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Digital Diasporas and transnational Identities: Media Practices of the Spanish Diaspora in Germany

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Digital Diaspora and Transnational Identities: Media Practices of the Spanish diaspora in
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Dedication,

to Jose Carlos Sendín, this journey would not have been possible without your support

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Abstract

The dissertation focuses, from a practice-based approach, on the processual, relational and situated character of the concept of “digital diaspora”. I selected the contemporary Spanish diaspora in Germany as a case study, applying a combination of two research methodologies: a) in-depth qualitative interviews and b) qualitative content analysis. Practice theory approaches (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 1996) seek to build social theory centred on "practices", rather than structures, systems, individuals, or interactions (Postill, 2010). RQ1 addresses both personal relationships and the public/political media practices of Spanish migrants in Germany: *How do diaspora communities develop their personal relations and public-political participation within the network?* To answer this question, I proposed the concept of “migrant’s digital associationism” to describe new digital logics of migrant communicative practices. It incorporates the public and political articulation 'within' the diaspora. The RQ2 addresses the processes of cultural identity and community development: *How do contemporary Spanish migrants in Germany symbolically construct a sense of we-ness, Spanish-ness and otherness through their media practices?* Here I specifically discuss discursive practices connected with different processes of belonging with the aim of illustrating how these identities are embedded in concrete realities. In this phase I also relate the concepts of belonging and memory, developing the construction of memory as a situated space of negotiation through certain social and communicative practices. The RQ3 constitutes the synthesis of the first question and the second, combining the conclusions drawn in both the public-private interaction and the identity analysis phase: *Which role play the ICT and media practices in the construction of transnational communities and identities?* Through the analysis of media practices and their processes of belonging, I develop the concept of *Digital Diaspora* from a practice-based approach as a contested and negotiated space in terms of belonging, but, at the same time, with a material and embodied basis.

Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Dissertation befasst sich aus einem praxisorientierten Ansatz heraus mit dem prozessualen, relationalen und situierten Charakter des Konzepts der "digitalen Diaspora". Ich habe die zeitgenössische spanische Diaspora in Deutschland als Fallstudie ausgewählt und dabei eine Kombination aus zwei Forschungsmethoden angewandt: a) qualitative Tiefeninterviews und b) nicht-teilnehmende Beobachtung von kommunikativen Umgebungen. Praxistheoretische Ansätze (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 1996) zielen darauf ab, eine Sozialtheorie zu entwickeln, die sich auf "Praktiken" konzentriert und nicht auf Strukturen, Systeme, Individuen oder Interaktionen (Postill, 2010). Die erste Forschungsfrage befasst sich sowohl mit den persönlichen Beziehungen als auch mit den öffentlichen/politischen Medienpraktiken spanischer Migranten in Deutschland: *Wie entwickeln Diaspora-Gemeinschaften ihre persönlichen Beziehungen und ihre öffentliche/politische Beteiligung innerhalb des Netzwerks?* Um diese Frage zu beantworten, habe ich das Konzept "migrant's digital associationism" vorgeschlagen, um neue digitale Logiken der kommunikativen Praktiken von Migranten zu beschreiben. Es umfasst die öffentliche und politische Artikulation innerhalb der Diaspora. Die zweite Forschungsfrage beschäftigt sich mit den Prozessen der kulturellen Identität und der Gemeinschaftsentwicklung: *Wie konstruieren zeitgenössische spanische Migranten in Deutschland durch ihre Medienpraktiken und ihre Routinen ein symbolisches Gemeinschaftsempfinden, Spanisch-Sein und Anderssein?* In dieser Frage diskutiere ich diskursive Praktiken, die mit verschiedenen Prozessen der Zugehörigkeit verbunden sind, mit dem Ziel zu erläutern, wie diese Identitäten in konkrete Realitäten eingebunden sind. In dieser Phase beziehe ich auch die Konzepte der Zugehörigkeit und des Gedächtnisses aufeinander, um die erkenntnistheoretische Debatte über die Konstruktion des Gedächtnisses als einen lokalisierten Raum der Verhandlung durch bestimmte soziale und kommunikative Praktiken voranzubringen. Die dritte Forschungsfrage stellt die Synthese der ersten und der zweiten Frage dar: *Welche Rolle spielen die IKT und die Medien bei der Bildung von transnationalen Gemeinschaften und Identitäten?* Durch die Analyse der Medienpraktiken und ihrer Zugehörigkeitsprozesse entwickle ich das Konzept der "digitalen Diaspora" aus einem praxisbasierten Ansatz heraus als einen umstrittenen und ausgehandelten Raum der Zugehörigkeit, der aber gleichzeitig eine materielle und körperliche Grundlage hat.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

In the last decade, we witnessed the emergence of a new intra-European demographic process. As a result of the financial crisis that shook Europe, people from the most vulnerable areas of the continent moved from their countries of origin towards European regions with enhanced professional development. Among these new demographic movements is the contemporary Spanish emigration to Germany. According to the official statistics¹, since the outbreak of the economic crisis in 2008, thousands of Spaniards have left Spain looking for jobs, with Germany as one of the most popular destination countries. However, the demographic process took years to consolidate and be considered a migratory process. In 2012 the German statistics began to report a considerable increase in emigration, which, for the first time, corresponded to the intra-European migratory process, mainly migrants stemming from Greece, Portugal and Spain. From 2012 the presence of Spaniards in Germany was increasing, leading to what I call in this study: the *Spanish Diaspora in Germany*. Intra-European mobility, boosted by the advent of the international economic crisis, defined a new path within European culture studies that challenged and redefined concepts such as: nationalism, new forms of multiculturalism, social and labour integration, differential opportunity, identity hybridisation processes, etc.

Since I graduated, I have worked on different aspects of the relation and interlinkages of media and migration processes in and towards Spain. A few years later, due to the lack of work opportunities in my home country, I was one of the many Spaniards seeking an opportunity abroad. It took me a couple of years to become aware of my condition as a migrant. Throughout this process, I personally experienced what it means to start over in a new country but keeping the link with the country of origin. Thanks to information and communication technologies, it was possible to keep in contact with people in Spain. On the other hand, the sociocultural impacts from Spain through digital media were constant and simultaneous in my new life in Germany. Most importantly, it facilitated the effective participation in the country of origin. Influenced by my previous studies on migration in Spain, I began to detect some interesting communicative patterns. This is why, in the

¹ Official figures of Spaniards in Germany: Destatis (German Statistics Institute), INE (National Statistics Institute), Consular Registers and the Ministry of Employment and Social Security itself. The German Statistical Institute, DESTATIS, publishes every 6 months reports with the statistical data collected in the previous semester and a general report with the annual figures.

theoretical reflection prior to my first *exposé*, I came up with the idea of investigating the new intra-European migration movement, selecting the Spanish diaspora as a case study.

The contemporary Spanish emigration process

The economic crisis of 2008 definitively marked the turn in migratory flows in and out of Spain. One of the first consequences of the financial crash of the Spanish economy was the business collapse and the strong growth of unemployment. This situation led to a shift in migratory patterns. On the one hand, it considerably slowed immigration to Spain and activated the processes of the return of immigrants to their countries of origin. Parallel to the intensification of the crisis, unemployment continued to grow, which provoked an upward trend in Spanish emigration (Bermudez & Brey, 2017). People left the country in search of new opportunities for personal and professional development, with special emphasis on 2011 and 2012, as shown by the statistics.²

A demographic process of this magnitude implies a period of adaptation to the new situation, and when the situation persists and outflows continue to increase, it can even generate a call effect that mobilises other co-nationals to migrate. Moreover, in the specific case of Germany, one of Spanish labour migration's favourite destinations, the DESTATIS report for the first half of 2012 documented an overall growth of 17% (66,000 persons) of foreigners residing in Germany, the majority of whom, for the first time, came from European states. In the crisis-affected countries in general, a strong growth in emigration departures took place. This already firmly indicated the beginning of these new intra-European migratory processes: 78% for Greece (6,900 people), 53% for Portugal (2,000 people) and 53% also for Spain, with a final balance of 3,900 people.

The scientific evidence suggested that unemployment and the economic crisis were the fundamental motivators for emigration in the second decade of the 2000s (González & Martínez, 2017). A fundamental change with respect to migratory experiences at the end of the 20th century relates to gender. In regards to the demographic features of contemporary

² Official figures of Spaniards in Germany: Destatis (German Statistics Institute), INE (National Statistics Institute), Consular Registers and the Ministry of Employment and Social Security itself. The German Statistical Institute, DESTATIS, publishes every 6 months reports with the statistical data collected in the previous semester and a general report with the annual figures.

post-crisis Spanish emigration, the number of women exceeded the number of men for the first time, according to data provided by the INE (National Statistics Institute). In regard to the sociodemographic profile of contemporary Spanish emigrants, the information varies according to different studies. Some data point to a large majority of young people between 25-34 years of age, which represented 67% of emigration, with postgraduate qualification in 70.6% of cases (Caro & Fernandez, 2016). On the other hand, other studies nuance this data and point to the youth as the predominant profile and highlight a relevant presence of the age group between 30 and 40 years old (Alba & Fernández, 2015). These variations in the data have not only generated some difficulties in sociocultural studies but have also led to different controversies in regard to the nature and magnitude of the contemporary Spanish migratory phenomenon. However, most of the researchers do agree on and denounce the lack of sufficient statistical information, and reject the inaccurate data provided by the institutions (Caro & Fernández, 2016; Bermúdez & Brey, 2017; González, 2014; González & Martínez, 2017; Fernández & Alba, 2020). One of the main reasons for these inaccuracies is that the Spanish National Statistics Institute (INE) only considers those citizens who are registered as residents (in Germany or in any other country). However, there is a large part of the Spanish emigrant population that is not included in this database, so the figures provided by the INE tend to underestimate the number of Spaniards abroad. In fact, according to Romero & Hidalgo (2014) the consular under-registration represents one of the main problems for the adequate observation and statistical measurement of current Spanish emigration. This is based on data from a 2012 survey of more than four thousand Spanish emigrants living abroad. In their article, the authors illustrated an under-reporting of around 50% among Spanish emigrants in the period from 2008 to 2012, 60% of those who chose the European Union as their destination and 75% in the specific case of the United Kingdom. These results provide very valuable empirical data on the serious bias faced by official Spanish statistics, which clearly overestimate the number of Spanish emigrants. Secondly, although consular registration in the country of destination is legally obligatory for those who reside for more than three months outside Spain, there are no sanction mechanisms against non-compliance with this rule, nor are there sufficient incentives to comply with it. Therefore, this lack of registration appears especially among those individuals who were in the first phase of their migratory experience and who did not know how long they would reside in that country (González & Martínez, 2017). Furthermore, such registration procedures require a consular registration in person, which implies high costs and traveling from other cities to carry out

the process. While in Germany, the census certificate is a fundamental requirement for any day-to-day procedure (opening a bank account, signing a work contract, housing, telephone, and any official registration), the registration at the Spanish Consulate does not provide any benefit to the emigrant. On the contrary, and in the case of temporary stays, it results in the loss of the emigrant's right to the health coverage offered. Therefore, it is to be expected that the total number of Spaniards in Germany (which included both residents and temporary residents) is considerably higher than the figures published by both institutions. A cross-check of statistical data with the countries of destination, including, for example, census registrations, would undoubtedly yield more reliable figures for the Spanish population settled abroad. These statistical inaccuracies not only remain uncorrected to this day, but they have also allowed for different interpretations and cognitive frameworks associated with the process, depending on the interests of the issuer. However, considering the figures available, they still point to a clear upward movement in recent years that has not ceased to grow. Since there are many monographs that deal profoundly with statistical analysis, I will not further delve into quantitative perspectives, but more into the symbolic construction of the contemporary Spanish diaspora, and the controversy generated around the social and political definition of the Spanish post-crisis demographic phenomenon.

The economic crisis has definitely modified the symbolic and structural elements of inter-European migration, introducing important material perspectives. In fact, contemporary Spanish emigration has been mediatised in Spain as one direct consequence of the Great Recession, intimately related to the austerity policies applied before, during, and after the economic crisis (Fernández & Alba, 2020, p. 16). The successive labour reforms of 2010 and 2012 in Spain, and the hard austerity measures accelerated labour precariousness and growing unemployment, played a fundamental role in the departures of Spaniards abroad, not only to Europe. Therefore, demographic profiles are closer to the traditional concepts of economic migrations. The southern countries most affected by the economic crisis began to become, progressively, emigration-sending countries. In the case of Spain, after the arrival of the economic crisis, there was a clear exponential increase in the outflow of Spanish citizens, not only to Europe, but also to other continents. This pointed to a clear demographic movement of economic migration, both in terms of the factors that triggered the flows and the characteristics of the movements. This migration process, fundamentally induced by economic reasons, also generated social reasons (seeking new opportunities for

personal and professional development) and political reasons (inability of governments to manage the needs of the population). Therefore, the mainstream discourse about the contemporary Spanish diaspora and its imagination has been crossed by structural, but also social, political, and economic factors. The arrival of the refugees in 2016, generated great expectation and attracted the attention of academic and media debates (Arvanitis & Yelland, 2019; Belloni, 2019; Chouliaraki, Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Gillespie et al., 2018; Maitland, 2018; Ross, 2018; Ruokolainen & Widén, 2019; Witteborn, 2015). In this context, both the economic crisis and intra-European migration lost presence in migration debates, behind the debates on borders and refugee reception. These events not only reshaped the notions of contemporary migration, but also inaugurated a new era in migration and border studies. In this context, several studies which denounced anti-immigrant sentiments and discourses of some countries also emerged. Therefore, the discourse about the economic crisis, the intra-European migrations, and the growing inequality between European countries were pushed into the background to report about the countries 'affected' by the misnamed 'refugee crisis'. This is the case of Greece, which, being one of the countries most affected by the Eurocrisis and with the highest statistics of emigration, attracted the attention as a country that received refugees. Since the crisis erupted in 2008,³ Spanish emigration maintains a relentless upward trend according to the data provided by the Spanish National Statistics Institute (INE):

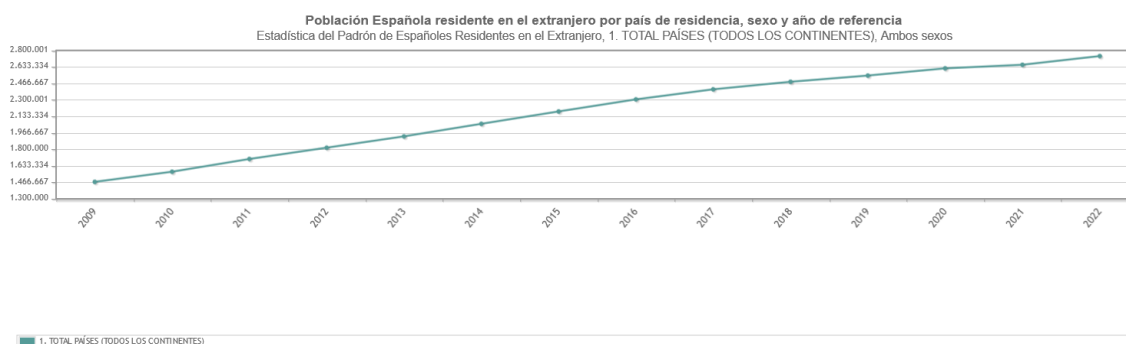


Figure 1.1: Number of Spaniards registered abroad. Statistical figures provided by the INE (Spanish National Statistics Institute).

The graph shows that despite losing the media spotlight over the years, the Spanish emigration has continued to grow. Only the year 2021 showed a significant fall in the

³ According to macroeconomic indicators, the year 2008 was selected as the reference for the beginning of the Spanish Crisis.

number of new registrations, foreseeably due to the development of the Covid19 pandemic and the border restrictions. However, the statistics also show that the number of registrations recovered in just one year:

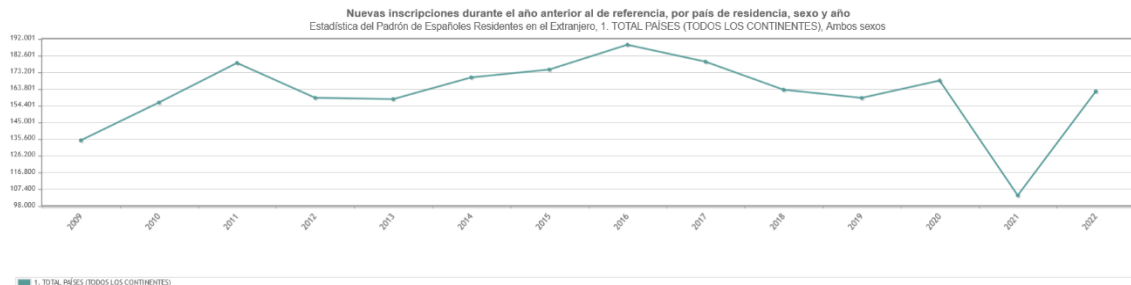


Figure 1.2: Annual new registrations considering the previous reference year. Statistical figures provided by the INE (Spanish National Statistics Institute).

To delimit the field of study of my dissertation, I defined the contemporary Spanish diaspora in Germany as all those Spanish emigrants who left Spain due to the economic crisis or those who were in Germany during these years but did not return due to a lack of job opportunities. I also decided not to focus only on the Spanish community in Berlin, but also to look for other migration experiences of Spaniards in other German cities. Once the study population was selected, I decided to investigate, from a purely qualitative and ethnographic perspective, how the development of information and communication technologies influence (and to some extent define) the development of contemporary migration process. In other words, how migrants' everyday lives, relationships, and processes of interaction in the societies of origin and destination start to coexist both in offline and online contexts. In addition, I was particularly interested in personal relationships in everyday environments. However, as the Spanish diaspora in Germany grew, I also observed how its visibility increased through a progressive public and political engagement both in the country of origin and in the country of destination. For this reason, I decided to include in the study this political 'awakening' of Spaniards as emigrants and how this process was mainly channelled through digital media, platforms, and social networks. In summary, the objective was to examine the role of media technologies in the migration process, how they influence and take part in the socialisation process, in political engagement, in the construction of transnational identities and, ultimately, in the conformation of the Spanish diaspora in Germany. In the following section, I will briefly situate the development of the dissertation topic from a theoretical research approach.

1.1 Theoretical Background

The processes of globalisation and digitalisation call for a reformulation of the traditional approach to national societies by turning them into a network system (Castells, 2006). Digital media are transforming societies leading to the mediatisation of the everyday lives. Krotz (2007) described mediatisation as a "major historical meta-process", ranging from face-to-face communication, followed by mediated communication to interactive communication (p. 259). In more recent studies, Hepp and Couldry (2017) introduced the concept of 'deep mediatisation' to describe how these media-related changes are reshaping society and its infrastructures, but also individual behaviours and communities. Bringing together different traditions of mediatisation research, the authors pointed out that "with the recent wave of digitalisation, mediatisation has entered a new stage" (p. 34-56). This new stage requires to discuss the integration of digital worlds, but not in isolation, but in a contextualised approach. From this perspective, it is not merely a matter of investigating the different types of media and their uses, but rather of developing their inter-relatedness as an intrinsic part of everyday life. Following these reflections, migration processes are also traversed by deep mediatisation, which has represented a notable breakthrough in migration processes and in the construction of transnational communities and identities. The media experience in the context of migration, requires an exploration of new media ecologies and sociocultural practices in the network.

Migration processes and their transnational media articulations have generated a significant number of investigations and methodological/theoretical paradigms. Given the highly complex and hybrid nature of migration contexts and their transforming communications strategies, this dissertation builds on two main streams of scholarship. First, the practice theory approaches that seek to build social theory centred on "practices", rather than structures, systems, individuals, or interactions (Postill, 2010). The philosophical concept of "practice theory" labelled and developed by Schatzki (1996), inaugurated a new "practice turn" that was also applied in media studies. It should be noted that "there is no such thing as a unified practice theory" (Nicolini, 2012, p. 8), but there is a great deal of research that belongs to the so-called "praxeological approaches" (Nicolini, 2012; Reckwitz, 2002). Reckwitz (2002) defined practices as a routinised type of behaviour which consists of several elements interconnected with each other. These elements included different forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, *things* and their use, tacit knowledge, implicit understanding, states of emotion, motivational factors, etc. In the field of media research,

Couldry (2004) proposed the conceptualisation of media as a practice as the core of a new research paradigm within media studies. I decided to apply the concept of "media practices" to analyse the media experience from a broad perspective that integrates other structural factors, such as personal, social, political or economic. Moreover, it proved to be a useful tool to investigate the inter-relatedness of different media practices and technological integration in the everyday life. This integration is not a linear process strictly speaking. Firstly, it is not historically linear, in the sense that the new tools that emerge do not immediately 'replace' the old ones. The ability to adapt to new tools and the transition is not definitive, but interrelated and progressive in the combination of the 'new' and the 'old' tools. Media practices are in continuous movement and intrinsically related to the development of new platforms. Moreover, technological and digital adaptation to everyday contexts is an individual and collective process at the same time, which builds different bifurcations according to the needs and communication strategies adopted by each individual. Online and offline interactions are non-linear processes, that means that they are not parallel, but intertwined in the migrants' everyday contexts. In fact, Kozinets (2010), insisted on the importance of taking into account the indistinct nature of the boundaries of online communities and their frequent online-offline nature. In this regard, I considered 'media practices' as the theoretical concept that most appropriately encompassed the complexity of the interactions under study. The transnational media practices addressed in this project, as everyday practices, involve complex cross-cultural, situational, and affective processes. According to Shove, Pantzar & Watson (2012) practices have an "untapped potential for understanding change" (p. 1). Media practice enables the concretisation of media articulations through the empirical analysis of different translocal interaction spaces, influenced at the same time by political, economic, cultural and affective factors. In this regard, the present study follows the flat ontology (Schatzki, 2016) of the practice-based approaches, which argue that a sample composed of everyday micro-events can constitute a rich theoretical repertoire that analyses different cases and their specifics. The aim is to show that translocal individual/collective practices can have a constitutive role in larger social orders, such as the processes of migration.

On the other hand, this dissertation also aims to deepen the complex transnational processes of identification and belonging. The convergence of online networking sites and the increasingly widespread use of mobile media applications have not only permeated our daily routines and changed social practices, but they have also generated new shared frames

of reference that are reflected in embedded everyday practices. How these practices relate to each other on an individual/collective and personal/public level constitute an important element of the new social orders. Following this reflection, the present dissertation also draws on the concept of "diaspora" applied to communication studies. Diaspora studies provided the theoretical roots to explore transnational and diasporic communication, as a challenging point of departure to develop new theoretical and methodological approaches to transnational communities and identities, or, in other words, to address collective identities. In this respect, the present dissertation aims not only to analyse the media practices of Spanish migrants, but also to discern how these media practices intervene in the creation of the Spanish community in Germany both from the point of view of individual identification and the processes of collective belonging. According to Georgiou (2010): "media actively get involved in the practices and ideologies of what it means to belong, of what identification with a group and a community consists of, what the symbols of the imagined self, the other and the community are and how the boundaries around communities and places are appropriated" (p. 21). It is also worth mentioning Radhika Gajjala's reflections on the digital diaspora and how migrant populations engage with digital media. These subjectivities take place within specific spacio-temporal engagements and socio-cultural contexts. Mitra and Gajjala understand digital interactions as situated practices, determined by "varying contextual disjunctural and conjunctural online-offline intersections" (Mitra & Gajjala, 2008). In this process the migrant reproduces and acquires new socio-cultural literacies. Situated means in this context that "virtual reality" is also influenced by different social, economic, political, material and discursive hierarchies. Technologically mediated diaspora occurs at online/offline interactions. The correlations of power are also manifested in these articulations. Digital Diaspora is also "a way to build networks of consumer citizens, networks of care, networks of activisms, religious networks, upper caste networks and so on, through circuits of transnational capital and labor" (Gajjala, 2019: 5). Under the term Digital Diaspora Gajjala explains how migrants develop online networks through communicative media: "diasporic populations around the world use the internet to connect to each other. Digital media used for digital diaspora formations are interactive and potentially allow people from all over the world with similar interests and similar missions to feel located in one "place" and able to gather in a common space" (p.11-12). Furthermore, Gajjala introduces the conceptualisation of *Ghar* and *Bahir*, or *the home* and *the world* in order to analyse the "Indian women's identity and relationship to modernity and public space" (p.45), reflecting on the limits of the public and the private in

the digital realm and their interrelation with socio-cultural contexts and power structures. In a period of profound social, economic and political changes, the contemporary Spanish emigration provides a great example of identity negotiation: in just a couple of years, in terms of migration, Spain turned from a receptor country to an emitting one, while Germany, as the most powerful economy in Europe, became an attractive destination for people seeking personal and professional development. Moreover, the constant connection of contemporary migrants with their countries of origin through digital media offers a vast and complex field of research to deepen the development of transnational/translocal identities. Historically, migration was constituted as a symbolically contested space, between visibility and invisibility, the we-ness and the otherness. Inclusion and exclusion structures have always played a fundamental role in the reaffirmation of identities, power structures and cultural citizenship (Alonso, 1994), articulated in transnational diasporic networks further strengthened by digital media (Madianou & Miller, 2012). But diasporic communities do not inhabit only theoretical spaces. Rather, the crucial role the media practices is to highlight how they have a tangible link with the offline world, with social, political and economic relations. In other words, how migrants situate themselves in the social spectrum. In the past, migration processes were associated with fracture and uprooting, yet the “connected migrant” (Diminescu, 2008) articulates their life between mobility and connectivity: “yesterday the motto was: immigrate and cut your roots; today it would be: circulate and keep in touch” (p. 568). According to Retis (2014), over time, the strategies of fusion and hybridization will increasingly become evident in local environments. In that sense, the author pointed out that we it is necessary to move forward in the study of media and migration with complex, interdisciplinary and critical views, both in the field of migration and media spaces. In that sense, the study of practices from an ethnographic perspective can broaden the conceptual focus of the relationship between media practices and migration. It offers information on how these concepts relate to each other and, above all, how they relate to other external or personal factors. With this approach, the present dissertation delves into the media practices of the Spanish community in Germany, examining its personal, public and political interactions within digital environments. Through the analysis of media practices and processes of belonging of Spanish migrants, I aim to develop the concept of *Digital Diaspora* from a practice-based approach as a contested and negotiated space in terms of belonging, but, at the same time, with a material and embodied basis. I seek to address this subject from a distinctly ethnographic perspective, where media themselves are no longer the object of study, but

rather how they are established in, and how they shape the everyday life. According to the complexity of the object of study the methodological design, which will be in depth developed in chapter 6, includes primarily the combination of two research methodologies: a) in-depth qualitative interviews and b) qualitative content analysis. The aim is to address both ruptures and continuities, social interactions and forms of expression (social, cultural and symbolic) articulated through media practices.

1.2 Contents Overview

This section offers a brief overview of the contents addressed in the ten different chapters that compose this dissertation. Present chapter 1 is intended to introduce the object of study with a brief theoretical contextualisation that situates the academic approach of the dissertation. In chapter 2, I briefly introduce some specific features of contemporary post-crisis Spanish emigration, in order to situate this wave of emigration both from a sociocultural and sociopolitical perspective. For this purpose, the chapter also presents a brief historiographic contextualisation of other Spanish waves of migration and the well-known Spanish associative movement abroad. The development of other migratory experiences, especially in terms of identity and organisation, is fundamental to understanding the construction of the contemporary Spanish diaspora. This is followed by a description of the main features of the demographic phenomenon, as well as some inputs on how the symbolic construction of contemporary Spanish emigration was conceived as a field of political dispute. Finally, I introduce the *Marea Granate* (Maroon Tide) movement as the reference collective for the Spanish emigration, which was mentioned and discussed in all the interviews. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the main theoretical perspectives in the study of media and migration. The first part of the chapter addresses the historical media linkages to migration. In other words, the study of mediatisation in migration contexts. The second section maps the main encounters in contemporary studies on media and migration, research practices and paradigms. This chapter is fundamental to exploring in depth how the phenomenon of migration has been approached through different research currents. In the following chapters, I develop the theoretical background of this dissertation. In chapter 4, I address the reconceptualisation of *diaspora* through cultural studies, and diasporic media communication. Then, I introduce different theoretical reflections around the concept of “digital diaspora” as the mediated condition of diaspora.

This chapter also introduces the concept of mnemonic practices and how it is related to cultural identity in diasporic contexts. Finally, I introduce the concept of citizenship and diasporic political participation, both fundamental to sustaining my theoretical contribution. In chapter 5, I develop the sociological foundations of the practice theory approaches, describing social practices and their components, and also the material and embodied perspective of social practices. Then I introduce the conceptualisation and problematisation of the concept of social practices in media studies and different theoretical approaches to media practices. Finally, I describe the application of the concept of “media practices” in this dissertation. Once the theoretical background has been developed, in chapter 6, I present the methodological design and fieldwork development. First, I develop how I operationalised the data by introducing my research questions. On the other hand, I explain the application of qualitative interviews and digital ethnography, as well as the selection of Grounded Theory as the theoretical and methodological background to explain the relation between my empirical data analysis and the production of generalizations. Chapter 7 discusses the analysis of the data collected in the qualitative interviews through the procedures of the Grounded Theory. This chapter aims to provide a description of the media-related practices that play a fundamental role in the everyday life of the Spanish emigrants interviewed at different aspects of their relations with the country of origin and destination, in the personal and public spheres, as well as at their political engagement. Further deepening on the data analysis and drawing on the media practices described in the previous chapter, chapter 8 presents the findings from qualitative content analysis of Facebook profiles. I will present the data and how the processes of identification are materialised in the day-to-day life of Spanish migrants through their media practices on Facebook. The aim of the interviews was to explore how migration understood, experienced, and articulated the transnational community through their media practices. However, I considered that it was necessary to analyse some of their communicative environments in order to obtain more information, beyond that provided in their own discourse in the interviews. Facebook was placed in the interviews as a vehicular platform for their experience as migrants. For this reason, after asking the users' permission, I decided to analyse some of the profiles and their different interaction strategies over an extended period of time. The aim was to inquire into the symbolic dimension of the process and the creation and development of diasporic identities. An important reason for undertaking virtual ethnography was that people were not always aware of their behaviours or were not able to externalise and verbalise them. However, through qualitative content

analysis I was able to analyse the discursive media practices of some of the interviewees directly without intervening in the actions. The combination of both methods allowed me to work with the data with a heuristic approach. Bringing together the results of both analytical phases, in chapter 9, I explain how I answered each of the research questions raised in the methodological chapter with my theoretical contribution and its applications in media practice approaches in contexts of migration. In the last section, I describe my practice-based approach to digital diaspora. Finally, chapter 10 draws the conclusions of the study, final remarks and open questions.

Chapter 2. The Case Study: The Contemporary Spanish Migration

The development of information and communication technologies has introduced important changes in social relations in general, but also in migration processes in particular, representing a turning point within migration strategies. This dissertation investigates the contemporary Spanish diaspora in Germany from the perspective of their media practices. Through a case study, the aim is to analyse the significance they acquire in terms of socialisation and identification processes, and what new cultural constructions and capitals they generate. Nevertheless, before starting to develop the theoretical development of this project, it is necessary to know and briefly contextualise the population under study. To this end, I will briefly introduce some specificities of contemporary post-crisis Spanish emigration in order to situate this wave of emigration both from a sociocultural and a political-economic point of view.

2.1 The Spanish Diaspora: Historiographic Contextualisation

Spain has had a long history of emigration. In fact, Spain has traditionally been considered a country of emigrants. But it has also been a main receptor country for immigrants in the last decades. According to Castles, de Haas & Miller (2014) “the old dichotomy between migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries is being eroded – if this dichotomy was ever valid at all. Most countries experience both emigration and immigration (although one or the other often predominates)” (p. 13). Emigration not only involves great demographic and geographic changes, but also has great economic, political and cultural significance, both for the countries of origin and destination. The Spanish diaspora is not, therefore, a new concept, but the outcome and evolution of different waves of Spanish population movements to different parts of the world in different periods. They built up physically and symbolically heterogeneous communities of Spaniards abroad. In general terms, there are three periods that have been of great importance in the development of the Spanish diaspora in different parts of the world: a) the Republican exile and the post-war period from 1939 onwards b) the wave of emigration of the 1960s-70s and c) contemporary migration since 2008, largely influenced by the global economic crisis. Beyond the

sociopolitical and socio-demographic importance of the different periods, a brief review of previous migration projects offers valuable information about the evolution of the Spanish Diaspora over time through different historical and political milestones. In order to understand the present diasporic identity, it is both interesting and necessary to examine the sociopolitical and belonging grounds inherited from other waves of emigration. The construction of the transnational community has inevitably been influenced by different historical processes and migration experiences. This impact is not only discernible in the cultural heritage of the different migratory waves. Furthermore, some of the Spaniards interviewed continued to coincide with Spaniards from different waves of migration in some diasporic spaces.

2.1.1 Republican Exile and the Post-Civil War Period

Exile, from the Latin *exilium*, means “to leave”, the forced separation from the land of origin for fundamentally political-ideological reasons (Ascunce, 2013, p. 164). Among the main reasons for the first departures after 1939 were the armed movements and the Spanish Civil War. Spanish exiles tried to escape from the persecution of the regime because of their political opinions or activities. After the fall of Barcelona and the end of the Spanish Civil War, more than half a million Spaniards, mostly Republican fighters and sympathisers, were forced to go into exile outside Spain's borders. First to France and Morocco, and later extending to other European and South American countries. The study of the Spanish Republican exile has been approached from various disciplines, but it led also to a fragmented understanding of its memory (Cabañas et al., 2020). This fragmentation arises due to two main factors. Firstly, the Spanish Republican exile encompassed diverse migratory experiences that occurred in different parts of the world. Secondly, the focus of study was primarily focused on the intellectual exile of renowned figures within Spanish culture and their testimonies. Their intellectual work motivated the greatest number of studies and has generated more historiographical developments. The exile of 1939 was comprised by a significant number of artists, scientists and intellectuals whose remarkable outputs also became part of the history of the Spanish diaspora. An extensive cultural contribution that Franco's dictatorship manipulated and censored for 40 years (Balibrea, 2017). As might be expected, these communities of exiled Spaniards abroad never received any kind of institutional support from Spain, hence, local support networks were crucial in

those years. After the Spanish Transition and the establishment of democracy, some exiles returned to Spain, while others decided to remain in their countries of destination, where they had often already developed strong ties and communities with other exiled Spaniards. It was not until the end of the 1970s, in the context of the Spanish transition, when the memory and trajectory of the war's victims and exiles began to be recognised in Spain (Balibrea, 2017b, p. 508-513). However, as Font & Serrano (2019) pointed out, this recognition was fundamentally limited to the cultural perspective, but not in the political arena, since, in the framework of the new parliamentary monarchy, there was no place for references to the contributions of the Second Republic. In this way, the Republican exile was relegated to oblivion for a long time, in an attempt to look to the future and leave behind the uncomfortable truth of the dictatorship. Furthermore, the authors also pointed out that the failed military coup of 1981 was one of the causes behind this desperate attempt to move forward, fearing the possibility of a return to another armed civil conflict. The consequence of this political and historical situation was that for many years, the Republican exile had limited visibility and public presence, since it was not institutionally considered “as a memorable event” (p. 84). In absence of institutional support, the migrant associative movement played a fundamental role both in the restoration and revindication of the historical memory of Spanish exile, as well as in the articulation and social support of exiles through solidarity networks and associations in different countries.

2.1.2 Spanish Emigration in the 60s-70s

During the years of dictatorship, the Franco regime and its political and economic stagnation only worsened the situation of the population. The agricultural and farming sector began a general rural exodus across Spain that spread to European borders, including Germany, as one of the main recipients of Spanish workers. Moreover, from the 1950s onwards, there followed an attempt by the dictatorship to integrate into the international circuit of economic and political relations. It included fostering migratory movements and bilateral agreements between governments that facilitated mobility. In this regard, Franco regime was interested in disposing labour surpluses and specially in attracting foreign funds from the receptor countries (Babiano, 2002). It should be noted that these bilateral measures never favoured the definitive settlement of the emigrants, but rather the transitory nature of the phenomenon. As a result, between the 1960s and 1970s, thousands of Spaniards left the country again, but this time in search of work as factory and manual

labourers. Under the system known as *Gastarbeiter* or guest worker, the destination countries absorbed the labour surplus from other countries (especially from Spain, Portugal and Greece, later joining Turkey and Yugoslavia) to alleviate the notorious lack of national workers and to support their economic expansion (Vilar, 2000). Although this demographic movement was already considered a migration wave, Franco had a special interest in preserving the emigrants' relationship with their country of origin, and consider "the return as a horizon, almost as a myth" (Vilar, 2000, p. 566). Franco's regime was reticent about a true integration of its emigrants, fearing that contact with European democracies would generate groups of Spaniards with an anti-Franco spirit. To this end, they fostered and created Spanish social centres that preserved (or segregated) the Spanish culture in the receiving countries, in addition to those already established during the republican exile. This migratory project was characterised by a strong tendency towards gregariousness, partly due to the strong 'provisional' nature of the movements, and also to the low education and language skills of the emigrants. During the following years, Spanish emigrant flows remained stable, with a modest increase as a result of family reunification. Until the 1970s, Spain was basically considered a country of emigration (Romero-Valiente, 2003). However, in 1973, the oil crisis and the restrictive measures for the recruitment of foreign workers that were introduced in some European countries, led to a slowdown in the Spanish migratory process (Alaminos et al., 2010). From that moment on, the return processes to Spain were activated, which continued until the mid-1980s.

According to Alaminos et al. (2010) during the first half of the 1980s, and especially in 1986 with Spain's accession to the EEC, the procedures for mobility began to facilitate Spanish mobility. It resulted in a reactivation of Spaniards moving to other European countries. Nevertheless, during this period, the profile of the emigrant was changing. The average profile no longer left the country forcefully or for reasons of economic necessity, but in search of social and professional recognition in countries with more resources for professional and/or academic development. These were non-massive demographic movements, generally with a highly qualified profile (Alaminos et al., 2010, p.13). At the same time, noticeable shifts in the direction of migration flows began to emerge, as Spain was also gradually becoming a receiving country for migrants from other countries (Bermudez & Brey, 2017). This would radically change the cognitive frameworks around economic solvency and migration processes in Spain. In fact, the large-scale arrival of immigrants to Spain at the end of the 20th century relegated this qualified Spanish

emigration to the background of the media and public interest. During the 1990s, Spain witnessed a remarkable economic growth and job expansion which resulted in a sustained growth in the employment rate throughout the early years of the new millennium. The debate on Spanish emigration was reactivated at the end of the first decade of the new century, motivated by the global economic crisis.

2.1.3 Associationism and Cultural Identity Articulation in Spanish Migration

The two mentioned Spanish diasporas had different histories of emigration, different ways of constituting themselves as transnational communities and different forms of interaction with the country of origin. Years ago, family networks, friends, and neighbours operated as a point of attraction, production, and reproduction of such migratory flows (Alaminos et. al, 2010). Before the irruption of the Internet into the everyday life of migrants, previous waves of Spanish emigrants developed their networks through Spanish cultural centres and associations in the host countries. Although Spanish associationism in Europe was consolidated especially between the 1950s and 1980s, it was overlooked by historiography until the beginning of the new millennium (Asperilla, 2011). According to Jose Babiano (2002), one of the key authors in the research of associationism and its social meaning, *migrant associationism* was created as an adaptive response, both from the domestic point of view, as well as from the collective action. In response to the lack of institutional support, they met with compatriots and generated solidarity networks, to speak their language or to recreate the cultural traditions of their territories of origin (Lillo, 2011). The associations or centres for emigrants, usually composed of family ties, friendships, and compatriots, fulfilled a very important social function in the countries of destination. There, the Spanish identity was reinforced to develop a place of cultural belonging in the countries of destination. The maintenance of cultural identity was nurtured through different activities where Spanish culture, and more specifically, popular culture, was recreated. Nevertheless, these centres and associations not only reinforced cultural identity, but also carried out a social assistance function, with the aim of informing and helping their compatriots. They also had a fundamental role in teaching the Spanish language and culture to the children of exiles and emigrants. Babiano (2002) lists three types of organisations and groups: a) catholic centres and clubs; b) associations and federations that were not hostile to the regime and received its support, generally financial; and c) associations and collectives

linked to the resistance and the communist party of Spain (PCE), which brought together leftist activism within the associative sphere of emigration. This last group, organised in exile, undertook new forms of collective action and organisation, both inside and outside Spain. Thus, looking at the picture of the associative movement, it can be appreciated that there was a certain ideological diversity in Spanish migrant associations. However, “associative life also gave rise to an identity as workers, so that this experience translated into an increasingly vindictive character of the associations, regardless of whether they were initially influenced by the left, the Church, or the Francoist administration” (Babiano, 2002, pp. 574-575). Spanish migrant associationism was very successful in creating its own keys and migration strategies, but also its own voice and discourse or, in other words, its own way of recreating the Spanish identity in emigration and exile.

