



Migrancy and digital mediations of emotion

Donya Alinejad and Sandra Ponzanesi

Utrecht University, The Netherlands

Abstract

This collection brings together key themes that integrate the scholarship on migration, digital media, and emotion. Drawing from a variety of conceptual, theoretical, and methodological traditions that cross-cut academic disciplines, the articles in this issue explore the emotional facets of digitally mediated migrant socialities in a variety of socio-cultural and geographic locales. These examinations raise important questions about how digital media ubiquity shapes global migration experiences and multicultural media publics at various scales. How are relations of intimacy and care at a distance articulated and experienced through social media? What does it mean to imagine home as a digitally mediated experience? In what unexpected ways are platforms reshaping migrant subjectivities? In this introductory article we address these and other questions, outlining how we believe the study of emotion can help us think more comprehensively about the digital mediation of migrants' social lives in the current media age.

Keywords

affect, emotion, diaspora, digital media, migration, platforms, transnationalism

The role of emotion in people's mobile lives has long been marginal in migration studies. A prevalent focus on political and economic 'push/pull' factors has followed wider

Corresponding author:

Sandra Ponzanesi, Department of Media and Culture Studies, Utrecht University, Muntstraat 2A, Utrecht, EV 3512, The Netherlands.

Email: s.ponzanesi@uu.nl

tendencies in social research to exclude emotion from the realm of valid foci of social theorization. Scholars have begun redressing this omission with research that demonstrates how feelings feature in the everyday lives of transnational migrants: in their experiences of belonging, intimate relationships, and aspects of how they experience and respond to political and economic realities (Boccagni and Baldassar, 2015; Skrbiš, 2008; Svašek, 2008, 2010, 2012; Wood and Waite, 2011). Migrant researchers calling attention to the importance of emotion have highlighted how transnational emotion relies on various forms of media. Diaspora and media studies scholars have delved into letter writing (Skrbiš, 2008), film and television (Hall, 1990; Naficy, 1993; Pisters and Staat, 2005), cassette tapes (Madianou and Miller, 2011), music (Chambers 2008; Gilroy, 1993) literary texts (Anzaldúa, 1987; Walkowitz, 2007), and remittances (McKay, 2007) as mediated exchanges with important emotional resonances. The development of digital media is therefore situated within a long history of technological developments that have shaped how the condition of migrancy is lived and represented. At the same time, the incorporation of digital media into discussions of emotion and migration opens up a much broader field of investigation than can be addressed through the study of the emotional dimensions of diasporic media texts and transnational interpersonal communications alone.

On a global scale, digital communications mediate varied aspects of migrancy, from long-distance calls and personal messaging to remittance transfers and access to information about jobs, immigration procedures, and smuggling routes. Platforms mediate the entirety of this wide range of communications. In other words, the rise of participatory culture with Web 2.0, and the more recent trends towards platform development and the usage associated with it (van Dijck, 2013), broaden the range of transnational social phenomena that rely on a single technological form, namely, the web-based platform. Yet despite the technical uniformity produced by the algorithmically determined options, datafied profiles, and advertising-oriented business models of the most prevalently used apps, the diversity of uses of these platforms cannot be fully understood by looking at the platform infrastructure alone. Understanding the emotional impacts of platforms requires in-depth investigation of particular practices, contexts, and consequences of media usage in social life. This intrusion of web applications into ever more aspects of people's everyday lives complicates an already diverse array of contemporary migration phenomena and diasporic cultural formations, heightening the need for further investigation of how human emotion is transformed when new technologies mediate transnational social life.

The purpose of this special issue is to sketch some of the contours of the growing area of research at the intersection of digital media, emotion, and migration. In this article, we argue for bringing emotion into the fold of understanding the digital mediations of migrant realities. In doing so, we revisit the more general terrain of studying the social world with an emphasis on emotion and emotional mediation (Reckwitz, 2012), and we ask what forms of emotionality new kinds of platform sociality might involve. It is therefore important to place the social circumstances of migrancy within the wider social conditions of digital ubiquity. This socially embedded understanding of emotion helps to avoid slippage into generalizations positing migrant web users as essentially different from other users. It also helps incorporate marginalized positions of media usage into more comprehensive understandings of digital media's impacts on social relations, as well as revealing how the vastly varying conditions of migrancy expose

power inequalities between forms of mobility. Furthermore, migrants' often intensive dependencies on digital media due to the physical distances that mark their social lives can be particularly instructive for understanding broader social phenomena. For instance, research insights on digitally mediated care at a distance in migrant families gain wider relevance in the context of Europe's aging populations and intra-family mobility, in particular with the restrictions on mobility/proximity as a result of the global Covid-19 pandemic.

