

EDITORIAL

Digital Migration Practices and the Everyday

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This special issue explores the role that digital technology plays in the lives of migrants. It does so by paying close attention to governmental and supranational organizations as well as to subjective and affective dimensions of the everyday. Digital migration practices emerge as complex negotiations in the digital media sphere between infrastructural bias and agential opportunities, contesting racial practices as well as enabling digitally mediated bonds of solidarity and intimacy. The issue offers nuanced critical perspectives ranging from surveillance capitalism, extractive humanitarianism, datafication, and border regimes to choreographies of care and intimacy in transnational settings, among other aspects. Renowned international scholars reflect on these issues from different vantage points. The closing forum section provides state-of-the-art commentaries on digital diaspora, affect and belonging, voice and visibility in the digital media sphere, queer migrant interventions in non-academic settings, and datafication and media infrastructures in “deep time.”

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Beyond Migration—Crisis or Autonomy?

The focus on digital migration practices and the everyday aims to move away from the dominant perspective on migration as a crisis, invasion, and/or problem (Gillespie et al., 2018; Risam, 2018, 2019; Ponzanesi & Leurs, 2014). Migration is often seen as a question of management, governmentality, and most of all of containment, which foregrounds the politics of bordering and surveillance (De Genova & Peutz, 2010; Dijstelbloem, 2021; Scheel, 2019; Trimikliniotis et al., 2015). While we are aware that these top-down regulations and law enforcements are real and cannot be easily dismissed, we want to emphasize the “deep time” (Amoore, 2021; Zielinski, 2006) of migration, as part of ongoing flows throughout history and also

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following a variety of logics (forced, economic, and political migration but also the paradoxical role of mediation), directions (not just South to North), and motivations.

The recent “migration crisis” of the last decade has been magnified by media and political institutions using worrying tropes and metaphors. Tropes of natural cataclysms, such as floods, streams, waves, tsunamis, tides, surges or inundations to mention but a few, have been rhetorically used to convey the unpredictability and catastrophic scale of migration. It is something that seems to overwhelm “us” in a way that could not be expected or prevented. Yet as we know and as the era of the Anthropocene shows, many of the natural disasters are very much human made; sometimes they are caused by the use and abuse of our planetary resources, which are not shared equally, but whose unequal exploitation mostly affects the poor.

The environmental crisis might seem a form of “slow violence,” as Nixon (2011) has defined the slow eroding of our planet (linked to deforestation, desertification, toxic drift, nuclear aftermaths, acidifying oceans, etc.), because it escapes media attention as it is neither spectacular nor instantaneous but rather incremental and accretive. Therefore, these disasters that are anonymous and star nobody, seem difficult to bring to the attention of public policy, which is shaped primarily around perceived immediate needs.

Equally the so-called migration crises, which seem to have no face or specific identities, but are magnified in numbers or fluid metaphors as highlighted above, are not to be understood outside of the neo-colonial world order, which deceptively reactivates the colonial dynamics of exploitation and extraction (Stoler, 2013). Understood within this framework, migration is not just a natural disaster or whimsical phenomenon that comes to disrupt the law and order of the Global North, but is to be understood as part and parcel of the entanglements of modernity (Gilroy, 1993; Quijano, 2007; Bhambra, 2016), which have seriously undermined security, livelihood and sustainability for the new generations in unequal ways. How to manage the responsibility and accountability for what could be seen as a violation of human rights, which curtails the survival of some immobilized subjects versus the prosperity of others, remains an essential issue in understanding the urgency of restorative justice as well as of planetary redistribution.

