accelerating efficiency in the means of production (related to the extension of a Protestant ethic), but also through the prevalence of a romantic ethic celebrating novelty and liminal desires. Such desires – which consumption reproduces rather than satisfies – spur modern individuals (some more than others) to continuously look for the new, the unexplored, and the different. Along these lines, digital disconnection in tourism (and probably also in other social realms) articulates

the enduring cultural prevalence of romanticism. The habitus of the “cultured traveller” seems to foster a distinctive, neo-romantic search for the genuine, or pure “other”, one’s inner self, or “authentic” experiences of place. Then, perhaps, “unplugging” should be considered something more than just a contemporary impulse among digitally exhausted knowledge workers and other members of the connected elite. Perhaps it is part of a larger transition, a “disconnection turn” (Fast, 2021) or a “digital backlash” (as discussed in this volume), whose dynamics can only be understood if studied in relation to the historical dialectics of capitalism and compared with similar phenomena of our modern past.

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