We explore the role of migration, digital media, and emotion following four major signposts. First, we have highlighted the role of 'Theories of emotion and the affective turn in media studies' by exploring the development and contentions among the different debates and disciplinary takes on media and emotions. Second, we have zoomed in on the role of 'Intimacy in personal transnational communications', elaborating on how emotions, affect, and feelings are not only essential to transnational migratory relationships but also constitutive and defining for their emergence. Third, we have signalled how home-making comes to be shared under conditions of transnational dislocation and digital place-making under the heading of 'Emotion in the dynamics of diasporic home'. Last, we have focused on the role of 'Platform circulations of sentiment about migration', studying the role of 'migrant platformed subjectivity' and other forms of identity formation afforded by digital media platforms that position migrants as part of the new transnational affective economies.

Theories of emotion and the affective turn in media studies

A number of academic disciplines, social phenomena, and theoretical approaches have been implicated in the study of digital media and emotion. The mediation of emotion, affect, and feeling through digital media has been investigated in contexts that range from the sentiment analysis of platform data, showing positive or negative emotional contagion (Ferrara and Yang, 2015), to interpretive analysis of how audiences are affected (or unaffected) by text and images representing distant violence and war (Kuntsman, 2010), to discussion of people's emotional motives for watching cat videos online (Myrick, 2015). In tandem with this interdisciplinary explosion of empirical investigations of digitally mediated emotion, media studies have seen an explosion of theorizations of emotion in what has been given the umbrella term 'the affective turn', a paradigm shift referenced widely in research on media and cultural production. The work of Brian Massumi has occupied an influential place in this turn, pointing out how cultural theory has offered only a partial understanding of the body, limited to the level of semiotics and semantics (i.e. systems of representation modelled after linguistic signification), while omitting non-representational modes of understanding that encompass embodiment, experience, and form. In 'The autonomy of affect', Massumi (1995) draws on Deleuze's understanding of affect as passing through complex, relational assemblages that connect objects and subjects, and in the process of doing so, come to make up bodies and social worlds. Many scholars have built on and developed understandings of affect along these lines, using similar emphases on the relational quality of subject formation in relation to material objects that have the power to affect through sensation.

In such Deleuzian theories,¹ a distinction tends to be made between affect and emotion: affect is immediate, an ‘intensity’ that does not require interpretation, while emotion involves more of a secondary, cognitive process. This distinction underpins Massumi’s (1995) notion of affect as automatic, asocial, and directly impacting upon the body – different from emotion in that the latter adheres to the logics that fix meaning socio-linguistically. The instantaneity of affect in Massumi’s work makes an event of the affective encounter. In accordance with philosopher William James’ doctrine of radical empiricism that Massumi follows, the event is all-important because subjects, objects, ideas, and things do not have qualities inherent to themselves, but are identifiable as such only based on the relational purpose they serve (and which becomes immanent) in the context of the encounter through the event. The truth is thus encountered through affect. And when emotion subsequently takes form, pure affect is glossed over and made into a fictional, continuous whole by linguistic devices such as narrative.

But cognition does not always mean ‘discoursivization’ (Reckwitz, 2012) and abstract signification. A degree of thought may also feature in the habituation of the body through practice, though not always in conscious ways. Monique Scheer (2012) draws on Bourdieu’s habitus to develop an approach to emotions that sees them as a kind of practice. For her, ‘emotional practices’ are ‘a practical engagement with the world’ – practices are not only the consequence of emotions but the way they are felt.² Scheer presents a notion of the self as comprised of both the body and the mind together, and sees the body as ‘distributed’ in the sense that it is situated within a definition of consciousness that ‘requires the joint operation of brain, body, and world’ (Scheer, 2012: 196). This can be aligned with the notion of the body being formed relationally to other objects and subjects in affect theoretical perspectives. But the proposal to see emotions as practice contrasts somewhat with the emphasis on the event of the encounter (e.g. moment of intuition), in the sense that the role of ‘doings’ in the setting of mundane, repeated, everyday living is posited as a crucial part of how the body is trained in the learned experience of emotion.