A new migration crisis from Ukraine is raging while we write this introduction in March 2022. It is testimony to the different scales and coloring in the perception, management, and response to the concept of “migration.” While recent waves of migration from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, rerouted via Europe’s eastern borders, were met with defiance and crude blocking measures, the sudden exodus of Ukrainian citizens fleeing the military attack by Russia has so far led to manifestations of solidarity, support and an international outcry. As of March 20, 2022, over 5 million Ukrainians were allowed to cross the borders with Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Moldova and move onwards (UNHCR, 2022) as they do not need to apply for asylum and can stay in the European Union (EU) for one year. The narrative is to see these people who have taken flight as “family,” in a way

part of Europe, many of whom were already living in Poland or commuting between and within the boundaries of the EU. This is not only due to the negotiations for making Ukraine part of the EU, which is becoming more unlikely by the day, but also to the continuous spinning and respinning of the tale of Europe, who belongs and who does not, where Europe begins and ends (Hall, 2003), and what the intrinsic values of Europeanness are (passing as White, supposedly secular and territorially close). While white Ukrainian migrants can cross the border, people of color fleeing Ukraine, such as international students from Africa, the Caribbean, and South Asia face discrimination at the border and experience difficulties accessing vital resources (Tondo & Akinwotu, 2022). This is what is accepted “in the name of Europe” (Ponzanesi & Blaagaard, 2011), the ability to spin tales that fit the ever-shifting framework of what makes Europe “United in Diversity” as the motto of the EU goes. Following this line of thought, Passerini (2003) argues that we should perceive Europe less as a political program and more as an emotional project. The Europe that Luisa Passerini envisions is an imagined territory, rather than a self-proclaimed and arrogant identity, that is a locus for doubt, absences, and shortcomings.

In his contribution to this special issue, “Working with ‘wogs’: Aliens, denizens and the machinations of denialism,” Paul Gilroy remarks that Europe’s political and intellectual traditions have been transformed negatively by technological change, and we are confronted with a re-engineering of the social and political order. Starting with an extensive analysis of the discussion around the genesis and use of the word “wog” in Britain, Gilroy explores how the term has been mobilized to racialize alien incomers so as to exclude them from belonging to the national community:

The “wog” is especially interesting because—against the grain of current thinking—as the term became a concept, it forced acknowledgements of the way in which Britain’s everyday racism fused the many, supposedly inferior life-forms that had populated its colonial territories into a single discursive entity. As a hybrid, the “wog” shows how those distinct characters were compressed into one abject figure, dense yet voluminous enough to hold a host of inferior types drawn from all the corners of the empire. W-O-G supplied the hateful acronym for another odd English colonial projection: the Western (or Westernized) Oriental Gentleman. (Gilroy, 2022)

The term has been reactivated and reignited with the rise of contemporary European “populist” politics and transferred to digital and virtual platforms. It can be noted how the perpetuation of this racism connects to the developments in AI and machine learning systems, where racial bias and supremacists’ politics get re-encoded. Taking cues from Shoshana Zuboff’s plea (2019) to turn our attention towards the epistemological disorientation integral to surveillance capitalism’s rewiring of political communication, Gilroy remarks that:

A double weaponization of information is expressed in its excessive provision combined with its selective withholding. Liberal analysis of this combination

speaks routinely of fact-checking and fake news, but remains bereft of a critical theory of ignorance and its important relationship to the increasing exercise of what might be called agno-political power. (Gilroy, 2022)

It is therefore important in the current culture to confront uncomfortable racial questions, which persist in “the afterglow of colonial history” (Gilroy, 2022), as attested to by the protracted use of the figure of the “wog.”

The lucid and critical appraisal in Gilroy’s analysis is a warning about the celebratory approach to digital technologies as territories of democratization and emancipation. Informed by the work of Han (2018) Gilroy concludes that on the contrary, digital technologies just embed more bias, with programming by White Western male engineers, and financial corporations being in the lead, as well as offering new platforms for right-wing alliances and supremacists to organize themselves and spread fake news, or for trolls manipulating elections:

The psycho-techno-cultural agglomerations on which this machine relied, enabled an as yet incomplete re-engineering of social and political orders. So far, this deployment of computational thinking has been fundamentally antidemocratic and wholly unaccountable either for its exercise of power or for the reckless use of the informational capital it greedily but covertly accumulated in the form of data. (Gilroy, 2022)

In his intervention “Viral borders: Migration, deceleration, and the re-bordering of mobility during the COVID-19 pandemic,” Nicholas de Genova points instead to another direction, emphasizing how we should understand migration in terms of rights, and as part of the intractable and always potentially disruptive constitutive power of people on the move:

Rather than seeing these ever more devious and violent formations of state power as if these were purely a matter of control, therefore, it is instructive to situate this economy of power in relation to the primacy, autonomy, and subjectivity of human mobility on a global (transnational, intercontinental, cross-border, postcolonial) scale. (De Genova, 2022)

To see migration within a longer process of mobility and autonomy allows us also to see migration as empowering and part of individual as well as collective decision-making processes. Therefore, it is important to understand not just the logics or apparatus surrounding migrations but also the experiences, affects and desires that underpin the will to migrate.