2.2 Contemporary Spanish Emigration: European Mobility or Labour Migration?

In the previous sections I have discussed some of the migration strategies of Spaniards over the years. The different migration experiences, definitely influenced by the social, political and cultural context, developed their own strategies to build communities of Spaniards abroad. The contemporary Spanish migration process has been strongly linked to the consequences of the global economic crisis of 2008 and with it, to political controversies. This context has deeply influenced the demographic movement from the early stages.

The concept of “emigration” derives etymologically from the Latin verb *e-migrare*. This refers to a more or less voluntary “change of location or residence” (Ascunce, 2013, p. 164). However, it is precisely in this *more or less voluntary* in-between space and in the temporal character of the movements where the diffuse limits of the concept emerge, especially when it is applied to certain contexts such as intra-European migration. In fact, the very definition of this last wave of the contemporary Spanish diaspora has been a contested space both academically and from a sociopolitical point of view. The proliferation of Internet communication channels and the reduction of intra-European flight costs have drastically reduced the romanticisation of absence. In that sense, intra-European emigrants can relatively frequent and quickly return home, and they are able to communicate with family and friends on a daily basis. As a result, these mobility processes are symbolically related more to temporary movements than to permanent uprooting situations. However, there is

still an ongoing debate about how to define 'international mobility', in reference to movements that take place within the European Union (Fernandez & Alba, 2020, p. 18). The free movement of persons between EU member states is one of the fundamental pillars of the concept of European citizenship. Nevertheless, the fact that people can move and reside freely in member countries does not necessarily imply a circular or reciprocal phenomenon. Demographic movements between European Union countries have generally generated discrepancies within academia in terms of whether they constitute migratory movements or intra-European mobility. Most research on intra-European mobilities has focused mostly on discussions about *brain drain* as unidirectional flows (Salt, 1997) or *brain circulation* as ongoing processes (Ackers, 2005; Meyer, 2003; Regets, 2003). In that sense, Louise Ackers (2005) established interesting points of critical reflection and debate on skilled migration by questioning the concept of voluntariness of the intra-European movements. Among them, she proposed the debate on reciprocity, balance, and differential opportunity. She also introduced questions the internationalisation of the process and considers that the exchange volume between countries is not reciprocal. Instead, it tends to cluster in centres of excellence, which are selected on the basis of having the best facilities and the best reputation. According to the author, the distinction of forced or voluntary migration depends on the context and also on the individual perception of the phenomenon. But when employment opportunities simply are not available, the author argues that it is necessary, at least, to question the voluntary nature of such movements. In the same vein, David Cairns (2010) also made a notable contribution to this field with his work *Youth on the Move. European Youth and Geographical Mobility*, a compilation of articles that delve into the mobility patterns of young people in Europe. The author explores different aspects of contemporary intra-European mobility. Some of those include: the concepts of identity and belonging, decision-making processes, labour integration, mobility in science, and the consequences of migration. However, it is noticeable that the terms of mobility and migration are still used interchangeably depending on the authors of the compilation. Although the definition is often related to temporary factors, there is no unanimity, considering that immigration does not have to be, by definition, permanent. In more recent studies, van Ostaijen & Scholten (2018) pointed out that intra-European free movement is characterised by “significant diversity and heterogeneity in socioeconomic status and timespan” (p. 3). This means that there is a marked diversity in the migrants' profile. On the one hand, it refers to socioeconomic diversification, i.e., people with different socioeconomic status and skill levels (low, medium, and high). On the other hand, they also

refer to different temporalities in their stay, from flexible temporary categories to permanent settlement. The variation of these temporalities tends to situate the debate on terms of mobility versus migration.

To summarise, the concept of ‘international mobility’ or ‘intra-European mobility’ was generally applied to very different types of displacements within the European Union. This included reasons of work, studies, different types of experiences, socioeconomic contexts in the country of origin... Therefore, it does not seem to be the most accurate term to explain the significant departure of Spaniards since 2008, a demographic phenomenon primarily driven by economic reasons.

2.3 The Political Controversy on Contemporary Spanish Emigration

The debate on the nature of Spanish emigration is not only anecdotal or descriptive but plays a fundamental role in the very conception of the diaspora and how it is situated socially and politically with respect to the country of origin. From the start, the symbolic construction of contemporary Spanish emigration was conceived as a field of political dispute. In fact, the interpretation of statistics, the description of phenomena, and the terms chosen also offer us information on the performative potential of discourses, especially in contested political contexts (Ostaijen, 2016). When the data on Spanish citizenship abroad began to increase dramatically, the Spanish government did not use the term “emigration”, in an attempt to avoid signs of weakness or social alarm. Instead, they used terms such as “European mobility”. This resulted in an ideological polarisation of the phenomenon. In that sense, while certain political parties and media denounced the mostly economic causes of the new migratory flows, others placed the phenomenon within other contextual frameworks. These included the return of nationalised immigrants to their countries of origin and/or the willingness of young people to seek for new experiences abroad, in attempts to erase the new wave of Spanish migration. The left-wing parties also talk about ‘economic exile’ and ‘economic migrants deported from Spain’: “The right-wing government hardly refers to the phenomenon and when it does, it describes outflows mainly as the result of return migration or of globalisation and mobility within Europe (...) This discourse has been contested by the Socialist party (PSOE), who blame the PP for the lack of opportunities in the country, and alert about brain drain and loss of human capital”

(Bermudez & Brey, 2017, p. 93). This was evidenced by the controversial statements made by Marina del Corral, at the time Secretary of State for Immigration and Emigration: "*Why not say it? There is an adventurous impetus, typical of youth, which also contributes in a powerful way to increase youth mobility*"⁴. This declaration triggered anger and a subsequent response, not only from some sectors of the population, but especially from Spanish migrants. On the other hand, there was a certain tendency to soften the discourse on the profiles of contemporary post-crisis Spanish emigration: "most of the public representations and discourses, including that of emigrants themselves, tend to offer an image of emigration as conformed only by young people and professionals. The emigration of the less skilled, the poor, the elderly, and families remains almost invisible" (p. 95). Therefore, with these types of discourses, the precariousness of Spanish emigrants or even the processes of re-emigration were rendered invisible (Domingo & Sabater 2013; Torres Pérez 2014). In fact, the labour trajectory of Spanish emigrants in destination countries also reported situations of extreme precariousness, with temporary and part-time contracts (Fernández & Alba, 2020).

During the highest peaks of incidence, Spanish migration had an enormous impact on the media, both in Spain and in the destination countries. Media coverage offered a wide and varied public debate on the nature of the new Spanish demographic phenomenon. Mainstream media coverage mainly highlighted the voice of the government or privileged sectors linked to power as recurrent sources of information (Cogo & Olivera, 2017, p. 176). According to Bermudez & Brey (2017) the coverage of contemporary emigration was quite prolific, especially between the years 2011 and 2013, which includes numerous articles on very diverse topics: how the crisis affected highly educated young people, how it encouraged return migration, main destination countries, people's reasons for leaving, difficulties encountered, and family consequences. Depending on the political orientation of the media, the articles raised the issue of the *brain drain* due to the socioeconomic context, as well as the stories of successful entrepreneurs abroad. However, it was the digital media, the Internet, and social networks which contributed to present alternative points of view on the subject (p. 94), a space that has also been able to be shared and participated in by Spanish emigration from abroad. This project aims, among other objectives, to explore how these spaces were built up, the impact of media communication technologies on migration and belonging processes.

⁴ https://www.lasexta.com/programas/mas-vale-tarde/noticias/daniel-montero-este-pais-mide-gente-que-cuesta-que-vale_201211305727e30a4beb28d4460325ec.html

The effect of this political conjuncture was that during the first years of emigration there was no institutional response, and it did not change in the following years. Therefore, political struggles definitely shaped not only the symbolic construction of the contemporary Spanish diaspora, but also its political articulation. In this context emerged the social movement Marea Granate, as a fundamental actor in giving voice to the Contemporary Spanish Diaspora. From that moment on, Spanish emigrants began to create spaces of resistance and social differentiation as a form of symbolic appropriation of the new migratory process. According to Cogo & Olivera (2017) the digital narratives generated by Marea Granate were mainly articulated around two axes: a) the intervention in the public and communicational space to confront, re-signify, and deconstruct the discourses made by the government on the migration of Spaniards; b) the attempt of the collective to denounce the processes of mobility, labour precariousness, and weakness of their citizenship status abroad (p. 178). This movement will play a fundamental role in media practices and in the development of a sense of belonging in the Spanish community in Germany, as it will be developed in the following chapters.

2.4 The Marea Granate Movement: "We are not leaving; they are kicking us out"

The Arab Spring, the events related to 15M in Madrid, and the Occupy Movement constituted a turning point not only in the history and configuration of societies, but also in the social and political identification of diasporic communities. The events of the Arab Spring in 2011 generated a growing interest in networked digital connectivity and deterritorialised political action (De Rooij, 2011), which underlined the role of media as catalysts of social movements (Cogo et al., 2012). After the Arab Spring, diasporas assumed a primary role in the democratisation process in their countries of origin and showed that immigrant communities could also be politically active from abroad, thus contributing to the change in the political situation in their countries of origin (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2013). The contemporary Spanish diaspora has also had rich associative networks, and the opportunity to be closely linked to different diasporic, civic and political spaces. Below, I offer a brief description of the social and political movements linked to the Spanish Diaspora in Germany.

The year 2011 was considered the year of network revolutions (The Arab Spring, Brazil, 15M in Spain...) which revived the debate on social movements and explored the role of new technologies in the construction of spaces and collective movements and, therefore, in their contribution to social change. 15M in Spain, also known as the *Indignados Movement*, had a definitive influence on the birth and development of the Marea Granate collective. The Indignados Movement was born in May 2011 when various collectives called for a peaceful demonstration against bipartisanship, in order to promote a more participatory democracy which involved its citizens (Mir & Prat, 2013). The demonstration, instead of dissolving, led to a spontaneous encampment in various cities in Spain which lasted weeks, and marked a turning point in the political articulation of citizenship in Spain. One of the fundamental aspects of the 15M mobilisations and events is that they were conceived and organised online through different platforms. In that sense, media technologies played “a key role in framing the 15 May action and developing a sense of common identity, solidarity and purpose amongst the participating groups” (Hughes, 2011, p. 408). From a communicative point of view, 15M transformed existing structures of social communication through critical activism, with a clear political-pedagogical orientation, and deeply rooted in the visibility of realities overlooked by mainstream media, which generated new and alternative interpretive frames (Barbas & Postill, 2017). Thanks to 15M, debates on factual powers, citizenship, exclusion, authority, etc. were no longer culturally or academically peripheral, but explicitly situated in the street, democratised and connected through the networks. This allowed the Spanish diaspora to participate in a deterritorialised way in the demonstrations, the political articulation, and the spirit of the 15M Movement.

Marea Granate was formally launched in June 2013⁵, preceded by some spontaneous demonstrations organised in other countries replicating the scenario of generalised social protest that Spain experienced in those years. Since 2011, various 15M assemblies were already present in different European cities, such as Berlin, London, and Brussels. Through networking and digital technologies, these collectives followed each step of the 15M mobilisations from abroad. In April 2013, *Juventud sin Futuro* (Youth without Future), one of the pioneering collectives of 15M in Spain, launched the 'We are not leaving, they are kicking us out' campaign in response to the new wave of Spanish economic emigration. Different 15M assemblies abroad joined this campaign. In this context, the *Marea Granate*

⁵ Information gathered at the presentation during the first international Marea Granate meeting, held in Berlin in May 2017.

movement emerged, which defined itself as a “transnational and non-partisan collective, formed by Spanish emigrants and their sympathisers, whose objective is to fight against the causes and those who have triggered the economic and social crisis that forces us to emigrate”.⁶ Since its first campaign, the Marea Granate collective rejects the voluntary nature of emigration (*No nos vamos, nos echan*). In the same year, May 2013, on the occasion of the anniversary of the 15M movement in Spain, the 15M London assembly camped in front of the Spanish embassy. In parallel, they launched a call-to-action email to all the mobilised assemblies abroad to coordinate in a single movement which they baptised as *Marea Granate* (Garnet Tide). It followed the various citizens movements or ‘tides’ in Spain like the Green and White Tides, citizen mobilizations in defense of the public education and healthcare in Spain (Iglesias-Onofrio et al., 2018). The choice of garnet color was inspired by the color of the passport. At the same time, they developed graphic materials and the well-known Marea Granate logo with a suitcase, which strengthened the visual dimension of the movement.



From this moment on, they organised different media campaigns, such as 'People United Against the Troika', a call for mobilisation against EU austerity policies; in October 12, the Spanish National Day, they built an alternative discourse about the Spanish brand: “*Desde todas partes, 12 de octubre, emigrantes por el mundo, uníos*” (From everywhere, October 12, emigrants around the world, join us!), which contributed to the expansion of the movement and the collective awareness among the Spanish migrant public. The Christmas Campaigns were also well known and repeated every year to give visibility to Spanish emigration, its problems, and demands. However, the influence of 15M in the social and political articulation of Marea Granate beyond the visibility strategies and development of communication campaigns from abroad generated other linked mobilisation spaces. Among them, they developed working groups that evolved into independent collectives, such as the Red Internacional de Oficinas Precarias (International Network of Precarious

⁶ Definition of the Marea Granate collective on the website: <http://mareagranate.org/>

Offices) and the *Grupo de Acción Sindical* – GAS (Trade Union Action Group). These groups also became spaces for political articulation and activism from abroad.

The first Precarity Office was born in Berlin, inspired by the Precarity Office in Madrid, with the aim of addressing the vulnerable situations of Spanish migrants and their labour rights in the host countries. Precarity offices were self-organised groups that worked in an assembly-based, horizontal, and independent format. Their objective, according to the website⁷, ‘is to provide tools to the migrant population through the knowledge of their rights and duties in the host countries. Also to generate empowerment in order to solve the problems arising in their migration experiences so that they (collectively) can support other migrants in a multiplicative way’. The empowerment tools offered by the Precarity Office are, among others, the development of the website, weekly face-to-face consultations, and online consultations. Another paradigmatic example is the Trade Union Action Group⁸, born out of the 15M assembly in Berlin with the aim of supporting workers to organise collectively in their workplaces. They helped to denounce abuses and labour conflicts (layoffs, non-payment of wages, contractless labour/payment under the table, non-compliance with contract conditions, irregular working hours, etc.) in order to promote the improvement of working conditions and the general increase of the labour and social rights of the migrant employees. To this end, the collective provided advice, created links between collectives and unions, and organised protests and denunciation campaigns.

Moreover, Spanish emigrants also had the opportunity to hold positions in the Spanish Residents Councils (CREs). These councils were consultative bodies of the consular offices of the embassies, and they were meant to provide a platform to discuss issues of interest to the Spanish community of residents⁹. In them, they developed issues of civil and labour rights, educational, social and cultural action in favour of the Spaniards who made up that community and their political participation in Spain. Finally, the political parties also developed their space for participation with their federations abroad.

However, although the activities and activism of these groups is primarily known through the media coverage that they received in recent years, few studies have addressed these activities from the perspective of these media practices, and specially how these practices

⁷ <https://oficinaprecariaberlin.org/politicas-de-la-oficina-precaria-berlin/quienes-somos/>

⁸ <https://15mberlin.com/2014/05/15/grupo-de-accion-sindical-gas/>

⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union, and Cooperation. (n.d.). Consulates. <https://www.exteriores.gob.es/Consulados>

interact with the everyday life of Spanish migrants. Political participation in migratory contexts continues to attract academic attention and offers challenging research possibilities. As already mentioned in the first section of the chapter, in other emigration waves, Spaniards built their social and political articulation spaces that have a key influence on the generation of cultural identities. For this reason, I included the media practices associated with the civic and political participation of contemporary Spanish migrants in the analysis of this dissertation.

2.5 Spanish Identity in Migration Contexts. Notes on the Spanish Identity

Finally, in order to approach the construction of the Spanish diaspora and belonging processes, it is necessary to briefly mention the complex construction of Spanish identity. This will provide useful information on how Spanish migrants symbolically reproduce their cultural elements through their media practices. National identity is not an innate or acquired entity, but a social, cultural, and political construction. When speaking about the recreation of Spanish identity, we enter a complex symbolic and political framework. It is therefore worthwhile at this point to comment on some relevant aspects in regard to nationalism and identity in Spain. According to Pérez (2005) identity is based on memory, on the faculty of reproducing what has happened. However, this reproduction (or omission) is always articulated by the selection of events and/or symbolic elements. Therefore, memory, being a re-construction of previous facts, is not always reliable, but rather a set of reconstructions based on one's own experiences. National memory and identity in Spain have been in conflict since its birth as a nation-state through symbolic representation in 1812, with contradictions generated by *the Spains of the two hemispheres* (p. 697). Subsequently, it also experienced the confrontation of the different State organisation models during the transition to democracy after Franco's dictatorship. The association between the nation and the Franco regime was an inevitable reality that has generated 'a sort of spiral of national silence for many years' (Muñoz, 2012, p. 2). These factors, in addition to territorial and cultural diversity and alternative nationalisms in different regions of Spain (especially Basque and Catalan), have had a clear influence in the identification, or rather, in the non-identification of citizens with certain national symbols or expressions of Spanish nationalism in general. Furthermore, it should be noted that Franco's repression

was especially hard against alternative nationalisms. During the transition period, there were attempts to adapt, with great discrepancies, the management of national symbols (flag, national anthem, etc.) to the new context of democracy. However, already in a democracy, centralism and national symbols continue to be related and used primarily by the political right wing, while the left-wing has based its principles on the defence of Spain's national and cultural diversity, solidarity, and inter-territorial autonomy. It was not until 2010, when Spain won the World Cup for the first time in South Africa, that a certain awakening of Spanish symbolism and patriotism through popular celebrations of the victory emerged (p. 1). Nevertheless, national symbology and patriotism remain uncomfortable cognitive frameworks for many Spaniards.

Therefore, Spanish identity has an intrinsic political component. However, the socialisation process plays a fundamental role in its development, which has cognitive as well as affective components. In order to reconstruct and analyse both the question of national identity and *Spanishness*, and the new spaces of exchange and socialisation in migratory contexts, it is necessary to address not only symbolic representations, but also acts and practices as generators of meaning. How this identity was constructed and how the participation of emigrants in previous migratory experiences was articulated has been already discussed. In fact, the cultural production of both exiles and migrants contributed to their particular way of creating new signs of identity, of constructing their own way of 'being and feeling Spanish' from abroad. But what is the performative definition of being Spanish in migration contexts? How is it practiced or articulated through the new information and communication technologies? These are some of the questions that this dissertation aims to answer.

In the current context, understanding national identity as solely linked to the State model can be very limiting because of the crisis of the Nation-State and, secondly, due to the process of globalisation. On the other hand, migratory movements generate new networks and digital exchanges that transform the way in which national identity is constructed and experienced and absorb cultural and social elements from the host societies. This does not mean that the original link with the identity of the country of origin is lost, but it does transform it and give rise to new spaces of belonging, both social and emotional. In that sense, contemporary migratory processes constitute a challenge to the conceptualisation of collective identity.

The sociohistorical and sociopolitical context is important because communicative practices are not produced in isolation, but are situated through certain social, cultural, economic, and political dispositions that also play a fundamental role in the generation of certain symbolic frameworks. This review of the different migratory experiences illustrates that the Spanish Diaspora has traditionally been addressed more as a cultural and historical issue at the institutional level, rather than a social, political, and economic element. Hence the importance of the associative networks in previous migrations in the absence of strong institutional support. In fact, according to Agulló (2012) the late adoption in 2006 of the Statute for Spaniards Abroad¹⁰ is a tacit acknowledgment that, in practice, those Spaniards living abroad have experienced difficulty in exercising many basic rights (for example, determining their eligibility to vote, lodging administrative enquiries, obtaining information on current affairs in Spain, accessing education, health-care, medical coverage, and social benefits, gaining recognition of qualifications attained, and so forth) (p. 83). It was not until the government transition in 2018 that greater visibility for migrations was brought forward, which raised its political category to a State Secretariat, which also included the development of a State Return Plan (Fernandez & Alba, 2020, p. 24).

2.6 The Spanish Emigration and the Associative Movement Abroad

In chapter 2 I provided a brief contextualization of the Spanish diaspora. In the first part of the chapter, I started with a historical review of the main waves of Spanish emigration, from the Republican exile and the post-civil war period abroad, to the emigration of the 1960s-70s commonly known as the *gastarbeiter*. These movements not only laid the foundations of the well-known Spanish associative movement abroad, but also had a great influence on the creation of Spanish identity and communities abroad. The associative movement became the place of reference for Spanish emigrants for information, creating personal ties, asking for help and commemorating Spanish culture and language. Different types of associations of a multifunctional nature fulfilled objectives of assistance and socio-cultural recreation. These associations facilitated the development of cultural belonging in the countries of destination, while at the same time they reinforced Spanish culture. Spanish migrant associations, deeply rooted in different territories, were managed by

¹⁰ <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2006-21991>

different generations of Spaniards abroad. It is therefore essential to understand how this tradition of associationism has influenced the development of contemporary Spanish emigration and how it has evolved with access to digital technologies. I also provide some important insights for understanding Spanish identity in migration contexts. The second part of the chapter zooms in on contemporary Spanish emigration and how it is contextualised socially and politically in the framework of the post-financial crisis years, becoming a field of political contestation. Indeed, *Marea Granate* emerged to denounce the consequences of the economic and social crisis that forced Spaniards to emigrate, denying that it constituted a voluntary mobility. This group became the voice of Spanish emigrants abroad, with great public and media visibility. It is continually mentioned both in the interviews and in the Facebook profiles analysed. The aim of this chapter is to provide a social, political and economic framework that allows the understanding of the contemporary Spanish emigration. After discussing the most relevant aspects of the case study, in the following chapters, I will develop the theoretical framework that grounds this dissertation. First, I will develop in depth the practice theory, understanding how individual and collective actions materialise in the digital environment. In the next chapter I will critically examine the vast field of media and migration research, exploring how communication technologies influence migration processes and cultural identities. Finally, I will delve into fundamental theoretical reflections on the concept of “digital diasporas” and cultural identities. The aim is to explore the theoretical frameworks that approach how communities dispersed in cyberspace maintain and transform their cultural connections.

Chapter 3. The Practice Theory Approaches

Practice Theory emerges from the necessity to theorise the dynamics of action in contemporary societies, where personal and everyday practice become relevant as indissoluble elements of the social order. Practice theory decentres mind, text and conversation of the object of study, by introducing new vocabularies to the social sciences, such as bodily movements, things, artefacts, practical knowledge, competence or routines. The development of practice theory historically had and continues to have different points of intersection in the fields of sociology, anthropology, cultural studies and increasingly media and communication studies. According to this, different methodological proposals and empirical scenarios emerge illustrating the untapped heuristic potential in the study of practice (Reckwitz, 2017).

The interlinkage between media, culture and practices, have been intensively developed in recent years by different authors, under different theoretical frameworks and approaches, in sociology, anthropology, cultural studies and increasingly, in media and communication studies. The conceptualisation and problematisation of the concept of practices, present different generations of authors with diverse philosophical points of reference and kinds of ontology and epistemology about practices. The practice turn (Schatzki et al., 2001) represented the contemporary revision of the different philosophical currents that explored the role of social practices over the years and the elements involved. The Practice Theory approaches explored “the philosophical and social scientific significance of human activity; the nature of subjectivity, embodiment, rationality, meaning, and normativity; the character of language, science, and power; and the organisation, reproduction, and transformation of social life” (p. 10). In this section I will revisit this different generations of authors and their theoretical reflections within the praxeological family of practices (Reckwitz, 2002), with special attention to the contemporary generations of authors of the new millennium, facing the specificities of globalisation in terms of communication research. The aim is not to offer an exhaustive mapping of authors, but rather to provide a comprehensive overview of the different theoretical currents and concepts under praxeological approaches, to conclude by setting out how it will be applied in this dissertation.

3.1 Philosophical Foundations

In the late twentieth-century an interdisciplinary group of approaches in social and cultural theory began to develop the routinised and performative character of action. Already since the 70-80's, social practices began to attract the attention in different schools of thought, especially in sociology (Giddens, 1984) and anthropology (Ortner, 1984). According to Postill (2010) there were two main generations of practice theorists that set the foundations of the practice theory approaches. The first generation whose most popular scholars Bourdieu (1977), Foucault (1976), Giddens (1979) and De Certeau (1984), set the foundations and theoretical elements of what we know today as practice theory. In his well-known *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Pierre Bourdieu (1977) developed his project of *praxeology*, developing the terms such as *agency* and *habitus* as the embodied social order. In his various praxeological studies (cf. 1977, 1990, 2000), Bourdieu exposed the misrepresentations of practical processes and set out a new epistemological path. Similarly, Giddens (1979, 1984) presented his own version of practice theorisation in his *Theory of Structuration*, presenting a new perspective on human behaviour based on the relationship between structure and agency. According to Giddens, although individuals are influenced by structure, structures are also determined and maintained through individual agency and human action or, in other words, that they are socially and reflexively constructed. Already in the late 1980s, Foucault analysed the relations between bodies, agency, knowledge and understanding, an academic work that was already considered as praxeological. De Certeau's (1984) theory of everyday life, focuses specifically on the importance of day-to-day practices. Following this perspective, culture is ultimately constituted by the practices of individuals. For De Certeau, practices have an ontological quality since he conceptualises them as constitutive (means and end) of his cultural theory.

The second generation of theorists, such as Ortner (1984), Schatzki (1996) and more recently Reckwitz (2002) and Warde (2005), continued to stress the centrality of the human body to practice, but began to introduce culture and history as central issues. For example, Ortner (1984), from an anthropological perspective, underlined the importance of the questions of power and culture in the development of practices. Schatzki (1996) was one of the most renowned authors among the second wave of practice theorists. Inspired by the works of the philosophers Heidegger and Wittgenstein, he focused on social practices as the fundamental element or “the central phenomenon by reference to which other social entities such as actions, institutions, and structures are to be understood” (p. 11). At the

beginning of the twenty-first century, in the effervescence of the information and communication age, Warde (2005) focused his work on the analysis of consumption as “a moment in almost every practice” (p. 137). In the same decade, Reckwitz (2002) developed another conceptualisation of social practices, establishing cultural theories as the point of departure for the development of practice theory as a subtype of cultural theory. Cultural theories such as culturalist mentalism, textualism and intersubjectivism, in contrast with previous theoretical approaches, introduced a new way to understand human action and social order by reconstructing symbolic structures of knowledge. For cultural theories social order was always embedded in collective cognitive and symbolic structures, as cultural shared knowledge or meaning. The basic difference between these schools of thought was precisely where they place ‘the smallest unit’ of social theory: in minds, discourses, interactions or ‘practices’ respectively. The *culturalist mentalism*, the branch of cultural theories with the longest tradition, located the social in human minds, namely, in the heads of human beings, locating the smallest unit of social analysis in mental structures. As a critique, *culturalist textualism* emerged in the last third of the twentieth century, situating the symbolic structures, signs, and symbols outside the mind, namely in discourse and texts. Finally, *culturalist intersubjectivism* placed the social in interactions, for example, in the ordinary use of language. Within this complex landscape of contemporary sociocultural theories, a theory of social practices would offer a conceptual and theoretical alternative, placing the social in practices and not in mental qualities, discourse or interaction between individuals. Practices represented the ontological social space in which action, individual agency and social structures conveyed and were negotiated (Schatzki, 1996; Schatzki et al., 2001). Nevertheless, practice theory did not simply represent another contribution to social theories, but rather implied a different attitude, seeking innovation and new strategies for cultural analyses (Schmidt, 2017) as well as further deepening a methodology of praxeologisation (cf. Schmidt 2012).

3.2 The Concept of Social Practices

“The field of practices is the total nexus of interconnected human practices”
(Schatzki et al., 2001, p.2)

In practice theory approaches there is more academic consensus around the need to address social practices in a new paradigm that complement previous theories, than on how to

define what practices actually are (Hobart, 2010, pp. 60-61). According to Schatzki (2002, 2016) practices can be considered as a routinised set of *doings* and *sayings* in close connection with *material arrangements*. However, practice is much more than an action, than a simple doing, practices are constituted by the interaction between doings, saying and objects (Barnes, 2001; Couldry, 2004) related to each other (Schatzki, 2001; Reckwitz, 2002). Social practices are always cultural practices as they depend on implicit schemes of knowledge, but they have also a material dimension as they are anchored in artefacts connected with bodies in specific ways (Reckwitz, 2017). Reckwitz (2002) defined practices as a routinised type of behaviour which consists of several elements interconnected by each other. These elements included different forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, *things* and their use, tacit knowledge, implicit understanding, states of emotion, motivational factors, etc. Inspired by the work of Reckwitz (2002), Schatzki (2001) and Barnes (2001), Ahva (2016) proposed a new definition of practices including other relevant aspects: “practices are socially recognised, routinised and embodied enactments, in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, things are described, and the world is understood” (p. 4). Moreover, beyond the recognised, regular and embodied enactment, she framed practices as a combination between a) *activity*, such as moving or handling, (b) *materiality* as the embodied nature of practice through tools, things, objects, technologies or places and c) *discursive reflexivity*, that referred to self-referential discursivity, such as describing, understanding, naming or the evaluation enactments. Summarising, practices are routinised and repeatable with various degrees of regularity, competence and flair (Postill, 2010) and also socially recognised, identifiable to other people and embodied (Schatzki, 2001; Reckwitz, 2002; Ahva, 2016). This means, that practices cannot be considered as "bundles of individual idiosyncrasies", but social constructions that involve “a whole world of capacities, constraints and power” (Couldry, 2012, p. 34).

Schatzki's (2010) notion of *activity timespace* introduces the temporal and spatial perspective as constituents of practice. For Schatzki, activity timespaces reflect the idea that human activity should be understood as an interdeterminate temporal spatial event. The concept not only approximates that practice occurs in a particular time and space, but that time and space are inherently constitutive parts of practice, directly impacting on it: “activity timespace is an important component of social space and time, that interwoven timespaces are a constitutive feature of social phenomena, and that history encompasses metamorphosing constellations of indeterminate temporalspatial events” (pp. 10-11). This

means that practices have temporary and spatial qualities through which they can connect and relate to other practices. In this section, I have reviewed some of the main definitions of the concept of social practices. An exhaustive classification appears therefore rather complicated. However, in the next section, I will introduce the discussion about some of the elements involved in the development of social practices that are important to discuss for the analysis.

3.3. Practice Organisation and Components

The material dimension of practices, *things and their use* have been extensively addressed by different authors (Schatzki, 2002; Reckwitz, 2002). However, there is less literature about the kind of connections that these material components acquire in practice. In fact, there are also material elements that are indirectly part of the practice, i.e. they maintain an *infrastructural dimension* within the practice, but do not interact with the practice, such as, for example, electricity or internet connection, that often simply take the role of fulfilling a need of the practitioner (Shove, 2017). Then, the discussion on the constituent elements of practices or the type of practices is closely connected to the way in which practices and their components relate to each other. In that sense, a question that still remains open within the practice theorists, seems to be the classification of practices and especially the relation between them. This was a fundamental debate that Swidler (2001) summarised with the following question: “*how [do] some practices anchor, control, or organise others?*” (p. 79). In order to answer this question, Shove, Pantzar and Watson (2012) contributed with different multi-practice concepts offering new terms to talk about the relation and connection between practices, considering material elements as an integral part of a practice (regardless of the nature of the connection of the material dimension, whether it is direct or indirect, contextual or occasional). They focused on the constituent elements of the practices and their interaction with each other. According to the authors, in performing practices people actively combine: *materials* (things, technologies, objects), *competences* (know-how and technique) and *meanings* (symbolic dimension) (p. 14). In that sense, the different elements involved in practices “forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, *things* and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge” (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 249) can influence each other and can be simultaneously in relation with different practices. For Schatzki (2015), the material

dimension takes the form of *arrangements* (people, things, artefacts, organisms) links to each other by contiguity, causality or physical connection. In addition, the author proposes larger units of practices, arguing that the practices connected with arrangements form *bundles*. When bundles connect with other bundles lead to *constellations* (larger practices and arrangements connections). Finally, connected bundles and constellations generate the *plenum*. In other words, practices not only relate but also merge into each other, giving rise to other phenomena: “all social phenomena are slices or sets of features of the plenum of practices and arrangements, differing simply in the continuity, density and spacio-temporal spread and form of the practices, arrangements and relations that compose them. It follows that all social phenomena – large or small, fleeting or persistent, micro or macro – have the same basic ingredients and constitution” (p. 16). On the other hand, Gherardi (2012) contributes to the debate with the image of *texture* and *web* to illustrate the interconnected nature of practices. The *competence* is another less explored aspect in the process of participation in which the individual is situated as 'enabled'. In that sense, competence is not only an individual matter but a processual one in which the individual is interactively confronted with the requirements to fulfil practices, and thus participants become recognizable as competent or incompetent (Alkemeyer & Buschmann, 2017, pp. 11-12). Finally, the symbolic dimension of the practices includes the meanings that people handle in their daily lives. However, these meanings do not function independently of the activities, but are instead a part of the practices. This aspect will be developed in depth in the next section. Despite the efforts to ground the elements that comprise practices and their interrelation, it is necessary to emphasise that praxeology is not interested in seeking an exact or delimited definition of what practice is or is not, but rather a reflexive, empirical and analytical way of approaching social reality. Similarly to the way in which the meanings in existing relations change, practices can also change and transform over time, an essential factor that undoubtedly leads us to question their routinised quality and the need to explore this condition through empirical studies.

3.4 The Mind-body Dualism

The social is considered a field of embodied practices and know-how. In fact, the meaning-making process is not only placed in texts, but “in subjective experience of participating, building, and living the digitally mediated environments” (Rybas & Gajjala, 2007, p. 12). Nevertheless, most theories in this field, at least implicitly, employ a hierarchical and often

dichotomic preconception of the two poles of media-human relations, by analysing the operationalities and ontologies of the human and the media independently from one another (Othold & Voss, 2015, p. 75) It is worth noting that the concept of bodies in a physical sense has rarely been developed as part of the material elements involved in practices. This is surprising considering the *practical* capacity of our bodies. In fact, although some practices are more bodily than others, all require some kind of bodily involvement or movement (Maller, 2017, p. 73). Shatzki (2001) introduced the distinction between *integrative practices*, considered as complex practices of the social life such as cooking, farming or business and *dispersed practices* that include discursive practices, describing, explaining or imagining (p. 3). In this case, Schatzki relates such *know how* to discursive practices. According to Reckwitz (2002) all these “forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, things and their use” that take place in conjunction and interconnected with a rather mental part, involve “a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge” (p. 249). Following Reckwitz’s theoretical developments, Shove, Pantzar & Watson (2012) introduced the distinction between practices as *entity* and practices as *performance* (p. 7). The practices as *entity* described the general ideas around actions, as a recognizable conjunction of ideas which can be spoken about or describe the action, whereas the practices as *performance*, include the immediacy of doing, the enactment, the mechanism through which the practice-as-an-entity is reproduced. On the other hand, it is also possible to find concepts such as *sociomateriality* that attempted to overcome the dichotomic relation between meaning and materiality “resolving the tension between a substantialist ontology that assumes that the social and the material, human beings and things, exist as separate entities” (Gherardi, 2017, p. 39).

There is always a symbolic meaning embedded in the practices as enactments, these are the meanings that people give to their acts and the objects they use (Shove et al. 2012, p. 14). However, when we discuss practices and meaning or representation, often they are directly related to discursive practices. For this reason, it seems necessary to approach the concept of ‘*discourse*’ in media practice. Already in the 70’s, Barthes in his contribution *From Work to Text* (1977) considered the text as a practice that makes use of signs to generate meaning. For Barthes, both the author and the reader were part of the practice. In practice theory in contrast to other forms of cultural studies such as textualism and intersubjectivism, discourse and texts language are no longer the central focus of studies, but they do not disappear, rather they begin to be considered as one kind of practice. Since practices are

shaped by an interplay between doings and sayings (Schatzki, 2002), discursive practices are nothing more than “practices of representation in which objects in the world are represented, imagined and evaluated, with the aid of media technologies” (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 122). In other words, discursive practices also involved bodily patterns, routinised mental activities (in forms of understanding, know-how, grammar and pragmatic rules of use), objects (e.g. computers) and different kind of motivations. These discursive practices also take part in the construction of the world through the language and other symbols. Under this perspective, it is important to emphasise, that meaning is not located in the text, but in the discursive practice and in practices in general.

A debate that remains open, is how to analyse practical processes while maintaining the balance between the mental elements of practices/forms of knowledge and the material/embodied dimension of practices. In fact, one of the criticisms levelled at some practice theory approaches is precisely the prioritisation of material elements (things, artefacts, technologies, bodies) over forms of knowledge, associated meanings and competences (Schmidt, 2017). It is indeed the same kind criticism about the limitation of mentalistic approaches, which neglect or overlook the embodied character of practice. As I discussed above, within praxeological approaches, there are different types of definitions and conceptualisations of social practices. This not only occurs in the theory, analytically, there are also different types of practice-based empirical approaches to address different kind of phenomena. Even within the so-called *flat ontologies* (Schatzki, 2016) that argue that small scale and large-scale phenomena are constituted and experienced from the micro perspective, there are different ways of approaching the study of social practices and large-scale phenomena (Nicolini, 2017). However, all of them allow the study of large-scale phenomena by focusing on the micro, avoiding the development of complex abstract theories. That means that every social order can be reduced to routinised everyday practices.

Finally, within the material perspective of media practices, it is worth highlighting the potential for action that technologies and objects offer to carry out different kind of activities. The term *affordances* applied in diverse disciplines was first coined by James J. Gibson (1966, 1979) to define what the environment potentially offers to individuals. It involved a relational and contextual concept since the same environment may offer different affordances depending on the person and/or the moment where the action takes place. In the case of technologies or objects the affordances are “the possibilities that they [the objects] offer for action” (Hutchby 2001, p. 447). In that sense, “certain affordance(s)

are inherent to the object, while the same object may offer different affordances the individual interacting with it” (Kędra, 2020, p. 2879). Moreover, the concept of *sociomateriality* (Gherardi, 2017; Van Dijk & Rietveld, 2017) can also be connected to *affordances* as the human and embodied actions such as practices, are situated and social concepts, in the sense that they illustrate the entanglement/coordination of the available sociomaterial environment and the abilities and/or needs of the people: “Similarly, doors are not only hinging vertical surfaces, but are *doors* that can solicit opening or keeping closed. And, as we shall see, it allows us to understand how stones can afford throwing in one situation and afford being a paper weight in the next. All these affordances are situated, but concretely available aspects of the sociomaterial environment to coordinate to. We can see that they function in these manifold ways if we zoom out on our practices in space and time to notice how chairs, doors, benches, paths and ponds are entangled within and across concrete situations” (Van Dijk & Rietveld, 2017, pp. 5-6).

3.5 Practice Theory Approaches applied to Media Studies

In the early years of the new millennium, Coudry (2004) called for a *turn to practices* in media and communication studies. This new approach proposed taking the focus away from media research of texts and production structures, and to placing it on media practice as an indissoluble part of our current social and cultural participation. According to Coudry (2004), the contemporary landscape of media studies‘ has been influenced by several theoretical currents. Although they set the research focus differently, he considers them to be 'cross-currents', as they have influenced each other in their own theoretical developments until reaching the path of the practice theory approaches (p. 116). Among them we find US mass communications research (Merton, Lazarsfeld, Katz), within the tradition of the experimental social sciences with theoretical focus on large-scale social effects. Second, critical Marxist commentary (Benjamin, Adorno), also part of the mass culture debates, focused on the critique of capitalism (which would later evolve into the political economy current). Third, drawing on psychoanalysis, semiotic analysis applied to media texts with the focus on the meanings embedded in the texts and signs. Fourth, the critical research, that rooted in semiotics and Marxism focused particularly on media audiences (Hall, Morley, Ang) keeping its main interest in the relation between people and texts. Finally, and most recently, the anthropological research (Ginsburg, 1994; Ginsburg

et al., 2002), the most closely related to practice theory, especially in terms of the broad focus approaching the social and the research methods, approached the concept of practice. The currents of anthropological research (free from the historical traditions of the analysis and interpretation of texts from media research) engaged with the study of the media experience as a cultural process (Ginsburg et al., 2002). Drawing on this approach, media anthropologist Liz Bird's (2003) proposed a paradigm shift towards a new approach *beyond the audience* that would consider the media experience, not as individual actions, but as “firmly anchored into the web of culture” (Bird 2003, pp. 2-3). The concept of mediation, originally coined by Martín-Barbero (1987), proposes studying media consumption as a broader process of cultural participation, and could also be considered as one of the contemporary references of Practice Theory. However, Silverstone's (2005) theoretical developments of the term *mediation* marked a turning point in communication studies, extending the research framework to all those social and cultural processes focused around media. In *Theorising Media & Practice* Bräuchler and Postill (2010) developed the interlinkage between media, culture and practice with the aim of concretising the often abstract theory around the new paradigm, combining two bodies of literature: practice theory and media studies. This compilation of theoretical proposals, aimed to respond to Nick Couldry's call for a turn to practices in media and communications studies. In order to explore the relation between media and the body, they proposed as a starting point to answer the following questions: “*What do we actually mean by ‘media practices’? What are the key theoretical and methodological problems attending in their Study?*” (preface xi). This book compiles and discusses different approaches to media practice with empirical examples, and also includes a theoretical review by John Postill, who takes the initiative of Couldry to bring together the different applications of practice theory in the field of media research. All these research streams anticipated the study of the media processes as cultural processes or media cultures. Practice theory attempts to reconcile the conflicting differences, trying to integrate those aspects that are relevant to the analysis of practices. Looking deeper into the different theoretical developments within the relation of media, mind and body, it begins to become clear how they all are somehow connected. In fact, these influences can be discerned in the way in which each author frames their research proposal. In the following I will address how the different research currents have approached the study of media practices in their theorisations.