Despite claims that the affective turn has brought about a necessary paradigm shift, others point to continuities between discursive and embodied modes of understanding emotion when doing research within the social contexts of people’s lives (Navaro-Yashin, 2009). Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (2010)³ bring into focus how affect is found in the small moments of mundane existence. These are the moments that nobody knows how to talk about because they are so uneventful, but that are an important part of ordinary life, for instance, a commute to work (referring to Henri Lefebvre’s ‘theory of moments’). Such a perspective blurs any strict boundaries between the encounter and everyday activities. Others have pointed out the value of socio-spatially sensitive approaches to emotion research (Gammerl et al., 2017) that integrate the visceral body with the political and historical contexts in which meaning is produced. For the study of digitally mediated transnational emotion, this implies that analysing the affective and emotional facets of migrants’ spatially mobile lives requires a conceptual approach that encompasses routine, repeated media activities and their digital traces. This connection between emotion, media, and situated bodily doings has also been reiterated with specific regard to researching media and migration (Alinejad and Olivieri, 2020).

The different conceptual understandings of emotion, affect, and feeling have differing implications for how emotion is understood in relation to media and technology, and have been applied to, and provided frameworks for, understanding media phenomena in various ways. With specific regard to digital media, Zizi Papacharissi (2016) has discussed how digital modes of sharing news about political protest events (the Egyptian revolution and Occupy Wall Street) give rise to networked forms of storytelling that make collective engagement affective. This work builds on the important concept of ‘networked publics’ to point out how affect is cultivated through the embodied engagement with specific (digital) cultural forms. Sara Ahmed’s (2004) discussion of affect also acknowledges the role of web media in arguing that circulation in an affective economy is what increases the emotional intensity and value of certain images or narratives. Through affect’s moments of movement and stasis/‘sticking’, boundaries of the body and community ‘surface’ in the same sense that Judith Butler (1993) talks about ‘materialization’: the body is in a constant process of formation through affective circulations.

Other scholars (Döveling et al., 2018; Giaxoglou and Döveling, 2018) argue, in a social media-oriented conceptualization of affect, that the ‘mediatization of emotion’ through people’s online ‘doings’ produces ‘digital affect cultures’ that are specific to communities of web practices (Döveling et al., 2018: 2). The idea emphasizes how affect is produced through people’s doings of media practices, and articulates a pursuit of the ‘logics’ of social media platforms. This approach’s theoretical underpinnings are in the broader conceptualization of mediatization, which aims to explain how societal change takes place in relation to technological development. The idea of ‘emotional affordances’ of digital media forms (Bareither, 2019) further centralizes the role of practice (Bräuchler and Postill, 2010; Costa, 2018; Couldry, 2004) in the relationship between technology and its usage. Rather than seeking to define digital platform logics, this approach understands the emotional as an experience produced through the process of the user’s sense of what usage is appropriate:

[the] emotional affordances of a specific media technology are its capacities to enable, prompt and restrict the enactment of particular emotional experiences unfolding in between the media technology and an actor’s practical sense for its use. (Bareither, 2019: 15)

The emphasis here is on how platform affordances become enacted through people’s ‘situated practices’ and are entangled with ‘embodied knowledge’ (Bareither, 2019: 18). The divergences and overlaps between these approaches show the various possibilities for approaching affect in ways that investigate digital media infrastructures in relation to users’ practices of sociality. As the articles of this special issue show, there are various conceptual and methodological approaches for researching the relationship between media technologies and their socially embedded usage to analyse affect and emotion in transnational contexts of digitally mediated sociality. These include digital methods tools for data collection and analysis, which mould to web and social media platforms to harness their unique potentials for studying ‘born-digital’ online phenomena such as likes, shares, follows, hashtags, and views. But they also include semiotic analyses of visual content, discourse analysis of textual content, and ethnographic investigation of platform uses embedded within offline everyday life. In the following section focused on

intimacy, care, and close social relations, we see an emphasis on ethnographically informed approaches, including in-depth interviewing and observational material collected in contexts of usage. This reflects the strengths of this approach for gaining access to people's experiences, felt engagements with media forms, and the observable way in which usage practices fit into other daily practices of living socially across borders.

Intimacy in personal transnational communications

In long-distance digitally mediated relationships, social media communication becomes central to the experience of being part of transnational extended families, friendships, and romantic relationships. As digital devices gain mobile ubiquity, the use of social media apps and platforms expands into the most intimate facets of social life. Migration contexts offer particularly relevant settings in which to investigate how intensive reliance on social media in intimate social spheres may shape emergent forms of intimate emotionality.

Ethnographic research methodologies have proven indispensable, as interviewing and observation techniques developed around digital device and software usage have been particularly important for investigating these themes. While digital methods research tools provide the basis for analytical approaches to aggregate online phenomena, these are largely inapplicable to messaging and voice/video calling platforms that offer encrypted communication.