Digitalization and Datafication—Abstraction and Extraction

The autonomy of migration is of course complicated in an increasingly datafied society (Leurs & Shepherd, 2017), in which the technological drive for innovation takes precedence over the needs, interests, or benefits of vulnerable groups, such as migrants. Often used for migration management, for monitoring, registration, and classifying

refugees and asylum seekers, digital and datafied borders and refugee camps become a testing ground, a “laboratory” to experiment with new applications, often outsourced to third companies. The use of biometrics and AI is part of a recent trend toward digital innovation and data practices (Salah, 2022). While biometrics is not something new, the acceleration of the utilization as part of the technological convergence that amplifies the risks associated with each constituent technology of the biometric assemblage is a new phenomenon (Martin et al., 2022). As Madianou (2019a, 2019b) explains with her notion of “technocolonialism,” there are several implications regarding biometric bias and errors, lack of data safeguards, data sharing and function creep within states and commercial companies (surveillance and profit), and experimentation with untested technologies among vulnerable people. Often these innovations are not even effective and the solutions to problems could easily be realized using other methods, without putting the refugees in jeopardy because of errors and illicit use.

This is also in line with the article “Practices of abstraction: The digitalization and datafication of forced migration” by Saskia Witteborn in this issue, where she analyzes the increasingly central role that digital data play in migration discourse and policy. She critically analyzes the narrative about datafied migration management, which is usually proposed as being about interoperability and efficiency. In her article, Witteborn carefully unpacks how the datafication of migration is organized at different levels: national, supranational, and intergovernmental. Examining the practices of sharing, enabling, and predicting, the article shows through specific case studies the increasing importance attributed to data to govern migrants in the name of transparency and technocratic rationality. She offers a theoretical illustration of how abstract spaces turn into data, through bureaucratic practices by bodies such as the police, immigration agencies, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), or the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), who increasingly invest in the translation of the migrant into digital data, and the sharing of those data.

According to Han’s (2015) philosophical perspective on space and the consequences of informationalism, digital data emerge as homogenized entities that defy qualitative differentiation in favor of quantified metrics and division. Drawing from Henri Lefebvre’s (1991) work, Witteborn elaborates on how these abstract spaces turned into data represent a liability for migrants. Abstract space is reductive space in that it compresses social life into a quantifiable unit, driven by the logics of efficiency, which foregrounds rationality and quantifiability in the name of transparency and social control. As such, abstraction and its accompanying techniques—ordering, sorting, and categorizing—are forceful, according to Lefebvre (1991). In this way, transparency becomes a practice of power. These processes of representation can be potentially harmful to selected populations, such as forced migrants, as they conceal spatial practice in the name of social control and the protection of national territory and interests.

Migration policy rests on the claim to abstract space. Sharing data and predicting mobility represent the human and human relations through scattered yet accumulative data markers, which feed back into lived space and shape the

daily life of migrants, including their access to territory, work, housing, education, and mobility. At the same time, the data practices are neither accessible nor transparent to the forced migrant and the scattered data markers remain a potential risk as they could be used against the person during asylum claims. (Witteborn, 2022)

Data justice is therefore foregrounded to counter these widely applied practices, which are increasingly used as quick fixes for social problems.