3.5.1 Media Practices as Analytical Tool

Coudry (2004) proposed one of the first and most widely accepted definitions of media practices as 'as an open set of practices focused directly to, or oriented around media'. For this purpose, Coudry suggested drawing on two aspects of practice in the media: First, *what types of things do people in relation to media? And second, what types of things do people say in relation to media?* (p. 121). From this starting point, he contributed with two fundamental concepts for the development of practice theory in the realm of media research: the concept of *media-oriented practices* and the question of whether certain media practices *anchor* other practices across social space. According to the author, the space of practices is not as chaotic as might appear, in fact, he argues that practices are organised among themselves. Later on, Ahva (2016) contributed by adding a third question to complete the paradigm by including the material perspective: *'What types of material objects are people's media-related practices organised around?'* (p.1529). With this new question, Ahva suggested that beyond the reflective aspects of practices, it is important to consider the relationship with the material aspects, which are also involved in the variation of practice and the creation of new practices. Hobart (2010) proposed a more radical shift in the conception of media practice. The author criticised that Coudry privileges media as an *anchor* for other social practices, that can lead "to essentialise and prioritise the medium over all the other aspects of social action" (p. 20). According to Hobart, the concept of media practice should be much broader, including those practices that were not only related to media organisations. Accordingly, he proposed the concept of *media-related practices*, a broader concept able to include all those practices related to the media in many different ways, from the production structures to the everyday environments in which people talk about the media or cooking while they watch a TV programme, for example. The term attempts to avoid mediacentrism and calls for a more ethnographic approach, which recognises media practice as an element of everyday life. Hobart's new interpretation of the relationship between practices opens up a new field of media practices ontological interpretation. Nevertheless, both authors agreed in transcending the empiricist and positivist influence and considering the philosophical foundations of media research and on the need to internationalise media studies. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the question of regularity remains important in media practices, since 'the specific regularities in our actions related to media' and 'the regularities of context and resource' constitute essential components of the media practices (Coudry, 2012). Nevertheless, Shove, Pantzar and Watson (2012) argued that practices may

evolve and change, they may cease to exist or become new practices from previously unconnected elements: “practices emerge, persist and disappear as links between their defining elements are made and broken” (p. 21). In that sense they proposed, rather than to organise the practices, to organise the ‘elements’ of practices on the level of *meaning, competence and materiality*. The material perspective is developed in media practices and takes into account what people collectively do *beyond their bodies*, i.e., what material elements, and specifically what technological systems they employ in media practice. This dimension is sometimes difficult to approach because not all technologies used in media practice have a direct relation to the practice itself. In other words, the practice is not always carried out with an artefact, but each artefact takes part in the activity of people with different distance, time and even awareness (Morley, 2017, p. 81). This is especially important in the case of media experience in the information age due the accumulation of new media technologies within society. Other aspects such as the combination and interplay of transnational social and media practices fields are rather unexplored and, in addition, in continuous development. With the advances in media technologies and the processes of digitalisation of communication, the routine enactments are changing, new media cultures emerging and practices in diverse places, being embodied in very diverse ways and transcending local and national scopes. Brink & Hepp (2017) developed *crossmedia research* as a conceptual and methodological concept to investigate communicative practices and their interrelations. To this end, they propose applying the concepts: “*media repertoire* (when it comes to the individual) and *media ensemble* (when it comes to social domains)” (p. 365). In that sense, the authors reject the idea that people act individually, but rather in relation to certain social *domains* involved in the process.

Ultimately, the ubiquitous presence of media in our societies does not necessarily imply a solipsistic or media-centric approach to the social. The new approach on media practices proposes taking away the focus from media research of texts and production structures and focusing it on media practice as an indissoluble part of our current social and cultural participation. In that sense, media practices are not reduced to interactions with new technologies, but to a deeper articulation in which simple communicative acts can generate complex structures of meaning through the ritualisation of uses and symbolic attribution. Media practice as constitutive of social orders, implies the intersection and interconnection between individual and collective articulations.

Just as in the case of social practices, it is very challenging to determine a classification of media practices. In contemporary societies, we can find a whole mass of media practices, but how they are divided up into specific practices, and how those practices are connected with each other, remains as an open question. The concept of 'media practice', as well as identities, can be considered as a broad, abstract and changing term. In fact, the conceptualisation often differs and fluctuates depending on the authors. Moreover, it should be taken into consideration that when the practice turn was first introduced in media and communication studies with Couldry in 2002, the penetration of new information technologies and the processes of digitalisation of everyday life had only just started and had not yet permeated the public and personal sphere, becoming embedded in everyday practices. In the following sections we will develop some theoretical concepts that are closely related to the development of practice theory in the field of communication studies in terms of how to approach the new digital environments.

3.5.2 Media Publics in Practice Theory Approaches

Theoretical developments of the public sphere have historically been closely related to the formation of nation-states and new consensus identities, that is, a unifying and nationally-oriented view of the public sphere. However, the 21st century, with the transnationalisation of public spheres and the development of new technologies, invites us to rethink and develop the public sphere in a broader sense. Nowadays, the public sphere is constituted by complex articulations and exchanges at the local and transnational levels. In digital communication environments, distribution and broadcasting evolve to circulation and exchange, so that the traditional concepts of audiences and publics (Butsch & Livingston, 2014), senders and receptors gradually become obsolete. Moreover, most definitions of publics still have a strong neo-colonial and Eurocentric orientation that often obviate more “organic understandings of ‘public’ in marginalizaed communities in the world” (Gajjala, 2019: 17). Over the years, with the proliferation of digital technologies the inherent tension between the media as institutionalised structures and media as a space of appropriation by users and participation has increased. Everyday practices become a key arena for the negotiation between personal and public and offer new forms of participation in the public sphere. In order to understand how these complex processes are organised and how they operate, it is important to rethink publics under the umbrella of the practice theory

approaches. Along that line, in a radical ontological turn, Boyd (2011) proposes the concept of *networked publics* to explain these new spaces that are constructed through networked technologies. Boyd considers networked publics as communities with collective imaginaries that emerge through the exchange between people, technologies and practices (p. 39). According to the author, what differentiates networked publics from other types of publics is precisely the different ways in which people relate to each other in digital environments, the possibilities of interaction and the new forms of participation. In other words, the real meeting point between the new concept of publics and the practice perspective is that publics are no longer considered as groups of people receiving messages, but become a communicative process where practices play a crucial role in generating new meanings, identities and forms of participation. According to Brouwer & Asen (2010), the inherent complexity of the concept of publics lies in the fact that it cannot be described as a transparent and delimited construct. Although it involves “significant symbolic and material consequences” (p.1), it is neither individual nor collective, it does not take up a specific physical space and the relationships between subjects can be diverse. Empirically, publics share the same instability argument as practices, as discussed in previous sections. Within the changing nature of the media audiences, recent works on *performative publics* (Lünenborg & Raetzsch, 2017) explore how individual routinised uses and appropriations of new media technologies, have a performative role in the creation of publics. This new theoretical perspective applied the practice theory and specifically the concept of media practice “as analytic concept to understand how individual routinised uses and appropriations of convergent media are performatively implicated in the creation of publics” (p. 23). The performative potential of the concept of public refers to the process of enactment, how the public is *brought to being* (Butler, 2010) through media practices. In that sense, practices can be considered performative tools of meaning production. From the perspective of practice analysis, what is intended to be investigated is precisely how social structures and symbolic orders are translated into enacted material. Thus, media practices become part of the process of knowledge production. From an empirical approach, this public connection can be analysed as sets of anchoring practices in order to map the situational and routinised layers of publicness: “from practices of information retrieval and social orientation to the public-oriented practices of (self-)representation and intervention” (Raetzsch & Lünenborg, 2020, p. 2875). This brings us directly to the recent debates on the processes of meaning-making in both media and practices of usage.

3.5.3 Media Practices as Performative Tools of Meaning Production

Every act of media consumption or production is shaped by meanings, relationships and systems of interactions to (Postill, 2009). Rather than in the relation between individuals with media technologies, it is possible to find meaning in different dimensions of the practice. In that sense, some authors have considered the semiotic approach as a possible tool to identify the social meanings of practices: if practices have associated meanings, they may also shape signs. Semiotics from the Greek: *σημειωτικός*, "simiotikos" is the science that reflects on the systems of communication within human societies, studying the general properties of sign systems, as a basis for understanding any human activity. In semiotics, a sign is understood as a present object or *event* that stands in place of another absent object or *event*, according to a certain code. Within the practice theorist it is possible to find some semiotically inspired approaches to (media) practices, in which practices are analysed as creators and bearers of meaning. According to Peirce (1955) "nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign", that is, the essence of meaning does not exist only in mind, but we recognise and interpret signs through larger systems of social conventions (p. 99). This implies that everything that means something to someone is susceptible of becoming a sign. However, according to Peirce technology is unable to create meaning without human action, namely, artifacts and new technologies, even though taking part in the process, cannot generate meaning by itself. Rather, a transposition of the paradigm applied to media practices would be to consider them as such activity that constitutes media meaning, constituted by humans using devices, not by devices itself (Postill, 2010, p. 175). In media studies, semiotics is concerned with the study of signs and the ways in which meaning is constructed and transmitted during communication processes and has traditionally been applied in discourse analysis. Couldry (2004) pointed out that one of the major contradictions of previous theoretical paradigms is that there still exists "a crucial uncertainty about how media texts (or any texts produced in an economy) causally mediate between the world they represent and the world where they are consumed" (p. 118). This critique, especially directed at audience research, defended that media consumption is a "determinate moment" in the production of meaning through media texts (Hall, 2019). He considered that audience research was constrained by focusing only on people's relationships to texts. However, signs are not only present in texts, but images, sounds or enactments can also shape signs.

Within the practice theorists, worth mentioning are the theoretical reflexions of Ipsen (2010) that explored Peircean semiotics in order to sketch the epistemology of semiotic processes in which media artefacts and also practices are involved. Ipsen focused his work on epistemological questions concerning the meaning of the media. This is the same instability discussed in the introductory section: just such as the practices, the meanings attributed to practices are also related to personal and social contexts. Hence, there is a need to investigate the construction of meanings not only approaching the mind or the messages, but also all the agents involved in the processes. To illustrate this meaning instability, Ipsen (2010) proposes contrasting the changing meanings of media usage through the example of a retro-style radio located in an all-new loft in Paris, in contrast to an old radio located in a shack in Sao Paulo. Thereby, he intended to show that the study of practice should focus on sensations in situations and not so much on messages or institutions. According to the author, some theoretical concepts of semiotics would open the door towards a new approach to the study of social practices drawing on three independent semiotic and philosophical sources: interpretation, relation between technology/culture and practice as a meaning production process. From this point of view, semiotic processes would constitute inherent elements of practices. In fact, paradigms do not have to overcome each other, but to complete each other and create new ones, which are better adapted to new contexts, and which allow a better explanation and understanding of phenomena.

Reckwitz (2017) contributed to the debate in this approach with the *semiotic-imaginary artefacts*, aimed at understanding media as artefacts of everyday human usage: “things produced primarily with the intention of transporting signs, images and imaginations calculated to affect people” (p. 124-125). Under this framework a simple artifact is a bearer of signs and potentially able to produce affects. For example, Reckwitz proposes musical sound sequences as genuine affective artefacts, in this case, its informative function would be significantly lower than its ability to produce moods in the listener. For Hine (2000), the Internet can be interpreted both as culture and as a cultural artefact. This heuristic distinction aims to find an ethnographic approach to the internet based on “the circumstances in which the internet is used (offline) and the social spaces that emerge through its use (online)” (p. 39), that are contextually relevant to the development of meaning. In more recent works Hine (2015), developed new ethnographic strategies to approach the Internet as an experiential form of knowledge, proposing three important

aspects that shape the contemporary Internet experience, what she calls the *E3 Internet* (embedded, embodied and everyday life). According to Hine, Internet “is *embedded* in various contextualising frameworks, institutions, and devices, that the experience of using it is *embodied* and hence highly personal and that it is *everyday*, often treated as an unremarkable and mundane infrastructure rather than something that people talk about in itself unless something significant goes wrong” (p. 32). This perspective underlines the need to develop ethnographic studies that inductively explore practices through personal experience, detecting social patterns, multiple sites, and networks, both physical and online. Consequently, in order to investigate the practices of signification different authors (Krajina et al., 2014) called attention to the need to investigate the implications of the new media technologies, as media practices in daily routines, everyday and contexts and social environments with a non-mediacentric approach. Drawing on these arguments, Coman (2005) proposes specifying determinations of media technologies with micro-group cultural traditions, reception situations, and immediate social and economical configurations (p. 8). Namely, this theoretical approach calls for further research into the *local* acts of communication. Hitherto, the process of meaning-making in media practices has not yet been fully addressed in the academic world. It can be appreciated, however, that signification practices are closely related to other research currents, especially with affect theory and ethnographic oriented approaches to media. The next section will address common anthropological research influences and concepts that emerge in the application of practice theory to media and communication studies.

3.5.4 Motivations and Affects in Media Practices

This section will address the motivations for performing certain types of practices. Often, motivations are connected to emotional states of the individual and practice becomes the form in which that emotion is externalised, what we know as affect. Contemporary social studies on affect and emotion propose a new approach to rethink social reality and the reconfiguration of knowledge production at different levels. The affective turn emerged as a response to the emotionalisation of the different spheres of public life (Greco & Stenner, 2008). To some extent, it also implied an emotionalisation of academic life, since emotions are part of all kinds of practice and research and researchers, therefore, are also emotionally affected. The emotionalisation of science was a generalised trend in the academia in the last

years. The term 'The Affective Turn' in contemporary studies was introduced by the American sociologists Patricia Clough and Jean Halley (2007) in their book: *The Affective Turn: Theorising the Social*. Strongly influenced by Spinoza's theoretical reflections, the authors considered affect as an ontology of processes and phenomena that are not dependent on human consciousness, or on linguistic or discursive communication. From the renowned philosopher Spinoza, that defined affect as the capacity to affect and be affected, Clough (2010) took the marked interest in the body as a reader of affect, an influence that can be appreciated in different authors who addressed the affective turn. Close to the reflections of Patricia Clough, Bruno Latour (2004), developed the understanding of the body as a process and not as an organism. Affect research presents a new approach to materiality and relationality, exploring the processes of intersection between the material, the social, the biological and the cultural (Latour, 2004, 2005). Among the theoretical developments, we find two different approaches of affect: a) affect in the individual (Tomkins) influenced by psychoanalytical approaches and commonly applied in media, feminist and queer studies; b) affect as a force (Spinoza), that explains the capacity of the body to both be affected and affect others. For Spinoza, argued that body and mind are two attributes of the same substance, therefore every event takes place at the same time in the mind (feelings, thoughts) and in the body (Brown & Stenner, 2001). Ponzanesi (2020) drawing from Appadurai's (1991) *mediascapes*, proposes *affectscapes* (p. 989) as a new term to define cultural emotional practices across borders and networks.

According to Pink (2009), affective practices and emotions are not only cognitive, but embodied and mediated. In traditional academic reflections there was always a permanent dispute about the nature of affect and emotion: while emotions are individual states, affect is collective, and it is considered as the material/bodily reaction to emotions. Silvan Tomkins (1991) argues that affect has a complex and self-referential life that gives profundity to human existence through our personal relationships, both with ourselves and with others. In *Affect, Imagery, consciousness* (1963; 1991), Tomkins exposes different basic emotions that are connected with the affective process, from shame, fear, anger, excitement, joy, to disgust. This reconceptualisation of affect, as well as the subsequent theoretical turn, is rooted in the interest on affect as a corporeal, pre-conscious and pre-individual phenomenon (Massumi, 2002).

Cultural theory considered feelings as culturally constructed. Nevertheless, Reckwitz (2017) criticised this research trend for leading to confusion with the semantics of feeling thus neglecting the physical facts of affects (Reckwitz, 2017). In contemporary theoretical reflections of cultural studies on affects, Melissa Gregg (2006) published her book *Cultural Studies' Affective Voices* which offers an interesting review of authors who have addressed different aspects of affectivity in cultural theory. Later, with Gregory Seigworth (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010) the author would take back again the interest on affect in everyday life practices. According to Reckwitz (2017) in radical culturalism the meanings embedded in spaces, things, bodies, perceptions were always culturally determined. In the new theoretical turn to the practices the theories of affect complete both the cultural and the material aspects of life. For Reckwitz (2017) the affective turn overcame the dichotomy between the culture/materialism dualism in the understanding of feelings. In that sense, social practices and affect analysis not only can but should be put in relation to each other since “every social order as a set of practices is a specific order of affects” (p. 116). According to the author the particularity of a practice theory perspective on affects is shaped by three important principles: a) affects are not subjective, but social; b) affects are not properties, but activities; c) affects are states of physical arousal. To illustrate this reflection, Reckwitz gives the paradigmatic example of love and its bundle of love practices as individual feelings that contain “routine behaviours dependent on specific cultural patterns and containing a peculiar set of affects” (p. 118). These routine behaviours are clearly closely tied to discursive practices and fields, therefore, the affective practice of falling in love is both cultural and material at the same time.

As I have already mentioned, social practices engage individuals through motivation. Every specific practice entails in a certain way a specific motivation to perform it. This motivation is the result of being affected, practices are not thinkable without affects. In regards to the question of practices as routinised enactments, affects are not anarchic or disruptive practices, but they can be considered culturally standardised and routine practices. Ipsen (2010) contributed to the debate with other new dimension in the affection process: the necessity. Thus, media practices do not emerge from the appropriateness of artefacts alone, they emerge from necessity, what can be considered in close relation with motivations. In the same line, practices in general, and among them those underpinned by new media technologies, are also related to 'human needs' on the background of a series of interdependencies in a particular time and space (Couldry, 2012). Finally, among the

different empirical proposals to approach affect, Margaret Wetherell published *Affect and Emotion. A new social Understanding* (2012) offering one of the most contemporary and inclusive perspectives to approach the study and analysis of affects. Wetherell's special interest in the construction of meaning in social practices and in the understanding of subjectivity is deeply rooted in her academic background marked by discourse analysis and discursive social psychology. Thus, it is not surprising to find clear constructivist and ethnographic influences in her work. In *Affect and Emotion* (2012) Wetherell diminishes the importance of traditional differences between both concepts, taking affect and emotion into account as part of the same process, of the same experience, both taking part in the construction of meaning. In that sense, Margaret Wetherell (2012) joins other authors such as John Cromby (2012) or Ipsen (2010), providing a semiotic perspective to address the study of affect and media practices. She considered semiotic processes and theories of representation and thus also the influence of discourse analysis in the practice process, a theoretical perspective that had until recently been excluded from academic discussions on practice. Finally, it is worth mentioning the theoretical reflections on "affective publics" (Papacharissi, 2015; Lünenborg, 2019) and more recently on "affective media practices" (Lünenborg et al., 2021; Lünenborg & Raetzsch, 2018; Lünenborg & Maier, 2019), which point to the importance of affect and emotions in social exchange in networked and mediatised worlds. Media affect is one of the most popular research streams of the moment and it is successful because it easily connects with other concepts. In general practice theories deal with different forms of embodiment and action, but there is still a need to establish the proper vocabulary to better define the phenomena. For this purpose, affect theory was drawn as a microstructure that was necessary to explain some important aspects of practice, such as affects and emotions.

3.5.5 Sociocultural Perspective and Operationalisation of Media Practices

Practice theory applied to media studies implies reconsidering social relations around the mass media and digital information and communication technologies. From this approach, media production, distribution, reception and discourses become practices. It also implies transferring certain theoretical concepts to the field of study in order to operationalise them. In the practice theory, it is important, specially from an empirical point of view, to take into

account ethnographical approaches to practices. Ethnographic research deals with different systems of social and cultural relations (domestic life, art, politics or economics), with particular emphasis on the organizational bases of social life. As already mentioned, the different ways in which the practices are defined or problematised complicates the delimitation of 'media practice'. The concept has been discussed and developed by philosophers, social and cultural theorists, and also in anthropology studies. According to Postill (2010), the anthropology of media constitutes an ideal theoretical starting point approach to review media studies literature on practice. Anthropological and ethnographical analysis approach the study of media as situated within other sets of human action and changing contexts rather than approaching social phenomena with a prior assumption about the media. Accordingly, Hobart (2010) insists on the idea that practice theoretical developments, "certainly invites ethnographic approaches and at least some recognition the anthropological thinking behind such work" (p. 58). In other words, to understand and explain the contexts and enactments of media practices would presumably often require resembling intensive ethnography such as for example participant-observation. Other practice theorists from anthropology such as Ortner (1996) considered practice theory as "an argument" that establishes the relationship between social structure and human agency (p. 2). It therefore, calls for a practice theory that addresses the negotiations and intersections between the questions of power, culture and practice, calling for a clear anthropological approach to (media) practices. There are differences reflected in current scholarship on practices-based media research, finding two forms of empirical approach to media practices: "the studies of 'media practices' (in the plural) and the overarching concept of 'media practice' (in the singular)" (Raetzsch & Lünenborg, 2020, 2874). While the first focus on the different ways in which new media technologies are used and appropriated generating communicative routines, the media practice studies aim to develop a strong program (Nicolini, 2017b) of research, understanding practice as a process of connections of meanings, competences and embedded and embodied materialities. It is also worth mentioning the concept of *assemblage* (De Landa, 2006, pp. 4-5) as an arrangement of heterogeneous elements, where the parts are connected and form connections between them, they produce or create something. De Landa's set of properties arise from the interactions between parts, arguing that social bodies are most appropriately investigated by considering their individual components. Every set includes different parts, just as individuals are also assemblages of sub-personal components (sense impressions, ideas, habits, and skills; social groups, networks, and organisations are assemblages of

individuals, norms, habits, and customs). It also applies to other institutions, such as governments or cities or groups, networks or communities. This concept has been criticised by Gherardi (2017) on the grounds that the English translation of the French concept *agencement* from Deleuze and Guattari (1987) has lost some of its original meaning. While the French term emphasised the processual character of the term, 'the idea of establishing or forming an assemblage', the translation as 'assemblage' points to the final state rather than to the process of connecting (p. 51). This reflection, per se, is also necessary in order to understand the processual character of the practice itself.

Summarising, practice theory, beyond representing a new way of approaching the study of the social in general and of the media experience in particular, implies deeper reflections on new forms of ontology, epistemology and politics entailed (Hobart, 2010, p. 61). In that sense, beyond the referents in social and cultural studies, the development and implementation of practice theory approaches in the field of communication requires at least an essential ethnographical approach in order to understand and define the concept of practices as processes. In fact, the research itself can be considered as set of practices. In that sense, academic practices, as other practices, have different motivations as well, from attitudes of curiosity and attentiveness to political and theoretical undergrounds and influences. Moreover, understanding media practices as routinised and shared (collective) processes does not exclude that social practices also interpellate individuals, as individual processes are also clearly crossed by emotional and affective factors. Motivation and empathy are key factors in the generation of common interests, and ultimately, in the generation of identities. This means that practice must always entail a specific motivation to perform it. This motivation is often related to the emotional domain and with being affected, as I already explained above.

3.6 Application of the Concept of Media Practices in the Dissertation

This theoretical chapter developed the concept of media practices within the framework of the theories on practices (Bräuchler & Postill, 2010; Couldry, 2004; Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 1996, 2001) considering migrant communities as specific repertoires of social practices in general and media practices in particular, which are the focus of interest in this study. This dissertation focuses on both the material and cultural perspectives of media practices in terms of relationality and connectivity. For this purpose, in the first part of this

chapter I started by reviewing the philosophical foundations of practice theories and different approaches in social and cultural theory that addressed the routinised and performative nature of action. In this section I also introduced some of the approaches to social practices and their components, and the material and embodied perspective of social practices. In other words, how the balance between the mental elements of practices/forms of knowledge and the material/embodied dimension of practices works. In the second part of the chapter, I focused on the practice theory approaches in media studies and I addressed the conceptualisation of media practices (Ahva, 2016; Couldry, 2004, 2012; Hobart, 2010) and other key concepts for researching media practices: media publics, meaning making processes, sociocultural factors, motivation and affects as inextricable parts of the practice. To avoid the mediacentrism, in this project I have applied the definition of media-related practices (Couldry, 2002, 2010; Hobart, 2010) in a broader sense, including those practices related to media organisations and also those practices related or oriented around the media in different everyday contexts. In order to analyse the empirical facts, the following constituent and integral elements of the practice were taken into account: body performances (embodiment, routinised body activities, behavioural acts, movements of the body); *things and artefacts* (Objects and their use); *mental activities* (routinised ways of understanding the world or doing something, knowhow, social conventions, ways of interpretations); *specific forms of meaning/knowledge production* (practical knowledge. Competences. Discursive practices/Language); *contextual factors* (*sociocultural*, socioeconomic processes); *affects and emotions* (motivations, affective activities); *structures* (routinisation, temporality); *agents* (relation between practices).

The fundamental reason behind the choice of praxeological approaches to frame my dissertation is that “the practice turn” has evolved in very close connection with empirical research (Schmidt, 2017). Practice theory relates and confronts the researching and theorising practice itself with the practices under investigation. In other words, theory is built on the empirical basis. In this project, the empirical analysis is developed inductively through a case study that provides information about media practices in migration contexts. As mentioned above, there are different ways in which (media) practice-based approaches can be addressed from a theoretical, but also from a methodological perspective. In that sense, beyond identifying the media-related practices of the Spanish diaspora in Germany, the aim is to focus the analysis on the processual character of these practices: how they relate to each other, their meanings and how the performativity of these practices affect or

influence larger social structures such as the diaspora's public and political participation or personal relationships. I will also delve in the processes of identification as “identity construction and assertions of belonging are manifested in bodily, mental, and spatial practices, which are enmeshed with technology use” (Christensen & Jansson, 2015, p. 1478). The *epistemologies of doing* are an essential part of the creation of communities in situated contexts: “This methodology suggests that subjects/objects produce selves—through typing, writing, image manipulation, creation of avatars, digital video, and audio—and engage in practices of everyday life at these interfaces” (Rybas & Gajjala, 2007, p. 5). For this purpose, I chose ethnographic methods and the Grounded Theory to inductively approach the data towards a situated media-practice based study. In the next chapter I will discuss the methodological design of the research.

Chapter 4. Media and Migration Research

The connections between human mobility/migration and media/connectivity have historically played a fundamental role, not only in shaping and narrating the history of migration, but also in the everyday lives of migrants. Beyond the communicative facilities that digital technologies and devices may offer, such as ubiquity or the speed of connection, media and communication technologies play a constitutive role in migration processes (Hegdee, 2019). In this dissertation media are not considered as artefactual, instrumental, and/or as an intermediary in the communication process, but as a constitutive part of the process, as an infrastructural component of migration. In that sense, the interplay between media and migration challenges traditional notions of identity, nation, community, and citizenship from an international perspective. This chapter aims to provide an overview of the main theoretical perspectives in the study of migration, technology, and mediation. The first part of the chapter addresses media linkages to migration and a historical overview of how migratory processes and technological breakthroughs have been entangled throughout history. The second section aims to map the main encounters in contemporary studies on media and migration, research practices and paradigms. This discussion will be followed by an in-depth examination of migration as a sociocultural process, and the material perspective of media texts, technologies, and artifacts. The last part of the chapter addresses the challenges and effects of the media-migration connection on the construction of basic social notions, such as transnationalism, or the presence/absence and territory/space binomials.

4.1 Modern Forms of Migration, new Forms of Research

In contemporary times, the flows of labour migration in Northern and Western Europe intensified after the Second World War, when Europe became one of the largest global migration destinations. The process of global integration generated large scale movements of people that brought about profound social challenges. Migration plays a fundamental and strategic role in the configuration and transformation of societies, both in origin and reception countries. Migratory processes are impacted by a wide range of factors such as geopolitical instabilities, the collisions of global economies, or the changing labour patterns

of countries. Therefore, there are different types of migratory processes: economic or labour migrations, exile and refugee movements, family reunions... Thus, when migration is addressed, it is necessary to take into consideration that neither all types of migrations are uniform, nor do all countries experience exclusively one type of emigration over time, as the case of Spanish emigration/immigration. In fact, according to Castles, Haas de & Miller, (2014) one of the main trends in contemporary migration is precisely “the differentiation of migration”, that “most countries are not dominated by one type of migration” (pp. 13-16). Current sociopolitical conditions, aggravated by persistent economic inequalities between rich and poor countries, suggest that migratory processes will persist over time, and will impel thousands of people to leave their countries of origin, motivated by the search for better opportunities. In the last decade, two historical events led to a relevant turn in European communication studies in relation to migration. On the one hand, the contemporary reactivation of intra-European migratory flows after the economic crisis of 2008. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, intra-European migration flows, as a consequence of the growing inequality generated by the austerity policies implemented from Europe, not only triggered great media expectation in both origin and destination countries, but it inaugurated a whole era of cultural studies on different migratory experiences of European citizens (especially Greeks, Spaniards, and Italians). On the other hand, the misnamed “refugee crisis” in 2015 also triggered great media and academic attention, which incorporated refugees to European digital migration studies (see Arvanitis & Yelland, 2019; Belloni, 2019; Chouliaraki, Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Gillespie et al., 2018; Maitland, 2018; Ross, 2018; Ruokolainen & Widén, 2019; Witteborn, 2015). The arrival of thousands of refugees and migrants to Europe in 2015 became a trending topic, as well as a controversial sociopolitical debate within Europe (Chouliaraki, Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017). These events inaugurated a new era of migration studies around refugees, and the role of the media in the symbolic process of bordering.

For years, media linkages to migration processes became a frequent object of social research in a wide variety of academic disciplines. These ranged from geography, sociology, communication science, psychology, political science, philosophy, and anthropology, and offered broad multi-disciplinary potential. Particularly in the discipline of communication sciences, new media technologies and migration processes have consistently maintained a dialectical relationship, continually shaping and influencing each other's evolution and sociocultural impact. In fact, different migration waves and technological innovations in

communication have been closely intertwined throughout history. Historically, migrants have always relied on information and communication technologies to keep personal bonds with the origin country, while the technological and transport structural innovations definitely contributed to the development of their migrant lives. As Dekker & Engbersen (2014) pointed out, “every medium comes with certain social affordances” (p. 403). In their analysis, the authors retraced the historic journey from communication by letter, audio tapes, phone calls, emails, text messages to instant messaging, and explained how different new forms of digital communication had evolved from the previous forms of communication. According to the authors, this made them “more synchronous, less expensive, media richer and more frequent” (p. 404). Before the advent of the Internet, the development of the legacy media also brought main changes: television screens became bigger, the quality of broadcasting got better, and the number of channels and programs rose exponentially. All these changes and developments revolutionised information and communications technology (ICT) and the meanings associated to this consumption. Migration and cultural exchange were far from being regarded as isolated phenomena, and were intimately intertwined and facilitated by transport, as well as by the progressive increase of printed and electronic media. It became evident that, as both processes have a clear influence on the other, they should not be studied separately, but rather from a distinctly transversal perspective, which means examining their interconnectedness and interdependencies to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how they function together as a whole system.

The 1980s, with the rise in migratory flows, along with the emergence of new forms of communication and the reduction of travel costs, brought significant changes in the migratory studies which emerged, introducing new concepts such as “chain or snowball migration” in which new technologies made migration, “easier by increasing the number of friends and relations abroad who can be found and might be willing to provide assistance” (Komito, 2011, p. 1077). In the age of migration (Castles & Miller, 2009), the transnationalisation of economic relations, and the deployment of communication industries enabled long-distance personal relationships. In migration contexts, the proliferation of media and communication channels exponentially multiplied both the number of personal contacts and international bonds with the country of origin, and also increased the potential networks of assistance and labour opportunities in destination countries. Information also spread across the planet, and challenged traditional links between local, national and international. In this context, early research on media and

migration online networks suggested that online media extended the availability of network ties and information, not by substituting traditional media, but by complementing them (Dekker et al., 2016).

In the late 90s, in the modernity scenario, Appadurai (1996) developed the interconnected relation between media and migration processes as the core of modern subjectivity, the crossroads between the past and the present. The relation between mass media and migratory audiences marked the turning point between globalisation and modernity. In the new post national political and social order, electronic media had a decisive role in the transformation of mass media communication. It offered news resources in the work of imagination and in national state theories.

In the early years of the new millennium, with the growing presence of Internet cafés, telephone centres and money transfer services advertising in immigrant neighbourhoods, emerged a new media paradigm in which the local and the global were closely interlinked. In the so-called “information society paradigm” (Castells, 1996), migrants' high interconnected everyday life has also faced historical transformations, not only in the technical realm, but also in the social and public sphere. However, the normative definition of the public has recently received different academic criticisms for failing to reflect “the increasingly convergent, networked, and mobile character of media technologies, and of the diversified modes of public communication they entail” (Lünenborg, 2019, p. 319). Thanks to the revolution of digital information and communication technologies, as well as the reduction in transport costs, migrants became dynamic human links between cultures, economies and societies (Ros, 2018, p. 22). Moreover, fast and inexpensive electronic communication also influenced new mobilities, as they would change traditional patterns of migration (Komito, 2011), and provide migrants new tools for information and organisation for migrants. Online media channels grew exponentially from traditional media and websites to blog and micro-blogs, picture-sharing and video-sharing sites, social media platforms, and chat services. The Web 2.0 or social network based on the user-community model, and the principles of collective intelligence and decentralisation brought interconnected social networks, blogs, wikis, and online tools provided the platforms for a flexible exchange of information between users and the co-production of content. This enabled users to publish their data and share it with others. It offered migrants a huge range of online media to communicate with, from email, websites, blogs and microblogs, picture/video sharing sites, to social media and chat services in mobile devices. Dekker and

Engbersen (2014) pointed out the importance of these migrant networks for the study of contemporary migration and considered that social media strengthened “the bonding and bridging capital of migrants, as well as their information position” (p. 405). The first decade of the new millennium offered prolific academic literature on the relationship between online communication and migration processes (Diminescu 2008; Madianou 2012; Ros 2010; Komito 2011; Nedelcu, 2012) that will be discussed in detail in the next section.

In the last decade, the appropriation of mobile phones in migratory contexts has also introduced a new field of research. Advances in digital connectivity were accompanied by mobile applications that provided new tools for keeping transnational families together (Baldassar 2016; Madianou & Miller, 2012; Mahler, 2001). These applications came to occupy a central role in people's communication patterns, by offering different kinds of communicative services which ranged from “utilitarian” (productivity-oriented) to “hedonic” (pleasure-oriented) (Verkasalo, 2009, p. 332). Moreover, in migration contexts, mobile applications allowed migrants to personalise their mobile phones and adapt them to their transnational needs (Jung 2013). However, the conceptualisations of smartphone affordances in migration contexts are currently considered a vast field of study to be explored by different streams of research in the coming years. In that sense, there is research from sociology, anthropology, and communication studies that analyses the role of mobile phones in different types of migratory experiences (Cartier, Castells & Qiu, 2005; Horst & Miller, 2006; Chu & Yang, 2006; Paragas, 2009; Qiu, 2009). On the other hand, online platforms and networks (from social media to commercial sites) have also adapted their services by offering their own mobile applications to join the field of mobile phone affordances. These platforms can now be used from the computer or from the mobile phone itself. At the same time, there emerged an economic perspective to take advantage of migrant interconnection (Ross, 2018). The economic powers continue to develop physical and digital spaces, and different types of businesses around international communication networks: from the Internet cafes and call shops, money transfers and remittances, telephone companies with special rates for migrants, to more recently, mobile applications, web platforms, and social networks to encourage the return, which is the newest business around migration, often used for political purposes.

4.2 Media & Migration Research Perspectives

Parallel to the different phases of migratory processes and technological breakthroughs, contemporary media and communication scholarship has been evolving over the years from very different perspectives: from the studies on mass media to the more recent computer-based communication studies. Today more than ever, transnational communication studies are concerned with new interconnection scenarios in migratory contexts, since they involve new ways of interrelation, both with origin and destination countries. In media and migration studies, there is a certain academic consensus around the impact and influence of technology on international migration (Alonso & Oiarzabal, 2010). Nevertheless, what such an impact means in terms of significance and at the social level is yet to be determined. In that sense, within the discipline of communication studies, different research approaches have been developed to analyse the multiple media involved in migrants' "communicative connectivity" (Hepp et al., 2012, p. 17). For many years, the paradigm of 'mediation' (Martín-Barbero, 1987; Couldry, 2000; Silverstone, 2002; Livingstone, 2009) has held a very influential place within media theory and has become one of the main perspectives of critical analysis in the field of communication. The 'mediation' paradigm explains the interrelationships between social systems and different modes of communication and acknowledges that there is a reciprocal influence between communicative systems and the development of societies and different social processes. In that sense and in contexts of migration, the concept of mediation opens a new analytic space for reflection on the encounters and intersections between institutions and actors (Hegdee, 2019, p. 3). According to Silverstone (2002, mediation is a "dialectical process in which institutional communication (the press, the broadcast radio and television, and increasingly the world wide web), are involved in the general circulation of symbols in social life" (p. 762). Furthermore, Couldry (2008) goes beyond this dialectical relationship as a non-linear process and proposes understanding mediation as a "variety of dynamics within media flows" of circulation, without assuming "any stable circuit of causality in this process" (p. 9). Media is relocated as part of an assemblage of social and political actors who connect and link with each other and across different sites and platforms. Mediation, therefore, is also a constitutive part of how migration is experienced. In migratory contexts, mediation or mediated communication as the dialectical process centred on the circulation of meaning (Silverstone, 1999, 2005) and technologically mediated processes of communication, materialises in transnational networked communication, which includes

institutional actors, migrant families, and transnational information flows. Later, in attempt to achieve a wider-angle approach to media, a social constructionist perspective on *mediatisation* emerged (Krotz, 2007; Couldry, 2008; Hepp, 2011; Couldry and Hepp, 2013), aimed at describing profound processes of social change. More recently, Couldry and Hepp (2017) proposed the concept of “deep mediatisation” (pp. 34–56) to explain the present and pervasive stage of mediatisation and digital media in everyday life. According to the authors media-related changes are reshaping society and its infrastructures, but also individual behaviours and communities. They proposed to study communicative practices in relation to an overarching context in which the digital worlds are produced and symbolically situated.

The articulation of migration and different forms of communication represents a complex construct that opens a wide range of research perspectives. Indeed, the very terms “media” and “migration” are both rich sources of meaning. According to Smets et al. (2019), “media” can refer to “objects, texts, symbols, technologies and organisations”, while “migration” includes, “forms of human migration and mobilities, within states and across borders” (p. 45). Most of the different sub-genres in media and migration research have focused on the study of journalism/news reporting, the uses of social media, and fiction/cinema. Moreover, the encounters when approaching the study of media and migration are not only theoretical, but also methodological, both in the data gathering in the fieldwork and in the analysis. These methodological encounters include “both media-centric and non-media-centric frameworks, as well as migrant-centric and non-migrant approaches” (p. 55). Thus, this wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches includes studies on discourse analysis that focus on symbolic structures of texts, studies on interaction and the transference of meanings, and studies focused on media practices. Therefore, the combination of these diverse perspectives generates diverse and prolific theoretical and methodological encounters. More than a simple convergence, it involves feedback which enables both phenomena to evolve in constant interaction. In the following sections I will develop some of the most relevant perspectives. However, these approaches or research streams are not always exclusive, but can interrelate and even influence each other.