Research on transnational family intimacy has been the empirical focus of much of the investigation into long-distance relationships. The concept of 'care' and family relationships has proven important in the study of transnational intimacy (Baldassar et al., 2016; Graham et al., 2012; Madianou and Miller, 2012), and discussions of 'co-presence' have helped in grasping how transnational family sociality is oriented towards feelings of togetherness at a distance (Alinejad, 2019; Baldassar, 2016; Baldassar et al., 2016; Itō et al., 2005; Madianou, 2016; Nedelcu and Wyss, 2016). This research suggests the importance of continuing to investigate how the significance of physical co-presence is maintained, shifted, and adapted in the context of digital proliferation.

This special issue includes work by some of the scholars who have led these debates over the past decade. Here, they contribute their latest insights about the dynamics of transnational family constellations in the context of digital media ubiquity. In their article on 'Digital media and the affective economies of translational families', Raelene Wilding and colleagues focus on the practices of migrant adults (aged 50+) living in Australia for over 20 years, who have fled violence and civil wars in Sri Lanka, Burma, and Somalia. The authors emphasize the routine features of everyday transnational life for these groups of forced migrants, for whom text messages, voice calls, and video calls form the cornerstone of what the authors call 'digital kinning': practices which are enabled across distance and without physical proximity through digital devices. The authors' emphasis on emotions as an understudied aspect of digital media focuses on the performative aspect of emotions, on what emotions 'do' within transnational relationships, therefore analysing their impact on actions and interactions.

In discussions of transnational family, motherhood has emerged as an important and contested area of focus. Motherhood from a distance is a growing global phenomenon,

best described as ‘transnational motherhood’ (Parreñas, 2001, 2009). While this has generated a vast scholarship on Filipino and Romanian mothers who have left their children ‘behind’, this literature has left other cases relatively understudied, especially in connection to the role of mobile technology. Technology allows for new ways in which ‘being here and there’ is possible across distance (Boccagni and Baldassar 2015) through mediated co-presence as discussed above. In their article ‘Mobile-mediated mothering from a distance: A case study of Somali women in Port Elizabeth, South Africa’, Celine Meyers and Pragna Rugunanan investigate the digital practices of Somali women residents in Port Elizabeth – and specifically the suburb of Korsten, created by the apartheid government to predominantly house people of mixed race. The authors analyse semi-structured interviews with Somali women with one or more children left behind, exploring the possibilities of empowering, rather than victimizing, conceptual frames for understanding mothering practices. The platforms are used not just to send remittances but also to sustain emotional bonds and continue to monitor the children left behind in their religious beliefs and educational pursuits.

While the growing area of research on transnational relationships has explored the importance of norms in family relations, it has also begun questioning certain normative tendencies carried over into social research focused on families. These can take for granted the status of the physically co-present (nuclear) family, and/or privilege the bonds associated with biological relations and heterosexual partners. Hence, investigations of friendships and queer relationships have made a significant addition and corrective to normative methodological and conceptual frames, revealing the diversity of conditions under which long-distance intimacy emerges, and identifying conceptual continuities and discontinuities with debates from family research. Indeed, scholars have identified the need to move beyond the heterosexual couple-based family when trying to understand contemporary intimacies, and towards the mediated emotional practices in queer relationships, friendships and other non-romantic or non-sexual relationships, and single lives (Rosiniel and Budgeon, 2004; Wilding, 2006, 2018). Others have discussed how, for sexual minority groups in migrant populations, digital media embed users within support and activist networks, while also noting how affective circuits become regulatory forces that integrate queer refugees into ‘regimes of racialized and sexualized difference’ (Bayramoğlu and Lünenborg, 2018: 1034).

In this special issue, the articles focusing on transnational friendship and queer women’s dating practices reveal how knowledge production about digitally mediated intimacies is enriched by the empirical material and conceptual perspectives generated by non-normative framings of what we mean by intimacy. In ‘Everybody needs friends: Emotion work, social networks and digital media in the friendships of international students’, Jolynna Sinanan and Catherine Gomes point to the centrality of friendship as an essential aspect of emotions and intimacy, as well as a network of support and care. Supplementing the argument by Wilding et al. that digital kinning is essential to the ritual and routine exchanges of transnational families, Sinanan and Gomes point to the understudied aspect of transnational migration and cross-cultural perspectives on friendship. Whereas families are often a given, friendships are voluntarily chosen, though influenced by factors inherent to mobility and migration. The authors also see the emotional

work done around transnational friendship as ‘making do’ practices (Nedelcu and Wyss, 2016; Ryan, 2015).