In her intervention on “Extractive humanitarianism: Digital technologies, participatory detention and refugees’ digital labor,” Martina Tazzioli focuses on the way the development and implementation of experimental technologies among migrants becomes a way of extracting digital labor and knowledge production. The use of “extractive humanitarianism” designates the political economy of labor and the modes of value extraction which are at play in refugee governmentality. More concretely, the article focuses on how asylum seekers are solicited to perform unpaid digital labor in refugee camps and hotspots “for their own good.” In so doing, it is argued, asylum seekers are asked to participate in their own confinement through mechanisms of “participatory detention”:

The participatory turn has been further pushed forward in refugee governmentality also through the systematic incorporation of digital technologies. Asylum seekers have been encouraged to design and find out solutions to their own displacement—what scholars and humanitarian agencies have defined as an approach “by refugees to refugees” (Betts, Easton-Calabria, & Pincock, 2020). That is, refugees are not only nudged to provide feedback and information about their experience as displaced persons; they are also asked to fill in the gaps, to fix the broken system and not to behave as “passive beneficiaries.” The injunction for asylum seekers to participate to find solutions to their own displacement is actually part of a broader consolidated humanitarian discourse around refugees’ self-reliance and resilience. (Tazzioli, 2022)

The intervention by Tazzioli therefore goes beyond the implementation and consequences of datafication of migration and ventures into the implications for migrants themselves, in the encampment and everyday life, as a nudge to become “good citizens” and as such contribute to their own regulation and monitoring. As Tazzioli further argues, the lens of feminist scholarship offers a relevant analytical lens for coming to grips with the invisible work performed by asylum seekers and the value generated through this, as well as with the blurred boundaries between consent and coercion.

Digital Strategies and Tactics—Border Affects and Biometrics

In Roopika Risam’s article “Don’t look away: Affect, empathy, and the mobilization of border imagery,” considers how artists have mobilized representations of immigrant detention to provoke empathy for migrants in the US. These artistic responses refer to the repressive U.S. immigration policies in 2018 under the Trump

Administration, which implemented “family separation” at the Mexico–U.S. border, consisting of a policy of tearing apart children and parents and detaining them separately to ostensibly deter migration. The emotions generated among viewers of these artistic responses, which included positive as well as negative emotions, have simultaneously generated support for migrants and promoted an anti-migrant nationalist backlash. Risam claims that these responses suggest that the border is not simply a territorial marker but also an epistemological phenomenon that has the power to both override and produce empathy. This is what Risam calls “border affects,” a dimension of affective cartography that is produced by and, in turn, reproduces a cultural imaginary that situates the citizen’s relationship to migration.

Through a qualitative study, Risam examines audience responses to four artistic activist responses. Representations of oppression at the border appear to uniformly generate ugly feelings (Ngai, 2005), irrespective of left- or right-wing political affiliation. However, the instances of particular affects, such as “anger” and “fear,” are influenced by political affiliation and immigration stance. In the rare instance of “guilt,” however, we see a mobilization of affect and perhaps even empathy that cuts across these categories (Risam, 2022).

However, the conclusion in this study is that while some of these artistic events, such as *Don’t look away* and the Super Bowl LIV halftime show, have, in fact, generated an acknowledgment of “guilt” across divides and some measure of empathy for the plight of migrant families, the question of whether such empathy translates into action remains an open and urgent one.

Yet, the question of how artistic representations of the border shape our affective responses is unclear (. . .) These responses speak to the presence of what I term “border affects,” a dimension of affective cartography that is produced by and, in turn, reproduces a cultural imaginary that situates the citizen’s relationships to migration and has the power to both override and promote empathy. These affects suggest that the southern border is not an ontological category that is implicitly known, extant, or eternal but a cognitive phenomenon filtered through their experiences. (Risam, 2022)

These artistic interventions could be seen as examples of “citizen media,” or practices of civic engagement as Risam calls them, which encompass not only the form and content produced by non-affiliated citizens but also the role citizens and their practices play in the public space and their ability to transform that space. Citizen media is therefore envisaged as operating through a varied pallet of art forms, creating diversified political interventions in a bid to pursue an inclusive agenda (Baker & Blaagaard, 2016). The study discussed by Risam could, perhaps, shed further light on how we can mobilize imagery of the border to promote empathy, imagine new forms of connection between citizens and migrants, and thus make it impossible for citizens to look away.

