Acknowledgements

My heartfelt thanks first of all go to the people of Anshan Town, who not only took me in as a stranger, but did everything they could to help me during my field work in the town. Their patience, generosity and warmth have formed the most enduring memories of field work that I have.

I am especially grateful to a number of other individuals in China who helped me navigate the administrative and practical challenges of conducting field work in the country. Zhang Ying from Minzu University of China and Qi Xiaoguang of Xi’an Jiaotong-Liverpool University helped with institutional affiliations and introductions, in addition to providing practical advice throughout the project. I am incredibly grateful to Liu Zhixian and Li Yinxue from Minzu University of China who both spent three months with me in Anshan Town acting as my research assistants; your contribution to the project has been enormous. Gillian Bolsover and Kiki Wang both stayed in Anshan Town for a week to produce an incredible series of photographs and films respectively; their hard work added an important extra dimension to the project.

My thanks to the Why We Post project team: Elisabetta Costa, Nell Haynes, Laura Haapio-Kirk, Sheba Mohammid, Razvan Nicolescu, Pascale Searle, Jolynna Sinanan, Juliano Spyer, Shriram Venkatraman and Xinyuan Wang. Working with you all has been incredible, and I am amazed at what has resulted from this co-operation. A special thanks to Daniel Miller for making the project happen in the first place, and for continuing always to support and encourage me as I grow and learn. A project of this scale and methodological originality would have been simply impossible had it not been for the generous (and brave!) funding of the European Research Council (Grant number: 2011-AdG-295486 SocNet).

There are a number of other colleagues at the UCL Department of Anthropology who have inspired me greatly since my undergraduate days and have provided much guidance on this and other projects. Special mentions go to Allen Abramson, Victor Buchli, Timothy Carroll,
Ludovic Coupaye, Adam Drazin, Alice Elliot, Rebecca Empson, Haidy Geismar, Martin Holbraad, David Jeevendrampillai, Susan Kuechler, Alison MacDonald, Aaron Parkhurst, Vita Peacock and Raphael Schacter.

I must also extend my thanks to my new colleagues at the Department of Sociology at The University of Hong Kong; they have welcomed me warmly and have been understanding while I have attempted to juggle my other duties with completing this manuscript. Particular thanks go to Cheris Chan, Travis Kong, Karen Laidler, Maggy Lee, David Palmer and Tommy Tse in this regard.

During the process of writing this book a number of individuals have kindly commented on either draft chapters I have shared or on presentations of my work that I have given. These include Allan Bahroun, Paul Bouanouchaud, Inge Daniels, Faye Ginsburg, Heather Horst, David Kurt Herold, John Hope, Freddy MacKee, Jack Linchuan Qiu, Jesper Schlæger, Charles Stafford, Hans Steinmüller and Marina Svensson, and the anonymous reviewers of this volume. I am especially grateful for the advice received from these individuals which has helped improve the manuscript enormously, although any remaining inaccuracies should be viewed as mine alone. I am particularly thankful to the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Oxford; the Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies, Lund University; and the Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Hong Kong for inviting me to present and receive feedback on my work in their seminars.

I am also extremely indebted to the fantastic team at UCL Press, led by Lara Speicher, for the opportunity to publish the entire book series via Open Access. They have worked with particular dedication and professionalism in guiding this volume through the production process.

A final round of thanks goes to close friends and family, who have had to endure my preoccupation with my work during this project. My own ‘circle of friends’ in London continue to bring happiness to my life, albeit from afar. A special mention is aimed at Wang Qiyao who has provided exceptional support and encouragement in recent months. I am, most of all, grateful to my parents, my brother Tim and his partner Manchi, who have not only tolerated my constant wandering over the years, but responded to it with a good humour and patience that always astounds me. Thank you.