Continuing this diversification of perspectives on long-distance relationships, Haili Li’s article on ‘Transnational togetherness through Rela: Chinese queer women’s practices for maintaining ties with the homeland’ explores how a lesbian-oriented dating app, Rela, facilitates homeland connections and diasporic community formation for queer Chinese women in Australia. Within the understudied group of the queer diaspora, most scholarly attention has been paid to gay male diaspora (Dhoest and Szulc, 2016). Compared to gay dating apps, lesbian dating apps have emerged and developed much more slowly. Moreover, in China homosexuality was decriminalized in 1997, and same-sex marriage is not legally recognized. This makes it all the more remarkable that Rela is one of the most popular Chinese lesbian social apps with more than 6 million active users worldwide. Unlike Western-based dating apps used by lesbians such as Tinder and HER, which mainly serve as dating space, Rela is famous for its multipurpose design, including live streaming, radio programs, speed matching, and shopping.

An important aspect in these analyses of transnational mobility is the experience of being ‘connected migrants’ (Diminescu, 2008, 2020), where digital media facilitate the portability of a network of belonging (Diminescu, 2008; Leurs and Ponzanesi, 2018). Yet, in contrast with the empirical work from which the concept of the ‘connected migrant’ emerged, the body of research on transnational intimate relations relies heavily on ethnographic methodological approaches. This involves studying practices through interview and observation techniques that have traditionally been cornerstones of media ethnographic and anthropological investigation. It also calls for adaptation of these methods to suit the study of platforms and digital media devices, responding to device mobility (Pink and Hjorth, 2012; Wilken et al., 2019), utilizing walk-through and demonstration techniques for studying software (Light et al., 2016), and using device/app usage journals (Berg and Düvel, 2012). The significance of ethnographic principles for studying transnational intimacy also carries over into the arena of researching the diasporic home, as we outline in the following section.

Emotion in the dynamics of the diasporic home

Diasporic belonging is produced in ways that are specific to the recent emergence of digital platforms and apps. Whether it is diaspora organizations identifying with a nation state, migrant individuals reproducing national cultures, or nation states calling upon their citizens abroad, diasporic *feelings of home* carry complex emotional resonances relating to the experiential dimensions of belonging. Bringing emotion to the analytical fore of diasporic memory research also means engaging with questions of *homeland* and feelings of exile, nostalgia, and longing. This involves raising questions of how contemporary practices of remembering increasingly rely on digital media’s affordances for mediating emotional dimensions of the past. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett states of remembering, each mediation of the past into the present relies on a new mediated experience (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998). This raises important questions of how memories of migration, homeland, and migrant pasts are brought into the present through contemporary digital media practices. Diaspora studies have elaborately addressed the

production of feelings of longing and nostalgia through the study of migrants in relation to postcolonial film and literature as well as television and radio (Marks, 2000; Naficy, 2001; Ponzanesi and Waller, 2012; Trinh, 1995). The dimensions of memory that evoke sensation and remembering through sense impressions have been discussed at length in work on diaspora memory and the cultural access that bodies have to pasts associated with homelands through the senses (Seremetakis, 1996). Recent discussion of how the homeland is experienced through social media platforms draws on this and other insights (Costa and Alinejad, 2020). The role of media in producing feelings that define a sense of home has begun to be explored under divergent conditions of exile, forced migration, and transitory mobility.

In their article on '(Be)Longing through visual narrative: Mediation of (dis)affect and formation of politics through photographs and narratives of migration at DiasporaTürk', Mine Gencil Bek and Patricia Prieto Blanco discuss how traces of photo-sharing on social media platforms mobilize remembering, creating an intriguing form of participatory cultural memory, '*Funktiongedächtnis*' (Assmann, 2001, 2008). The DiasporaTürk media project consists of a growing collection of networked images circulated via Twitter and Instagram, and collected in some books. These connect the past to the present and come to life through new comments, shares, likes, and retweets. Photographs are often considered the most important element in the communication infrastructure of migrants, as they awaken both affection and disaffection in users, making the photographs a form of (dis)affective currency (Ahmed, 2004).

Through an analysis of the romanticized and selective narrative produced through the interactive social media archive that they take as their focus, the authors show how the framing of the vintage photographs of Turkish labour migration journeys through the textual annotations added by the posting account allows the stories to be flexible in a (dis)affective discourse of Turkish migration. This remembering involves reverence for a Turkish homeland imagined by the 'guest worker' who is positioned within a Turkish diaspora marked by exclusion and 'othering' (Said, 1978) in European 'host' countries. Here, the connection with home is moulded through feelings about a collective past that is cast as a national one, however politically contested this memory may be.