In their article “Biometric bordering and automatic gender recognition: Challenging binary gender norms in everyday biometric technologies,” Christine Quinan and Mina Hunt tackle the increased use of advanced biometric

technologies, such as body mass index (BMI) measurements, identity documents, full-body scanners, and facial recognition, that integrate forms of automatic gender recognition (AGR) and are used for the surveillance and targeting of populations who do not match racial and gender norms. This is especially damaging when biometrics make assumptions about both gender and race based on skin color, facial structure, body type, and body parts, which are then encoded in predictive algorithms and other AI-driven systems. By positioning their work within the critical field of surveillance data studies and AI, but complemented with autoethnography, interviews and surveys, the article empirically shows how biometrics pose serious obstacles for trans and non-binary individuals in several spheres, including border security, healthcare, and social media. Binary-based biometric technologies and automatic gender recognition rely on outmoded understandings of gender as static, measurable, and physiological:

Because the algorithms that underpin these technologies are encoded with binary gender and/or sex, they create hidden dangers for trans and non-binary individuals (Baldwin, 2016; Edinger, 2021), making them into objects of suspicion and exclusion. And while national borders are often where such binary-based biometrics are tested and refined, these technologies reach beyond their originary usage. In fact, they become such a part of our everyday lives that they serve to discipline bodies at medical clinics, on smartphones, on social networking apps, and in public spaces. (Quinan & Hunt, 2022)

The interesting interviews that emerge from the research contribute by exposing not only the bias and blindness of these operating systems, but also the obstacles, impediments and humiliation they cause in everyday life, while travelling, attending to health issues or in social interaction. The social impacts of this automating of inequality are emphasized in many of the interviews conducted with non-binary participants, and presented in excerpts in this article:

I get the standard looks up and down like “what are you” in public toilets and stuff, especially at the airport. I think it was the last time I was going to the States going through the body scan thing, they said: “oh just a sec” and then like “what gender do you identify as” [or] “do you identify as male or female”, and I was like “what?” (...) and I ended up saying female because generally that is how I feel safest being perceived if I have to choose (...) (Quinan & Hunt, 2022)

The authors argue that while the discriminating effects of surveillance and AI technologies have been detailed in the existing literature (Browne, 2015; Chun, 2021; Magnet, 2011; Pugliese, 2010), few studies have addressed the ways binary gender is taken as a given and as an invisible framework that impacts trans and non-binary people. For many of the people interviewed, the process of traveling through airports and submitting to body scans illustrates how gender ambiguity creates problems when passing through biometric checkpoints, and these experiences also demonstrate how trans and non-binary bodies are forced to bend to these systems.

The ethnographic approach greatly helps in reconfiguring not only the ways this technology works, recreating bias and anxieties about complying with the norms, but also the possibilities of resistance to the exacerbating inequalities that these dystopian technologies end up promoting. Quinan and Hunt argue that engaging with and fighting the misuse of biometric technologies remains a priority for everyone but in particular for non-binary people, whose voices and hopes need to be recorded and taken into account.

Digital Ethnographies & the Everyday—Choreographies of Care and Mediated Immobilities

The final articles focus in more detail on ethnographic practices and the everyday, in particular how belonging, kinship, and intimacy are supported through social media across a spectrum of migrant subjects taking into account their ethnic, gender, and generational axes (Miller & Slater, 2000).

In her article “Careful digital kinship: Understanding multispecies digital kinship, choreographies of care and older adults during the pandemic in Australia,” Larissa Hjorth unpacks the concept of digital kinship and how this has impacted or been reshaped by the recent pandemic. Kinship is a complex term that captures our relationality, intimacies, and connections, and it is understood as always being in action and in becoming (Baldassar & Wilding, 2020; Carsten, 2020; Van Horn et al., 2021). During the pandemic the digital played a central role in establishing digital kinship, recalibrating many aspects of our lives. Hjorth’s article focuses in particular on older adults (65 years plus) living in Australia, who were disproportionately disadvantaged due to the uneven digital literacy skills, and their reliance or dependence on family or network support. Negative attitudes about aging and older people—ageism—are a key driver of failures in safety, quality of care, and quality of life within Australia, the author states.

Hjorth reflects on the role of creative forms of knowledge and cultural transmissions, for example place-making games, to curate public awareness and enact change. The concept she develops is that of “careful digital kinship” and “choreographies of care.”