4.2.1 Media (mis) Representation of Migrants

The representation's perspective includes the different ways in which migration, migrants, and ethnic minorities are presented and symbolically constructed in different media (usually mainstream and mass media). Hence, representation plays a key role in terms of visibility, which frames the way in which the migration process and migrants are publicly defined and represented. Media, both as an important social actor and a discursive authority in information exchange, contributes actively to the creation of a social reality. It not only gives visibility or takes it away from specific events, but it also legitimises and encourages attitudes and social patterns. In fact, symbolic recognition has a clear influence in public emotions towards migration and how these emotions are related to certain forms of action (Chouliaraki et al., 2017, p. 10). Media communication intervenes in the social and cultural representation of migration, and in the negotiation of cultural diversity. The representation of emigration became a major research perspective since analyses on the cognitive frameworks and media representation derived from migration processes as important elements in the practices of cultural integration. Until a few years ago, media scholarship was mostly focused on the (mis)representation of migrants in different media, news, and popular culture (Madianou, 2014, p. 324). The media sphere has traditionally offered a predominantly negative treatment that tends to stigmatise, stereotype, victimise, and silence immigration (Igartua et al., 2007; Smet et al., 2019; Sendín & Izquierdo, 2008; Van Dijk 1991, 1997). In this regard the dominant representation frames often present "the symbolic duality of migrants as a victim and as a threat" (Chouliaraki et al., 2017, pp. 8-9). Although international migration has generally been considered a socially beneficial process in contrast to the era of nationalism, the perception of migration experienced a process of semantic deterioration. This primarily occurred after events such as 9/11 in New York, the 2004 Spain and 2007-2007 UK terrorist attacks, where migrants started to be directly or indirectly linked to said conflict (Castles et al., 2014). In this context, in an attempt to neutralise this trend, different studies emerged on the role of the symbolic practices of language in representing migration contexts (Wright, 2002, 2004; King & Wood, 2001). Meanwhile, other authors began to investigate the contributions of the migrant population to the host societies as well as the "artistic, activist and oppositional representations and narratives of migrants" (Smets et al., 2019, p. 48) that also take a central position in the exchange on social platforms.

4.2.2 Migrant Digital Presence or Absence?

In contexts of migration, transnational communication and networking challenge the conventional notions of spatialities, not only in terms of material and geographic space, but also in terms of networks and flows (Gilroy, 1993; Hall, 1990). In that sense, in order to fill meaning and theoretical gaps new concepts arose: from the *double absence* (neither here, nor there) of Sayad (1999), which challenges the concepts of emigration and immigration, to Beck's (2006) cosmopolitan vision of the *both here and there* based on the mobile condition of the modern migrants. Both authors aimed to explain new ways of symbolically re-positioning migrants in the social realm. In the first decade of the new millennium, Becks proposed the transition to a 'Methodological Cosmopolitanism' as a general social theory with the aim of overcoming the nation-state barriers. This proposal was based on the analysis of the transnationalisation of political and social relations. In the same line, more recent studies pointed to "the dialogically ubiquitous condition of the modern migrant" (Nedelcu, 2012, p. 1339) to refer the co-presence of migrants in multiple locations (in origin and destination countries). It was possible thanks to the fact that both the Internet and mobile phones have overcome the friction of distance (Dicken 2011). The extensive work on transnational migrant communities "no longer prevents individuals in remote locations from coexisting and interacting in ways that we can effectively describe as co-presence" (Tsagarousianou, 2019, p. 88). However, it is important to note that these forms of co-presence "do not merely enable their users to be in two places at once, but effectively give them the opportunity of producing new spaces where multiple remote localities and the experiences shared by their inhabitants come together, synchronise, and relate to each other" (p. 13). In digital environments, the boundaries between presence and absence get diffused. The conceptualisation of presence and absence not only challenge the social and symbolical position of migrants, they also challenge what it means to 'be a migrant' and the individual/community experiences.

On the other hand, there is a less frequent debate about the actual presence of the media itself; in fact, it is still difficult to establish what constitutes a medium, a question that can hardly be answered with precision or objectively (Meyer, 2011). Every communicative act has a material perspective that has often remained overlooked. Not only from a strictly technological point of view (the devices or technologies used to generate the communicative act), but also the bodies and actions involved in the communicative action,

the context in which it takes place, what the act has implied at a spatial and temporal level, or what emotions it has generated. Transnational embodiment refers broadly to how the physical situation of the human body in time and space influences its awareness: "it is relevant because emotional attachment to certain places is achieved through sense impressions and sense memory that connect lived experiences with personal narratives of migration, as well as (mediated) ties with places" (p. 45). If we assume that humans are emotionally connected to places, and that the notions of places and spaces are changing, so are the emotional aspects of communication.

4.2.3 Migrant's Digital Territorialisation and Spatialities

In close relation with the presence/absence, the boundaries of the *territory* and *territorialisation* also get diffused. Communication and *space* have an inextricable relation, primarily because different forms of communication take place in different physical but also symbolic spaces. In this context, Appadurai (1991) introduced the concept of ethnoscaples, which reflects the symbolic deconstruction of physical spaces, in spaces where interconnection and meanings are exchanged. In that sense, the symbolic construction of space is intimately linked to the spaces of mediation. According to Delanney (2005), territories are historically social creations, cultural artifacts developed with different kind of semantic implications in relation to the political, economic, and communicative context of the social order in which they have been developed: "Stone Age manifestations of territoriality were certainly different from electronic age manifestations of territoriality. The territories of literate societies differ from those of oral societies insofar as these involve strongly dissimilar forms of social life and different kinds of communicative practices" (p.10). It is also worth noting Roger Silverstone's (2007) academic contribution. Silverstone developed the concept of *Mediapolis*, a mediated public sphere and a new space of communication and public participation. Silverstone defined *Mediapolis* as the postmodern space of appearance, not in terms of the selective presence of the world in media, but instead he considered the media as a constitutive part of social reality. Accordingly, Mediapolis does not replace any physical space, but emerges from the interaction itself of human beings in a space of mediated appearance. Nevertheless, Silverstone pointed out that appearance was not a sufficient condition to speak about Mediapolis, but rather understands mediation as a practice in which people play an active role as listeners,

speakers, and actors (Silverstone, 2007, p. 38). Moreover, Lemos (2018) criticised the reduction of the media experience through deterritorialisation processes and rejected the consideration of virtual worlds or cybercultures apart from the real world. In that sense, authors Sheller and Urry (2006) called to examine mobilities “in their fluid interdependence and not in their separate spheres” (p. 212). It involves transcending territories as spaces or geographical containers of social processes, towards the appropriation of subjects and objects, which includes movements of images and information at the local, national, and global level. In that sense, the authors underline again that the development of new information technologies allows for new forms of communication and organisation of people. They also pointed to the material perspective of objects, as materials are also in movement, carried by bodies.

In summary, new mobile technologies are creating new forms of territorialisation (Lemos, 2018), assigning new meanings to concepts such as space, place, and even distance. The concepts are neither natural nor fortuitous, but cultural artifacts that are linked to social, cultural, economic, political, and also personal context. Rather than an absolute deterritorialisation, it would involve new forms of territorialisation though. Deterritorialisation could be better understood as a process of symbolic deconstruction rather than dematerialisation. This prompts us to reflect on the specific moment in which the concepts of space and distance undergo transformation and negotiation. According to Massey (1994, 2005) both spatiality and places are constructed as relational concepts primarily shaped by practices. In the same line, Witteborn (2011) stated that Socio-spatial complexities emerge from spatial subjectivities, collectivities, and materialities.

This chapter has provided an overview of the main contemporary theoretical encounters in media and migration studies. However, both migration and technologies continue to evolve, giving rise to new conceptual paths and perspectives: “there is also an increasing level of scholarly consensus across disciplines for the need to provide deeper contextualisation and theorisation of the connection between media forms, practices and materialities of migration” (Hegde, 2019, p. 5). The aim of this dissertation is therefore to delve into the construction of the contemporary Spanish diaspora from a historical and contextual perspective, analysing how the penetration of new technologies and specifically the associated media practices have had a definitive influence on the social and symbolic construction of the migratory process. In other words, to discern the changes of meaning in existing relations, through the analysis of the meaning-making moments of

communicative practices. Through the reconstruction of these practices, the concept of digital diaspora as a relational concept will be further developed as an empirically-based concept “that operates on three levels – Internet-specific, network-oriented and embedded in wider social practices – while also accounting for political, geographical and historical specificities” (Ponzanesi, 2020, p. 978). A fundamental question that this research aims to explore is to what extent the migrant public uses international networks for political empowerment, and especially to what extent they feel identified, and shape and reproduce the relation between media practices and power.

4.2.4 Migrants’ Digital Connectivity: The Connected Migrant

The incorporation of digital technologies into migratory processes inaugurated a new era of digital migration studies under three different paradigms: (a) “migrants in cyberspace”; (b) “everyday digitally mediated migrant life”; and (c) “migrants as data” (Leurs & Ponzanesi, 2018, p.14). These three paradigms, far from being closed categories, were further developed and interconnected. The fundamental cognitive shift in media communication studies arrived with the seminal manifesto *Connected Migrant* by Dana Diminescu (2002, 2008). It addressed the transformation of the uprooted and isolated condition of migrants into the connective presence. Under this perspective, many studies developed the topic of digital migrant connectivity as the interaction between migrants and their places of origin. In this line, numerous studies argued that digital and online media facilitate the ability for migrants to maintain personal transnational relations (Diminescu, 2008; Komito, 2011; Madianou & Miller, 2012). In general, different studies underline the positive effect of media consumption on migration processes (Komito,2011; Dekker & Engbersen, 2012; Ros, 2018) through a multitude of options of pre-departure, arrival, and adaptation in the reception country. The interconnectedness of migrants between countries of origin and destination has also generated interesting research on the different types of ties, such as strong and weak ties (Chen, 2013; Burke et al., 2011), as well as bridging and bonding ties (Ellison et al., 2007). Chen (2013) examined the significance of the ties in the context of migration and stated that strong ties typically refer to close and trust-based relationships, such as those with family and intimate friends. These strong connections can provide emotional support and assistance with adaptation in the destination country. Conversely, weak ties refer to less close connections, such as acquaintances and peripheral contacts. Burke et al. (2011) noted that these weak ties can be crucial for migrants, as they can provide access to information and opportunities that would otherwise be inaccessible.

For instance, acquaintances in the destination country can offer information about employment or housing. Ellison et al. (2007) highlighted how migrants establish relationships within their ethnic group or community (bonding connections) and how they interact with individuals from different groups or communities (bridging connections). The public or semi-public character of internet platforms enabled the expansion of traditional migrant networks, which resulted in new pools of contact and 'latent' ties. The most commonly discussed benefits include: to maintain and to extend personal networks, and to participate in the national debates of their home societies through transnational associations (Komito, 2011). According to Dekker and Engbersen's (2012) findings, new media technologies are not mere channels of migration, but they actively transform the nature of these channels, and facilitate migration in four interconnected ways (the first three related to personal ties) (p. 401): 1) new media technologies allow migrants to maintain and strengthen ties with friends and family; 2) activate weak ties, acquaintances, and friends of friends, relevant to processes of migration and integration; 3) awaken latent ties that already exist, but have not yet been activated. These links and networks developed transnationally (both local and distant networks) played a significant role in the process of exchanging imaginaries, and in the transformation of the community from dispersed populations into transnational actors. In this regard, some authors (Tsagarousianou, 2019, p. 12) questioned the excessive emphasis on the notion of a homeland and stressed the importance of countries of destination and the alternative experiential spaces created within the diaspora. A debate that includes rethinking both the concept of nation and national cultures, and national identity. This will be by means of exploring the creation and reproduction of diasporic cultures and associated concepts such as deterritorialisation, transnational links, processes of imagination/identification/belonging, and the practices set in motion in these social and cultural contexts associated with migratory processes.

Moreover, online media technologies constitute a great information resource that has allowed potential migrants to broaden their knowledge of the migratory processes, which potentially makes migrants "streetwise" (p. 4019) or at least well-informed when they undertake the experience of migration (Hiller and Franz, 2004; Burrell and Anderson, 2008; Ros, 2018). In other words, media offer migrants "culturally relevant and locally vital information to immigrants in the host society" (Yin, 2015, p. 558). These new channels of transnational communication, influenced migration processes and aspirations, and decision-making in processes of pre-migration (Dekker, et al., 2016; Castles et al., 2014). In

fact, through online media, non-migrants or pre-migrants are able to develop new ties in destination countries prior to departure, to prepare their journey, to gather information about the destination country, to learn about the processes of adaptation, and to keep the link between countries of origin and destination (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Baran, 2018; Bayramoğlu & Lünenborg, 2018; Bakewell and Jolivet, 2015; Belloni, 2019; Borkert et al. , 2018; Milivojevic, 2019). However, there are also authors who warn about the great diversity of this information, which exposes migrants to the possibility of encountering untrustworthy information or people with malicious intentions (Borkert et al., 2018; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014).

ITCs play a fundamental role in obtaining information, but also in the arrival and in the stage of socialisation, when ITCs become fundamental resources for social and employment interaction (Ros, 2018). In summary, new media communication technologies enhance the possibilities of maintaining strong ties with family and friends and offer a rich source of knowledge on migration. Nevertheless, the decision to emigrate is also influenced by other social, economic, and demographic determinants in both the country of origin and destination, as well as personal motivations linked to aspirations, expectations, needs, as well as to family (Massey, 1999), as opposed to the overexposure to information. On the other hand, personal ties and contacts are often stronger than any other motive to migrate. In fact, some authors suggest being cautious with claims about how and to what extent technologies impact migration trends, as there are studies that show that interpersonal social networks have more influence on migration decisions than the impacts received through technologies. Hence, although there is certain agreement that electronic media changes and broadens traditional migrant networks, which broadens the diversity of channels and information flows, the role of new technologies in how they shape communities and transnational identities still needs further investigation. For this reason, it seems more accurate to continue to study mediation as a process, rather than as a catalyst for migration (Dekker et al., 2016; Maitland, 2018). Nevertheless, migration mediation is a complex process which transcends much more than a mediating function. The transnationalisation and cosmopolitanisation of interconnected social spheres are overlapping spaces of belonging, systems of references, loyalties, and identifications. That means that different types of interconnected lives are developing simultaneously at a distance (Nedelcu, 2012). In that sense, to assume that connection constitutes an intrinsic element of migration also implies the recognition of a new model of social organisation (Ros, 2018).

Migration processes call to be re-examined from other perspectives beyond the political and media agenda, because it is increasingly noticeable that sociocultural practices of migration (among them media practices) are deeply transforming symbolic orders at the global, regional, and local levels. It is therefore necessary to approach communicational processes beyond the media, and to understand media practice as a broader and interrelational process, an intersubjective process in which social meanings and structures of significance are produced and reproduced within a multipolar system of references. Therefore, both the media representation of migration and the communicative practices of migrants are fundamental parts of the mediation of the process: “On the one hand, media narrates stories of migration before, during and after people’s moves, feeding into social imaginaries of what cross-border mobility means and who these people are. On the other hand, migrants themselves imagine and narrate space through their own verbal, auditory and visual practices on and through digital communications” (Smets, et al., 2019, p. 58). Information and communication technologies become an essential and indissociable component in migration processes, although the meanings of these media practices are still rather unexplored. In this new paradigm, beyond the role of important channels of communication in migration networks, the development of new media and communication technologies may be transforming the nature, meaning and, logic of migration processes in both origin and reception contexts (Ros, 2018; Madianou, 2014), but what is still not so clear is how exactly this is happening.

4.3 Migrants’ Communication as a Sociocultural Process

The problematisation of communication as a process and migration as a sociocultural action challenge the study both theoretically and methodologically, which leads us to rethink the way in which we approach social processes and interactions. In that sense, within media and communication studies, beyond the different perspectives, different social concepts need to be questioned in the context of media and migration interlinkages. Exploring migrants' communication as a process involves considering action as a social and cultural process that is produced and reproduced, negotiated, and made visible through different potential media forms. This has led to the diversification of the study on the intersection of media and migration into different perspectives. This perspective invites us to understand concepts such as digital diasporas and transnational identities, to link it to

other concepts whose meaning has been deconstructed and transformed by the interrelationship between ICT and migration.

4.3.1 The Concept of Diaspora and Diasporic Communication

Among the main contemporary perspectives on the study of migration and the media as a sociocultural process are the studies on identity and diaspora (Georgiou, 2006). Articles and academic work on the concept of diaspora have increased exponentially over the last decade to provide a basis for different qualitative perspectives on defining the high complexity of human mobility. Diasporic studies have mostly focused on the process of building diasporas and transnational communities through transnational connectivity, and the development of new identities and social meanings: “As migrants developed institutions, social action repertoires and transnational linkages, they challenged understandings of migration as an irrevocable one-way process of moving on or of leaving behind” (Tsagarousianou, 2019, p. 10). In that sense, media communication studies have underlined the relevant role of new technologies in distant connectivity, the construction of the translocal space, and the diasporic experience in general. However, as a complex and interactional process, it is still necessary to delve deeper into the particular meanings that diaspora takes on in wider debates on globalisation, in the tension between national and transnational scenarios, as well as in other political and theoretical constellations (p. 12). The concept has been multidisciplinary applied, from sociology, anthropology to cultural, communication and postcolonial studies. Postcolonialism as a critical tool “is not linked purely to a critique of Western colonisation and imperialism, but to other forms of domination and how they overlap in global relations that often include racialised, gendered and classed processes” (Ponzanesi, 2019, p. 18). This interdisciplinary concept applied in media studies (Appadurai, 1996), was also developed in power relationships in diasporic contexts with the aim of decolonising and transcending nation-state approaches towards new transnational dynamics. Hall (1996) considered the media not as objects, but as a set of practices of everyday life, as a potential space for empowerment and participation in social and cultural spheres where the interaction of class, race, and gender is negotiated. The concept of intersectionality emerged precisely in this theoretical crossroad, defined as “the description of the way multiple oppressions are experienced” (Smith, 2013). This concept illustrates the intersection between class, race, and gender. Intersectional analysis

applied to migration studies (McDowell, 2008; Bürkner, 2012) introduces the international perspective in the construction of identities within migrant populations and highlights contextualised “intra-group differences” and “axes of power and oppression” in transnational intersectional subjectivity (Bastia, 2014, p. 241). Thus, intersectionality is not only a space for oppression, but also for emancipatory potential, for identity, and agency (Fisher et al., 2019, pp. 60-61). The concept of intersectionality coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), has been used both as a methodology and as a theory, and can display different forms of intersection: structural, political and representational (Fisher et al., 2019, pp. 53-54). This perspective argues that it is not possible to analyse only one form of discrimination, as identity is composed of multiple overlapping categories that affect to some extent the person's social, cultural, and economic positioning. The concept of intersectionality offers a new perspective for the analysis of identity and social participation in migration contexts.

4.3.2 Materiality and Embodiment in Migration contexts

One final consideration is the material perspective of communication processes in migration contexts. The relationship between media studies and material world has been a process widely discussed from different theoretical approaches. According to Appadurai (2015) mediation is the very mode of materialisation, as a form of “embodied practice” that produces materiality through its operations (p. 224). In critical media and communication studies, with the user turn from the 1980s onward, a more constructivist research trend focused on user studies. In effect, the cultural and negotiated meaning of technologies emerged to approach how people appropriate new technologies and cultural meanings in their everyday life (Lievrouw, 2014). In this regard, concepts such as the material affordances of communication technologies arose (Hutchby, 2001; Kedra, 2020), social and material arrangements (Schatzki 2002; 2016), and the praxeological family of practices (Reckwitz, 2002). Social practices are the social embeddedness of the human activity, but such as culture or meanings, social practices are sites of contestation. Over the years, practice theorists have developed different conceptualisations of practices as embodied and materially mediated patterns of human activity. In summary, communication processes are not only mental or cultural processes, but "are intertwined with material practices, ranging from bodily movements to complex sociotechnical apparatuses" (Krtilova, 2015, p. 28).

Materiality is therefore also an important aspect of migrants' everyday practices. In that sense, it becomes part of the different ways in which the diaspora is constructed as a social and cultural process, through its everyday routines and media practices.

Nevertheless, the material perspective is not only concerned with the more technological facet or with the media artifacts, but also explores the processes of situated embodiment. To imagine homelands in the processes of migration involves mind but also body, a process that Alinejad (2011) coined as “transnational embodiment” (p. 45). The questions of identity and belonging can also be approached in terms of emotions and feelings. The interconnected everyday lives of migrants also produced different forms of networked affectivity. The media has an indisputable influence on how migration is constituted emotionally, from aspects related to communication, representation/media coverage, subjectivities, intimate relationships/spaces and, in general, how digital technologies mediate emotions in different migration contexts. (Alinejad & Olivieri, 2019, pp. 65-66). Finally, among the most recent studies of media and migration, there are four topics that still offer a vast space for empirical, theoretical and methodological development: “datafication of migration, the intersection between migration and mobility, memory and diversity teaching, and activism” (Smets et. al, 2019, p. 50). Nevertheless, whatever the perspective of approaching the cultural role of media or media practices in migratory contexts, at this point it is indisputable that the digital and cross-border exchange of people has generated new spaces of interaction that have inevitably transformed certain basic social notions.

However, despite the optimistic discourse of globalisation and new ICTs in the new millennium, different authors (Alonso & Oiarzabal, 2010; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014) also highlight the inequalities among migrants generated by technological development, not only in terms of access, but also in the quality of use of the information and communication technologies, also known as “digital divide”. Thus, even when the documented positive effects of ICT consumption in migration processes is widely accepted, new reflections around the limitations of these effects also emerge. This *digital divide* in access and ability appears especially in refugee movements, influenced by disparities in digital literacy, demographic features, financial status, and connectivity at different stages of migration (Arvanitis & Yelland, 2019; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Gillespie et al., 2018; Maitland, 2018; Ross, 2018; Ruokolainen & Widén, 2019; Witteborn, 2015). On the other hand, the

lower trustworthiness of virtual ties and the amount of information can also present problems when there is either insufficient, excessive, or contradictory information.

The other side of the digital divide is the empowerment model (Alonso & Oiarzabal, 2010) that focuses on the positive aspects of digitalisation. According to this perspective, digitalisation may empower and benefit diasporic communities in terms of representation and participation. Just as migratory processes have evolved throughout history, the ever-changing nature of new digital technologies requires constant review. They provide an inexhaustible avenue to continue to question the meanings and uses of ever-changing technologies, which transform our objects and perspectives of communication studies, both from a theoretical and methodological point of view. The challenge ahead is therefore to broaden conceptual networks and develop a certain methodological flexibility that allows us to understand all these economic, political, and cultural perspectives as integral parts of the mediated migration process itself, and not as separate spaces (Hegde, 2019). This dissertation aims to offer more insights into this *digital migrant being*, by introducing the material, practical, and processual character of this process. Other authors call for a deeper analysis and theorisation of class (mobility) and migration in order to establish what the similarities and differences in media consumption are within different migration trajectories (Lim, Bork-Hüffer, & Yeoh, 2016). To this end, this dissertation focuses primarily on two theoretical perspectives: the development of the concept of the digital diaspora, and the media practices in migratory contexts, which will be developed in depth in the next two chapters.

4.4 Open Challenges in Migration Studies and in this Dissertation

In this theoretical chapter I reviewed the broad scholarship on the media linkages to migration. First, I discussed how technological development has always been intimately linked to migratory movements, influencing their development and their forms of communication and organisation. In other words, how media and communication technologies play a constitutive role in migration processes. Media technologies generate new interconnection scenarios in migratory contexts and new ways of interrelation, both with origin and destination countries. Media and migration opened a wide range of research perspectives, not only theoretical, but also methodological. In this chapter I also provided a brief theoretical review of the main research encounters in this arena. The last part of the

chapter zooms into the theoretical framework of this dissertation, describing how the object of study is understood and introducing the basic theoretical concepts on which I will draw in the following chapters. The fundamental cognitive and theoretical shift in media and migration studies arrived with the seminal manifesto “*The Connected Migrant*” by Dana Diminescu (2002, 2008). It addressed the transformation of the uprooted and isolated condition of migrants into the connective presence. The topic of migrants' digital connectivity became a major focus of the migration experience, defining the interaction between migrants and their places of origin. (Diminescu, 2008; Komito, 2011; Madianou & Miller, 2012). From this context, the present study draws on media interlinkages to migration as a sociocultural process with the aim of providing applied information on how the growing connectivity of migrants is specifically materialised in media practices and in the generation of diasporic identities. For this purpose, I introduce the two key concepts of this study and I connected both scholarships. First, the studies on identity and diaspora (Appadurai, 1996; Georgiou, 2006; Ponzanesi, 2019; Tsagarousianou, 2019), to provide a basis for different qualitative perspectives to analyse human mobility, the generation of social meanings and the creation of new identities. Finally, the chapter focuses on the materiality perspective of communication processes in migration contexts, considering mediation as a form of materialisation, as a form of “embodied practice”. From this perspective, social practices are the social embeddedness of the human activity, but such as culture or meanings, social practices are sites of contestation. Both concepts will be developed in depth in the following two chapters. In summary, this study aims to explore the interlinkage between media and migration from both a material and an imagined perspective. In order to capture the dialectical and interconnected relation between new media and migration and from a distinctly ethnographic and non-mediacentric perspective, I was concerned with the various ways in which media practices are becoming an intrinsic part of migrants' lives, everyday social practices, and transnational experienced.

Chapter 5. Digital Diasporas and Cultural Identities

Diaspora studies provide this dissertation a firm theoretical background to explore transnational communication, diasporic communities and the development of collective identities in migration contexts. Diaspora, from the ancient Greek word *διασπορά*, or “to scatter about”, refers to the dispersion of ethnic and/or religious groups that left their original place of origin towards their settlement in different territories. Although the term was applied to refer to the expulsion of the Jewish people from the Holy Land, its meaning has been transformed over the years to designate different types of migrant communities and peoples scattered outside their country of origin. The notion of diaspora was re-conceptualised in global contexts in order to include new dimensions of human mobility. Traditionally associated with migration and colonisation processes, new diaspora was re-appropriated in contemporary theories on migration, which dynamised the discussion of mobility in the context of globalisation and multicultural societies. Such a theoretical framework involved the reconceptualisation of the central concepts on migration and media studies, which replaced migration and mobility with the notion of diaspora. The contemporary concept of diaspora recognises mediation and heterogeneity and enables the incorporation of displacements not necessarily forced or encouraged by violence/persecution (Georgiou, 2006). The concept of diaspora also introduced new variables on creation/modification of identity, and it was (and still is) increasingly used to understand migratory belonging processes in the context of globalisation, in contrast to traditional acculturation methods used in psychology (Bhatia & Ram, 2009). It involved a deconstructive approach from the concept of identity as a unique and static product, towards a re-interpretation of identity as a process of identification/recognition (Hall, 2011). Diasporic identity is considered as an entity in constant movement, not subjected to fixed patterns, but influenced by different sociocultural, sociopolitical and socioeconomic factors. It constitutes a process of negotiated interactions that constructs and re-constructs self-perception. The multifaceted contexts, encompassing political landscapes, societal structures, economic conditions, gender dynamics, media influences, and more, play a pivotal role in the development of the concept of diaspora.

Digital diaspora approach also include the connectivity perspective, which displace the core meaning of diaspora as a dispersed population, to a distant but transnationally and translocally-connected population, which created new spaces, communities, and networks where new identities are negotiated. Although the concept of diaspora has often been associated with a certain essentialism (Smets, 2019), diaspora research has evolved beyond the relation of diaspora communities to places and localities and focuses on the processual character of diaspora and on the "connectivity of communication processes" (Hepp & Couldry, 2009, p. 37). In order to avoid the semantic dispersion of the concept, Tsagarousiannou (2019) suggested focusing the discussion on the "multiple ways in which the debate on diasporas converges with the broader debates on globalisation and late modernity" (p. 12). According to the author, the complex connectivity intersection of transnational communities also had a definitive influence in the imagination and reconstruction of the diasporic condition and the diasporic communities.

5.1 The Construction of Diasporic Communities

Mass migration, combined with the development of electronic mediation, led to new diasporic public spheres that were no longer small, marginal, or exceptional (Appadurai, 1996, pp. 5-10). As previously noted, the reconceptualisation of diasporic communities in contemporary cultural studies was initially related to the so-called imagined communities (Anderson, 1991) built through mutual recognition, information exchange, and consumption of imaginaries. According to Anderson, when nations were defined as communities based on a common culture and history, the media played an important role in the imagination of the nation-state through the production and exchange of discourses of identity and culture in a community shaped by people of the same nationality. Nevertheless, this perspective began to be questioned as soon as national cultural production was no longer fixed to territories delimited by borders. Schiller (2008: 613) argued that this perspective would directly lead to a methodological nationalism, that, applying an "ethnic lens" distorted the study of media and migration, and did not reflect the diversity of contacts or relations between countries around the world. Simultaneously, globalization and translocalities have both played a role in the subsequent crisis of the traditional state concept. The categorisations of human mobility in "conventional state-centred logic" (Alonso & Oiarzabal, 2010, p. 7) were widely criticised as they failed to adapt to the complex processes of mobility and migration in contexts of transnationalism and

globalisation. As an alternative, emerged the concept of *transnationalism* (Hannerz 1996, 1998; Smith 2001, 2005). This alternative was better adapted to contemporary contexts of mobility and socio-spatial interconnectedness, where borders are replaced by systems of networks and flows (Castells, 1996). Myria Georgiou, a key author in contemporary conceptualisation of diaspora as mediated space, developed a related concept called the *universalism-particularism continuum* (2005: 481-498). Under this perspective, diasporic media cultures challenged the limits of both European universalism and diasporic particularism since they were fed from ideas of globalisation and democratic participation, as well as from ideas of identity and particularism. Georgiou argued that diasporic media contexts are global in scope but particular in their cultural role. In other words, that they were expressions of the universalisation of particularism and conversely, at the same time, the particularisation of universalism. Other authors described this exchange as the relational continuum of *encapsulation and cosmopolitanisation* (Christensen & Jansson, 2015; Georgiou & Zabarowski, 2017; Leurs & Ponzanesi, 2018). Here, encapsulation refers to the maintenance and nurturing of networks and relationships with the homeland and co-nationals, while cosmopolitanisation points to the bridging possibilities to connect to other groups and communities (Ponzanesi, 2020, pp. 979-980). Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that these two forms of exchange were not mutually exclusive, but rather coexisted in migrant connectivity networks.

5.2 Diasporic Media, Identity and Visibility

Since early 2000 *diasporic media* has been proliferated in many different forms and formats. Diasporic media were described “as the media that are produced by and for migrants and deal with issues that are of specific interest for the members of diasporic communities” (Bozdag et al., 2012, p. 97). Over time, the scope began to open to include broader aspects of the migrants' media experience, such as the appropriation of media by diasporic groups. In general terms, there are two main lines of analysis among diasporic communication studies. The first approach was the diasporic media mapping that analyses morphological characteristics and their social significance (Gómez-Escalonilla, 2008, 2012). As already mentioned, under this approach, diasporic media were usually defined as those media created mostly by and for the diaspora, which were also often associated with ethnic media. On the other hand, the second approach addressed media use or social media practices in diasporic contexts. Under this perspective, the academic contributions of Myria Georgiou

and Roger Silverstone (2003) for the *European Media Technology and Everyday Life network* project had great relevance within the European framework. The authors provided an exhaustive mapping of diasporic communities in 15 European states and their media. They aimed to analyse how media were involved in the development of transnational communities.¹¹ Diasporic media, as the mediated representation of the community, can provide powerful images of self-representation and empowerment symbols within host countries and in homeland and transnational public spheres as well (Georgiou, 2006). In these emerging mediated diasporic spaces digital media not only linked individuals to their countries of origin but also fostered connections with their host countries, giving rise to dual belonging relationships. Moreover, individuals are also connected with third cultures, which enables people to maintain multipolar sociocultural relations. In that sense, media consumption of connections and information began to be considered social capital for human settlement and diasporic connection of individuals (Varela, 2012).

5.3 The Concept of Digital Diaspora

In the late 80s, Jesús Martín-Barbero (1987), one of the most influential theorists in contemporary audience and media reception research, introduced the concept of *mediation*. Martín-Barbero articulated the transfer process from media to mediation, where public produces and appropriates the meaning and sense of the communication process. In this proposal, consumption was considered a cultural instance, therefore taking part in the construction of identity. Along this line, several studies have explored the potential of digital diasporas in the process of identification and belonging (Bayramoglu and Lunenborg, 2018; Brinkerhoff, 2012; Georgiou, 2010; Kok and Rogers, 2017; Leurs, 2016; NurMuhammad et al., 2016). The connection between these concepts lies in the recognition of how digital technologies mediate and facilitate the experiences of diasporic communities. Martín-Barbero's mediation concept explained how digital platforms act as intermediaries in the maintenance and evolution of cultural identities within the digital diasporas. These platforms become the spaces where cultural meanings are negotiated, shared, and reconstructed, showcasing the interplay between media, culture, and identity. Under this paradigm, migration became a question of identity, a diasporic process in which migrants' interaction with media technologies symbolically (re)situate them in both origin and

¹¹ http://www2.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/emtel/minorities/minorities_docs.html

destination countries (Mădroane, 2017). Contemporary theorisation of diaspora has always depended on increasing mediation (Georgiou, 2006). Myria Georgiou explored how diasporic communication was actively involved in the construction of new migration processes, and redefined the sense of belonging, group identification, *otherness*, and subsequent community imagination (Georgiou, 2006). Digitalisation contributed to proliferation of low-cost diasporic media, which afforded diasporas the ability to maintain and progressively extend their networks: from letters, telephone, mobiles, call shops, and internet cafés, to satellite television, Internet, email, chats, video conferencing, social networks such as Facebook or Twitter and mobile apps such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram... These resources allow users to actively and simultaneously participate in different geographies. It is precisely within this information exchange as an extension of translocal networks where diaspora generate a shared recognition (Hepp et. al, 2011). At the same time, while telecommunications reduced social and physical distance between countries of origin and host countries, they also allowed a strong cultural pressure from home communities (Uriarte & Etcheverry, 2012).

The first decade of the new millennium and especially the first half of the second, brought along a wide spectrum of studies on digital diasporas and digital transnational communities (Alinejad, 2011; Alonso & Oiarzabal, 2010; Georgiou, 2006). Nevertheless, the concept of digital diasporas still remains theoretically contested. In fact, the concept has been developed with different theoretical variants such as “e-diasporas, net-diasporas, web-diasporas” (Diminescu 2008), “virtual diaspora” (Laguerre, 2010) or “ye-diaspora” -youth specific diaspora- (Donà, 2014). Diminescu (2012) proposed the concept of *e-diaspora*, or “a migrant collective that organises itself and is active first and foremost on the Web” (p. 452) but not exclusively. According to Diminescu, *e-diasporas* involve both the online and offline processes that describe the social and institutional context of the connected migrant (p. 452). Alonso and Oiarzabal (2010) defined “digital diaspora” as “the distinct online networks that diasporic people use to re-create identities, share opportunities, spread their culture, influence homeland, and host-land policy, or create debate about common-interest issues by means of electronic devices” (p. 11). The author approached the concept of digital diasporas directly in terms of the online networks that are used by diasporic people with different purposes. Michel Laguerre (2010) linked the concept of “virtual diaspora” with “the use of cyberspace by immigrants or descendants of an immigrant group for the purpose of participating or engaging in online interactional transactions” (p. 49). In this

conceptualisation, virtual diaspora was defined as the use of cyberspace by immigrants, with the purpose of participating. The focus of this definition, then, was on how diaspora use media technologies to maintain relationships with different actors. These “transactions” or networked relations may take place in many different ways, both in the country of origin and in the country of destination, both publicly and privately, with different devices, etc. Moreover, the author also included the need for “real-life diasporas” as a precondition for the existence of “virtual diasporas” and considered them as a virtual pole continuum: “By extension, virtual diaspora is the cyberexpansion of real diaspora” (p. 49). On the one hand, what both definitions have in common is the understanding of the digital diaspora as the ‘use’ of new media technologies. They understand “use” as making something to serve a purpose. On the other hand, they show the passive and utilitarian character of objects/devices/artifacts. Nevertheless, in his later definition of the “digital diaspora”, Laguerre (2010) also included the identity negotiation, and argued that “connectivity makes it possible for the diaspora to express and perform its digital identity” (p. 50). Still, he also outlined the three conditions for a diaspora to emerge: “migration”, “information technology”, and “networking”. Following the author “digital diaspora is an immigrant group or descendant of an immigrant population that uses IT connectivity to participate in virtual networks of contacts for a variety of political, economic, social, religious, and communicational purposes that, for the most part, may concern either the homeland, the host land or both, including its own trajectory abroad” (p. 50). Ponzanesi (2020) defined “digital diaspora” as “the use of the Internet to connect members of diasporic communities” (p. 983). She also introduced identity and belonging processes as an integral part of the construction of the concept: “this place is what members of the community have in common – where their roots are, their original home, their sense of belonging, their community” (p. 983). In other words, a bounded community that recreate, not only an imaginary “homeland”, but also a place for transnational participation. She considered digital diaspora as a relational term that operates on three levels: “Internet-specific, network-oriented, and embedded in wider social practices – while also accounting for political, geographical, and historical specificities” (p. 978). Another key author in the development of the concept of “digital diaspora” is Radhika Gajjala (2019). She introduces the question of gender and power correlations in situated contexts. According to the author, in technologically mediated diasporas, the negotiation of these spaces takes place at online/offline intersections, through situated practices and particular socio-cultural contexts that define different power relations. Gajjala draws on the concept of the “digital

diaspora” to refer to “diasporic populations around the world use the internet to connect to each other. Digital media used for digital diaspora formations are interactive and potentially allow people from all over the world with similar interests and similar missions to feel located in one “place” and able to gather in common space” (p. 11-12). In this process, the author underlined the specific conditions of subjectivity that migrants reproduce in their media practices in specific spatio-temporal engagements and in particular socio-cultural contexts. Digital diaspora is shaped by the internet use and digital connectivity of migrants worldwide. Immersion in global digital environments transforms the spatio-temporal everyday experiences of migrants through the development of different digital practices. These digital practices can include from discursive practices, practices of interaction, to manifestations of subject position and processes of belonging that express particular socio-cultural affiliations. In this process migrant develop new socio-cultural literacies. Gajjala further proposed the conceptualisation of *ghar* and *bahir* as “a nuanced notion of private and public where the idea of *ghar* includes, for instance, a culturally or religiously bound community— as in the case of immigrant communities— and *bahir* refers to anyone or group of people considered not part of that community” (2019: 42). According to the author, *ghar* and *bahir* does not exactly coincide with the commonly used private/public spheres. Firstly, because the idea of public/private does not apply equally to all populations. On the other hand, they do not constitute strict bounded binaries by themselves, as they work in a continuum. Digital tools make it possible to participate in the public realm from home or to transform the private into the public. However, the practice is not defined by the use of the tools and their affordances, but by the reproduction of different kinds of literacies, such as social, cultural or technological. As can be appreciated, the concept of digital diaspora is often abstract and transversal enough to welcome different theoretical reflections without changing its meaning.

The consumption of media within diasporic communities is not merely an individual activity; rather, it constitutes a dynamic process characterized by the intertwined dynamics of public and private spheres, as well as national and transnational elements, forming a continuous and mutually dependent relationship (Georgiou, 2006). It is in this dialectical tension that the essence of digital diaspora arises. Through diasporic appropriation of social media, digital diaspora generates new forms of public representation and create diasporic identities that are not defined but liminal. Following these reflections, digital media, as powerful generators of identity, have become the most important social capital for auto-representation, public participation, and the collective empowerment of the diaspora. In

summary, there is a continuous and dependent relation between media practices and migration experience: not only does the experience of migration influence media consumption, but media practices themselves shape migration. Media practice involves much more than networking: “Digital diasporas are considered to be mutually constituted here and there, through bodies and data, across borders and networks, online and offline, by users and platforms and through material, symbolic and emotional practices that are all reflective of intersecting power relations” (Ponzanesi, 2019, p. 21). The academic production on digital diasporas has been developed from different research streams, with audience research being the most widespread. This research stream focuses on the media consumption of the diasporas, both alternative and mainstream media, audiences, and readers in diasporic communities. There are also qualitative studies that apply ethnography and approach mediated cultural practices and the associated identity processes (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 65). The increasing literature on the diasporas’ use of media pointed out that “the ever increasing use of transnational communication technologies has become central in supporting, organising and dissemination shared narratives, memories and experience as well as diversity within diasporas, in their cognitive and affective mapping” (Tsagarousianou, 2019, p. 13). Digital diaspora will always constitute a vast field of study to analyse media practices and the development of different migratory currents as a continuum. In that sense, an increasing number of studies begin to recognise the potential of digital diaspora to generate sources of memory.