The notion of home and of national remembering can be particularly challenging for protracted refugee situations. Yet life in transitory migration contexts such as refugee camps has become meaningful and personal through emotional practices that embody a sense of home (Boccagni, 2018). Digital technologies and their affordances have provided new ways in which refugees create a sense of place, interact transnationally, and sustain feelings of connectedness. They take on an essential role in the everyday life of forgotten emergency situations. Silvia Almenara-Niebla's article 'Making digital "home-camps": Mediating emotions among the Sahrawi refugee diaspora' focuses on how Sahrawi refugees rebuild their lives in conditions of uncertainty, using digital media as part of this home-making process. The article refers to multiple scales of digital home-making with the notion of HOME-Home-home (Blum and Fábos, 2015), where home is perceived, negotiated, resignified, and enacted through digital media practices. Based on a short ethnographic fieldwork study, this non-media-centric article focuses on how the notion of home is produced at different levels: *HOME*, as the dynamic of identity formation at the community level, in a political and historical context; *Home* as the subjective

feelings of home which are identified as nostalgia, and the ideal of the homeland; and *home* as the everyday life that transforms the place of displacement into a place of belonging.

Platform circulations of sentiment about migration

Representations of migration in legacy media are an important part of migration debates in societies of arrival and settlement, especially with mass migration movements (Smets and Bozdağ, 2018). Both media studies scholarship and migration studies research have developed an interest in better understanding the impacts of media representations of migration, including through emerging research tools (Bleich et al., 2015). Europe's migration peak of 2015–16 is a recent mass migration event that has not only received a great deal of news media coverage, but also triggered much scholarly attention. Furthermore, while traditional news coverage has been extensive, social media and smartphones have featured in this major media event in various ways. Yet, as Kevin Smets and Çiğdem Bozdağ (2018: 295) have argued, 'the representations of immigrants and refugees in social media debates do not necessarily diverge from these dominant stereotypical patterns in mainstream mass media'. Lilie Chouliaraki (2017) similarly points out that the 'migrant-related selfie' was a genre of media production that forcefully entered the European media landscape in this period, but came to be 'remediated' in mainstream media representations in ways that fitted within, and reinforced, pre-existing media frames about mass migration. Thus, while media platforms have facilitated a merging of representation and self-representation of migrants for European publics, scholars have conceptualized media representations of migrant border crossings as part of a 'techno-affective' network of mediations through which the exclusions of the border are publicly 'narrated' and 'performed' (Chouliaraki and Musarò, 2017: 545). These studies suggest that although self-representations of migrants have become integrated into mainstream media representations in 'host countries', the use of social media platforms by migrants does not, in itself, seem to shift established frames of migrants as victims and/or threats in this context.

While these insights help us understand how 'platform content' makes its way from mobile devices into legacy media spheres, there are also important ways in which images and messages circulate in the platform spheres themselves. The image of Aylan Kurdi, the young Syrian boy whose drowned body was photographed washed up on a Turkish shore, has become exemplary of the impacts of affective circulation of migrant representations through various media platforms. Computational tools have proven powerful in allowing researchers access to these dynamics, revealing insights that, however, always require further political contextualization. Using a mixed methods data-driven approach, Farida Vis and Olga Goriunova (2015) analysed the online spread of this affectively charged image to show how it produced a turning point in the migration discussion. Recent years have seen a surge in contestations around migration in Europe, highlighting both the solidarities and the anti-immigrant responses that have been mobilized through affective media spheres. The dominant focus on the European Mediterranean border, and on digital borders (Chouliaraki and Georgiou, 2019; Georgiou and Zabarowski, 2017), has seen little expansion in the settings of migration, concealing how the recent

migration seen by Europe is connected to dynamics in Middle Eastern and African countries, where international responsibilities have been left largely unarticulated.

Responding to this gap, Marloes Geboers and Chad Van de Wiele discuss, in their article on 'Regimes of visibility and the affective affordances of Twitter', how images from the Syrian war circulated through retweeting in ways that reflect their affective power and potentials within separate Arabic- and English-language issue spheres. Retweeting is considered a 'low-level' platform affordance that shapes a particular visibility through the practice of sharing. Platform affordances are understood as 'the possibility for action that emerge from . . . given technological forms' (Hutchby, 2001: 30) and the act of retweeting is seen as a form of endorsement. The article focuses in particular on tweeted images that circulated in the month surrounding World Refugee Day 2019, hashtag #worldrefugeeday, which mostly generated tweets pertaining to Syrian refugees. They used a mixed methods approach that combines automated computational analysis of images (via the Google Cloud Vision API) with platform data (retweet metrics) and the exploration of visual patterns in the most prominent retweeted images.