As we have witnessed, the pandemic has heightened the role of the digital across all aspects of our lives. In doing so, it has *amplified* the inequalities and uneven literacies. At the core of this understanding is taking care seriously as a *conceptual framework, an everyday practice* and an *ethics of being in the world* (. . .) The two choreographies are (informal) *multispecies* and *intergenerational co-present care*. As I suggest, through expanding our definitions of digital kinship as choreographies of care that include multispecies approaches we might find new possibilities for better, more careful futures. (Hjorth, 2022)

As the author argues for migrant older adults, digital media play an important role in care networks—especially “care at a distance.” The lockdown restrictions

made the digital the *only* option for many for social connection. Therefore, we need to take seriously the mundane forms of care *in* and *through* digital media as central in shaping contemporary forms of kinship. That is what characterizes the choreographies of care, as a rubric that captures the relationalities of informal practices around care—especially those that are overlooked. Hjorth includes here the notion of the multispecies (Haraway, 2016), for example, the role animals or “more-than-humans” can play as companions for older adults—particularly in a time of social distancing and restrictions. By understanding the complex ways in which humans and more-than-humans can play an important role in choreographies of care for older adults during the pandemic, we can think through future scenarios for digital kinship. This study offers an original contribution to a multispecies approach to digital kinship and older adults. As the author writes:

For Brandhorst, Baldassar, and Wilding (2020) immobilities—rather than mobilities—are key in transnational familial care (. . .) Through an assemblage of care practices that involve old and new media, transnational connection can be maintained—involving connections between adult migrants and their aging parents (Baldassar et al., 2007) and between parents and their children (e.g., Madianou & Miller, 2012). In this configuration, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and especially mobile technologies play a crucial role in the maintaining of kin relations. (Hjorth, 2022)

The notion of immobility is also central to Earvin Cabalquinto’s article “Come on, put Viber, we can drink coffee together’: The aging migrant’s (im)mobile intimacy in turbulent times” which critically examines how elderly people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds in Victoria, Australia, use visual-based platforms in navigating the lockdown in Melbourne, Australia. The article does so by locating both movements and stasis in digitalized environments, in order to shed light on the (re)production of exclusion during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on remote interviews conducted during the 2020 lockdown, the findings show that digital practices are integral to forging and maintaining cultural identities and social connectedness. The author coins the term “(im)mobile intimacy” to articulate a sense of closeness enabled, *felt*, and negotiated through modes of movements and stasis in and with online platforms.

The author claims that to date the majority of studies on mobile intimacy tend to privilege “movements” (Hjorth, 2011; Holmes & Wilding, 2019). Yet a growing number of works have begun unpacking how both mobilities and immobilities in and with mobile devices characterize mobile intimacy (Cabalquinto, 2022; Leurs, 2019; Wilding, 2006). Cabalquinto explores this in the context of aging migrants’ digital practices especially during the pandemic. He further unpacks the notion of “digital kinning” conceived by Baldassar and Wilding (2020), which is also explored by Hjorth, to explore the social and cultural dimension of everyday intimate digital practices of aging migrants:

(. . .) the visuality, mobility, and networked connectivity of digital media channels reinforce cultural and social connections and a sense of inclusivity (Baldassar & Wilding, 2020). However, digital and interactional spaces are characterized by immobilities. For the participants, such conditions are addressed through various strategies. (Cabalquinto, 2022).

The author concludes that the lockdown has created forced physical immobility, which has been used as a new opportunity to perform and embody intimacy among aging migrants via digital media use. It has also magnified the ways digital practices, competencies, and network access have come to inform everyday affective textures. In conclusion, Cabalquinto argues that that differential mediated mobilities and immobilities are informed by social, contextual, and technological factors. This reveals how technology enables different textures of affective and relational dimensions across ages and spaces.

Forum

The special issue ends with a Forum section which includes specific commentaries on digital migration studies. These interventions by established scholars offer not only vignettes on the state of the art in a particular field connected to digital media and migration, but also explore the intersection between the academic and the wider public, institutional, and collective realms.