5.4 Memory and Cultural Identity in Diasporic Contexts

Diaspora studies also provide a new space for self-reflective discourse and identification processes, which reinforce identities and the sense of belonging (Hepp et al., 2012; Georgiou, 2006; Tsagarousianou, 2004). In these new transnational spaces, migrants negotiate and express their hybrid identities as part of their everyday life and as members of the diaspora (Franklin, 2013; Madianou & Miller, 2012; Madianou, 2014; Nedelcu, 2012). Identity is always linked to the practices carried out in day-to-day environments. In that sense, the authors Natalia Rybas and Radhika Gajjala (2007) underline the need to approach the study of identity construction in technospaces from the perspective of the production of culture and subjectivity in specific contexts of interaction, in order to gain “a nuanced understanding of how identities are formed and performed in such socioeconomic

environments” (para. 1). In a dialectical interaction, hyperconnected sites and services allow users to participate publicly or semi-publicly, and to share biographical information that conforms the *mediatised memory* (Hoskins, 2014). On the other hand, the formation of a personhood or an identity require autobiographical memories or identity records “based on long-term remembrance of facts, emotions, and experiences” that constantly evolve (Van Dijk, 2007, p. 3). Consequently, there is an inextricable relationship between cultural identity and remembrance processes. In the field of social sciences, Maurice Halbwachs (1967) was the first to develop the concept of *collective memory* to refer to the set of memories of a society in his work *Les Cadres Sociaux de la Mémoire*. According to Halbwachs, memory is an eminently social phenomenon. always directly related to collective memory. Thus, collective memory should be considered as social, shared, transmitted, and built by the group or society. He emphasized that individual memories are inexorably linked to collective memory, as personal recollections are shaped and influenced by the broader cultural, social, and historical context in which individuals exist. Halbwachs's pioneering ideas underscored the communal nature of memory, highlighting that collective memory is a dynamic and shared repository of experiences, narratives, and symbols, which are transmitted, constructed, and continuously reshaped by the group or society at large. This perspective has guided extensive research and analysis in the social sciences, deepening our understanding of how societies remember and commemorate their past, and how these collective memories influence social identity, culture, and historical consciousness. The discussion on the *collective identity* was later revisited by Jan Assmann (1993) in his academic work *Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis*, which introduced the concept of *communicative memory*, which refers to memories that are based on the recent past, i.e. on everyday communication. This form of memory deals with the social aspect of individual memory that is developed in the relationships between individuals. Collective memory fulfilled the general storage function, while communicative memory performed the function of an everyday memory that is situated in the present. Collective memory refers then to biographical memory based on the experiences of individuals but influenced by social interaction and the socioeconomic-political context. In that sense, Berta Mendlovic (2014) suggests that sociohistorical transformations of the context involve necessary changes both in the content and in the form of the memories. The author argues that the contemporary social scenario framed by globalisation, hypermobility, transnational flows, and specially the development of ICT and the growth in media literacy, will shape unprecedented forms of mnemonic spaces and practices. Memory has recently been defined as an emerging topic within media and

migration studies (Smets et. al, 2019, p. 50). It is worth noting that not all contemporary studies focus on past memories, but they also open new theoretical venues, especially in relation with digital media. This future-oriented dimension of memory (Hajek et al., 2016; Hoskins, 2014; Koselleck, 2004) is closely related to the work of Halbwachs (1967) on the constitution of the past in terms of present concerns and actions. The future-oriented dimension of memory, as discussed by Hajek et al. (2016), Hoskins (2014), and Koselleck (2004), refers to the idea that our memories are not solely about the past, but they also play a crucial role in shaping our expectations and perceptions of the future. This concept suggests that our recollection of past events influences our understanding of what lies ahead. Hajek et al. (2016) emphasize that this dimension highlights the adaptive nature of memory, as it helps individuals anticipate and plan for future events based on their past experiences. In the same line, Hoskins (2014) explores how collective memories of historical events can shape a society's aspirations and goals, impacting its trajectory. Koselleck (2004) introduces the temporal structure of historical consciousness, emphasizing how concepts of past, present, and future are intertwined in our memory. In summary the future-oriented dimension of memory underscores the dynamic relationship between our recollections of the past and our expectations for the future.

Memory studies is a complex field of research because it crosses the paths of different disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, history, cultural analysis, and of course, media and communication research. There are more and more new studies that analyse how media practices take part in the collective and archiving of personal memory. Memory studies offer a broad field of research on “how movement is remembered and archived by whom and for what purposes” (Smet et al., p. 51). In media memory Studies, we find a variety of perspectives and scholarship that establishes a “new memory ecology that transformed the traditional ways to research in this field” (Brown & Hoskins, 2010, p. 94). Among the main contributors on the connective turn in memory studies we find different approaches: memory studies as analytical concept (Birkner & Donk, 2020; Kitch, 2005); memory in a mediated world (Hajek et al., 2016); the mediatisation of memory (Hoskins, 2009); and other studies developed the role of social media in the communities’ memory culture (Garde-Hansen, 2011; Neiger et al., 2011; Van Dijck, 2007).

In the era of digitalization, memory is generated through people connecting, inhabiting, and creating increasingly complex sets of social networks (Hoskins, 2011, p. 271). According to Neiger (2011) "collective memories do not exist in the abstract. Their

presence and influence can only be discerned through their ongoing usage" (p. 3). In that sense, the mediatisation of memory introduced a new digital temporality of memory (Hoskins, 2009). Following these new epistemological reflections, memory can be considered as a living entity in continuous development in which any type of medium has capabilities or potentialities for the memory-making and for performing mnemonic practices. In that sense the author argues that: "memory's biological, social, and cultural divisions and distinctions seem increasingly blurred if not collapsed under the key active dynamic of the emergent media–memorial relationship: hyperconnectivity" (Hoskins, 2014, p. 661). Under this perspective, "remembering becomes less a matter of patchy reimaginings and reconstructions drawn from the traces of declining lives and decaying objects and media, and more a matter of personal and public hyperconnectivity strung out in multiple and mobile real-times" (p. 664). In that sense, contemporary memory is increasingly related with the concept of media practices as there are "inextricable interconnections between acts of remembrance and the specific mediated objects through which these acts materialize" (Van Dijk, 2007, p. 16). Ultimately, datafication opens up another new perspective in both quantitative and qualitative terms, to further explore large-scale and small-scale data and memories as archives. In this line, Diminescu (2019) introduces "migration traceability as a new model for the analysis of migration" aimed at compiling digital data recorded or digital prints left in order to reconstruct migratory itineraries in real time or over long periods (p. 77).

5.5 Citizenship and Diasporic Political Participation

Ultimately, diasporic media also emerged as a potentially empowering element. In regard to diasporic media communication visibility Georgiou (2018) pointed out that digital communication is constituted as a major expression of alternative mediation for migrants and refugees "against the voiceless and threatening *Other* that predominates in Europe's mainstream media" (p. 54). Diasporic media mediate the community's participation and identities in transnational contexts but can vary in its different kind of political and social aims: management, professional networks, communicative strategy, and technologies, commercial (or not) condition, size, potential to reach people and lifespan (Bailey et al., 2008, pp. 63-64). Although diasporic media may have the potential as counter-hegemonic power for social change, they cannot be considered inherently as counter-hegemonic

means, but rather the empowerment emerges from the use of new technologies by migrants rather than from the means itself (Mădroane, 2017; Bailey et al., 2008; Georgiou, 2006).

At the beginning of my dissertation, the political participation of Spanish migrants in Germany did not feature among my analytical objectives. However, during these research years, not only did my academic interests change, but Europe itself and the intra-European power correlations also changed. Parallel to this process, I was able to observe how the contemporary Spanish diaspora has evolved, how their political interest and experiences have dominated a great part of the in-depth interviews. At that moment I realised that indeed that the traditional concept of migrants as isolated, uprooted was on its last legs and I understood the importance of migrants' political participation. According to Katsiaficas (2014), political participation allows migrants to meet basic needs in terms of representation, to know their rights, to feel protected, and sometimes to counteract obstacles and restrictions to their own participation in the receiving country. In that sense, media consumption plays a fundamental role in terms of the relational aspect of political participation: it contributes to the creation of new digital spaces, the construction of social identity and also “facilitates both resistance of transnational political activists” (Smets et. al, 2019, p. 46). While it is not a novelty that the internet is generally used for political purposes, in the case of diasporas, ICTs have a pervasive role in the very shaping of the community. The links between migrants and their countries of origin, makes ICTs indispensable and an integral part of any social exchange. Some studies suggest that political interaction in cyberspace fosters the empowerment of digital diasporas, the integration of migrants and the appropriation of public space (Marino, 2015). From this transnational perspective media “contribute to the emergence of publics and social movements which are simultaneously embodied and mediated, locally embedded, and translocally perceived” (Foellmer et al., 2017, p. 1). Citizens' political participation is no longer confined to the territory of the nation-state and, diasporic communities began to be considered in political terms, not only by the wider society, but also by political parties. In fact, it is no coincidence that most Spanish political parties developed their federations abroad in these years, they began to consider the potential of the migrant as a political actor.

The concept of diaspora includes political projects that articulate the often-unheard voices of migrants (Georgiou, 2007). Therefore, diaspora also welcomes the issues of recognition and voice emerging in the public space of new forms of politics and collective action

(Tsagarousianou, 2019). It also includes cultural politics derived from diasporic activism and everyday practices of migrants. In that sense, diasporas are much more than just distant ethnic minorities or appendages of the countries of origin, but constitute new ways of thinking about belonging, national cultures and identities, transnationally, citizenship and power correlations. To that end, it is necessary to explore the concept of participation through the media and, specifically, political participation in diasporic contexts. The diversification of new media technologies and communicative practices calls for a revision of the traditional concept of citizenship, in which participation can be considered as a form of social agency rather than as a formal set of rights and obligations (Dahlgren, 2009). Considering media as a particular form of cultural production, the mediated meaning of cultural citizenship involves “all those cultural practices that allow competent participation in society and includes the rights to be represented and to speak actively” (Klaus & Lünenborg, 2012, p. 204). In that sense, cultural citizenship can be considered as a key concept to understand social implications of media practices for political participation and cultural meaning production. The notion of participation has been extensively developed with a range of meanings and applications in different disciplines, but also in media and communication studies, it is used in very different ways. Carpentier (2011) contributed to the debate with two interconnected forms of participation in relation to media: participation *in* the media and *through* the media. From this perspective, participation *in* the media was related with the production of media content and participation in the media organisational decision-making process. Participation *through* the media referred to the mediated participation in public debate and self-representation in a variety of public spaces where citizens can express their opinions and experiences as well as interacting with other citizens. According to Dahlgren (2009) political participation implied a certain *activity*, which can also include acts of communication. Furthermore, although certain media practices can be defined as public and/or political participation in the sense that they are themselves forms of appropriation of public space (not only for public visibility but also for political purposes), not every kind of *doing* with media or consumption of media output can be considered as political actions (Dahlgren, 2009; Baym, 2010). Media practices can be considered as political participation when such media practices intervene in the political agenda or perform political acts in themselves. In that regard, Dahlgren (2009) proposed the distinction between the concepts of participation and engagement. While engagement is considered a subjective state or attention in some object, participation presupposes some degree of engagement with a certain grade of civic agency, including practical and do-able

activities (including online practices), where citizens can feel empowered or in other words, where citizens or ordinary people can actively take part in social life towards influencing directly or indirectly the political context. In the contentious politics realm, digital communication networks may transfer political action to citizens, experiencing other forms of participation and mobilisation beyond conventional political channels (Bennet, 2006). In fact, more recent studies (Barbas and Postill, 2017), argue that movements such as the abovementioned 15M, the immediate reference of *Marea Granate*, have reinvented *Communication for Social Change* since, through a large repertoire of media practices with a clear pedagogical orientation, they have turned the movement into a kind of “political school” (p. 646) that brings together diverse traditions of thought, including anarchism, alterglobalism, media activism, and hacktivism. In the same vein, other studies focus on the analysis of the kind of participation that ICTs facilitates or restricts and the levels of autonomy that can be achieved through these practices (Montero & Sierra, 2017; Bennett & Segerberg, 2015), giving more relevance to agency-related aspects and the real possibilities for emancipation of technological development. According to Montero & Sierra (2017) new forms of connectivity and activism of new social movements are advancing a new regime of social information and representation. Bennet and Segerberg (2012) defined this process as *connective action*, a new logic of self-organisation enabled by connective action networks highlighting: “the role of communication as an organising principle in personalised, digitally networked action” (p.27). This perspective does not only involve personal action frames, but instead points to the connection of these networks in large- scale communication organisational structures or, in other words, in digitally networked action. According to the authors, the main difference with the more familiar *logic of collective action* is that digital actions are carried out by individuals, not by organisations composed mainly of professionals, unions or political parties. Therefore, this includes new ways in which protest is organised and digital media are used, in which individuals do not need a central organisation to be activated in the conflict. In that sense, media practices are increasingly implicated in the organisation of social movements and in how they work ‘determining how large and fast they grow, how they achieve some semblance of coherence, how long they last, and what kinds of impacts they may have’ (Bennett & Segerberg, 2015, p. 13).

In terms of the political participation of migrants, digital and social media enabled to engage larger publics, within and beyond national borders, internationalising political processes and transforming passive mass media audiences in active participants through the interactive media offer (Bennet et al., 2014, p. 233). Political interaction of migrants in the cyberspace facilitated the empowerment of digital diasporas and allowed the appropriation of public space (Marino, 2015). In the Spanish case, the irruption of movements such as 15M on the political scene in Spain, and the consequently political reactivation of citizens spread across the Spanish borders, simultaneously activated the Spanish migrant population. The present dissertation also seeks a to draw further on how quotidian usage of digital media is related to and/or allows public and political participation of migrants by developing the concept of media practice. For this purpose, it will be necessary to explore the relationship between power and technology, power and media practices and how networked connectivity in communities may lead to different forms of empowerment. This topic has been more extensively developed in digital activism and social movements than in media and migration studies. In previous chapters it was discussed how Spanish emigrants in previous waves of emigration developed different kinds of associations as a social adaptive response to the new environment. These associations fulfilled basic needs of migrants, including in-person meeting with co-nationals, generating solidarity networks, sharing information or reproducing cultural elements, and also political activities. This dissertation will also address the political media practices of the contemporary Spanish migration in order to build an interpretative framework of the new forms of political digital participation in migration contexts.

This dissertation aims to focus on the evolution of the concept of diasporic communication and how media practices have contributed to shaping transnational communities and identities in the European post-financial crisis. Acknowledging the significance of media texts and media production's structures, the current discussion is focused more on the media practices of diasporic communities rather than on the diaspora representation in social media, although symbolic representation can also constitute discursive practices, as will be explained in following sections. In that sense, media practices become the second main theoretical concept in the research object, which will be developed in the next chapter.

5.6 Open Challenges in Digital Diaspora Studies

Digital diaspora is part of broader social processes such as the reconfiguration of geographical spaces, culture, and identity. Consequently, various institutional, social, and cultural structures are activated to imagine a community with mechanisms of collective engagement around the notions of recognition, visibility, and voice (Tsagarousianou, 2019). In this chapter, I summarized some of the main theoretical concepts associated with the creation of diaspora and cultural identities and how it operates in frameworks of hyperconnectivity. First, I addressed the reconceptualisation of the concept of *diaspora* by cultural studies. The contemporary concept of diaspora recognised mediation, heterogeneity and the incorporation of displacements not necessarily forced or encouraged by violence/persecution (Georgiou, 2006). On the other hand, the concept of diaspora also introduces the identity, community and belonging processes in contexts of contemporary contexts of mobility and socio-spatial interconnectedness. I also provided information about the different approaches to diasporic media in terms of visibility, as the mediated representation of the community. I argue that the appropriation of digital media have contributed to creating diasporic identities, which are linked to ethnicity, transnationalism, community, and multiple identities. Finally, the core of this chapter discussed the implications of the mediated condition of diaspora and the contemporary conceptualisation of “digital diaspora” (Gajjala, 2019; Georgiou, 2006; Hepp et al., 2011). Gajjala addressed the specific conditions of subjectivity that migrants reproduce in their media practices in specific spatio-temporal engagements and in particular socio-cultural contexts. In that regard, this chapter also explores the theoretical developments in the relation between cultural identity and memory, how digital contexts can be a space for self-reflective discourse/belonging processes leading to a mediated memory in terms of acts of remembrance of facts, emotions, and experiences online. The last section of the chapter introduces the political participation of migrants in digital and transnational contexts.

Drawing on these reflections, Digital diaspora in global digital environments transforms the spatio-temporal everyday experiences of migrants through the development of different digital practices. In summary, the concept of digital diaspora introduces the analysis of contemporary migration as a social and cultural process in a context of increasing mediation. The objective is to discern *how* diasporic communication is actively involved in the construction of new migration processes. This research aims to provide empirical

information on the media practices of Spanish migrants in Germany and on the generation of transnational identities and communities, and thereby contribute to the theoretical body of contemporary digital diasporas. To that end, from an inductive perspective, I explore the conditions of subjectivity in this particular context, constituted by the use of digital tools and the digital connectivity of the interviewed users. According to Ponzanesi (2020), despite the different approaches and theoretical developments around the concept in the last years, the term “digital diaspora” still lacks a clear definition and calls for an empirically grounded relation approach “to foreground different experiences of locality, mobility and diasporic digitality” (pp. 987-988). From this perspective, it is not a question of finding the most complete definition, but rather of providing information about how these 'media uses' are embodied in situated media practices and how they relate to broader social processes such as this “transnational living”.

Chapter 6. Methodological Design

In previous chapters I outlined the selection of the practice theory approach as the theoretical cornerstone of the dissertation, presenting the different research perspectives and theorisations around the complex concept of social and media practices. This new paradigm represents a useful, pragmatic shift in the analysis of culture and therefore also the *media culture* and the *embodied media practices* as objects of study. The practice turn involves methodological implications, new forms of analysis and data collection, often introducing qualitative methods for media practice inquiry. In this chapter, I will describe the methodological framework of this research, which comprises two distinct phases. Towards a holistic approach, I proceeded to the triangulation of methods combining in-depth interviews with qualitative content analysis. This approach aims to enhance the depth of the study on media practices within the Spanish community in Germany particularly focusing on how these media practices have mediated and reshaped the migration process itself. The media practices analysed in both methodological phases illustrate the situated intersections between media technologies and the everyday life in migration contexts from a grounded and non-media-centric approach. Contemporary migration has a material and symbolic dimension that is closely related and shaped through media practices with reference points in both the origin and destination country. Hasebrink & Hepp (2017) proposed to analyse the patterns of cross-media practices through the concepts of “media repertoire (when it comes to the individual) and media ensemble (when it comes to social domains)” (p. 365). According to the authors, people do not just act individually but in relation to certain ‘domains’ of the social world which they empirically referred to as *communicative figurations*. In this study, I also take as my starting point in the analysis the idea that the individual always operates in social domains, which involves personal relationships with family or friends in the origin country, but also the public and political participation of individuals in the country of destination. On the other hand, people likewise operate in a symbolic/cultural dimension related to the processes of identification and belonging embedded in their practices. In this sense, in order to analyse the media practices of the Spanish migrants I selected a qualitative approach because it offers a specific kind of information that is based on the richness and depth of the data and not in terms of its capacity for standardisation. While the repetition and structured patterns of media practices are indeed important, particularly in establishing relationships of belonging, equally crucial is the diversity of such practices and, almost importantly, their association with concrete

situations and meanings. In this regard, Hasebrink & Hepp (2017) also highlight several limitations to consider when researching and analysing groups or collectivities. Specifically, the authors emphasize that when we analyse “the media ensemble of a particular figuration (‘social domain’), it can be much more limited than the media repertoire of an individual” (p. 371). This stems from the fact that collectivities use different types of digital and online media for different aspects or situations of their everyday life. On the other hand, as each figuration involves various individuals using different media within it, “the media ensemble in its totality might include media that certain individuals do not use” (p. 371). In other words, the media ensemble described will be broader and richer than the media repertoires reported by the individuals interviewed. On this basis, the emphasis of this dissertation is not focused on the quantity or specific applications they use. Instead, I will explore the role their media practices play in the migration process, how these practices are articulated, and how they are integrated into their daily lives as migrants. Moreover, since this is an exploratory study, I selected grounded theory as the most appropriate analysis framework to address open-ended questions about the media practices of the Spanish diaspora in Germany.

6.1 The Grounded Theory: Methods and Procedures

Grounded theory was developed as a form of qualitative research by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in their seminal book *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. They introduced the foundations of one of the most influential qualitative research methodologies in the social sciences with the aim of constructing theory grounded in data, providing transparency to the qualitative research. The Grounded Theory was traditionally applied to the investigation of social phenomena, with the aim of analysing, discerning and describing social relations and patterns of behaviour. Beyond the unstructured interpretation of data, Grounded Theory offers comprehensive explanations of phenomena based on scientific evidence, by providing a set of flexible procedures for analyse and construct theory from data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Grounded Theory provided systematic inductive guidelines for collecting, and analysing data to build middle-ground theoretical frameworks that explain the collected data (Atkinson et al., 2012; Charmaz, 2014; 2000; Corbin, 2017). According to Corbin and Strauss (2015), this set of procedures facilitates an in-depth analysis of the data aimed to discover “the beliefs and meanings that

underlie action” (p. 11), and thereby allowing the incorporation of the analysis of both rational/non-rational, logic/emotional aspects of behaviour. The legitimacy of the Grounded Theory has been questioned both for being too scientific (Thomas and James 2006), and for being too interpretative, by the more positivist side of sciences. Nevertheless, other scholars (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001) argue that the adoption and adaptation of grounded theory by ethnographers, increase the analytic incisiveness of their studies. In academic debates, there are various interpretations of how grounded theory should be applied, although most agree on its cyclical nature and the importance of constant comparisons to formulate theories based on empirical data (Krotz, 2005, p. 162). Consequently, the analysis process involves always to code the data by developing empirical inputs and to establish relationships between the categories of the output data.

One of the most interesting features of the Grounded Theory is that the concepts developed after the analysis are concepts derived and based directly from the analysis of the data collected and not chosen in the design of the research. In fact, because of its cyclical nature, the development of the analysis itself and the data collection are closely interrelated (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The inductive approach of the Grounded Theory ‘prevent existing theoretical concepts from over-defining the analysis and obscuring the possibility of identifying and developing new concepts and theories’ (Lewins & Silver, 2007, p. 84). After the publication of *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research* and the contact with different research trends and colleges, Glaser and Strauss separately developed their own interpretation of the methodology and application perspectives. The fundamental difference between the two founders of Grounded Theory was the role of theory in the epistemological debate inherent to the methodology of grounded theory and previous knowledge in the process of analysis. Moreover, some technical terms and procedures differ according to the different traditions of Grounded Theory, for instance, the nomenclature of the different types of coding. In the process of conceptual abstraction of specific incidents in data, Glaser (1978) differentiates between substantive coding (which includes open and selective coding) and theoretical coding, while Strauss and Corbin (1990) list three different types of coding procedures: open, axial, and selective coding. Following Strauss and Corbin (1990), open coding constitute the first approximation of the data, the first broken up of the data in smaller units of meaning towards the conceptualisation and categorisation of specific incidents. In this phase, Strauss and Corbin (1990) apply also some hierarchisation to the codes by naming concepts and categories (concepts of higher

order). The objective of the axial coding, as the second step of the analysis, is to develop the relation between different concepts and categories that have been developed in the open coding process. In axial coding, codes are related to each other by combining inductive and deductive thinking. In Glaser's theoretical coding (1978), the researcher develops links between substantive codes and their properties. Finally, selective coding implies the process of selecting a category to be the core of the coding process, the central category. The objective is to develop a main category that can be related to the other categories from axial coding. According to Charmaz & Mitchell (2001), "all variants of grounded theory include the following strategies": a) simultaneous data-collection and analysis; b) pursuit of emergent themes through early data analysis; c) discovery of basic social processes within the data; d) inductive construction of abstract categories that explain and synthesise these processes and e) integration of categories into a theoretical framework that specifies causes, conditions and consequences of the process(es) (p. 160). The *Constructing Grounded Theory* of Kathy Charmaz (2007, 2014) stressed the importance of including experience, decisions, and researcher's interpretations in all the stages of the investigation process. According to Charmaz, the data do not just speak for themselves, but it is the researcher who makes them talk. This dissertation applied the Grounded theory incorporating these late constructivist reflexions. However, although there are some important differences in the constructivist conception of both data analysis and specially in the presentation of written accounts, the core analytical methods are generally the same within the various schools of Grounded Theory. Summarising, despite the various academic debates about the procedures, Grounded Theory is, essentially, an inductive approach that guides the collection and analysis of an extensive empirical material, with the aim of constructing potential "grounded" theories, providing legitimacy and rigor to qualitative research practice.

The fundamental analytical steps or strategies for developing Grounded Theory include coding data, memo writing, and theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2000, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In addition, there are also different types of codes when analysing data: a) substantive codes: generated directly from the original empirical data; b) theoretical codes: generated from the classification, ordering and integration of memos into theory; c) *In vivo codes*: literal quotations arising from the language used by the interviewees (these kinds of codes have a high capacity of interpretative meaning when developing the theory). The researcher simultaneously codes and analyses data in order to develop concepts. Through

the comparison of different specific incidents within the data, the researcher refines those concepts, identifies their properties, explores their interrelationships, and integrates them into a coherent theory. In this phase, the collection of methodological and theoretical memos is very important to integrate and to relate the codes. Memos are notes of theoretical ideas about codes and their relation/interaction that emerge during the coding process. Memos help to map the emerging theory and are useful in identifying concepts and their properties. According to Glaser (1978) the researcher should write them freely and complete them with his/her own ideas and perceptions. Finally, through theoretical sampling, the researcher selects new cases to be studied according to their potential to refine or develop our concepts and/or theories. This is the fundamental reason why data collection and analysis are carried out simultaneously in Grounded Theory. According to Krotz (2005), the selection of new respondents depends on the previous research process and the statements and information gathered so far. It should therefore be taken into account: a) allowing for other similar empirical cases in order to test the previous conclusions; b) looking for different cases or counter-examples, to determine the validity of the previous statements and address and develop those cases where it does not apply; c) allowing for socio-demographic criteria such as: gender, education, age, incomes, and even lifestyles (pp. 191-192). The aim is to extend the sample on the basis of theoretical criteria in order “maximize opportunities to compare events, incidents or happenings to determine how a category varies in terms of its properties and dimensions, varying the conditions” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 177). The ability to recognise concepts and relate them to each other, with their similarities and differences, depends on the coding process of the individual perspectives contained in the interview transcripts that constitute blocks of the theory (Krotz, 2005, p. 180). The theory construction starts with a description, with a basic selection of concepts. Once the description of the concepts is developed in relation to their properties and dimensions, the major concepts or categories begin to emerge. These categories will gradually turn into more abstract concepts that summarise and integrate the rest of the categories: the core categories (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In the following, I will theoretically situate the selected methods of analysis, aimed to articulate a comprehensive examination of the media practices within the Spanish community in Germany.

6.2 Methodological Design and Fieldwork Development

The present study seeks to address the media practices of the Spanish community in Germany from a practice theory perspective, where media themselves are no longer the object of study but, rather, how they are settled in and how they shape the everyday life of migrants. To this end, from a distinctly qualitative perspective, I will apply a combination of two research methodologies: a) in-depth qualitative interviews and b) qualitative content analysis. Furthermore, I selected Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) as the data analysis procedure due to its inductive nature and capacity to develop substantive theories grounded in collected data. This methodology offers a rigorous framework for investigating complex social phenomena, enabling emergent patterns and significant relationships to arise directly from empirical data, without imposing pre-existing theoretical assumptions. The selection of Grounded Theory stems from its methodological flexibility, particularly suitable for analysing underexplored phenomena or dynamic contexts like Spanish migration in Germany. Adopting a holistic approach, Grounded Theory facilitates capturing the richness and complexity of data, facilitating deep and contextualized interpretations.

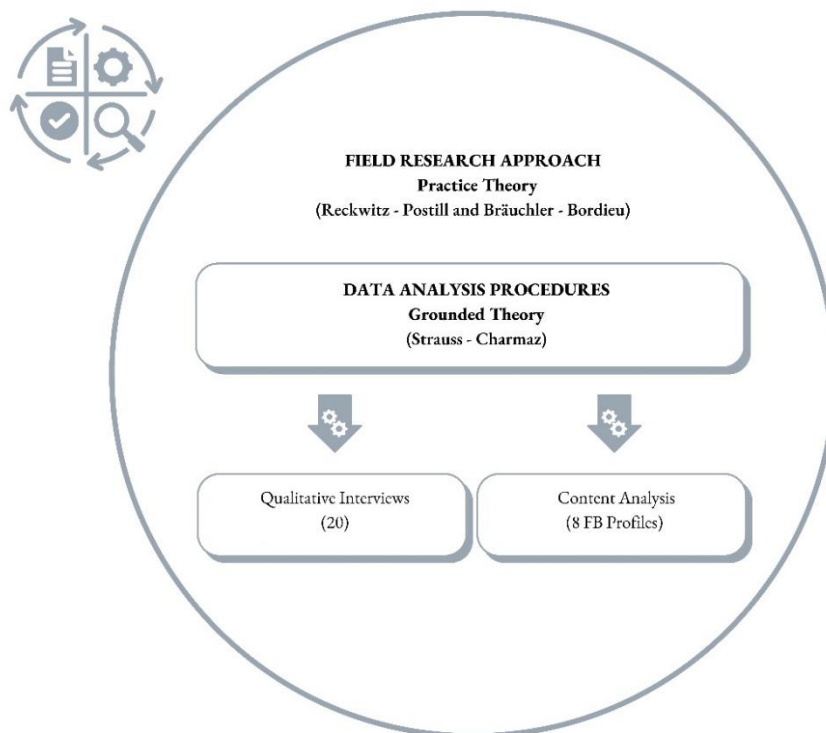


Figure 6.1: Visual representation of the Methodological Design.

1) *In-depth Interviews (20)*

In the first phase of the research, I conducted 20 qualitative in-depth interviews. Qualitative methods in general, and the in-depth qualitative interviews as a technique in particular, provide a fundamental tool for the investigation of cultural processes. Within the field of qualitative research, there is a vast academic production on qualitative interviewing (Flick, 2005; Kvale, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Silverman, 2013). The in-depth interview is a qualitative research technique used to obtain a detailed and comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences, motives, opinions, feelings, and perceptions on a specific topic (Rubin & Rubin, 2012: 3-4). These interviews enable the exploration of complex systems of interaction. Unlike structured interviews, in-depth interviews are typically more flexible and open-ended, enabling interviewees to speak freely and provide detailed responses. Due to their informative, intensive, flexible and holistic nature and their accessibility to behaviours and highly internalised patterns that are difficult to observe, interviews enable researchers to follow unexpected paths in the investigation potentially leading to new theoretical and cognitive developments. In semi-structured interviews (Saharan, 2009), researchers have the flexibility to employ a combination of structured and open-ended inquiries. This approach allows for fluidity in question formulation and sequence, enabling interviewers to adapt to the evolving dynamics of the discussion and capture the unique worldview of each respondent. Such dynamic flexibility not only facilitates the nuanced exploration of the interview context but also encourages the discovery of new perspectives (p. 90). The potential of interviews to capture the complexity and uniqueness of human experiences is invaluable. Through interviewing, researchers can develop detailed and holistic descriptions, integrate multiple perspectives, describe processes, understand how events are interpreted by bridging intersubjectivities, and even identify variables for further quantitative research (Weiss, 1995: 9-11). In qualitative in-depth interviews the interviewer aims to uncover general themes to grasp the participants' perspectives. However, the utmost importance lies in how the interviewee's structure and frame their answers (Marshall, 2006). Qualitative interviews constitute a cornerstone of qualitative research and provide a profound insight into participants' experiences and perspectives. Therefore, as Seidman (2006: 9) emphasizes, in-depth interviews are not conducted to evaluate responses or test hypotheses, but rather to listen to individuals' stories and understand their life experiences. In this particular case, the objective is to examine how media practices influence the migratory experience of Spaniards in Germany and how they construct their

own migratory narratives. As Seidman points out storytelling itself constitutes a very contextualized process of creating meaning. This perspective resonates with Robert K. Yin's (2009) emphasis on the importance of qualitative interviews in the case study approach, emphasizing their capacity to unveil rich and contextual details. He further emphasizes the idea that "case studies need not be limited to a single source of evidence. In fact, most of the cases studies rely on a variety of sources" (p. 93) highlighting the importance of methodological triangulation to enhance the consistency and validity of the findings. Moreover, the grounded theory, as an analytical procedure, offers a highly effective approach to maximize the benefits of in-depth interviews due to its inductive and adaptable nature. The application of grounded theory allows to analyse interview data without rigid preconceptions, thereby facilitating a more comprehensive picture of the complexity and richness of the participants' experiences.

2) Qualitative Content Analysis (8 Profiles – 3 years)

For the second methodological phase, I selected the qualitative content analysis as research technique. This approach enabled me to assess discursive media practices of Spanish migrants and the behaviours they described on the social network. Depending on the research objectives, content analysis can be either quantitative or qualitative, but both techniques contribute with broader contextual elements (Wegener, 2005, p. 204). In quantitative analysis, the primary focus lies on frequency or correlation studies, examining numerical trends and ratios within the content. This often entails counting words, tracking the number of mentions of specific topics, or applying other numerical metrics. On the other hand, qualitative analysis, drawing from hermeneutic or linguistic traditions, emphasizes the description and highlighting of the particularities and nuances within the analysed content. In qualitative content analysis, the interpretation is grounded on the understanding of the context and meaning of the content. Consequently, the collected data are analysed in terms of patterns, concepts, frames, or content categories, without necessarily assigning numerical values to the data. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that at the same time, every form of content analysis has a certain qualitative component, from defining objectives to operating variables, analysing data, and drawing conclusions (Koelmer, 2008:118).

In the second methodological phase of the research after conducting the interviews, I applied qualitative content analysis in 8 Facebook profiles during 3 years. While In-depth

interviews provided insights into user perceptions, attitudes, and media experiences, qualitative content analysis as a research technique offer a comprehensive view within a specific context, identifying emerging themes and patterns in content posted on social media platforms, in this case, on Facebook. By combining these methodologies, I achieved a more holistic understanding, integrating individual narratives with the observed patterns within the social network. Qualitative content analysis provides a rule-guided approach to text analysis, integrating elements of traditional quantitative content analysis to establish methodologically controlled qualitative procedures including category development as well as summarizing or contextual analysis (Mayring, 2000; 2015). This technique is commonly employed for the systematic and objective examination of various types of texts and content. According to Hall (2018: 401) qualitative content analysis, influenced by various research orientations such as naturalism, hermeneutics, critical realism, phenomenology, or grounded theory, shows various key characteristics (Hall, 2018: 401). First, it applies an inductive approach, where themes emerge directly from the material, guided by the research questions. Consequently, categories are developed through iterative reading of the analysed contents. Secondly, it focuses on the deep grounding of the data and the contextualised description as the basis for validation. In terms of participants selection, qualitative content analysis commonly calls for purposive sampling (Maxwell, 1996), prioritizing participants who can offer rich and meaningful information on the topic. In this sense, data collection constitutes an ongoing process and aims to uncover latent content throughout the process. The qualitative content analysis can be also framed in the cyclical process of the grounded theory approach applied in this research, with the aim to provide deeper insights into media practices. As Schatzki (2001, p.45) pointed out, practices and discourses engage in a process of mutual transformation. When the researchers ask questions to the participants in order to reflect about their practices, the interviewees interpret our requests and formulate their responses, giving rise to a metacultural process that involves the redefinition of their own cultural action (Peterson, 2010:201). That means, that in the interviews data, respondents described practices through discourses, and conversely, these practices can themselves evolve into discourses or discursive practices through a process of meaning rearticulation. The reason behind selecting the network Facebook for the study is that the interviewees highlighted it as one of the most frequently used platforms for interactions among migrants, as well as with family and friends in their home country. During the interviews, I noticed that individuals are not always conscious of their behaviours or are unable to describe them. Interestingly, when users discussed their Facebook experiences, they mainly focused on the

content they typically post or enjoy consuming. But they were rarely aware of their interactions and their own daily routines and cultural patterns, which became evident during the subsequent analysis of their posts. During the analysis phase, it became clear that their Facebook walls contained a significant amount of personal and private information about their daily lives. Moreover, when I inquired in the interviews about the existence of a 'Spanish migrant community in Germany,' respondents unanimously pointed to Spanish migrant groups on Facebook. All interviewees mentioned that it was one of the most relevant spaces for interaction among Spanish migrants, facilitating various private and public exchanges. This led me to consider the significance of identity management in this context. Then, I decided to investigate how contents, interactional features, and relational contexts are related to various forms of self-expression and the performance of individual and collective identities. The qualitative analysis on Facebook profiles allowed me to develop a more objective picture of the analysed phenomenon, analysing the contents and interaction of individuals.

6.3 Research Questions

Combining these two methods, the challenge of this dissertation is to study the media practices of Spanish emigrants in Germany as a cultural and embodied experience, as integrated in the transnational everyday life of migrants. These media practices are channeling new ways of socialisation both in destination countries, but specially in origin country helping to maintain strong ties, generating new forms of interaction with loved ones and forms of transnational everyday life. Drawing on these reflections, I developed the following research questions:

RQ1 How do diaspora communities develop their personal relations and public-political participation within the network?

RQ2 How do contemporary Spanish migrants in Germany symbolically construct a sense of we-ness, Spanish-ness and otherness through their media practices?

RQ3 Which role have the ICT and media practices in the construction of transnational communities and identities?

In RQ1 I will address the media practices of Spanish migrants in Germany. The analysis of media practices offers valuable information on the creation of links between different social and cultural groups. The objective is to be able to create a picture of those media practices that shape the networked relationships and the everyday life of Spaniards through media technologies. Through the application of in-depth interviews, I will develop a detailed map of media practices of the Spanish diaspora in Germany and how they relate to each other. To this end, the interviews will explore the media practices of Spanish emigrants in various aspects of everyday life, including work, personal relationships, interactions related to the country of origin and the country of destination, and how these media practices intersect with each other.

After addressing media practices, in RQ2 I will focus on cultural identities. How identities are articulated is a fundamental element in studying the processes of cohesion and integration. Drawing on information gathered in the in-depth interviews, I selected 8 Facebook profiles to further deepen the analysis. The objective is to analyse the process of creation and materialisation of these identities and the networked forms of interaction in the semi-private sphere. For this purpose, in this second phase, I will apply qualitative content analysis, selecting Facebook as one of the main spaces of interaction of the Spanish diaspora according to the information gathered in the interviews. However, the objective is to focus the analysis of identity from its processual nature, exploring in depth how these identities are materialised in media content in their everyday life on Facebook. Migratory processes have traditionally been related to multiple identities, however, this research attempts to go further, analysing the construction of those identities as a cultural instance and therefore, as a cultural process: “the question is rather which identities are limited, to what extent, by which structures and in which contexts. Identity is not well understood only as a voluntarist issue - a simple question of what you decide to make yourself into - but also of what (specific and limited) forms of cultural and economic capital your social position provides you with, out of which you can construct your identity” (Henriques & Morley, 2018, p. 52). The aim of this research is to provide process-oriented information on the creation of identities in relation to associated media practices and their social significance.

Finally, RQ3 constitutes the synthesis of the first question and the second, combining the conclusions drawn in both methods. In this phase, the results of both phases of the research

will be focused on the practice-based conceptualization of the digital diaspora according to the case study analysed. In the following sections, I will provide a detailed description of the application of both research techniques and the role of grounded theory procedures in data analysis. Specifically, I will explain the use of grounded theory as an analytical umbrella, as well as the nature of data collection, coding, and analysis to 'identify the underlying factor structure of the collected information and to interpret the identified structure in relation to the study objective' (Lai & Ming, 2015).

6.3 Phase 1: Application of in-Depth Interviews (20)

The following section is based on the analysis of twenty interviews with Spanish migrants in different cities in Germany between the years 2017 y 2019. In Grounded theory, the researcher does not initially know the final sample size (Glaser, 1992), in fact, the final credibility of the theory generated does not depend so much on the size of the sample, but on the richness of the information collected and the analytical efforts of the researcher. In so-called theoretical sampling, the data collection process generates theory from the moment that the provided information is collected, coded and analysed. On this basis, the researcher decides what kind of data will be collected in the following interviews in relation to developing the theory as it is emerging. According to Corbin and Strauss (1990), noticeable concepts are those that “a) repeatedly be present (or, in some situations, noticeably absent) in the data when comparing incident to incident and to b) act as conditions that give variation to a major category” (p. 177). In this research, I applied a combination of theoretical sampling (Breuer, 2011; Krotz, 2005) and snowball sampling (Atkinson & Flint, 2004; Morgan, 2008). Theoretical sampling is a concept primarily applied in qualitative research methodology, particularly within the grounded theory framework. Unlike the random or pre-established participant selection of quantitative research methods, theoretical sampling involves selecting participants focusing on the emerging theory and conceptual development of the study. Instead of drawing a sample that represents a specific population, in this case, the Spanish Diaspora in Germany, I selected participants who enabled me to deepen the understanding of the studied media practices, guided by the categories and concepts that emerged during the research process. This approach entailed a dynamic interaction between data collection and analysis. Initially, I selected with theoretical sampling a group of Spanish migrants representing a specific interview profile relevant to the research. Subsequently, I used snowball sampling to expand

the sample size, allowing the initial participants to introduce me to other individuals who met specific criteria or characteristics crucial to the study. This “chain referral” (p. 1044) method can enhance the researcher's access and foster greater trust within hard-to-reach groups. In my case, it facilitated making contacts. Moreover, being a Spanish immigrant myself, I never faced rejection or a lack of confidence. On the contrary, I found a high level of willingness to participate and share their experiences. The aim of this sampling process was to capture the diversity and complexity of the Spanish diaspora in Germany. As a result, it did not adhere to a predefined pattern but adapted and evolved throughout the research, guided by new ideas and perspectives emerging during data analysis.