Platforms reconfigure how mass audiences are able to engage with representations of forced migration, but for migrants (users) themselves, platform usage also comes to shape their experiences of being in the world. Evidently, as migrants take up platform usage in their everyday practices, the spheres of self-representation and activities that are part of everyday life increasingly merge. In their article on 'Emotional practices of unaccompanied refugee youth on social media', Annamaria Neag and Markéta Supa explore how the emotional practices of unaccompanied refugee minors in Sweden and Italy take shape through their photo posting choices, in particular on Facebook. The smartphone becomes a lifeline, as Amanda Alencar et al. (2018) have stated, that is used not only to seek information and maintain networks but also to experience and express emotions. Instead of portraying the refugees as disenfranchised and suffering from loss and traumas, this approach emphasizes emotional gains and empowerment, conveyed in part through the affordances of technology that enable the refugees from Afghanistan, Somalia, Morocco, and Egypt to stay connected and express themselves on social media. The photos posted are not about a tourist gaze, but rather a migrant gaze (Ostrowska, 2019) that refers to place-making. Social media play a big role in mobilizing emotions, contributing to contrasting feelings and emotions such as loss, nostalgia, guilt, ambition, affection, and disaffection. As Michaela Riediger et al. (2014) write, emotions are never either positive or negative but are an interconnected 'mixed affect'. The authors show how this mix is common among adolescents. New questions arise as to what kinds and scales of publics are produced through the mediation effects of these platforms, and what kinds of power relations are produced or reinforced through them.

It is important to understand the economic dynamics that underlie migrants' specific platform usages, and to pay attention to the emotional aspects of how livelihoods are maintained and financial support is transferred transnationally. In this special issue, the emotional facets of platform use for maintaining economic relations and livelihoods emerge in the article on 'Migrant platformed subjectivity: Rethinking the mediation of transnational affective economies via digital connectivity services' by Earvin Cabalquinto and Guy Wood-Bradley which offers an analysis of how connectivity services, such as money transfer (Western Union), parcel

delivery (LBC), and government-based companies (BalinkBayan), mobilize and manipulate the affective needs of overseas Filipinos. The Filipino nation state makes a strong appeal to their loyalty and their sense of national belonging through the platforms used for transnational financial services. Based on slogans such as 'Share', 'Move', and 'Connect', these services are premised on the idea of migrants as 'economic subjects', as 'valued clientele', and on the idea of connectivity as shaping the migrant's translocal subjectivity and mobility. The idea of translocal subjectivity (Appadurai, 1996) is based on the enactment of practices that reflect the culture of the home country in the new environment. Through daily activities such as the consumption of goods, but also the flow of money and care packages among transnational family members (McKay, 2007), translocal subjectivities emerge as shaped by emotional ties (Bocagni and Baldassar, 2015; Conradson and McKay, 2007) and expressed through media-based practices.

Further elaborating the discussion of migrant subjectivity within a global platform economy the article, 'WeChat, we sell, we feel: Chinese women's emotional petit capitalism', Beatrice Zani offers a multi-sited ethnography for the study of Chinese migrant women's digital labour and e-commerce in Taiwan. The author does so through the analysis of the social and emotional construction of translocal virtual markets. This study examines the commercial implications of migratory experiences and the use of platforms, with a particular focus on the emotional and affective dimension. Rather than looking at the interpellation and manipulation of commercial and governmental structures, it concentrates on the appropriation of platforms such as the incredibly popular WeChat by migrants to carve a niche of their own. Users construct small commercial enterprises that allow them not only to overcome the feeling of isolation and marginalization in Taiwan, because of their Chinese origin, but also to engage in rewarding e-commerce that turns their disadvantage into a positive strategy. 'Emotional capitalism' refers to what Eva Illouz defines as a dual process by which emotional and economic relationships come to define and shape each other (2007: 12–13). Drawing from this definition, Zani qualifies these Chinese migrant women's entrepreneurial activities as translocal emotional petit capitalism. It is petit capitalism because it is produced by migrants in their daily lives and everyday routines, but is also part of global chains of distribution. It draws simultaneously from physical and digital circuits, involving different actors and partners, that is, multi-situated social networks of 'sisters', trading companies, postal services, 'purchasing agents', and suitcase carriers. Zani shows the interconnection of e-commerce, emotions, and feelings of reciprocity, where the entrepreneurial spirit is coupled with the strategic use of digital platforms and the support of gendered networks.