In their forum contribution on “Digital diaspora: Staying with the trouble,” Laura Candidatu and Sandra Ponzanesi (2022) approach the notion of digital diaspora as a traveling concept evolving through time and engaging with different disciplinary takes and discursive reorientations. Digital media affordances in this sense are just such new configurations that enable, sustain and multiply diasporic encounters through social media platforms, digital devices, and infrastructures. Yet despite the growing field of study of the *digital diaspora*, the term is far from being unequivocal and coherent. On the contrary, it seems to swim among a plethora of close friends that signal disciplinary or media-specific differences, but also geopolitical variations. Some approaches in technology and communication studies focus more on the medium-specificity of Internet interactions, paying attention to web hyperlinks and digital traces online.

However, it is important to understand digital diasporas not in opposition to or replacing traditional diasporas, but on the contrary as an expansion and transformation of their agency in the digital age (Nedelcu, 2018). In this intervention Candidatu and Ponzanesi foreground the idea of a digital diaspora conveyed through its everydayness, emphasizing an ethnographic approach that allows us to tap into the politics of emotion and the affective dimension of migration and belonging. This offers a renewed look at digital diasporas as spaces where the experience of loss and vulnerability can be reconfigured in agential forms of

representation and the building of social networks of solidarity (Candidatu et al., 2019; Ponzanesi, 2020; Witteborn, 2019).

In her commentary on “Digital (in-)visibilities: Spatializing and visualizing politics of voice,” Myria Georgiou (2022) focuses on the conditions that create migrant (in-)visibilities in the mediascape and addresses the ambivalent and complex communicative architecture of voice in the context of digitization and migration. Thinking through Arendt’s subjective-in-between (1998), and Spivak’s notion of the “subaltern cannot speak” (2010), this intervention reflects on the value of voice beyond its conception as an individual right and as a mediated occasion of appearance.

Georgiou argues that even when we see migrants speaking across Western digital mediascapes, their interventions rarely challenge hegemonic politics of racial order. It seems instead to achieve the opposite effect, by reaffirming the racial categories of the speakers despite the, at times, good intentions of media platforms and other Western outlets. The author therefore questions the limits of visibility and voicing of subaltern subjects, such as migrants, beyond the recognition and curated appearances that are granted to them in the digital mediascape.

By offering empirical evidence from across Western digital mediascapes, Georgiou argues that we should not take the notion of “voice” as equivalent to agency, or autonomous speech acts, but as acts that should be understood within the context in which they are allowed to be produced, as incomplete forms of storytelling, shaped as Hannah Arendt theorizes in the “subjective-in-between” (Arendt, 1998) which refers to the representational and geographical space where those speaking and those hearing converge or have a responsibility to converge.

In the contribution “A lot of straddling and squirming. Taking queer migrant stories beyond the academic walls,” Łukasz Szulc (2022) reports on empirical work on a diverse group of Polish LGBTQ people living in the UK and the experience with non-academic writing in this context. The author offers an autoethnography as many of the participants’ personal experiences felt alike, but also different. Taking Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* as inspiration, Szulc argues that “Being a writer feels very much like being a Chicana, or being queer—a lot of squirming, coming up against all sorts of walls” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 94). This refers in particular to the need to tell these queer migrant stories beyond the academic contexts, something that requires a lot of straddling and squirming against all the obstacles in cisheteronormative societies and the ambivalences and dilemmas it generates.

Many of the nuances and complexities can be reduced by journalists and media outlets who want a simple story about queer migrants, often of victimhood. Szulc therefore acknowledges having to straddle various loyalties and positionalities. Striking the right balance is not easy, especially when you have no say over the final publication. Also, these attempts to document injustices among Polish LGBTQs in the UK risk reconfirming the myths of a religious, conservative and homophobic Poland. Despite the pitfalls and backlashes, Łukasz Szulc reiterates the importance

of continuing this engagement beyond the academic walls, creatively and collaboratively, with the communities, despite possible setbacks.

In their contribution on “Affect and creative practices,” Raelene Wilding and Monika Winarnita (2022) pay attention to the politics of emotion, addressing the role of affect and belonging in the context of increased mobility and accelerated mediation. The authors guide us through the complex debates on theories of affect and emotion (Ahmed, 2004; Antonsich, 2010; Hochschild, 1979; Massumi, 2002) while foregrounding the role that affect and emotion play in the digital sphere (Bocconi & Baldassar, 2015), altering notions of home and belonging.