In-depth interviews are one of the main methods applied in qualitative research. In in-depth interviews the researcher combine *structure* with *flexibility*, “setting out key topics and issues to be covered during the interview but with the enough flexibility to permit topics to be covered in the order most suited to the interviewee”, allowing the research to directly react to relevant data spontaneously commented by the informant (Legard et. al, 2014, p. 141). The aim of these interviews was to reconstruct the “media repertoires” (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006) related with the “relatively stable cross-media patterns of media practices” (Hasebrink & Hepp, 2017, p. 367) of the individuals interviewed. In the interviews, different aspects of the everyday life of Spanish migrants in Germany were discussed in depth and focused on media-related practices. The interview covered topics such as the migration process as a whole, before leaving Spain, the arrival, the process of adaptation to the destination country, and the relationship/bonding of migrants with the country of origin. The final objective was to identify and reconstruct those relevant media-related practices, how they mobilise through them different (gender, class or cultural/ethnic) backgrounds, with which purpose, how they relate to each other, and which was the role of these practices in the everyday life of migrants.

In total, twenty people agreed to participate in individual in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted in Spanish to facilitate the respondent's immersion in the discussion and to create a favourable environment for a pleasant conversation. The average interview lasted between 1 and 2 hours. However, to illustrate some theoretical developments, I have translated quotes into English. The sample of this study included both men and women, aged between 25 and 35 years old, and consider demographic variables such as age, gender, and length of stay in Germany into account. There were two significant variations in the sampling process. First, during the initial interviews, I realized

that political participation, both in general and specifically related to Spain, was important to Spanish emigrants, as it was mentioned in all the interviews. At that point, I decided to seek out Spaniards who were politically active. The sample also included the profiles of 12 activists (from Marea Granate/15M Berlin, Izquierda Unida Berlin, Podemos Berlin, CUP, EQUO). As a methodological decision and by request of some of the activists interviewed, in the quotations I do not use the real names of the interviewees since it was not relevant for the data analysis. Instead, I provide demographic profile data, such as age, place of residence and profession. Secondly, I began to wonder whether media practices and socialization patterns would be different in other cities or smaller towns in Germany. As a result, I also interviewed Spaniards living in other cities in Germany.

Interview	Name	Gender	Age	Profession	Years - Residence
1	Naiara	F	27	Chemical engineer	3
2	Juan (1)	M	27	Master Student	4
3	Natalia	F	34	Journalist	8
4	Raquel	F	34	Journalist	9
5	Rafael	M	29	PhD Student	4
6	Pau	M	30	Social Researcher	4
7	Carlos	M	28	Construction worker	2
8	Miguel	M	29	Spanish teacher	5
9	Javier	M	26	Construction worker	2
10	Laura	F	29	Journalist	3
11	Cristina	F	26	Hairdresser	2
12	Helena	F	29	Project Manager	5
13	Elia	F	34	Ambiental Consultant	5
14	Juan (2)	M	33	PhD Student	5
15	Verónica	F	35	Spanish teacher	8
16	Miriam	F	30	Logistics engineering	4
17	Rosa	F	35	Copywriter	8
18	Raquel	F	32	Graphic Designer	5
19	Antonio	M	31	Aeronautical engineer	2
20	María	F	32	Environmental engineer	1

To begin, I designed a flexible questionnaire that evolved throughout the process of the field work. In addition, with the guidelines, I always carried a field diary that allowed me to make notes both on ideas that appeared while listening to the interviewees' narratives, as well as context notes, relevant reactions or gestures, that I already recorded as memos. The question guidelines helped me to keep in mind the topics I was interested in discussing in the interview. However, each interview was different, I let the conversation flow and did not force the following a specific order of topics but rather tried to let them flow. I asked following the natural course of the conversation, introducing those topics that they had not previously mentioned. This also allowed me to explore new aspects that the interviewees

themselves introduced into the conversation. When any of these new topics interested me, I included them into the question guide to explore them in other interviews. For this reason, the question guide was always a living, constantly updated document. I conducted a couple of test interviews with some acquaintances that did not belong to my closest social circle in order to test the guide and to test myself as an interviewer. In those first interviews I realised two facts: the first one is that people *wanted to talk*, so at a certain point I stopped worrying about the time clock and let them talk, redirecting the conversation when necessary. There was a certain relief in putting words to the experience they were living. A couple of interviewees told me that they have enjoyed expressing how they were living the immigration process. This already provided me with relevant analytical information about their desire to make their experience visible or perhaps as a way of letting off steam. Secondly, I realised that we give little reflection or consideration to our daily media practices and that people were reflecting about things that they had only managed to realise by verbalising them in the interview. They were surprised by the depth of their reflections and so was I. These *unexplored* reflections also helped me to recompose the guide, so I stopped asking about media consumption as a media mapping and I started to take into account other factors that could influence media practice and asking about them. In these first interviews I was guided by purely demographic and social criteria based on my own definition of the Spanish Diaspora in Germany: the community formed by the Spanish population living in Germany, who left its country due the economic crisis or has stayed in Germany for the same reason. This definition included Spaniards who came to Germany after 2008, but also those who arrived years before and whose return has been frustrated by the crisis. According to macroeconomic indicators, the year 2008 was taken as the reference for the beginning of the Spanish Crisis.

In 2016, I conducted two preliminary interviews as part of the testing phase. The objective was to familiarize myself with the study population and develop the interview guidelines. These initial interactions allowed me to connect with other Spaniards, and I was able to formally start my research interviews in 2017. During this year 2017 I met a girl involved in the *Marea Granate* movement who encouraged me to attend one of their assemblies. There, I was able to get in touch with more people who facilitated me other contacts from outside the movement and thus creating a map of interviewees outside of my social circle. From the beginning I analysed the interviews and saw patterns that pointed me in the right direction for the next interviews. That same year, 2017, I was invited to participate in the

'First International *Marea Granate Meeting*', held in Berlin between 26 and 28 May, which I attended with great pleasure with the aim of getting in touch with the media practices of the group, and also to meet new people. There I was able to get in touch with Spanish emigrants in other European countries and also people living in other cities in Germany that I would interview later. Besides conducting interviews and informal conversations, I took field notes with my impressions and observations from the interviews to explain how digital practices are connected to power relationships, communicative patterns, individual and collective identities and the development of new societies. In between and after fieldwork with the interviews, I continued to observe and take notes about the online presences and digital practices, and also to visit environments of social networking sites and social media platforms, such as Facebook groups "*Españoles en Alemania*", "*Españoles en Berlín*", "*Españoles en Colonia*", etc. It helped me prepare the next interviews.

Finally, following the grounded theory approach, all the interviews and collected data (field notes, interview transcripts, context information) were analysed with the support of the software MAXQDA, where I added all the extra information collected as memos. Once I transcribed the first interviews, I proceeded to analyse all the material together with the field notes, observations, comments and context information through grounded theory. After that I returned to the fieldwork to conduct more interviews and observations (since within the umbrella of the Grounded Theory, the researcher can use different types of methods to collect the information) and then, I came back over and over to the concepts, refining them with the new information gathered. This description illustrates the cyclical nature of the process, an arduous task that fuels the research until reaching what is known as theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Krotz, 2005).

The in-depth interviews combined with Grounded theory offers a valuable instrument to face highly abstract interaction contexts, deciphering social/local/supralocal practices and their cultural meaning for the analysed group, keeping the essence of the interpretative and qualitative social inquiry. At the same time, however, it offers a systematic, but flexible, approach to analysing qualitative data, keeping the analytical and scientific rigor, with high levels of conceptual abstraction that allow the development of sociological significance from the lifeworld of others (Timmermans & Tavory, 2007). In the words of Charmaz and Mitchell (2001) "Grounded theory techniques can sharpen the analytic edge and theoretical sophistication of ethnographic research" (p. 161). The theory generated through the

inductive process of analysis facilitates the detailed explanation of the studied phenomenon more than its generalisation. At this point, it is interesting to reflect on the constructivist question of the neutrality and objectivity of the researchers. In my case, just like the interviewees, I am a Spanish emigrant in Germany. The constructivist tradition supports a more reflective and participatory researcher's attitude. What may initially appear as a limitation can also become an advantage when approaching a community. In my case, the empathy that I was able to build with the interviewees and *vice versa* allowed me to speak with confidence and with a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and the respondents' testimonies, always without interfering in the respondents' narrative, but being able to recognise patterns in their discourse. Nevertheless, I always tried to keep the distance with the respondents, avoiding interruption or conducting the dialogue according to my emotional response to the conversation, but, rather, towards recollecting data for the conceptualisation of the information provided by the respondents. The aim was to explain what is specific about this *being Spanish emigrant in Germany* through the lens of the experience and media practices, by providing a substantive analysis.

6.5 Phase 2: Application of Qualitative Content Analysis on Facebook Profiles

In the second methodological phase, I selected 8 of the 20 interview respondents to analyse their Facebook profiles. Facebook stood out as one of the most visited and recognised social networks in the digital landscape. Since it appeared in 2006, it has revolutionised society, facilitated interaction between users and broke down communication barriers. In the last two decades, the social network has continued to grow and evolve, and has applied new technologies, including more and more applications and resources for user entertainment and connection on the web: posting status updates, sending photos, voice notes and videos, chat service, the option of joining public and private groups, etc. Facebook broadened the opportunities to reach more people and *to know more* about people in general. It also made the expansion of social circles and networks of acquaintances possible, opening the ability to see, to get in touch, and interact with people all over the world. Moreover, beyond expanding social circles, users were able to follow reference pages and to find live news of daily events, both in local and global contexts. This interchange has become fundamental in the current dissemination of news and in the exchange of

information itself in contexts of migration, as I will address in following chapters. The development of the social network, accompanied by a huge number of users around the world, has had a great social impact, and has become a reference point for the exchange of information and opinions. In addition, the ongoing updates and all the new options on Facebook allowed users to get more involved in topics of their interest, facilitated the digital participation, and has become increasingly relevant in the creation of digital communities. In fact, according to the official Facebook homepage, the company's mission is: "Give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together"¹². This social development has had an impact on migratory processes, acquiring great relevance in the processes of socialisation of migrants. Users have also changed Facebook by modifying and developing the uses set out by its creators and have adapted the tool to the context and their needs, as in the case of migration contexts. Facebook simultaneously allowed the development of networks in both origin and destination country. This fact has influenced both the socialisation and identity processes in migratory contexts. But how are these networks generated and how does this exchange take place on Facebook? How do these worlds interact? What are their main features? What topics come into play? These and other questions were addressed in the second empirical phase of this research.

The reason for selecting Facebook as a data resource followed the analysis of the interviews. During the whole process of analysis and conceptualisation of media practices and patterns derived from the interviews, it became clear that Facebook was one of the main interaction platforms of the Spanish community in Germany, vehiculating different aspects of the daily life of the interviewees. In fact, after reviewing in MAXQDA the most commonly used words in the interviews, Facebook surprisingly appeared as the most repeated word. The interviewees told me about their use of Facebook, but at this stage, I was interested in finding out what the interviewees were actually doing on the site. For this purpose, I selected 8 of the interviewees' profiles and requested permission to track their Facebook accounts over 3 years. It became therefore interesting to analyse how users used this semi-private space, without any kind of interference or influence on the investigated action. The sample consisted of 8 profiles, 3 men and 5 women, 4 of them living in Berlin, the place with the highest population concentration of Spaniards in Germany, and the remaining 4 from different cities in Germany. Here I display a visualisation of the selected profiles:

¹² <https://about.facebook.com/company-info/>

Interview	Name	Gender	Age	Profession	Residence Place
1	Antonio	M	31	Aeronautical engineer	Munich
2	Helena	F	29	Project Manager	Berlin
3	Naiara	F	27	Chemical engineer	Berlin
4	Verónica	F	35	Spanish teacher	Berlin
5	Carlos	M	28	Construction worker	Erfurt
6	Miguel	M	27	Spanish teacher	Nüreberg
7	Laura	F	29	Journalist	Berlin
8	Cristina	F	26	Hairdresser	Erfurt

This phase also incorporates the concept of media-related practices (Couldry, 2004, 2012; Hobart, 2010). The relevance of media practice is not merely based on identifying the user's feelings of belonging or identification with the group, but also on the way of inhabiting and experiencing migration in these spaces: this includes discursive, cultural, affective, consumption and interaction practices. It is rather a question of new possibilities not only for self-representation, but also for positioning in the group and in the whole social system. While the interviews provided a comprehensive mapping of practices that constitute the basis of interaction in the digital diaspora, it is also important to consider the relationship with the material aspects. Some practices are more bodily than others, but all require some kind of bodily involvement or movement (Maller, 2017, p. 73). In the interviews, the participants set in motion the practice of describing their actions, of telling their stories. However, through the qualitative content analysis I was able to see the practice in context and without interference. It materialises digitally in a sense, leaving a trace of the practice. This trace is in fact one of the most interesting contributions of the content analysis, as will be explained later in the chapters of the theoretical contribution.

According to Reckwitz (2002) all practices as “forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, things and their use” take place in conjunction and interconnected with a rather mental part, involving “a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge” (p. 249). This basis has already been developed through the interviews, which has allowed the reconstruction of a complex of practices. Following Reckwitz’s theoretical developments, Shove, Pantzar & Watson (2012) introduced the distinction between practices as *entity* and practices as *performance* (p. 7). The practices as *entity* described the general ideas around actions, as a recognizable conjunction of ideas which can be spoken about or describe the action. While the practices as *performance*, include the immediacy of doing, the enactment, the mechanism through

which the practice-as-an-entity is reproduced. Facebook practices are both synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous because I was able to see them in context, to see them materialised, but at the same time they are asynchronous insofar as the analysis does not necessarily have to take place at the moment in which the action takes place. In short, I also apply the concept of media-related practices to the qualitative content analysis because I understand that Facebook profiles are not mere noticeboards containing isolated notes or posts but involve social patterns and interactions that involve offline-online relations and subjectivities. The concept of media practices is related with daily activities and behaviours related to the production, distribution, and consumption of media. When applied to qualitative content analysis, this approach requires not only examining the content on the platform but also understanding the motivations behind users' interactions with media. Applying this concept to the qualitative content analysis of Facebook profiles can provide a richer and more contextualized view of the interactions within the platform. For this purpose, I considered not only the content of the posts but also the context in which they are embedded, the comments, and possible similarities between profiles. From the production perspective, some aspects to consider include questioning how and why users create content, what types of content they produce, what tools and resources they use, and their motivations for creating and sharing content. Additionally, I focused on exploring how Spanish migrants use Facebook to build and maintain their identity and community, how they present themselves online, and the kinds of interactions their content generates. Furthermore, qualitative content analysis calls for critical reflection, interpreting the findings within a broader context of media and digital culture, and contrasting the data with other research methods, in this case, with the in-depth interviews and previous testimonies of interviewees. Following Mayring (2010) content can only be understood as part of the communicative process, situated within specific contexts that influence its production. In this regard, my investigation of media practices was primarily focused on exploring the depth and nuances of the discursive practices, but also in understanding the contextual factors in which the content operates. However, this does not mean that the focus was on the particular individuals, but also on detecting common frames of reference and media practices within the migrant community. When individuals face new contexts, they must adjust their usual actions to adapt to the new social environment, meaning that new habitual actions must also be learned (Peterson, 2010:141). The objective is, therefore, to detect and understand these new media practices and discourses.

In qualitative research, samples tend to remain small and contextualized, often being purposively selected rather than random. The sample is often not predefined but rather evolve with the progression of the fieldwork, a theory-driven sample (Miles et al., 2014: 31). In the qualitative content analysis phase of this research, I also applied the theoretical sampling (Breuer, 2011; Krotz, 2005). I selected 8 out of the 20 interviewees to participate in this second phase of the research. I targeted users who were active and regular users on Facebook to gather a comprehensive record of their Facebook activity. This selection was primarily based on the information provided by participants during their interviews regarding their Facebook usage habits. It's important to note, as Daschel et al. (2019) highlighted, that not all Facebook interactions are recorded on the platform. The authors distinguished between active users (who frequently post and comment) and passive users (who observe interactions without actively engaging) (p.4). Therefore, it was essential to identify active users among the interviewees. While all respondents mentioned using Facebook, both actively and passively, I specifically selected individuals who reported regular posting and interaction for the second phase of analysis.

In the qualitative content analysis on Facebook, I considered different factors for the selection of the profiles. Firstly, I selected active Facebook profiles with up-to-date information. Secondly, I discarded some profiles specifically chosen for their political participation in parties since, according to the interviews, the most engaged activists had a predominantly political use of their social networks. Moreover, I tried to build a diverse sample, including profiles from different cities. Qualitative content analysis encompasses three fundamental procedures or techniques (Mayring, 2015: 373): Reducing procedures or text summary, aimed at condensing material to its essential contents; explication procedures to provide additional context for understanding and interpreting the content; and structuring procedures, used to evaluate the material based on specific organizational criteria. The process involves to establish a criterion of definition (Mayring, 2000: 4), drawn from both the theoretical framework and the research questions, to determine which elements of the textual material are going to be considered. Then the material is systematically analysed, leading to the gradual induction of provisional categories. Studies analysing active and passive Facebook users can gather data from Facebook's public pages and groups. Data extraction methods may include manual techniques (such as copying and pasting data into a spreadsheet) or outsourcing to external vendors and third-party services for extraction (Daschel et al., 2019: 6) To compile the sample, I manually retrieved all posts.

Although there are third-party analysis tools available for Facebook pages, private profiles and groups often have limitations when accessing data. To ensure the safety and anonymity of participants (as well as those interacting on their private profiles), I included for analysis only basic demographic data and excerpts of the content, without attaching any screenshots or photographs of their Facebook profiles. During this phase, I manually collected data the dataset composed of 8 user profiles. First, I gathered all user-generated content, including posts and status updates, over a period of 3 years. Additionally, I reserved a column to record reactions and comments on the posts, considering them as contextual information. All the information was meticulously organized into an Excel spreadsheet.

In order to operationalise all this information and to analyse the material I designed my own data matrix. I took into account several elements to develop it. First, the control sections, corresponding to the year, date and number of posts. Second, the sections related to the content of the posts: 'Post text' where the text message of the post is registered and the 'Post description', containing a brief description of the shared content, photographs, uses, type of shared topic, everyday narratives about common event or friend pages. Following two sections to record the data referring to the interaction between users (comments, more elaborate interactions, debates or discussion, tone of the comments, relevant aspects of the communication context) and likes or reactions in general to the published content. Finally, a section dedicated to field notes (comments on the contexts of the interaction, cultural aspects, highlights, observed patterns, theoretical memos, etc.). As a result, I was able to create an organised digital record that allowed me to return easily and automatically over and over again to the information collected from the profiles in order to contrast data and to detect patterns. The use of a digital field diary was helpful for dynamic recording, allowing me to quickly return to the information recorded through the search tool.

After organising all the material from the selected profiles, I created a list of topics and questions for an initial approach to the data. This helped me stay aligned with the research objectives while analysing the posts:

- *Who publishes on the wall, the user or their contacts? What kind of posts are published? What kind of topics are shared? Do they add pictures? Who is the target of these posts?*

- *How is the interaction in the posts? Who answers? What kind of communication is established? What information does it offer us about the socialisation of individuals?*
- *What kind of identities are materialised in media practices?*
- *What is the relationship between interview narratives and the published content?*

To analyse the data, I applied the cyclical coding process proposed by Mayring (2010), wherein the codes were not predefined but rather developed and classified during the analysis process in accordance with the grounded theory procedures. According to Becker & Lissmann (1973), a text contains different levels of content: the primary content consists of themes and main ideas, while contextual information represents latent content. Therefore, to start the analysis, I established some basic codes as a starting point for approaching the material. I structured these codes on the analysis worksheet to develop each of them. Furthermore, I designated a column for memos, where I documented all the ideas and initial impressions gathered during each round of analysis. Subsequently, some of these initial ideas were refined into concepts and categories. Nevertheless, while I did not employ quantitative content analysis techniques, I considered the confluence of concepts, searching for patterns across the different profiles that might contribute to develop broader media practices.

In order to have a broader scope of practice, I decided to analyse the whole communicative environment. On the one hand, I paid attention to the content, but also to the interaction with other Facebook users. The aim, with the starting point of the interviews, was to analyse what Spanish migrants actually did in their spaces of interaction. Overall, I completed three full rounds of coding. However, I revisited the material numerous times to compare similarities and reflect on the various findings. To ensure intracoder reliability (Mayring, 2010: 125), I took several days between each coding round to approach them with greater clarity. The first round was a process of initial familiarization with the material, in which I developed a first descriptive coding to the data. Then, in the second round of coding I identified the themes. In each coding round, I applied a higher level of abstraction, culminating in the final round where I developed the most relevant codes and concepts that defined the categories. I also recorded data on the interaction of other profiles and the publications of other users, including the practices of tagging, liking, memories... etc. In the second review, I moved into a focused analysis, in which I narrowed down the scope and noted repeated patterns looking for clusters of common practices. I kept re-reading until I

reached the theoretical saturation. In the third round, once all the material had been analysed and the core categories defined I selected the most illustrative posts to comment on in the results chapter. The aim of the content analysis was to offer further insights into the practices previously described in the interviews, especially in terms of the articulation of new identities and how these identities are materialised in concrete discursive practices, both at the content-symbolic level and at the interpersonal level. In other words, I sought to reach a broader scope of the digital localities onsite. I tried to consider the whole communicative environment: if migrants shared content, I clicked on it and I read it, I observed carefully the photographs, I listened to the songs and their lyrics, I looked at the profiles of the people who interacted with them. I kept track of all these information in my data matrix. On the other hand, researching over a three-year period offered me the opportunity to observe the evolution of the profiles and how these practices were taking root or evolving. The connections between the practices were explored from the starting point of questions such as: *what role does Facebook play in the lives of Spanish migrants in Germany? what kind of information do they post? But also, a deeper reflection on when do they use Facebook? for what purpose? with what social meanings? how do these practices interact with the processes of belonging?*

However, the ethics of capturing visual data in digital 'private' spaces need here specific attention due to the identities of the participants, photographs and third interactors. All participants signed an informed consent form to participate in this second phase of the research. For data protection and privacy considerations, I have avoided taking screenshots of the interviewees' profiles. I described their profiles, posts and documented behaviours through the data matrix, preserving the identity of the participants.

6.6 Methodological Challenges

Ethnographic methods in digital environments, as well as the problematisation or approach of networks as a source, present different challenges and limitations to researchers. On the one hand, digital venues constitute a complex palimpsest to address. I was dealing with a huge amount of information to operationalise and analyse. The first challenge was the development, organisation and connection of the complex web of practices reported by the different informants interviewed. It involved a very long process, starting with transcription. Following the different analytical phases of the methods and procedures of

the grounded theory. Secondly, in relation to the qualitative content analysis over three years, the challenge was to deal again with an enormous amount of the data available in the users profiles as well as the extreme hypertextuality of the platform. It rendered necessary a systematisation of the materials collected with techniques of data recording to make the information available for work. During this period, I had to recollect the data manually developing my own matrix. On the other hand, privacy administration tools are designed to regulate content in both individual and group profiles: content can be selected and hidden according to audiences, edited, and deleted. It was also necessary to consider the ethical challenges of working with semi-private or semi-public materials.

Finally, I considered the ethical challenges related to the role of the researcher providing transparent information about the object of the research and the participation in the study. In this regard, as already mentioned, all participants signed an informed consent document that detailed all the terms of the research. In the present research, the physical presence (in the interviews) or the digital presence (in the content analysis) did not pose many limitations. Both the contact and the interaction with the interviewees was uncomplicated and natural. Being part of the Spanish Diaspora and living in Germany for years made it easy for both sides (researcher/respondent) to build empathy. In fact, throughout the process, it was clear from the interviewees' statements that they considered me part of the diaspora, so my role as a researcher in the field was not perceived as a threat or intrusion. This can be appreciated in the interviews in comments such as *'well, you know how this works...'*; *'you must have experienced it the same way I did...'*; *'I don't have to tell you...'*; *'you know what this is...'* Moreover, when I asked for permission to track the profiles, everyone agreed without hesitation. The positive aspect is that by considering me part of the community, most of them opened up emotionally much more than I had expected, talking to me openly about their concerns, insecurities and hopes. In fact, several interviewees admitted to being surprised by their own answers, because they had never reflected before about some aspects of their daily life in relation to media technologies and what these technologies mean to them, and they were happy to have been part of the investigation. However, logically the ethical challenge in my case was to maintain objectivity in the analysis of the data, preventing my own emotions from interfering with the participants' media practices. I remained close and tried to create an informal atmosphere where the interviewees felt comfortable to talk. In both methodological phases the data were worked on primarily inductively way, making the data speak, basing all information on the interviewees' own

words and experiences. It involved the reconstruction of the everyday lives of Spanish migrants, considering digital spaces as fundamental part of the material conditions in which the subject socialises. The result was richly nuanced, opening up new avenues, practices and meanings not anticipated in the early stages of the research. As I said at the beginning of the chapter, the biggest challenge was working with such a large volume of data, but the depth of the data was undoubtedly worth it.

6.7 The Combination of Methods

This methodological chapter dialogued with the theoretical chapters, providing the means for the data operationalization and analysis to contribute to the scholarship of digital diasporas from the perspective of the media practice. In the first part of the chapter I theoretically developed the selection of methodologies of in-depth interviews and qualitative content analysis, but especially, how the data were operationalized and how they have been addressed in this study. The praxeological approach involves not only a theoretical, but also an empirical decision that entails a deep methodological reflection (Bueger, 2014). Analysing the media practices of a digital diaspora, required addressing the everyday life since both personal relationships and information exchange take place through media and communication technologies. Therefore, it was not a matter of analysing static elements, but rather a reconstruction of a multi-layered system of practices, affective bonds and meaning making processes. This perspective certainly called for qualitative approaches, as they offer a specific kind of information that is based on the richness and depth of the data. The second section highlights the interaction between the two methods, in-depth interviews, and qualitative content analysis and how they relate to the research questions. Then I focused on the analysis and operationalization of the data through the methods and procedures of the Grounded Theory. The Grounded Theory constituted the theoretical and methodological background to explain the relation between my empirical data analysis and the production of generalizations. Ultimately, I explained in detail how the object of study is operationalized and how the data have been handled in in both methodological phases.

Chapter 7. Media Practices of the Spanish Diaspora in Germany

Media practices constitute complex sociocultural processes which are quite difficult to capture in words. However, I knew from the very beginning that in the first phase of my dissertation I would perform in-depth interviews. It was easy to make the contacts. During the interviews the respondents felt very comfortable, except for two people who were timid and responded with rather short sentences. Overall, they were very interested in the research, in being part of it, and in reflecting more about the experience they were living. The interviews were a very enriching experience, but also generated a huge amount of information. Respondents had complete freedom to express themselves and to define their uses and practices in relation to new information and communication technologies. I tried to avoid turning the interview into a list of uses of different platforms. I explored different aspects of the migrants' lives, from their departure from Spain, through their arrival in Germany, their first steps, integration into the labour market, language development, informational frames of reference, personal relationships and the self-referentiation processes. The aim was therefore to let the users talk about their lives and to discover through guided questions what role the media played in their daily lives. In this way, with a purely ethnographic approach, the information received was much more nuanced and contextualised, rather than asking them about what platforms they used and for what purpose. In the following I will reconstruct media practices in the relationship of migrants with their family and friends in the country of origin. With this objective, the vast amount of information collected in the interviews was analysed through Grounded Theory techniques and procedures. I selected the GT to identify and describe a social process, in this case, the media practices of the Spanish diaspora in Germany. The data-gathering and analysis enabled the concepts and categories to emerge from the data. I approached the data without any preconceptions or theories carefully observing and taking detailed notes of the proceedings. I was particularly interested in understanding how the participants negotiated and managed social situations in migration contexts. For this purpose, I identified their media-related practices and how these actions contribute to the unfolding of their migration experience on the one hand, and in the creation of the transnational community on the other hand. The thematic categories that I will discuss in this chapter are the result of this analysis.

Numerous studies report the positive effects of ICTs in migration contexts towards a connective presence (Diminescu, 2002, 2008). However, there is still a lack of information on the materialisation of these practices (not only in the sense of the use of artifacts and platforms but in the embodied character of these actions), the relationship between all these media practices of personal/public connection. I approached all the material from in-depth interviews through the classic open coding strategies of the Grounded Theory. In this first phase I started with the coding of loose concepts, without relating them to each other. These codes evolved into concepts throughout the analysis, taking the form of more abstract concepts. From there, once the patterns of media practice were detected, I proceeded to look at how they were related to each other. These concepts were inductively attributed to thematic categories and through these main categories the different types of media-related practices were grouped together forming structured groups of media-related practices. The following analytical framework is based on those categories. The results of the report are divided into the major categories identified. Under each heading, I developed the main category and I introduced and defined its subcategories. I provide quotations from participants to illustrate the contextualised category and to support the analytical points made.

7.1 Media-related Practices in the Destination Country: Information, Socialisation and Association

This section addresses the different types of media-related practices associated with the settlement process in the country of destination. Among the different media repertoires reported by the interviewees, there are three groups of media practices that were particularly relevant in the everyday life of Spanish migrants in Germany: a) *practices of information*, concerning the different media practices associated with information processes and the creation of information frames of reference. Media provide migrants access to information from the beginning of their experience and at each stage of the migration process. Moreover, the information individuals receive from different media outlets actively shapes migrants' perceptions of the world, influencing their interests and processes of cultural negotiation. These frames of reference are shaped in a situated context and also have an influence on the way Spaniards relate to each other in Germany; b) *practices of interaction*, media-related practices contribute to the creation and consolidation of networks in the country of destination. Therefore, it includes all those media practices associated with the

socialisation process identified in the interviews. However, Spanish migrants do not only establish relations with locals in the destination country, but also with other migrants. In the following section c) *practices of community building*, I will analyse the media-related practices that had a role in the creation of a Spanish community of belonging in Germany and how they create their own forms of digital associationism.

7.1.1 Practices of Information: Frames of Reference

Access to the media is an important factor in the processes of adaptation in the new society. In contexts of migration, the media offer opportunities both to learn about the host society and to maintain connection with the society of origin (Sendín, 2014). Before migrating, individuals can access extensive information about potential host countries from online resources like government websites, migration forums, expatriate blogs, and social media platforms. This information, covering aspects like education, healthcare, cost of living, employment opportunities or immigration laws, is crucial for those considering migration and may even determine their final destination. During the process of settlement in the destination country, they also play a very important role since they function as opportunity multipliers in many different ways. Once the country of origin has been selected, the emigrant can access different sources of information: bureaucratic information about the country, cultural characteristics, local information about the area or city, housing and work possibilities, and even to contact existing networks of Spanish emigrants in the destination countries. With globalisation and the manifold media, the possibilities are unlimited. The media and social networks offer a wide range of possibilities for interaction between the societies of origin and destination, as well as for the exchange of information that influences both the migration process and the construction of potential imaginaries about emigration. Practices of information include:

a) Information and Job Searching in the Pre-emigration Process

One of the most widespread practices in the pre-migration process, as reported in the interviews, is that the respondents previously informed themselves intensively about the country of destination and the experience of other migrants. There is a wide range of

possibilities to obtain information before leaving. First of all, through the experience of close people. Migrants are in contact with a wide circle of people, so the testimony and experience of other persons with direct contact can also influence them. They also sought information from official agencies such as in the Foreign Office, specialised pages or blogs, forums, the websites of emigrant associations and also in groups on platforms such as Facebook. In fact, Facebook was reported as one of the main forums for information in the pre-migration process and also in the settlement. In these types of forums, different topics of interest to emigrants or those preparing to emigrate are discussed. These resources usually include specific information on bureaucratic processes, documentation (registration, housing, health, education), institutions to which emigrants can turn, work, public transportation... However, taking into account the specific type of emigration involved - economic emigration - it is not surprising that the search for job opportunities was a priority aspect of this first approximation to the country of destination. The search for work was then fundamental in order to know if there were possibilities of settlement. Therefore, media practices related to the search for work were a fundamental pillar of this pre-migratory process. Although personal relationships played a fundamental role, the routine job search on platforms such as Infojobs, Xing, Indeed, Jobleads, became a common practice before leaving. In fact, all interviewees already had job/academic options before emigrating. In the following quote, the interviewee tells how she looked for a job through the Internet before emigrating to Germany:

“I had already been sending CVs from Spain since, I was fired on January 31 and I was down for 3 days. After 3 days I started looking for a job and I was already sending CVs to Germany.

And then, I had the interview as soon as I arrived, but I didn't arrange it here, it was derived from a CV that I had already sent from Spain. Thanks to that job search, before I came to work in Germany, those 4 months that I was looking for a job in Spain and also in Germany, I made a very good network of contacts because what I did was to contact people directly. I was looking for someone whose profile interested me, or I was interested in the company where they worked. Then I introduced myself and told them that I was looking for a job and that, well, if they knew of something that I would like... It didn't work out. There were people who didn't answer me, there were people who simply told me *'I'm sorry, right now we don't have any opportunity we wish you the best of luck'* and those people have stayed in my network of contacts. And there were people who tried to help me, that is, there were people, especially 3 or 4

persons who absolutely selflessly helped me such as *'well look, maybe not in our company, but look here, look there...'* I have even had personal contact with people from LinkedIn when I went to Germany. I think that the LinkedIn network is a good tool to look for a job”.

(I13: F, 34 years, environmental consultant, Berlin, p. 167)

“Through Infojobs, there was a company halfway between Spain and Germany that offered us work where I am working now, they looked for the language course for us and they helped us with the documentation here as well”.

(I11: F, 26 years, hairdresser, Erfurt, p. 141)

Informational Reference Frameworks: Social Media as Primary Informational Resource

The Internet has introduced not only new formats to access information but has also offered the legacy media a space to combine their old formats. Thus, the Internet has forever changed the way in which legacy media are produced, but also consumed. The Internet and web platforms made it easier to keep informed about events happening around the world. The amount of information is enormous, and the migrants have the possibility to select the information they consume. According to the information extracted from the interviews, once in the country of destination, the emigrant does not disconnect from the country of origin, but remains connected to it in many different ways, not only through personal relations or networks, but also from a symbolic and cultural perspective. This was particularly noticeable in the access to information in the host country. In that sense, Spanish migrants continued to have unlimited access to information from the Spanish media such as the written press (digital), radio or television, and other kinds of digital audiovisual content. Informational frames of reference were produced in combination of different platforms, where migrants articulate different types of media practices, which includes both media from the origin and destination countries. However, the common pattern was a purely digital informational framework (predominantly through social media) in which the Spanish media predominated. Below, I mention some examples that illustrate this analysis:

“The truth is that I have a morning ritual. I drink a coffee in front of the computer and the first two media I visit as a ritual -because it is a ritual- are: *El País* and *eldiario.es*. They are more or less the pages I visit directly without intermediaries to see what is going on, the news, the headlines and so on. Then I go to Facebook and consume as much as I can according to what comes to me. But those are the two media I check first. Then I also try to consume German media to find out about the country I live in. Sometimes in English. Then I download podcasts to listen to radio when I'm on the subway, sometimes I read and sometimes I listen to the radio. Or when I'm cleaning, or when I'm walking or at the gym, I listen to a lot of podcasts.

I: You told me that sometimes you also consume German or even English newspapers, do you do it as a routine as you told me in the case of *El País* or *El Diario* or just once in a while?

A: Not every day but.... That already comes to me through Facebook. I look for it less, it comes to me through the social media. I subscribe to a lot of different stuff, *Der Spiegel*, *Taz*, *The Guardian*, a lot of media and it comes to me”

(I4: F, 34 years, journalist, Berlin, pp. 26-27)

“I: How do you get information on a daily basis?

R: Well, the Internet, I mean, what I do is to go to newspaper websites, and Twitter and Facebook”

(I9: M, 26 years, construction worker, Hamburg, p. 114)

I: What do you consult on a daily basis to get informed about current affairs, what kind of media do you consume?

A: Above all, a lot of digital press, a lot. It is my main communication medium. And then, I use Facebook as a news aggregator. I mean, with my friends I share a lot of news, or I also follow the pages of the digital media I'm interested in. They post on Facebooks their highlights or news of the day. Then, I go on Facebook and see which news my friend's post.... It's a way of '*hey, have you seen this news that the newspaper has published?*' But instead of telling, I see it on your wall, and I click on the link and read it”

(I3:F, 34 years, journalist, Berlin, p. 39)

“And Facebook too, the truth is that the pages that I have been selecting over the years also offer me news when I open it, when I open my wall. Twitter also because I started using it to follow accounts that I found funny, and I ended up following journalists and organisations. So, newspapers, Facebook and Twitter above all.”

(I12, 29 years, project manager, Berlin, p. 153)

These quotes illustrate a very common pattern in news consumption: the respondents consulted Spanish newspapers as their main press and complemented the information through the informative impacts coming from other social media such as Facebook or Twitter. In fact, it also reveals a common pattern that information impacts are commonly filtered by their profiles and the pages they follow on social media. In fact, when they were asked about the media most frequently used for information, some interviewees answered directly that Facebook or Twitter, thus identifying them as *informational media*. In view of the large media offer available, they selected in which media they were interested in following, with a conscious selection of the informational framework they wanted to build to keep up to date about the current affairs. The consultation of legacy media in its digital version took place then either by clicking on the news through the publications of the media showed on Facebook/Twitter or through publications shared by other users:

“Well, basically I get my information through Facebook. I follow several newspapers and basically everything that comes out on Facebook is what I read. The truth is that my reading of newspapers is quite biased because I only read newspapers in line with my political interest, which sometimes makes me to live in a bubble... Well, like *Diagonal, La Directa, Villa Web...* And... so basically, I learn about reality through Facebook. And then with German newspapers the same thing, yes, sometimes I buy the newspaper here to read it but usually on Facebook the ones that appear and the ones I follow, *Junge Welt, Neues Deutschland, Tag Zeitung...*”

(I1: F, 27 years, chemical engineer, Berlin, p. 2)

“Twitter, I especially use Twitter when I want to be informed fast about what's going on and I don't have much time”.

(I17: F, 37 years, copywriter, Berlin, p. 230)

“I don't usually visit the media. I think it is a mistake, I'm a little ashamed to say this, but I don't usually read complete news. I am guided by the headlines, by which media is giving the information and by people's comments. Besides, I do it by inertia, the only media that I open is *El País*, sometimes also *Eldiario.es*, but I remain faithful to *El País*, it is still my reference journal. And yes, I visit some news that catches my attention, but I don't usually read news in depth. Facebook posts and headlines and little else”

(I13: F, 34 years, environmental consultant, Berlin, p. 168)

In the different quotes it can be appreciated that the consumption pattern is quite clear, with Spanish digital media being the most followed in social media. Nevertheless, they not only followed the media sites, but also individuals or journalists who publish specific kind of content, both informative and opinions. But it can be clearly observed that, mostly information impacts were filtered through social networks, generating a social media situated agenda setting effect according to the profiles they follow:

“I basically get my information from Facebook, people who post things, or from digital newspapers. Those are my two sources of information”

(I5: M, 29 years, PhD Student, Berlin, p. 54)

“The comments that people make, and if you know the people who make the comments, then you will have almost all the information... Sometimes you are interested in watching a debate because it interests you, and there are even people who quote what has been said in the debates... So, why am I going to invest two hours of my life in watching the debate if I just have a look on Facebook and I have more or less like a summary and various opinions and criticisms about everything?”

(I15: F, 36 years, Spanish teacher, Berlin, p. 198)

“Well, usually Facebook or Twitter. (...) I used to go to the digital media, I used to go to *El País*, *El Diario*' and so on, but nowadays I just look at the headlines (on Facebook) that interest me and I click on them. But besides that, sometimes I also check if there is anything that interests me and I did not see in Twitter or Facebook. On Twitter it doesn't happen, but on Facebook you get the news a bit randomly depending on the audience, what people have written, the contacts you have, so it doesn't always come up what I want and then sometimes I look for it. But yes, I usually see what people share and then I read it”.