Conclusion

Media researchers have called for explicit attention to emotion in migration phenomena, highlighting how transnational emotion relies on various forms of media. However, as we have argued, the entry of *digital* media into discussions of emotion and migration has opened up a much broader and more complex field of investigation that cannot be

addressed through diasporic media texts and transnational interpersonal communication alone. Throughout our discussion of what we see as urgent themes emerging in scholarship on emotion, digital media, and migration, we introduce and draw upon various debates pertaining to the field of media and communication but also to neighbouring disciplines such as anthropology, philosophy, postcolonial studies, gender studies, economics and sociology among others.

We have discussed how theoretical understandings of emotion and affect – not as discrete inner states but as conditions emerging from the relations of people to their material and social surroundings – have opened up an array of possibilities for investigating emotionality as quintessentially social and always mediated. Therefore, the study of emotions in relation to digital media under conditions of migrancy emerges as being about what emotions ‘do’ rather than what emotions ‘are’. The emotions refer not only to transnational families in the traditional sense but also to various forms of digital intimacy such as friendships, queer relations, diasporic motherhood, connective services, and entrepreneurship.

Digital media support synchronous and instantaneous connections that enable families, communities, and feelings of belonging to be sustained across distance. We have shown how this can be detailed, in the various articles in this collection, through careful ethnographic observations, and other innovative methodologies (such as app walk-through methods, digital methods, and automated computational analysis). In these studies, emotions are not just mentioned or discussed as such, but observed and analysed as evidence in the circulation of affect through digital media interactions, without naming or needing to authenticate specific emotions.

Further research is necessary in order to bring emotion more explicitly to the forefront of theorizations of important social phenomena in the lives of migrant digital media users. This further research might require not only longitudinal studies and wider comparative dimensions, but also the exploration and implementation of a mixture of methods that are important for understanding experiences, affective traces, collective formation, and subjectivities that are produced through different forms of mobility.

This special issue on ‘Migration, Digital Media and Emotion’ makes a significant contribution to these ongoing questions and debates, setting out important suggestions for future conceptual, theoretical, methodological, and ethical directions.

We would like to conclude this introduction by emphasizing the role of emotion as one locus in the study of digital media and migration, which is creatively bringing together various fields of scholarship, not in the interest of merging them into one field but precisely in order to make sense of the divergences that are necessary in studying migration and digital media in particular contexts.

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Notes

1. See Deleuze on Spinoza (<https://www.webdeleuze.com/>) (accessed 5 June 2020).
2. A useful illustration Scheer gives to show how emotions are by definition historically contingent is the case of ‘the specific feeling on honor made available to [male] bourgeois practitioners of dueling in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe’, which is lost when the duel falls into disuse (Scheer, 2012: 219).
3. Drawing on Grossberg’s use of Lefebvre on the cultural theorization of ‘everyday life’.

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Author biographies

Donya Alinejad (PhD, VU University of Amsterdam, NL) is a postdoctoral researcher in the Media and Culture Studies Department of Utrecht University. She was a postdoctoral fellow within the ERC Project 'Digital Crossings in Europe: Gender, Diaspora and Belonging'. Her main research interests include ethnographic approaches to digital media, transnational mobility and communication, and migrant subjectivities. She is the author of *The Internet and Formations of Iranian American-ness: Next Generation Diaspora* (Palgrave, 2017) and has published in peer-review journals such as *Global Networks*, *New Media & Society*, *Social Media + Society*, *Global Perspectives* among others.

Sandra Ponzanesi is professor of Media, Gender, and Postcolonial Studies, Department of Media and Culture Studies at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. She has published widely in the field

of postcolonial feminist theory, cinema studies, digital media and migration. Among her publications are *Postcolonial Intellectuals in Europe* (2018), *Postcolonial Transitions in Europe* (2016), *The Postcolonial Cultural Industry* (2014), *Gender, Globalisation and Violence* (2014), *Postcolonial Cinema Studies* (2012) and *Paradoxes of Postcolonial Culture* (2004). She has also guest-edited several special issues on postcolonial Europe, digital migration, and transnational cinema studies for journals such as *Social Identities*, *Crossings*, *Interventions*, *Transnational Cinemas*, *Popular Communication, Television & New Media* and *Postcolonial Studies* along with publishing in many edited volumes and peer-reviewed journals across disciplines. She is the project leader of the ERC project ‘Digital Crossings in Europe: Gender, Diaspora and Belonging’, see <http://connectingeuropeproject.eu/>.