The authors pay particular attention to the role of creative practices, and how they work to reframe emotions and create alternative spaces of belonging, and new modes of emotional and symbolic capital across groups and generations. They present examples of innovative participatory action-based projects where researchers collaborate with migrants to create inclusive spaces and practices of belonging such as the “Dispersed Belongings” project. Wilding and Winarnita also present the concrete example of migrant daughters, who grapple with conflicting expectations and aspirations. While the dutiful migrant daughters internalize many of the gendered structures of feeling, practices, and obligations, they also disrupt their emotional bonds, reconsidering everything from their religious identities to their intimate relationships. The authors show how female migrant artists manage to negotiate a different emotional landscape through their artistic and creative practices, rethinking the affective economy in which they participate.

In their intervention on “Migration and the ‘deep time’ of media infrastructures,” Koen Leurs and Philipp Seufferling (2022) discuss how media infrastructures deployed in migration governance and control reflect distinctive moments in media history, as well as in migration history. The authors propose an archaeological approach (Huhtamo & Parikka, 2011) in which media infrastructure do not emerge as isolated devices and fully formed, but as embedded in longer temporalities and genealogical connections.

This *deep time* of media and migration infrastructure (Zielinski, 2006) allows us to attend to the historicities of *materiality*, *practices*, and *imaginaries*, and to analyze how they manifest themselves, travel, and emerge across time. These intersections enable archaeological as well as genealogical insights into how constellations of media technologies and experiences of migration emerge at different points in history (Jasanoff, 2015).

The authors unpack (socio-technical) imaginaries such as technosolutionism, used to govern so-called crises of mobility and migration, to question the legitimacy and desirability of specific technologies. The authors question whether disruptive technologies are needed in the first place above other alternatives, therefore going beyond the mere assessment of how to make technology better, fairer, and less biased, debunking the assumption of technological progression, and claims about the exceptionality or uniqueness of technology in the context of migration and mobility.

Conclusion

The variety of interventions on digital media cultures gathered in this special issue bears testimony to the growing awareness of the entanglement of media and migration and intensified scholarly attention around the question of how various new technical affordances of platforms and apps are shaping the transnationally connected, and locally situated, social worlds in which migrants live their everyday lives.

In *The Practice of everyday life* (De Certeau, 1984), the social theorist Michel de Certeau differentiates between “strategies” and “tactics.” He identifies “strategies” as the hidden means through which institutions and structures of power dominate, territorialize, and create an ordering of the social order. The use of “tactics” refers instead to ordinary people who disrupt and unsettle these practices, diverging from the prescribed conventions. For De Certeau, “a tactic insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance” (De Certeau, 1984, p. xix).

Therefore, the interventions gathered in this special issue encapsulate the different aspects of digital migration practices and the everyday, signaling how strategies and tactics alternate and are negotiated in the digital sphere. On the one hand, surveillance, datafication, and extraction show the increasingly datafied migration management, algorithmic control and biometric classification, as well as forms of transnational authoritarianism and networked repression. On the other hand, individuals, diasporas, and networked friends, family and peers navigate the digital in their role as users, participants, and producers of media knowledge and representations, showing how their daily tactics help counter negative stereotyping as well as forging strategies of survival and contestations of the structures that place them under scrutiny (Leurs & Ponzanesi, 2018).

The focus on the everyday allows us to tap into the emotions, affects, and desires of migrants themselves while putting the emphasis on the mundane, banal, and daily transactions happening with and through the use of various media, including digital platforms, allowing for a diversification of co-presence as creating possibilities for alternative counter-publics (Fraser 1992) that can emerge outside of the mainstream representation of demonization, vilification, and othering of the migrants (Chouliaraki, 2017; Georgiou, 2018).

Therefore, we have examined individual and collective user practices within the wider historical and cultural contexts of media studies, cultural studies, and postcolonial cultural studies scholarship, attuned to issues of politics and power, identity, geographies, and the everyday. This also creates new challenges for cross-disciplinary dialogues that require an integration of ethnography and critical data studies in order to look at the formation of identity and experience, representation, community building, and creation of spaces of belongingness.

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