(I10: F, 29 years, journalist, Berlin, p. 130)

Therefore, they feel it is no longer necessary to directly visit the media, not even their digital version, but these impacts arrived through social networks, in particular through Facebook and Twitter. In that sense, the practice of selecting which media to follow, both in the

country of origin and destination, had a great influence on the construction of a (more or less international) informational frame of reference. In this context, professional media and companies search for new strategies to position them and to reach the walls and profiles of the users, through the trending topics, likes or hashtags that come into play. Publics can feed on the information exchanged, both from the professional media and from the individual people they follow, they can create their own content, open debates, etc. Moreover, besides the informative impacts received from digital environments, they receive other impacts in their offline everyday life from the legacy media, from people at work, at the University, in the bar with friends of other nationalities, etc. Through this hybrid informational stimuli, they learn about the world. This generates a mixed transnational exposure that becomes part of the process of knowledge production and with it, of the symbolic and referential framework from which they feed to create what I call their *digital localities*. In that sense, the connection of emigrants with Spain set also the frame of reference of the information that will reach them. In fact, as already mentioned, there is a generalised and major exposure to Spanish digital media. Looking further into the reasons to explain why they followed more Spanish media than German, the answers pointed to several factors, among them: the language competence and the time factor. Language skills are fundamental in the selection of the media. Logically, as long as they do not master the language, it is easier to access information in the mother tongue. Although there was a favourable predisposition and commitment to read German media, the language remained the main limitation. Closely related to the language competence, given such an enormous volume of information, they had to select what they wanted to read according to their available time. Although some of the interviewed were fluent in German, due to time constraints, they preferred to consult Spanish media because it was faster and required less concentration than reading in another language. Unless when they were dealing with national or local issues in the destination country. In that case, they preferred German media:

“In my social networks when I watch TV it is mostly Spanish content. In France I was more aware of what was going on in France. In Germany, with the language barrier, I am not. I really try to connect with the country I'm in. There are many pages to access and find out what's going on with content in Spanish. But of course, there is a language barrier and that hinders in my case”

(I19: M, 31 years, aeronautical engineer, Munich, p. 265)

“R: Well, it's usually Facebook or Twitter. More than newspapers, I have TV channels, I have *Antena 3* and I have *La Sexta* (Spanish TV channels)

I: What about online digital newspapers?

R: No, I don't have anything.

I: And the channels that you use are mostly Spanish?

R: Yes, because I still can't understand German”

(I11: F, 26 years, hairdresser, Erfurt, p. 142)

However, language skills were not always a determining factor in this choice. There were also cases in which with high language proficiency, the user still frequented the Spanish press and media:

“R: Well, all the newspapers, all the news programs: *TVE*, *El Mundo*, *El País*, the ones I follow. Also '*Junta de Castilla y León*' (regional government) although I'm not there anymore I still like to be informed about Valladolid, the University, yes, everything they publish.... (laughs)

E: (laughs) Do you follow the '*Junta de Castilla y León*'?

A: Yes, yes, yes. I tell you. Everything comes when you scroll, scroll and you read what you want.... It's like the crocodile in Valladolid, how the hell would I know that supposedly there was a crocodile in the river if I don't read these news.... (laughs). And I tell you, I am more informed about the news that happen in Spain, than the ones that happen in Germany.”

(I18: F, 32 years, graphic designer, Karlsruhe, p. 250)

Interviewee's (18) case is particularly interesting: she was part of the analysed community and was married to a German guy. She had a very high level of German, but nevertheless she still consciously chose to inform herself through the Spanish media. There were also other factors such as the sociocultural context, personal interests, and feeling of temporality, that played also a key role in the construction of the informational reference frameworks in social media. First of all, the profiles themselves are based on a given socio-cultural context. This is clearly evident in the social media profiles that were created before leaving Spain. In these cases, one can observe the changes in their media practices brought about by the migratory process. In fact, all the respondents had already an active profile in

Spain, with all their established networks and internal dynamics. It is through time that these profiles merge with the contacts and experiences in the country of destination. Therefore, as their social media profiles and “followed lists” came already from Spain, and they are more in number than the new media that are being incorporated in Germany. In summary, the general tendency of all interviewees was to show more interest in the news of the country of origin. In fact, most of the media they cited to explain their media patterns were actually Spanish media and I had to ask aside if they consulted German media or from other countries. They also mentioned the feeling of temporality. Although the language factor was one of the main reasons for accessing the Spanish press, another of the most frequently mentioned factors was the feeling of temporality of migration itself. This coincides with the data provided by other research studies, such as the theoretical contributions of Cortés, Moncó and Betrisey (2015) who studied transnational mobility of young Spaniards and Latin Americans in the United Kingdom. According to the authors, the geographical proximity and the low travel costs made many Spanish migrants consider migration as a “fluid continuum of coming and going” in which if things do not work out as they expected, they can easily return home (p. 9). This sense of temporality influences both the generation of cultural identities and the ways of relating to others, to participate in German civil society or even to learn the language. In this extract, Interviewee 12 reflects that this feeling of temporality was fundamentally related with material aspects such as the instability of work, the growing mobility, uncertainty, and the reinforcement of identity as a point of reference:

I: I see a general trend to remain closely linked to the country of origin, to read newspapers in Spanish... is it just a matter of language?

R: I think this migratory process is very different from our grandparents' time for example. In our grandparents' time you would leave Spain and you would never know when you would come back and now.... First, the kind of jobs you find do not offer you the kind of security to say, *‘well, I have arrived here, I have established myself and maybe this is where I want to put down roots’*. In fact, the very concept of putting down roots is becoming more and more blurred. You don't know where you're going to be, you don't know what's going to happen to your work.... And then it's so easy to connect with everything you've left behind that it's a difficult thing not to be”.

I: It's curious that people with high language abilities still continue choosing to consult the Spanish media, do you think it's a synonym of non-integration?

R: No, no. I don't know, apart from Spain, I have lived and worked in 3 countries and at no time have I ever had the feeling that I was going to stay for long. I

don't know, at least in my case, Spain is a starting point. So, if someday I have to go back somewhere I will go back to Spain. And it is true that this also affects the choice of what you want to be informed about, of what is going on, right? And you still have your friends there and your family, well if you have a good relationship, in case you do. Well, yes, I think they are fundamental.”

(I12, 29 years, project manager, Berlin, p. 154)

“If the future project was to stay here, then maybe I would be more interested, but my idea is to be there (in Spain), it's not that I'm not interested, but I'm just passing through.”

(I2: M, 27 years, master student, Berlin, p. 13)

“It's the current affairs that affects most of my friends and family, on the one hand. And at the end... I know how the elections are in Spain, how often, I know which parties are there, I know who is who, -well sometimes not-, but... In Germany you read, and you have to find out more things that you don't know, and it is much more difficult to follow it because you are not from here. Now I do know what the German political parties are. But back then, I didn't even know which ones were, and I didn't know what the acronyms meant and when I should be happy and when I shouldn't be happy. At the end it is also a huge effort to try to find out everything that happens in Germany. But everything that happens in Spain, apart from the fact that you feel more connected because it is where you have grown up and where your family and friends are, it is also easier to understand. And of course, I am also concerned, and I would like to come back in the future. So yes. For example, at the political level, the political decisions that are taken now are going to affect me in the future. Because more research investment will be decisive in creating jobs for me in the future.”

(I20: F, 32 years, environment engineer, Leipzig, p. 276-277)

These comments also indicate that Spain is "the point of reference", which often is related to the fact that it is the place where their loved ones live. Therefore, it was simply a matter of identification with the place where their family and friends reside, even if they did not want to go back home soon. This introduces, in addition to temporality, a question that goes beyond linguistic competence, the cultural competence. Beyond the language, it is necessary to know the social and cultural context of a society in order to be able to understand the current political affairs. In the following two quotes the respondents introduced two very interesting factors related with cultural aspects of the media practice that also played a key role in the choice of media, on the one hand, the importance of humour:

“The good part of Twitter is that you can find the news, but you can also find a lot of humour. And this characteristic humour that we have in Spain, we don't find anywhere else. I wouldn't change it for anything. The Germans don't understand why I'm so addicted to Twitter, no matter what's going on, there's always someone who's going to make fun or make a joke.... I'm not celebrating the misfortune that happened, but there's always a funny point, there's always humour everywhere... I swear, I have tears of laughter. I try to explain them to my husband, but he doesn't understand them. But he respects me and tells me, *'go and read Twitter, and laugh to go to bed happy'*”

(I18: F, 32 years, graphic designer, Karlsruhe, p. 250)

On the other hand, the habits related to the media format. This interviewee cited another cultural component related to media and programmes' formats. In addition, she gives some examples and an interesting analogy with food and flavours:

“I listen to German radio very seldom. When I do listen to the radio, I listen to Spanish radio and through the Internet. I have realized that German radio is very different from Spanish radio I used to listen. I'm a lifelong radio listener. And I think that the fact of being so habituated to a certain kind of radio in Spain -the tertulia, the magazine, radio products that don't exist here-, it makes me feel uncomfortable with German radio. For example, I can't bear a radio report, which is very typical in German radio. (...) I don't think it has to do with the language but with the 'metalinguage'. That is, it is not related to the fact that I understand the words in German. It's like flavours. I'll give you a food analogy. It's not that I don't like German food, it's just that I'm not used to those flavours. It is probably very good, and the ingredients are correct and in the right proportions, but I'm not used to their flavours. I haven't grown up with them. So the same thing happens to me with the news. It's what I explained before with the radio, it's not that German radio is not good, it's that I'm not used to listening to it because it has different ways of explaining things. When I switch on the TV and watch the German news, the first thing I think is that someone should go into the studio and steal half of the spotlights because the way they light the set seems to me very aggressive. But why? It is wrongly done? No. It is because I'm used to seeing different sets. (...) I don't read *'El Clarín'* (Argentinian newspaper) either, I don't read *'El Progreso'* of Argentina, I don't read the newspaper either... When do I read news written in Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico? The same, when a Colombian friend, a Mexican friend or an Ecuadorian friend publishes an interesting article on Facebook or sends it to me by Whatsapp or tells me to look at it. And it is not related to the language”

(I3: F, 34 years, journalist, Berlin, pp. 40-41)

In this quote, the interviewee explains her reasons in great detail, emphasising the importance of habits and cultural codes around media formats. Moreover, from the material perspective, this transnational experience that shapes the practices of information takes place through a combination of devices. In fact, the aforementioned exchange through social networks rarely takes place on the computer but is rather transferred to mobile devices through the applications of the social networks. This seemingly unimportant factor is indeed very important in relation to the embodied dimension of the practice. Migrants connect and generate new spaces of transnational interaction. This contact/interaction is material and embodied insofar as nowadays the mobile phone accompanies us in practically every moment of our lives, reading messages while we are eating, looking at notifications during class or at work. In other words, this translational contact and interaction occurs permanently throughout the day entangled with their everyday life. And it is not only framed in the aforementioned platforms, but also interacts through other messaging services, social networks, mobile applications such as WhatsApp or Telegram and also with the offline localities. In that sense, the *connective presence* (Diminescu, 2008), seems to be evolving into a *performative presence* as their media practices become a symbolic and material element of this transnational everyday life. Following this reflection, it is not so much a question of whether the migrant is present or absent from the country of origin through this connection, but rather that this media practice constitutes in itself an everyday space. In other words, a form of digital locality.

The Legacy Media Evolution

As I have already mentioned, in general, the written press is mostly consulted in its digital version, both in the country of origin and in the country of destination. Only in a few cases did they acknowledge buying print media. In this case, more for idiomatic than informational reasons:

“Here from time to time I buy one of these journals such as the Berliner Zeitung, Das Bild, because it helps me not to lose the habit of reading in German without reading a big tome, but to read the brief news. It is pure and hard sensationalism what I read, but it is also easier than to read Die Zeit...”

(I17: F, 37 years, copywriter, Berlin, p. 228)

In that sense, several interviewees acknowledged reading print media to practise the language, as an additional way to gain German vocabulary. In the case of television, few people acknowledged having a regular use of the traditional television device, but they did make use of the digital platforms of televisions to watch selected content from both the country of origin and destination:

“Television I have there but we watch it very seldom. I actually watch it on the computer, both German and Spanish television. When I'm at home if I want to watch the news because of the whole issue of Catalonia, then it would be on the computer. Also certain YouTube channels that I can trust the most or I put *La Sexta*, knowing what it implies. Well, I put it on my laptop, there is an application that shows all the channels in Spain”.

(I7: M, 28 years, construction worker, Erfurt, p. 85)

“I have a TV, but the truth is that I never use it unless it's to watch something specific or to play with the Play Station sometimes. And the radio yes, but well, I don't use it as a source of information, I just use it to listen to music or to have German in the background and see if it gets into my brain at some point <laughs>”.

(I12, 29 years, project manager, Berlin, p. 153)

“But above all I use the digital press. And also, digital television. For example, I pay €4 a month for '*La Sexta*' (Spanish TV channel). And I share it with my friends.”

(I3: F, 34 years, journalist, Berlin, p. 39)

Furthermore, listening to the radio with its traditional function of companionship was an often commented and valued practice, with the added use related to training linguistic competence, in order to attune the ear to the German language. However, they listen to the radio through other devices such as the computer or the mobile phone:

“I listen to German radio mostly because, well, because of what I told you, as background. But listening, listening... if suddenly they say something that catches my attention and I understand it, well. But I also listen, for example sometimes to *Carne Cruda* or *Radio3* (Spanish radio)”.

(I12, 29 years, project manager, Berlin, p. 155)

“The mobile phone also for the radio, I listen to it very often when I'm at home (...)

I: Do you listen to live radio?

A: Yes, because what I like is, if I'm cooking, I'm cleaning, I'm at home... If I'm not reading, because otherwise I can't concentrate, to do these kind of things, I like to have something in the background.”

(I2: M, 27 years, master student, Berlin, p. 13)

“I: What about radio programmes?

R: In German, also to practice, but rather cultural programs, because I'm a bit saturated with so much politics. And Spanish radio, yes, *La Cafetera* and *Carne Cruda* (Spanish radio) also sometimes”.

(I10: F, 29 years, journalist, Berlin, p. 130)

“Radio yes, but traditional... I listen to the radio via Internet. So, of course, it's a bit... yes, it's a traditional media. But I listen to the Spanish radio. I have to say that I have a German radio in the kitchen, but paradoxically, despite living here, I am still infinitely more interested in the news of my country, when perhaps I should be more concerned about the news of Germany where I live and where I eat, but even so, I am interested... I guess it's something hard to avoid. When it's Spanish radio it's through the Internet, if I listen to German radio, it's through, as my grandfather would say, the transistor”.

(I17: F, 37 years, copywriter, Berlin, p. 228)

In summary, their consumption of legacy media was rather secondary to their use of digital media in its many variants and formats.

The Consumption of Diasporic Media

Spanish migrants also obtained information from other migrants, both before departure and during the emigration experience from other compatriots. Friends' word-of-mouth becomes a digital and sometimes even viral process. This fact attracted the attention of media professionals. The development of diasporic media followed the development of the various contemporary migration flows. Diasporic media, ethnomedia or ethnic media are those media "produced for and/or by immigrants in their own language or in inter-/transcultural combinations" (Añez Saucedo, 2014, p. 52). The objective of diasporic media is to report on local or home country issues, provide information about the country of

destination in their own language, to deal with topics of interest or useful information for the migrant community, to publish cultural events and even job offers. Years ago, the diasporic media (written press, radio) played a very important role in the migrant communities' frameworks of reference. However, although the diasporic media contribute to the construction of this feeling of belonging, of transnational community, the migrants interviewed did not place them as a primary media in their information spectrum, but rather in the field of entertainment and practical issues. One of the reasons seems to suggest that with globalisation and the proliferation of digital information products, migrants can easily consult the media in their country of origin. As this function was already covered, it was no longer necessary to look for a specific migrant-oriented medium in the destination countries to inform them in their own language. In addition, social networks erupted powerfully in the media landscape, taking over the functions of information, entertainment and cultural dissemination. On the other hand, emerged also new interactive spaces for exchange in migrant communities (social networks groups, forums...), which have been gaining ground over diasporic media. In fact, diasporic media also developed strategies to be present in those spaces in social media and even to move into them in order to open up new ways of interaction. In fact, it was in social media that most of the interviewees claimed to receive the of the diasporic media. Therefore, diasporic media gradually began to integrate into the digital locality of Spanish migrants, in social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, or in groups such as *Espanoles en Alemania* (Spaniards in Germany). On the other hand, all interviewees reported that they had consulted this type of media:

“R: Yes, especially *Berlin Amateurs* for events and so on in Berlin, I think it's good. *Berlunes* sometimes to look for jobs because they have a job search tool. But for reading articles... well yes, sometimes, but not so often, the cultural ones from here (Germany).

I: What kind of content do they share, what do they bring to you as a media?

R: It's not professional or professionalised information, let's say, it's more of a type of information specifically aimed at immigrants because it helps you to integrate because in Berlunes I have seen some interesting articles about 'Self-employed in Germany' for example”

(I10: F, 29 years, journalist, Berlin, p. 131)

“I do read *Berlunes* sometimes and I find it funny, and I follow *Berlunes* and *Professor Shopenhaua* on Twitter. But I don't really... I don't read much else for immigrants...

E Do you read it for information or for entertainment?

R For entertainment I think, yes”.

(I12, 29 years, project manager, Berlin, p. 155)

“R: *Berlunes*. I like some of the articles they write, they make me laugh above all, because they criticise both the Spaniards and the Germans and sometimes you feel quite identified. *Berlin Amateurs*, in fact I know them because a few years ago I asked them if they wanted me to collaborate with them, and they wrote me that if I wanted to start writing a blog and so on. After a couple of months, I got a job and so on. But, well, I have them on Facebook and I follow them and so on... All these platforms are a bit similar...”

I: In which sense?

R: Well, they all have a bit of the same sections, don't they? ‘My ideal Berlin’, ‘why I came to Berlin’, ‘Berlin anecdotes’, ‘partying in Berlin’, ‘what to do in Berlin’, places to visit... They talk a lot about politics but almost never go into too much depth. I think they are more useful for people who have just arrived than for those of us who have been here for a while, because they really repeat the information, there is not so much to say about the same city, I think”

(I15: F, 36 years, Spanish teacher, Berlin, p. 199)

“I: And do you consult the so-called diasporic media, made by immigrants, for immigrants...

R: Yes, '*Spaniards in Berlin*' yes, as long as I need something. I mean I don't go to Spaniards in Berlin to see what's going on, because I need something or because I suddenly saw an advertisement that caught my attention because it appeared on my wall. *Berlunes*, yes, I read it sometimes, but not usually. Or again because something has been posted on Facebook and it has caught my attention, so I've gone in to read it. But not usually”.

(I13: F, 34 years, environmental consultant, Berlin, p. 170)

In general terms, they are familiar with the diasporic media, but they do not consider them as main press reference. Rather, it offers access to practical information for migrants, as well as humorous or entertaining content. In general terms, diasporic media are integrated

into the 'digital locality' of the Spanish community. Nevertheless, rather than visiting the websites of this type of media autonomously or spontaneously, the impacts reached them through social networks. Sometimes through their own publications and on other occasions because the content was shared by other profiles. Despite this, all the interviewees positively valued the contribution of these media and illustrated how this type of media were gradually being incorporated into their digital interaction spaces, such as social networks, forums, etc. On the other hand, the last quote illustrates very accurately how some of the interviewees directly identified Facebook groups with diasporic media. These groups fulfilled a very relevant function at the level of social exchange between immigrants. Such groups have already been very useful in other types of migration processes to access crowdsourced information (Latonero and Kift, 2018). I will discuss them in more detail in the section on community building.

To conclude, the process of keeping up-to-date also involves a process of adaptation in the country of destination. This is partly due a generalised social and cultural process in which legacy media have moved first to the Internet and web platforms, and progressively to mobile applications. However, this adaptive process is not only generated from a material point of view, changing media and formats, but also includes effects on how the information is consumed. The morning coffee with a newspaper is no longer the exclusive moment of the day to inform ourselves. Given that the mobile phone always accompanies the user, both information impacts and interaction become part of the user's daily life. On the other hand, it also has a metonymic effect on a symbolic level, as users tend to extend the meanings traditionally attributed to other signifiers: In language, it is noticeable that they talk about informational media interchangeably, sometimes referring to professional media, and sometimes to social networks. The same happened when I asked about social media. They included mobile applications in as social media, referring not only to application versions of social media such as Facebook or Twitter, but also to other kinds of mobile applications such as WhatsApp, for example. Finally, this adaptive technological process also has a cultural and symbolic perspective. It does not only involve the migrant's media consumption, it also involves the manifold media of legacy media, web platforms, social networks, and applications from Spain and Germany that are gradually merging into the migrants digital experience. In the next section, I will analyse the socialising perspective, looking at which media practices interfere with the migrant's socialisation processes in the destination country and, conversely, how the migrant's personal situation in offline contexts in the destination country is reflected in their media practices.

7.1.2 Practices of Interaction: Personal Relations in the Host Country

In this section I will discuss how Spanish migrants develop their social and friendship relations in the destination country and how this interaction is later reflected in their media practices and in their digital locality. Socialisation of immigrants is not necessarily related to integration, but with adaptation to a new (more or less hostile) environment of interaction. Adapting to the host country is more than a spatial question, more than finding a place to live, a job, or learning a language. It is a long and complex sociocultural process, with personal, social, political, and emotional implications. It, therefore, involves an adaptive and learning process. Socialisation is the process by which the individual interacts with the sociocultural values of the social environment, both offline and online. In that sense, the connected migrants (Diminescu, 2008) interact in a hybrid digital social environment in which they develop new ties. This is not a static but an unfolding process. The process of integration (fleeing from paternalistic assumptions that integration is about to assimilate the culture of the other) consists of adopting certain decisions and carrying out a set of social practices (including digital practices) whose ultimate goal is to build a space, a new quotidianity whatever it is depending on the people, in which to feel comfortable and adapt to the new situation. In this regard, an important aspect is the kind of connections and friendships they developed in the host country. I first asked the interviewees about their personal relationships in Germany, and then I reconstructed how these relationships and social interactions were related by their media practices. In the process of socialisation people mobilise different forms of social capital: economic, social and cultural capitals (Bourdieu, 1983). As long as society becomes more complex, the process of socialisation also gets more intricate, both in terms of cohesion and adaptation in different contexts. Changes in social structure, technological developments, cultural diversity, and the progressive and simultaneous interconnection between different parts of the world make people engage in increasingly complex relationships to adapt to the diverse contexts in which they interact. When I asked the interviewees about their social relations in the country of destination, the answer often led to talking directly about their friendships. In this regard, the interviewee reported to have more Spanish and international friends than German friends. Other respondents felt they had closer friendships among their co-nationals. Of course, language always plays a fundamental role in personal relationships as facilitating factor, especially in the early stages of emigration. However, this predominance

was not always related to language competence, but with the level of effort involved and/or cultural factors that make them feel more comfortable surrounded by co-nationals:

“I work in English, so I speak English almost every day. If I meet a Spanish colleague, I speak Spanish but mostly in English. But since I use English as a vehicular language in my professional life almost exclusively, or when I use it for a German friendship. But with English I do not reach the standards of having fun or disconnecting as you can reach with Spanish. So obviously you are going to choose Spanish in your group of friends if you want to disconnect, have a good time, have fun.”

(I19: M, 31 years, aeronautical engineer, Munich, p. 268)

In this quote, the interviewee speaks of 'disconnecting' from the extra effort it takes to speak other languages and indirectly from cultural affinity. However, even if migrants initially relied on relationships with co-nationals, new friendships and relationships also emerge in the migration experience. In the following quotes, the interviewees describe their friendships in Germany:

“Friends of other nationalities I have almost more than Germans. I don't find it hard to speak English either. So, I have friends from the United Kingdom, Asians, Italians, French, Portuguese. But, as I say, they are not my regular group of people, I mainly go with Spaniards”.

(I13: F, 34 years, environmental consultant, Berlin, p. 178)

I: Do you have Spanish and German friends and other nationalities?

R: Yes, more Spanish. Approximately 80% Spanish because of the groups and so on and 20% foreigners. My flatmate is German, and I have some German friends yes, but not the closest ones.

I: And in the 20% more Germans or more foreigners?

R: Yes, more foreigners because of the German courses and so on, and less Germans, it's hard for me and it's even harder for them”.

(I10: F, 29 years, journalist, Berlin, p. 136)

“It is true that I have lacked a more personal connection with people here. I've always got on well with my ex-girlfriend (German), and actually in both in Heidelberg and in Berlin I've always had more contact with native people, with German people. But it's also true that I have a really good relation with other immigrants, even with Latinos, with Greeks or Italians”.

(I5: M, 29 years, PhD Student, Berlin, p. 54)

“In my group of friends, I have my two best friends who are Spanish and also Brazilians and Latinos and then Germans, Italians too. Right now, I have 50% Germans and 50% Spaniards, Latinos, Italians (laughs) it's kind of like that.”

(I4: F, 34 years, journalist, Berlin, p. 28)

In these quotations, it is already noticeable that Spanish emigrants tend to seek out friendships with their fellow nationals. Also noteworthy was the progressive internationalisation of their social relationships that was not limited to the country of origin and destination. One remarkable pattern was how immigrants from different countries established personal relationships. In the case of relations with co-nationals, interviewees argued reasons of identification, language competence, but also the facilities offered by sharing the same cultural codes. In the case of friendships with people from third countries, linguistic competence also played an important role because it was usual to communicate in a third language, in this case English, which was an easier language for most of the interviewees. Here again, identification played also an important role, as most of the friends from third countries shared a similar situation or at least shared the experience of living in another country. In fact, many of these contacts and relationships were, according to the interviewees, developed in the German language courses. In the case of relationships with Germans, the responses were very diverse. Although linguistic competence always played a significant role, it depended on the migrant's personal context. For example, it was influenced by whether they worked with German colleagues or had daily interactions with Germans. Additionally, it was linked to the duration of their stay in the destination country and whether they had established personal connections with Germans before leaving Spain. On the other hand, the type of city they lived in also played a role, whether it was a big or a small city. Some of the interviewees who lived in small cities reported that their integration was easy, that they immediately met cool and nice people who facilitated their participation in the spaces. Others commented that in big cities it was more complicated, as there were

more people, of other nationalities and also a large community of Spaniards, so it was easier to end up resorting to the familiar. On the other hand, they commented that integrating in German circles in larger cities is more complicated.

So far, I have described the personal relationships of Spanish migrants in the destination country. A situated context is important in order to unfold the media practices involved in this process. In general terms, the interaction with Germans and other relationships in the host country did not play a relevant role in the description of media patterns of the respondents. Fundamentally, because in the case of the relationships in the destination country, the media practice only constituted a support to the face-to-face interaction. When I asked about the uses of media technologies, the conversation always turned to how they maintained the link with the country of origin. They did not arrange online meetings to talk with the friends in the destination, they met to go out for a drink, to have dinner, they interacted at work, etc. Therefore, the media practice was not considered as vehicular or pervasive in their relationship, but accessory¹³. From a material point of view, they used information and communication technologies like any individual in a non-migrant context to contact with their offline friends in the country of destination. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter facilitated connections with friends, allowing individuals to share moments from their lives and stay informed about others' activities. Additionally, instant messaging applications such as WhatsApp and Telegram have largely supplanted traditional phone conversations, providing a quick and convenient means of real-time communication. However, it was difficult to develop their media practices in contexts of socialisation in the destination country because migrants interviewed continuously differentiated between their *offline life* in the destination country and their *online life* in networks, attaching great importance to the contact with Spain. Nevertheless, what I found more interesting, is how these new established personal relationships were incorporated into the digital contexts of the interviewees and how they developed new digital networks. When the new relationships are incorporated into the offline life, they begin to be reflected in digital contexts, for example, in social networks. At that moment there began a process of internationalisation of common digital spaces, in which people in other languages start to intervene and even the interviewees themselves start to publish in other languages. However, as the social relations explained by the interviewees themselves

¹³ This changed significantly in the context of the coronavirus crisis. During the lockdowns, many individuals turned to video calls and other digital means to maintain social contact, due to the necessity of physical distancing to prevent the spread of the virus. It highlighted how personal relationships always find a way to stay connected, even in cases like this, through digital means.

had already been advancing, the volume of interaction with Germans tends to be lower than with Spaniards. When I asked about this lack of interaction, they alluded reasons of linguistic competence and cultural factors. Interviewee 1 comments in the following extract from her interview, that interacting with Spaniards is easier and that interacting with Germans requires more effort, more 'energy':

“I have German friends on Facebook, many of them. And I have German colleagues, but not friends who call when I have a problem or I need to talk to someone, let's go for a beer, no. But in the end, if you want a full social life with German people you have to be personally strong and willing to put your energy into it. Whereas with Spanish people it's much easier, you don't have to put so much energy into it. So when you are down for personal or work-related reasons or whatever, you end up resorting to easier relationships, which are also closer and with more confidence. So I think that to preserve those German relationships you need a lot of effort”.

(I1: F, 27 years, chemical engineer, Berlin, p. 9)

Therefore, according to the interviewees, off-line relationships had an immediate reflection in digital contexts. In other words, they tend to have more contacts and interact more with Spaniards. This does not mean that they do not feel adapted or integrated in Germany, but rather that their transnational media practices were strongly linked to their relationships and sense of belonging to their country of origin. In fact, most of the interviewees felt well-integrated and had stable situations in Germany. However, the newly built relationships in Germany were situated in their discourse at the *offline* level. They were part of their new life in the destination country, with their jobs, friendships, leisure and entertainment activities. New personal relationships in the country of origin were gradually incorporated into their everyday life, adding experiences, frames of reference and emotionalities. The same thing happened in the digital social spaces that individuals frequented before (Facebook, Twitter, other applications...), as their digital social circles grow progressively with the migration experience. There is, therefore, a simultaneity between the relation in both origin and destination countries, and the digital configuration of transnational community spaces. These new spaces are rearticulated through individual and collective media practices, creating broader symbolic configurations. For instance, migrants often published content in various languages, catering to audiences in either their home country or their destination. This interaction within networks transformed their offline experiences into digital and semi-public realms, shaping novel transnational spaces of interaction. At the same time, in

this new *offline* life, they generate strong ties among the Spanish migrant community, which is also reflected in their media practices.

7.1.3 Practices of Community Building: From Migrant Associations to digital Platforms

In this section I will explore how Spanish migrants relate to their co-nationals in digital environments, drawing on the limits of the concept of digital Spanish community. Taking into account the link of the interviewed migrants with Spain, the aim is to describe how these feelings are transferred to the digital environment and how cultural roots generate a communitarian bond. Migration can be a challenging experience, particularly in the initial stages. All interviewees agreed on this. Especially in the early stages of migration, meeting with co-nationals, exchanging information, talking and sharing experiences becomes a human necessity that helps to overcome the loneliness and hostility of an unknown place (Blanch, 2005). In that sense, it is common to seek out people from the same country of origin living the same experience, or more abstractly, to seek new environments of belonging. Migrants' associations have traditionally fulfilled this role, reinforcing the identity of newly arrived migrants and preventing them from feeling isolated. In these places, migrants were able to interact with their co-nationals, thereby reducing estrangement and obtaining relevant information for social integration in the countries of destination. However, according to the interviews, this type of association is increasingly being developed in digital spaces, not only locally but also transnationally. This is reflected, for example, in well-known groups such as "Spaniards in Berlin, Frankfurt..." on Facebook, but also in diasporic media, websites, blogs and associations like *Marea Granate* or the Precarity Office Berlin that cater to the Spanish-speaking audience in Germany. These types of support networks were mentioned in the interviews as particularly necessary in the first stage of emigration. However, according to the users interviewed, these types of spaces have moved largely to the digital formats. The Internet offers new possibilities for exchange through websites, email, forums and social networking groups, chats that bring together groups of people with common interests/needs. Thus, digital platforms and social networks also become a source of data on the migrant heritage. In particular, the platform most frequently mentioned by all interviewees were the Facebook groups such as "*Españoles en Alemania*", "*Españoles en Berlín*", "*Españoles en Hamburgo*"... Facebook groups serve as semi-public forums, requiring acceptance into the group. In these spaces, migrants can freely

share their experiences, knowledge, report difficulties and constraints, post questions, and different kind of migrant-oriented contents. This network of emigrants disseminates useful information at every stage of emigration, from the pre-departure, offering a picture of what they may find in the host country, to during the migration process itself, offering valuable information for labour and social integration, as well as on the limitations and difficulties they may encounter on the arrival. It should be noted that Facebook was in general the most frequently mentioned digital tool within the migrant networks. In fact, it is relevant that all the interviewees mentioned this kind of groups both when talking about diasporic media and also when they reflected about the Spanish community in Germany. Therefore, they built a direct symbolic relationship between this type of group and the creation of networks of belonging. All the interviewees without exception participated in this groups (sometimes in various of them):

I: And what about the diasporic media, the typical media that are made by immigrants for immigrants... Do you consult those kinds of media?

R: I consulted them more when I arrived, that is, when I arrived, I was on my own, I was in a hostel, it took me 10 days to find a house, very unassisted, although that's a cool feeling in my case, although there are those who don't like it so much. The thing is that my channels for contacting people were those at the beginning. I joined 'Españoles en Berlin', I found many meetings of Spanish-German tandems. There was another one called 'Profesionales en Berlin' and I contacted them more as initial channels of interaction with other people, more in politics, which has also been a fundamental channel for me to get in contact with people. I know them, but right now they are totally disused, perhaps because I am already more established, that is, I already have my circle, my partner. Yes, I used at the beginning but I don't use them anymore".

(I14: M, 33 years, PhD student, Berlin, p. 184)

In this quotation, we can see, first of all, how the interviewee speaks about the group as a diasporic media. In his response, he clearly illustrates how participating in this kind of site was a strategy of adaptation in his first stage of emigration. Through the group, he was informed about places where he could find a tandem, to meet people or to participate politically. However, this comment illustrates a fundamental observation that is also reflected in other interviews: Once their stay is consolidated in the destination country, the Spanish migrants interviewed built new personal networks and expanded their social

resources. Nevertheless, they consistently maintained their involvement in digital migrant networks as essential points of reference and practical support in their daily lives.

I: And the typical pages of 'Spaniards in Berlin', 'Spaniards in Leipzig'... Do you use them too?

A: Yes, quite a lot. The typical situation, when you have a question, you look there first because someone has asked it before, that's for sure. And if not, you post it and people answer you. Yes, I use them a lot in fact. The 'Spaniards in Leipzig' (...) What I have learned after moving a lot is that the first thing I do when I get to a place is to join the group 'Españoles no se dónde' (Spaniards don't know where). And it's true that... That happened to me in Kyrgyzstan, otherwise where do I get friends there without knowing Russian? It opens doors. You are part of a network, and you know that there are people from everywhere. And it is a network that also has more and more people. It is very interesting to see how it is a network that is reaching more and more places. Well, the first thing when I am going to move to a place I ask there if anyone knows about an apartment, basically. Then people answer me. Then I look to see if there is an event and if there is an event, I get in.

(I2: F, 32 years, environment engineer, Leipzig, pp. 278,286)

R: Yes this is essential, I consult several of them. Facebook pages and so on, or Twitter that basically tell you about the situation in the country you're in at the moment. And it is essential because it will answer questions that many people have and that you also have and it can save you from troubles, searches, time... And it helps you to integrate, obviously. They are people who are already here and most of them have had a bad experience and have shared it in order to prevent it from happening to others.

E: Are you talking about the typical groups of 'Spaniards in Berlin'?

A: Yes, and groups such as 'Spaniards in Germany' It's a page and there you get millions of answers to all kinds of questions that a Spaniard by culture is going to have: 'how to recycle garbage' 'what to do to register your car' I don't know, things like that. Basically, to know about bureaucratic issues in my case. Although there are people who ask questions about all kinds of things, 'where can I buy a closet'... Then, I know the stores where I can go to buy it...'where can I buy Spanish food?'... Then, I know the stores that are available.

(...)

In Spanish Facebook groups I did post a couple of times 'who would like to have a beer?', especially when I arrived here. Not in Berlin, because in Berlin the group is the death, there are, I don't know, 2000 people? 3 million? I don't know. But your comment is lost among all of them. But in my group of Spaniards in Ingolstadt where I live now, which is very small, your comment stays there for a while, and many will read it and will answer you and say yes. So yes, I have used it. More in Ingolstadt than in Berlin because in the general Facebook groups in Berlin are very numerous and it is a bit chaotic to put something there and that someone responds the way you want them to. (...) Here where I live is a small city, but in Berlin there are groups of everything, I don't know about salsa, salsa for Spanish or Spanish speakers. Another one that I was in was photography for Spaniards and so on, another one was theater. So depending on what you like, for sure you will find something in Berlin, because there are a lot of people, so that helps you. Not here, here there is only one group and that's it and maybe there are three publications a day.

(I19: M, 31 years, aeronautical engineer, Munich, p. 269 - 270)

These quotations reflect various relevant aspects their media practice. Firstly, the question of reciprocity, the groups offer a space to share content of interest for the Spanish community in Germany. On the other hand, it provides a space for personal interaction, they can also ask questions and receive answers, plan events and formulate proposals. The group is therefore a place of cultural reference and, to some extent, a reliable place to ask for help or information. This information is particularly important for newcomers, facilitating their incorporation and civic development in the country of destination, in this case Germany. They also used this platform to meet people and create new networks. However, as the last quote notes, the dynamics of these groups work differently in larger cities, where there is usually a greater offer of these groups, but where communication is more complicated. As a result, this space of reference becomes a strong symbolic space of identification. This was very explicitly reflected in the interviews. In the next quote, the interviewee speaks about the group specifically as 'a small virtual Spain', which shows the strong identity link I mentioned earlier with this platform:

“R: For a while I was very entertained in 'Spaniards in Berlin' because for me it was like a small Spain, or a virtual Spain, and you could really find everything, and sometimes you could spend a lot of time reading, it was a reproduction of Spain, but in social networks...

I: Do you think that there is any kind of digital Spanish community?

R: Well, for me, '*Espanoles en Berlin*' is like a small Spain in miniature, or virtual, where you could find everything, and sometimes you could lose a lot of time

reading, because that was the reproduction of Spain, but in social networks... It's like a little piece of Spain... You know when you cut off a starfish's arm and another starfish comes out? Well, that's it. We have taken Spain, we have cut a little piece and another Spain has come out again in the network, in the media. And here in Berlin, there is a giant community of Spaniards and the starfish that is Spain has been reproduced here in Berlin and also on the social networks, and not only in Berlin, but also 'Españoles en Edimburgo', 'Españoles... I don't know where', that is, 'Españoles everywhere'”

(I17: F, 37 years, copywriter, Berlin, pp. 231-232)

The comparison between Spain and a starfish is extremely interesting. She compared the Facebook groups as digital reproductions of *Spain*. Logically, she was not referring to Spain as a geographical territory, but as a set of social and cultural characteristics. She even speaks directly about *Spanishness*, specifically illustrating the collective imaginary and referentiality of these groups. After this interview I began to ask the respondents whether they thought there existed a community of Spaniards in Germany. Their answers repeatedly alluded to these Facebook groups. On the other hand, other interviewees also referred to this groups when we talked about the Spanish community in Germany:

“I: Do you think there is a kind of community of Spaniards in Germany?

R: Yes, well, for example 'Spaniards in Berlin' helps you a lot and then the social collectives also, well, they are not media, but they are also useful to meet people and to integrate, to communicate and so on”.

(I10: F, 29 years, journalist, Berlin, p. 131)

“A digital community, a non-digital community... And it's funny because at the end, if you think about it, we all know each other. And sometimes you go to any event related to something Spanish, like a monologue, and you start greeting people and the times goes by... And I am a person who is not at all from the *ghetto*, I have a lot of friends who are both from German and from other countries. And I'm not the kind of person who only goes with Spaniards, but even so you build your own ghetto, both on the Internet and offline, in the everyday social life and you meet people in the street, in the German courses... And at the end we all know each other, it's like a little Spanish village”.

(I15: F, 36 years, Spanish teacher, Berlin, p. 200)

In the interviews, I looked more deeply into the media practice, asking directly what kind of information was shared there or what they used it for. Some interviewees also mentioned

other aspects of the interaction, such as meeting people and even "flirting". Other users added factors such as humour and confrontation as typical elements. The most frequently attributed uses were the exchange of practical information: basic installation issues, looking for a flat, moving companies, looking for Spanish-speaking doctors or even seeking the opinion of the community of reference:

“I: And what kind of information is shared there?”

R: Most of the things, as far as I've seen, are where can I find this, where can I find that, there are funny people, someone who wants to flirt... But it's mostly informative stuff. If I have just arrived in Berlin, I'm looking for a house, where can I obtain the Anmeldung, where can I do this... Then, for absurd things, they start arguing in comments and comments... That was the funny part, wan't it? They would start talking about where to buy a backpack and end up talking about anything else”.

(I17: F, 37 years, copywriter, Berlin, p. 232)

“I only use 'Españoles in Berlin' when I need something or if I see that there has been a publication that interests me. But normally I don't visit them much, only if I need the opinion of Spanish speakers. I'm especially interested when someone posts things such as ‘Does anyone know a Spanish-speaking gynaecologist in Berlin? Well, I run to see if they say anything, and I write it down too”

(I12, 29 years, project manager, Berlin, p. 155)

Along with the social networks for employment opportunities discussed in previous sections, groups such as 'Spaniards in...' were also used as a space to receive information about job positions. In fact, one of the interviewees specifically mentioned a group of Spaniards called “*Trabajar en Berlín*” (Working in Berlin):

“Facebook also has these groups 'Spaniards in Berlin', 'Working in Berlin' and there are many people who post things there and in fact, yesterday I received an alarm that there was a group looking for administrative staff on Facebook and through Facebook I applied and then I was called for an interview”.

(I15: F, 36 years, Spanish teacher, Berlin, p.196)

In the following discussion, the interviewees not only addressed the employment-related aspects but also introduced the leisure factor within the context of online platforms. Their insights shed light on the multifaceted nature of these digital communities, encompassing both professional opportunities and social engagements:

“I: And what kind of content is shared there?”

R: Well, I would say two thirds job offers and one third parties, *Kubanische Nacht, Kubanische Party...* And there are job offers because there is a social worker here in Erfurt who is Spanish, and she is in the group. And that woman especially uploads a lot of job offers. And then there is another woman in a cleaning company, and she is constantly publishing offers”.

(I7: M, 28 years, construction worker, Erfurt, p. 89)

“The group works really well, and people help each other a lot, I've bought things that they sell and so on. And yeah, I mean, they also meet up to go out and party and stuff and they help each other a lot, also in looking for a flat, people who leave the flat share it there first to help the people in the group”

(I9: M, 26 years, construction worker, Hamburg, p. 116)

Looking at the different answers provided by users, the role of the groups also varied with the size of the city. In smaller cities, the group became a primary mean of finding friends in the first stage of emigration. In this case, respondents reported more difficulties to meet people than those living in larger cities. Thus, I found cases in which the interviewees claimed to have met all her friends through this type of group:

“R: There I met Carlos for example, all the friends I have now, otherwise I'd stay at home all day and do nothing at the weekends, what a bore.

Well, it was because my partner started talking to one of the guys, 'let's go out for a weekend, let's go to a club nearby' and of course, we had been here for two months, we hadn't been here much longer than that. And we said let's start going out and meeting people because otherwise we will stay at home all the time. And we went out two or three times with them to a party and from then on, we started to meet more people. Then there was a Christmas dinner, a Christmas Eve dinner and a New Year's Eve dinner and from then on we started to meet more people”.

(I11: F, 26 years, hairdresser, Erfurt, p. 144)

Undoubtedly, digital platforms of exchange between co-nationals, specifically Facebook groups such as 'Spaniards in Berlin, Munich, Leipzig, Erfurt...' became one of the most important categories of the analysis. These digital networks of support were defined as spaces of exchange, reciprocity, spaces of belonging and cultural reference. Places where participants felt identified and safe, familiar spaces. Among the most common uses of the platform, the most repeated codes were: meeting people (also flirting), sociocultural activities, exchange of practical information about the city/country of destination (bureaucratic issues, renting, services in Spanish (doctors, language academies), personal opinions of Spanish speakers and finding a job. The fundamental variation in this practice comes with the development of emigration process, as several interviewees noted that the use of these platforms declined as soon as they developed new offline networks in Germany. These communities were therefore particularly useful in the early stages of emigration as support networks. However, relationships with co-nationals were not limited to the digital realm, but also developed in their offline lives. Therefore, it is possible to speak about a highly active Spanish community. Within this category, I explored the relationship between participation in the Spanish community (both online and offline) with integration in the destination country. Given that in all cases there was a strong link between the emigrants interviewed and their Spanish co-nationals, both in offline and in online contexts, I asked them whether they thought that this type of group helped socialisation in the destination country, or if on the contrary it contributed to isolation. Nevertheless, the general feeling was that these exchange spaces offered positive elements for integration in the country of origin, not only in terms of information, but also in terms of emotional support, by helping to create networks of solidarity and assistance:

I: Do you think that these platforms facilitate integration in Germany or the opposite?

R: Yes, yes. I think they do, and I don't know, they also motivate you. At the beginning when you arrive, and you don't really know how it all works and you see people who have already created things. It encourages you also to create your own things. I mean, it's not just about arriving, adapting, integrating and looking for a job and that's it. It's about helping other people and even being able to create your own digital platforms if you like them”.

(I10: F, 29 years, journalist, Berlin, p. 131)

However, although in most cases they valued positively their participation in the groups, in terms of assistance, information and even emotional support, they pointed to this participation as only one aspect of integration. Moreover, they emphasised the importance of offline contexts.

“I: Do you think that new technologies help immigrant integration?”

R: ‘Jain’, I would say yes and no. Groups such as ‘Spaniards in Berlin’, it doesn’t help integration, because if you are in a group called ‘Spaniards in Berlin’ you are not integrating, you are integrating with the Spanish community in Berlin. If you want to integrate into a group, you join a tandem group. But if you don’t know German, no matter how much you want to integrate, it’s in German. So, language is a real digital barrier as well. So, it helps, yes, you can find information faster, you don’t have to go around so much, yes”.

(I17: F, 37 years, copywriter, Berlin, p. 240)

“I don’t think it makes a difference. I don’t think it’s a reason for you to integrate better or worse. I think that integrating is a very big word and apart from the fact that it can take years, integrating into a culture is mainly the language and I don’t think that social networks help much with that because the social networks I use are in Spanish. I think that integrating is, above all, having friends from Germany and it has nothing to do with social networks. I am from old school, and I like to meet people in person, I can chat on Facebook, whatever you want, but if I really love that person, I will meet them for a coffee, a glass of wine, a dinner, a party.... Integrating is working in the country with people from the country, I don’t think it has anything to do with that”

(I15: F, 36 years, Spanish teacher, Berlin, p. 205)

In summary, from all the information gathered in the interviews, I found three fundamental dimensions of the media practice in Facebook groups: first, the informative-practical dimension: to search information and advice for migrants, talks of interest or general questions of sociocultural integration, documentation, bureaucratic procedures, validation of diplomas, housing, health, job search, Spanish-speaking doctors, social assistance, buying/selling of household goods or furniture, moving house, etc... Second, the sociocultural dimension: organisation of cultural events, national celebrations, gastronomy, events for the promotion of Spanish culture/language in general (exhibitions of Spanish

artists, Spanish cinema, poetry recitals, events of a protest/political nature, gastronomic days...). And third, to meet people and generate new networks: Facebook groups, along with Tinder and other similar platforms were also used to meet people. According to the interviewee media practice can benefit the adaptation process through the self-empowerment generated by access to information, rather than cultural assimilation. Moreover, they also pointed out that the language competences remained one of the main barriers in the socialisation in both offline and online contexts. However, the variation in the media practice in this case was related to the access to other sources of information. For example, in the specific experience of one of the interviewees, who was married to a German guy. As she told me, she had no need to contact such groups of Spaniards on Facebook because from the beginning she had found her place in her partner's social circle. He helped her a lot in the process of adaptation to the new context, providing her all the information she needed. She did not need the supportive work of this type of groups or to get closer to groups of Spaniards:

“I have always felt very well supported and I have never lacked support or advice or information because my partner has always given it to me.... I think that this is the difference between me, that I came here, and I had the support of a person who is also German. I think it is different for people who came here to look for a job or to work and did not have a person, especially a German, who could tell you: 'Well, here we do things like that', or 'for this you need this paper', or 'don't worry, because...'. He has helped me with all the bureaucracy, to integrate, to make friends, I already knew where to find an academy.... It is like... I already had an instruction manual that told me the steps to follow: 1, 2, 3, 4... So, there was no room for error. I didn't need it to say 'I'm going to visit a forum to see if people are doing the same as me, to look for help or if someone can give me some advice, to see how I can get this...' No, I always had a home, I always had friends. It was easier for me in that sense. I don't know if it is a form of support among people who go to other countries to feel together, that we are not the only ones...”

(I18: F, 32 years, graphic designer, Karlsruhe, pp. 252-254)

7.2 Media-related Practices in personal Relations with the Origin Country

In this section, I analyse migrants' social relationships and personal networks with the origin country. Years ago, it was inconceivable to communicate on a daily basis with the geographically distant loved ones. Partly due to the economic costs and partly due to the lack of resources. Nowadays, all that is required is an-Internet connection on a computer or on any of the mobile devices available. Communicative networking of Spanish migrants interviewed took place in a transnational and translocal scenario. This entails the establishment of new social ties in the destination country, while simultaneously maintaining personal connections with their home country through various digital applications, platforms, and social networks. . The establishment of social connections and networks within the destination country, reflecting the migrants' engagement into the local community. Simultaneously, their sustained ties with their home country through digital means, indicate also a continuous engagement with their cultural, social, and familial roots. This dynamic scenario underscores the migrants' ability to navigate and bridge two distinct digital and spatial realms, maintaining a sense of belonging and participation in both their adopted and home communities. The simultaneous existence and interaction within these transnational and translocal spheres characterize the nuanced and multifaceted nature of their communicative experiences. I will analyse the characteristics of personal interactions with the country of origin, examining the types of media practices are associated with this interaction, as well as their functions and meanings. Within the realm of personal and affective relationships, I will take into consideration both kinship bonds (fathers, mothers, siblings, uncles, aunts, cousins...) and friendships. When I first asked interviewees whether they maintained regular contact with their family and friends in the country of origin, the response was unanimous: they maintained not only regular but almost daily contact with their family and closest friends. Although interviewees told their own personal experience and dynamics of communication and exchange, it was possible, however, to detect certain patterns and media practices in this contact. In general terms, taking the repetition and regularity of use into account, the most used applications to keep in touch with family were Skype, WhatsApp, and Facebook. However, as I mentioned in the introduction, the functions attributed to each of them were different. In the following, I will describe the media practices associated with - the country of origin to reconstruct the role of this contact

in the everyday lives of Spanish migrants in Germany. For this purpose, I will focus not only on the use but also on the everyday spaces generated by these media-related practices.

7.2.1 Practices of Digital Quotidianity: WhatsApp Connection

The interviewees reported that WhatsApp was one of the most used applications for direct contact with the country of origin, but also for new relationships in the country of destination. Specifically, in the context of communicating with family and friends in the country of origin, it proved to be a fundamental tool. Its significance lies in its ability to maintain ongoing contact despite the challenges posed by the migration process. The emotional and affective connections facilitated by WhatsApp were vital for sustaining these relationships, offering a platform that transcended geographical distances and mitigated the impact of the migration experience on personal bonds. A striking factor that may seem unimportant, but it is indeed symbolically significant is the fact that informants used to speak about WhatsApp as a *social network*. This was a quite repeated element in the interviews when I asked if they used any social network. It seems clear that although WhatsApp is not a 'social network' in the conventional sense of the word but a mobile application, it is indeed a literal form of connect with other people. WhatsApp is a cross-platform messaging application that enables users to send text messages, voice messages, multimedia content, and conduct voice and video calls over the internet. While WhatsApp facilitates social interaction and communication, it does not strictly fit the conventional definition of a social network. Unlike traditional social networks, WhatsApp primarily focuses on private, one-on-one or group communication rather than the public sharing of content. Nevertheless, it plays a significant role in fostering and maintaining interpersonal connections, especially within close-knit circles, making it a crucial tool for personal communication and coordination. Since it was one of the most used means to maintain their 'social/personal networks', it made them spontaneously and directly relate these applications to the concept of 'social network', as a synonym of the way they relate to their social environment. First, the most obvious reason for highlighting the use of this application was the frequency of use, while other applications such as Skype for example, were used for more occasional conversations. In the case of WhatsApp, the results pointed to a general trend of using it on a daily basis:

“I talk to my family every day by WhatsApp and... I talk once or twice a week by phone or Skype”.

(I13: F, 34 years, environmental consultant, Berlin, p. 176)

“Well, we do not use Skype a lot, because I don't like it, I'm overwhelmed by the cameras. So, I use it but not much. And WhatsApp... yes, every day my mother writes to me, and she also writes to me on Facebook”

(I10: F, 29 years, journalist, Berlin, p. 135)

“I communicate with my mother and my father, my family, by WhatsApp, by Skype, but not by mail. Before, when there was no WhatsApp, we used to write more emails. Then, with my sister by WhatsApp and Skype. And with my family it's basically WhatsApp and Skype, it's a more direct contact I think”

(I17: F, 37 years, copywriter, Berlin, p. 234)

Moreover, WhatsApp introduced a transformative feature that has reshaped social connections with the country of origin: the immediacy. In this context, "immediacy" refers to the quality of being instantaneous, prompt, and direct in communication. The key feature introduced by WhatsApp is characterized by the immediacy it offers, allowing for real-time and spontaneous interactions. Interviewees underscored the commodity and usability provided in interpersonal communication through WhatsApp, as it allows for spontaneous and unplanned interactions, in contrast to platforms like Skype, which requires to arrange meeting. The utilization of various WhatsApp tools has facilitated a phenomenon previously limited to migrants: the ability to maintain continuous and real-time contact with the country of origin, resulting in the emergence of a digital daily life. In essence, it empowers migrants to actively engage digitally in the day-to-day affairs of their social circles in their home country. Immediacy, in this context, emerges as the definitive element influencing the performative aspects of everyday life. I use the term "performative" to emphasize the active, dynamic, and expressive nature of individuals how they navigate and participate in the rituals, practices, and interactions that constitute their everyday lives. In essence, it highlights the behavioral manifestations that shape the routine and habitual aspects of daily existence in migration contexts. In other words, the ways in which individuals enact, embody, and engage in their daily routines and activities. It encompasses

the actions, behaviors, and expressions that contribute to the ongoing performance of one's daily existence in contexts of migration. Whereas in the case of Skype, Spanish migrants referred to the videoconference as a space of intimacy to 'talk about their daily lives', in the case of WhatsApp, the daily life is practiced, to the extent that individuals take part in the process. With this purpose, WhatsApp offers many functions as mobile application, including sending messages, photos, audio, videos, creating groups or videoconferencing. In the following I will describe some relevant aspects of digital everyday life and how they were reproduced from a material perspective. Using WhatsApp, Spanish migrants can stay in constant contact with their families and loved ones, exchange information in real time or participate in everyday situations:

“If I'm eating a cupcake and my friend Maria likes cupcakes, I send her a picture and tell her 'Look how good it looks' and these things, which are mostly just nonsense. Or if I have something new, I bought this sweater, I show it, because your friend is not around to see it...” (...) “when there are family birthdays we meet (per WhatsApp) to blow out the candles and I get always very nervous, because it's a mess, everyone is talking at the same time, blowing, singing birthdays songs...”

(I17: F, 37 years, copywriter, Berlin, pp. 234, 237)

The daily use of communication technologies allows the sharing of non-relevant events, such as what you are eating at the moment, what you bought on a shopping day, or even family events. Sending photos and videos on WhatsApp is also a fundamental element of interaction, both to illustrate this quotidianity but with daily information, sharing what they are doing or eating, or simply by sharing photographs of their children to show their growth, as several interviewees mentioned:

“I have my nephew, if I didn't have the option to send me videos of him via WhatsApp or photos, I would have a much harder time, and the fact that I can call my parents whenever I want and be in contact with them at any time is essential for me. If it were like 100 years ago, sending letters, it would be much harder, apart from the fact that you wouldn't know more than half of the things that happen... I receive photos especially of my nephew and then the typical 'Oh how fat he is' or I send them photos if I've gone on a trip...”

(I15: F, 36 years, Spanish teacher, Berlin, p. 204)

Here the interviewee highlighted this factor: if the relationship with her loved ones were by letter, she "wouldn't know more than half of the things that happen". In other words, she would have missed out on many daily events and situations. A letter would summarise the most important aspects of the events, leaving aside the details of the everyday life. On the other hand, Whatsapp tends to progressively replace phonecalls as it offers the possibility to call people directly and free of charge from the application. Below is an extract from an interview in which the respondent talks about her daily conversations via Whatsapp:

“A normal conversation doesn't last more than 7 or 8 minutes. It is just, how am I doing here, how is the work going, what are my plans? It depends. On a working day: how am I doing? how's work going? If I've been at the gym or if I attended course, I tell her. Then it is my turn: How about you? How are you doing, how's the weather, we talk a lot about the weather, about 3 minutes (they talk) about the weather (laughs) of those 7. Then, 'what is my mother cooking, what does this have in it, this has saffron or thyme because I was thinking about cooking it other day, but I was missing this and so on...' You know, random things. And well, I always ask what their plans are, what they are going to do. And they tell me, well, 'this weekend we have lunch with friends, the other day your cousin came here, you can't imagine what he said...' Well, gossip about family, neighbors, things like that. Everyday stuff.”

(I19: M, 31 years, aeronautical engineer, Munich, p. 262)

“Nowadays it has been established that one of the tasks like going for a shower, lunch, dinner... it is to have an hour to be in contact with people, even if you don't have anything important to say.”

(I18: F, 32 years, graphic designer, Karlsruhe, p. 242)

Furthermore, the messaging service enables bidirectional communication between individuals, but also multidirectional communication with WhatsApp groups as a fundamental tool for communication and collective participation within the family networks. Within WhatsApp groups, there are different levels of distribution. According to the data reported, it is usual to have a “nuclear family group”, usually composed of parents and siblings, and an 'extended family group', with uncles, aunts, cousins, etc. These groups not only fulfil a practical function but also a symbolic and even identification function, with a great sense of collectivity. This is evidenced through the names given to the nuclear groups, to give some real examples extracted from the interviews: “*Children in exile*”, “*Children*”, “*Family Power*” (original in English), “*Family*”, “*The Calatrava Family*”, “*The Teledín Family*”, “*Álvarez Family*”, “*Torres Family*” (original in English).

“By WhatsApp, we have our group there to talk just nonsense and we are almost always in contact, we talk every day practically, not on Skype, but by WhatsApp”.

(I15: F, 36 years, Spanish teacher, Berlin, p. 204)

“I have the cell phone for WhatsApp, to have above all, more importantly the family group, otherwise I would almost take away my cell phone because I am very dependent”.

(I2: M, 27 years, master student, Berlin, p. 12)

The larger family groups (with uncles, aunts, cousins...), which I will hereafter label as “extended groups”, are used to maintain a continuous link with the family, although the form of exchange generated is generally less profound and of a *semi-private* nature. According to the interviewees, in these groups they share less personalised day-to-day information (which is understandable given the larger number of people), but they share other information of interest (upcoming meetings, local information...), photographs (when several family members get together, photographs of children...) and birthday greetings:

“Well, there my aunts and my mother send nonsense, send funny videos and photos and so. Also my aunts and my mother inform if someone dies in the village. Congratulate birthdays and that's it”

(I9: M, 26 years, construction worker, Hamburg, p. 122)

“Now that the old people of my family have all WhatsApp they built a macro group and right now for example a second cousin has been born and they are uploading photos”

(I7: M, 28 years, construction worker, Erfurt, p. 92)

I: And for example, in the chat group of 'The Family', what kind of things do you talk about there?

R: Right now, my mother is sending memes. But if not, apart from those things that my mother sends, I don't know... My nephew has graduated as a sailing instructor, and he sends us pictures of that. Or we tell each other pictures of

the day to day. The other day he went to see Bernie Sanders and he sent us a picture. Or my nephew graduated from high school and tells us about it. That's it, we tell each other things." (...) "There are small details that keep you connected to the everyday life of your loved ones that maybe if we had emigrated in the 70's we would not have been able to perceive. Because nobody would bother to send you a letter to tell you a joke. On the Internet, they do. So, it does help you to maintain a level of contact that would be impossible without technology."

(I4: F, 34 years, journalist, Berlin, pp. 34, 36)

This concluding reflection underscores the theme introduced at the beginning of this section, focusing on immediacy and its impact on everyday life. The pivotal characteristic of digital media technologies is their capacity to shape and generate aspects of daily life. As she points out in her quote, years ago when the media were more restrictive, limited communication had an influence not only on people's relationships or the accessibility of information, but also on the content they shared. The new digital formats allow the sharing of 'non-relevant' information, such as jokes, day-to-day situations and spontaneous reflections without any economic, personal or temporal cost (since they are immediate). At the same time, they foster a participative culture, in the sense that they can play a fundamental role in decision making processes in real time, for example. On the other hand, the most explicit form of participation is to generate media practices and routines to be present at family events:

"It started as a group to broadcast my aunt's wedding. And then people started to leave, and we stayed just the cousins. And since I, for example, could not attend it and other people were unable to go, they formed a group to report the event and send us photos.

E: And do you also do this kind of transmissions with other things?

A: Yes, when we had a family event. The other day was my cousin's wedding, which I couldn't attend either, and they also sent me photos over there. Or for example, I traveled to China with my mother and 'The Family' was created to broadcast the trip to China (laughs) and I sent photos of the trip."

(I4: F, 34 years, journalist, Berlin, p. 34)

The interviewee employed WhatsApp as a means of remote participation in significant family events, demonstrating its utility for bridging geographical distances. In particular,

she describes the creation of a group initially for broadcasting her aunt's wedding, which evolved into an ongoing platform for sharing updates and photos among cousins who couldn't attend in person. This practice extends to encompass various family events, including her cousin's wedding and even a trip to China with her mother. While the interviewee acknowledges the value of these digital transmissions for staying informed, she also recognizes the limitations:

I: Does it make you feel like you are somehow there?

A: Mmmm no, because I'm not there. Some things... For example, the connection with my siblings is pretty strong and we still keep updated but there are things like... My nephew is getting older, and I don't hear about that on whatsapp. When he was younger, we had a very close relationship, we got on very well my nephew and I. And now that he's a teenager I'm getting lost.... I don't know him so much anymore. Or my mother is getting older and that's... The 'paellas' on Sundays... I'm not there. It doesn't matter if they forward it to me. These are things that just take place and technology can't replace them.

(I4: F, 34 years, journalist, Berlin, pp. 34-35)

Despite receiving updates and images, she clarifies that it doesn't make her feel as if she is truly present, especially in cases involving nuanced familial connections, such as the evolving relationship with her teenage nephew or missing out on traditional Sunday *paellas*. In this context, she suggests that technology cannot fully replicate or replace the authentic experience of certain familial moments. In this context, there exists a tension between the immediacy facilitated by WhatsApp, as discussed earlier, and the notion of genuine physical presence. The interviewee's use of WhatsApp allows for immediate and remote and digital engagement in family events, offering an online connection despite geographical distances. However, she explicitly highlights that this digital engagement does not replace the authentic sense of presence. This tension reflects the nuanced dynamics of digital everyday life, wherein the immediacy of communication technologies provides novel ways to connect but does not necessarily replicate or substitute the depth and authenticity of face-to-face interactions.

In friendship relationships, WhatsApp (alongside with social networks, especially Facebook), also plays a key role. According to the data, there is a continuous connection

with friends, not only in a bidirectional way, but also through collective groups via WhatsApp. They also introduce an extensive use of audios as an effective form of communication. In friendship relationships, the collective groups increase in number. That is, all interviewees report belonging to several different friendship groups. These groups of friends have in common with the family groups that also in this case the variable of intimacy and quality of the relationship played an important role both in the conception of the groups themselves, as well as in the content and the uses given to them:

“With my friends I mainly communicate via WhatsApp, because we also have different groups depending on the level of intimacy and so on. So yes, the truth is that I am in constant contact ... With my best friend who is in Madrid I send audios almost every day, with the rest of my friends we have a (group) chat and we keep going. With other friends from Luxembourg, we keep talking, we send audios via WhatsApp, we also have our (group) chat, we meet in other cities, and we continue to see each other. If WhatsApp didn't exist, or at least Facebook where I keep in touch with my friends more than with my family, maybe I wouldn't have been able to maintain those relationships at the level I do now”.

(I12: F, 29 years, project manager, Berlin, p. 162)

“With my friends, we have the typical group of friends where they are constantly chatting and it doesn't matter if you are there or not, because you participate in the same way... If there is any news to share, it is shared through that group, and everyone is immediately informed... to talk privately with friends WhatsApp is also the most immediate way”.

(I13: F, 34 years, environmental consultant, Berlin, p. 176)

They exchange with friends all kinds of information: current affairs, humour pieces and the latest news and events in local circles. Participation in these groups allows them to remain connected to everyday life and to remain connected to the dynamics of their groups of friends. This continuous connection or effective participation in their origin social circles has effects not only in terms of socialisation, but also in terms of identity. Despite the limitations inherent in digital contact, maintaining daily communication with family and friends as an immigrant in another country offers several advantages. First, it fosters a sense of connectedness and alleviates feelings of isolation. Secondly, regular contact enables the sharing of daily experiences, providing a virtual presence in the lives of loved ones and

preserving a sense of belonging. Thirdly, it facilitates the exchange of practical information, including updates on family events, health matters, and other important aspects of daily life. Additionally, maintaining daily connections helps to sustain cultural ties and shared experiences, contributing to the preservation of one's identity in the context of a new cultural environment.

7.2.2 Practices of Closeness: Videoconferencing as adapted Spaces of Closeness

The closeness dimension has already been developed under different theoretical approximation. Madianou (2016) proposed the notion of 'co-presence' to explain experiences of emotional proximity/intimate presence experiences in social media contexts while Wilding (2006) proposed "virtual intimacy" to explain the emotional bonds of transnational long-distance communication. Also, Attwood & Alison (2017) considered media as "infrastructures of intimacy" understanding that the process of intimacy takes place not only between people, but across "devices, apps and platforms" (p. 2). According to the interviewees, Skype was the most used (but not the only one) tool for video conferencing with the family, and also with the closest friends. In this application, the interviewees meet to talk for a longer time, for more relaxed conversations and for *important issues* that require a face to face meeting. According to their narratives, videoconferences replaces the phone calls they used to maintain when they lived in the country of origin. In fact, an interesting factor is that while international telephone rates and calls in locutories have played a relevant role in the recent past in the communication of migrants with their countries of origin, with the penetration of the Internet, digital media have facilitated and reduced the costs of communication with the countries of origin. In that sense, none of the interviewees mentioned having a special rate on their telephone to talk to their loved ones in the country of origin. There were some interviewees who still sometimes continued to talk on the phone, but because it did not represent an increase in their tariff or because of media literacy issues in the family, for example with parents or grandparents who did not handle the computer. However, talking on the phone was not the most habitual way to establish a connection with the ties in the origin country:

“I send them (family) sometimes a message (WhatsApp) and so on but we don't talk on the phone, I think once in a few months, every few months. I used to have a contract to call to Spain but not anymore”.

(I5: M, 29 years, PhD Student, Berlin, p. 61)

“With my home country I mainly use WhatsApp, because even my parents use WhatsApp, they send me audios! With my family mostly by WhatsApp. Well, they gave my dad for his retirement an iPad and I have an iPhone, so we meet up on Facetime sometimes, he has learned to use it already and everything! Too much use I would say... and yes, with my family I mainly use WhatsApp. Also, because the calls are free, and well, living abroad, international conferences (by phone) are quite expensive”.

(I12: F, 29 years, project manager, Berlin, p. 162)

All interviewees consistently reported videoconferencing tools such as Skype, Facetime, Google Meets, or similar platforms for regular family contact, albeit not on a daily basis. These videoconferences were reserved for more extended conversations, providing a dedicated space where both the migrant and the family could engage in substantial discussions and exchange information. In this sense, videoconferences were regarded as intimate spaces, exclusively employed with family and close friends, for two fundamental reasons. Firstly, because they exchange private information. Secondly, and closely related, because of the close relationship between the migrant and the interlocutor. Only with the closest contacts do they exclusively reserve this space of time for sharing:

“Skype is for the most important things, when we want to talk quietly. I don't meet weekly per Skype either. Every month or every two months... Especially because with WhatsApp you are already located. If not, it would be different. But since WhatsApp is there for almost everything.” (...) “With Skype not so often, maybe to say ‘hey, how is everything going, or to plan things, right? To talk about the master degree, that overwhelms me...With my parents I talk about which exams I'm going to do, If leave one of the for October or so on, how are you going to plan your life Project”. (...) “I meet via Skype not so often. Maybe more with my parents because with my sisters for more specific things I use WhatsApp without problems, just with an audio. But, yes, sometimes we also use Skype. The other day I had a meeting round, first with my sister Marina, then with my sister Anina and then about two hours with my parents”

(I2: M, 27 years, master student, Berlin, pp. 16-17)

Curiously, upon brief reflection, participants provided more comprehensive information about their practices. Indeed, there were instances where immediate responses prompted self-corrections, subsequently leading to more detailed and nuanced elaborations.. It seems that the use of media technologies is so pervasively present in their everyday routines that only when they verbalise it, they generate a practice that sometimes was also revealing for them. In these conversations, it was also possible to reproduce some everyday scenes. Indeed, one of the prominent manifestations of incorporating new technologies into daily communication involved users engaging in various activities while conversing with family or friends via Skype, such as cooking, ironing, or washing up. This practice closely mirrors a commonplace form of interaction within any household. While not universally reported, some participants described scenarios in which users did not necessarily need to be positioned in front of the screen but could be involved in other tasks, fostering an environment where conversation unfolded as if they were present in the same room:

“When I'm talking to my mother through audios, I'm sometimes making the dinner, or I'm cleaning my room, or doing the laundry, or I'm preparing the outfit for the next day's work”.

(I7: M, 28 years, construction worker, Erfurt, p. 147)

“Typical Saturday at 12 o'clock in the morning and you say I'm going to call my mother and you're folding the laundry or making the bed or whatever.... And since you have her on the computer, yes, it is a normal thing”.

(I15: F, 36 years, Spanish teacher, Berlin, p. 205)

Yes, especially cooking. Yes, because although you are not face-to-face it is practically as if you were with them. Moreover, you know perfectly well what they are doing, what your house is like, where you have grown up, you know where they are, at what moment, so it is almost like being there.

(I17: F, 37 years, copywriter, Berlin, p. 237)

Skype also provides an opportunity to talk about daily life in the destination country and to update loved ones in the country of origin. When asked about the most common topics of discussion in this type of videoconferences, the interviewees talked mainly about: a) routine issues, daily life in the country of destination; b) family issues and interpersonal

relationships with family and friends; c) local current affairs in the country of origin, latest news, politics, etc.; c) emotional aspects of how emigrants and their loved ones feel in the country of origin. Here are some answers on the topics most frequently discussed in Skype conversation with their families:

“Well, my mother's typical discourse: ‘what did you have for dinner?’(laughs), the routine, what have you done, what's new there? Family issues, like for example, my sister is getting married, so what are the news. Routine things!”

(I13: F, 34 years, environmental consultant, Berlin, p. 176)

“We talk about my situation here obviously, that's the main topic. Also, about what's going on there, although we speak more by WhatsApp about what happens there and politics, and I can also talk about other affective relationships that go beyond the family”

(I10: F, 29 years, journalist, Berlin, p. 135)

“Now that I am unemployed, we speak especially on this subject. You know how Spanish mothers are. I have two brothers, so my mother talks to my brothers about me and tells me about my brothers, that's how it is, that's all. Now I have a little nephew, so we talk a lot about my nephew who is 7 months old, about what he did, what he didn't do, if he doesn't eat, we also talk a lot about the situation in Spain, about whether I go back or not because things are better (...) What I do with my flatmates, if the tap has broken, if I went out with my friends, about everything , the conversation flows, the conversation flows -laughs-”

(I15: F, 36 years, Spanish teacher, Berlin, p. 203)

Finally, as can be appreciated in the shared quotations, the emotional dimension is an important aspect that is intimately related to the question of caring and affective practices. All the interviewees consistently alluded to a deeper and more emotional kind of communication in the Skype videoconferences. Undoubtedly, the family constitutes a fundamental pillar of emotional support, a safe space to “let off steam”, to talk about their emotional states and also about their personal relationships and ties with other people. In contact with friends in the country of origin, the functions of Skype are very similar to those mentioned in the exchange with family members. Although WhatsApp and Facebook emerge as the priority means of contact with friends in the country of origin, Skype is a

space reserved for the closest friends. With them they have an enough close relationship to reserve this space for exchange. According to some of the interviewees, they talk more via WhatsApp, but also on Skype with the closest friends and with friends living abroad:

“R: Being abroad I became distanced from many people, and at the end of the day you live your life and your friends, another. Something that is normal, and I think it happens to all of us. But there are other friends with whom you keep in touch with them also via Telegram or WhatsApp or something like that. And they are also people that I'm interested in, that I'm interested in how their life is going and they are interested in mine, so there is contact.

I: And by Skype...?

R: Also, by Skype. With close, close, close friends, by Skype too”.

(I2: M, 27 years, master student, Berlin, p. 18)

“I meet on videoconferences especially with those friends who are living abroad, the ones who are more used to using videoconferences. I have one of my best friends who is living in Vancouver, then I meet via videoconference with her, and also with another friend who is in the USA. With them I meet via video conferences more than writing or sending audios. But not so often with those who are in Spain. I call them by WhatsApp sometimes or I send the audios”

(I12: F, 29 years, project manager, Berlin, p. 163)

These two examples from the interviews clearly illustrate the two fundamental factors that sustain the exchange via Skype in friendship relationships. On the one hand, the proximity, similar to offline interpersonal relationships, there are certain spaces of intimacy that you only share with friends with a closer relationship. On the other hand, empathy and media competence. Those friends who live abroad are more used to Skype as a common tool in everyday life.

New forms of Togetherness

The digital realm also enables new ways of feeling together. Collective virtual spaces for sharing, not only reproduce the forms of offline exchange, but also, unexpectedly, create new ones. An aspect highlighted during the interviews, which I hadn't previously taken into

account, is the transformation of relationships within the digital environment. While there might be an initial assumption that interactions in these spaces lack the warmth or depth found in face-to-face communication, this is not always the case.. Indeed, digital communication can go beyond merely maintaining relationships; it has the potential to enhance and fortify them. While it is undeniable that the warmth of physical contact or a tender caress remains irreplaceable, surprisingly, a significant majority of interviewees reported not only a more profound exchange facilitated by digital media but also acknowledged engaging in deeper conversations with their families since living abroad. In Spain, they maintained a more daily relation with their families, meeting more frequently for family meals, restaurant outings, or shared picnics. However, these interactions didn't always include dedicated moments for deep discussions about life, encompassing both positive and negative aspects; more often, they simply savored the present moment. However, by being far away and reserving that space to talk at length, deeper conversations came up than those that would arise in a normal Sunday lunch:

“When I was in Spain, I talked to them a lot but it just didn’t seem so necessary, you didn’t have to do it or you didn’t really feel like doing it. Now you really want to do it. When you are in Spain, how am I going to call my mother every day! No way!”

(I15: F, 36 years, Spanish teacher, Berlin, p. 203)

“I tell her everything, more than when I’m there actually. I tell my mother more things when I’m here than when I’m there. Because I get more pissed off with her there. Because she has her house, her habits, it’s not my house anymore, and that’s it. (...) If you had your mother every day you would say ‘What am I going to tell you if you are seeing me every day?’. But when you are not seeing them every day, you tell them.... They don’t know your life and you try to illustrate it to them, that’s why you talk more because you have to show them what your life is like here. My parents have visited me, they know what my life is like but well, they don’t know where I work, or which way I take to go to work”

(I17: F, 37 years, copywriter, Berlin, p. 236)

“I have noticed that I talk more with my parents about how they are feeling and how I am feeling, with my parents or with my sisters, because if you don’t tell them they don’t know, they are not there to know how you are. They see you on Skype and you can tell them whatever you want, now you have to tell them, if you are feeling bad, if you are sad, if suddenly you are really happy because something has happened to you... This is the moment to transmit it. Because they can’t see it in your face, because she knows always, because she is your mother. You have to tell her because she doesn’t see you. So, I have noticed that the conversations with my family have become deeper since I am abroad”.

(I13: F, 34 years, environmental consultant, Berlin, p. 176-177)

“We stopped calling each other on video call because my mother felt so sad for me. I mean, my mother talks to me, but she doesn’t see me. Just seeing me she brokes down in tears. And I was like: *‘I’m not a little girl anymore’*. And she says that for her I would always be a child. *“Mom, we see each other more or we talk more being in Germany as we used to do it in Leon”*. We were also separated but we didn't talk every day. So that was, calls every day per Whatsapp.”

(I18: F, 32 years, copywriter, Berlin, p. 235)

The interviews revealed a dual need. From the migrants' perspective, it is crucial to share their lived experiences, providing details about their current life in Germany, outlining the composition of their social milieu, and delving into other relevant aspects. Concurrently, families express a keen interest in gaining insights into the circumstances under which their offspring, siblings, or cousins live. They seek information about their well-being, happiness, and daily routines. Therefore, these conversations serve as the sole conduit for conveying such information. Finally, there is a discernible concern about the emotional well-being of the migrants, prompting familial inquiries into the psychological state of their kin.. On the other hand, they are gradually finding ways to continue sharing the life experience, and as far as possible, they try to maintain a normal, everyday relationship, as they used to have in their country of origin:

“With my siblings I talk exactly as I would talk in person. I mean, we tell each other stuff, if you have a boyfriend and so on... My brother and I talk a lot about politics. We have a lot of things in common. Or sometimes my brother and I are just on the Internet and 'look at this website! And we send each other jokes or bullshit, we spend hours as if we were face to face. Yes, with my brother the communication is more similar to what we would have in person.”

(I4: F, 34 years, journalist, Berlin, p. 33)

These new spaces of closeness are also related to the users' own personal evolution and maturing. Not only thanks to the use of media technologies, social permeability or skills, but there is also a personal evolution that is also reflected in certain media-related practices. Some of the respondents situated the migration process in a stage of personal growth and maturing in which the relationships between children and parents moved to another phase. As people mature, various elements contribute to a growing inclination to cultivate stronger bonds with family members and communicate more about their lives. A key factor in this trend is the development of emotional intelligence and the cultivation of a more expansive perspective through life experiences. With age, individuals frequently attain an elevated awareness of the importance of familial connections, fostering deeper interpersonal relationships. In this phase, they became closer and begin to share more with the family:

“You get older, and you have nothing to hide <laughs> But I think it is also because we have grown up. The moment in which I left was also a moment of evolution for all of us, for my parents maybe not so much because they are at an age in which changes do not happen so fast, but for my siblings and me they do. Yes, also with job changes or with educational or professional dilemmas, ‘so what should I do, should I go, should I stay?’ So, all these things. In addition, being the youngest, I was the first one to leave and the one who has been away the longest, the one who speaks languages, so every time my siblings had doubts about leaving or staying in Spain, studying a language or not, if it was convenient for them, they always came to me to ask me, and I think that has also brought us closer. They also stop seeing me as the little sister and now we are all at the same level, which also leads to a change in communication”.

(I12: F, 29 years, project manager, Berlin, pp. 163-164)

“I've realized, but I think that was not related to emigration but rather to my own age, that the conversations with my mother have become more mature. We no longer talk just as mother and daughter, we talk as two people talking about a topic. Also because I am already 34 years old. Does it relate to emigration? It would be interesting to see the difference between my sister and me.”

(I13: F, 34 years, journalist, Berlin, p. 50-51)

These comments clearly show a transformation of roles, from the child who left to the empowered adult she has become during the process. From this point on, there emerges a

different process of interlocution. In these two quotes we can see how they reflect on this process:

“It’s not that we love each other more than ever, we always loved each other a lot. But right now, it’s like everything it is ok. A few years ago, I was more on my own, I didn’t talk so much, I don’t know, because I didn’t feel that we had to talk about it. But now you see, now we are all very cohesive. I guess I’m getting older (laughs) You start to miss them a lot, the family is there for the good times and the bad times, and they are people who love you, and you love them too, it’s reciprocal”.

(I2: M, 27 years, master student, Berlin, p. 17)

“When you go abroad, this experience opens up a new dimension that you didn’t know about your parents, or your mother and you meet them again. Do you know what I mean? And either through Skype or when you see them. It’s like a re-encounter with your mother in this case that you hadn’t seen it from that perspective before. It is true that maybe the fact of being an immigrant is a factor. I left home very young when I was 19, 20? It is true that in my previous life, before I left home at 19, I was very routinised, I hardly had any communication with my mother. In that sense, people who have come to Berlin now for the first time will discover a different level of communication.”

(I14: M, 33 years, PhD student, Berlin, p. 190)

7.2.3 Social Media Practices: The Semi-Private Sphere

In all the interviews, Facebook was mentioned as one of the most important social networks in migration contexts, in terms of the fundamental role in the connectivity of migrants both with the country of origin and in the country of destination. In fact, it is remarkable that the most repeated word in the interviews was precisely *Facebook*. This network provides migrants with various opportunities for interaction, from sharing daily life photos to exchanging information about interests, humor, and entertainment. Serving as a shared, semi-public agora bridging "their two worlds," this social network effectively recreates a digital microcosm. In this digital space, the lives and interactions of migrants converge, not only with their country of origin but also with new social circles in the destination country.. According to the interviewees, Facebook was from the beginning of the migratory experience a point of reference for different types of exchanges, all of them

serving basic human needs: interpersonal contact, socialising, and feeling a sense of belonging. In the migration process Facebook becomes a space to manage the visibility of the new life, to inform from professional topics, to share information or experiences of everyday life. It also generates a shared sociability, which is not only related to visibility, but also to the interpersonal relationships that are generated transnationally. A daily life in which both people from the country of origin and the country of destination participate, sometimes simultaneously in the same space, as in the post comments, for example. Examining the dynamics of interaction with the country of origin and loved ones, this section underscores the dual, integral roles played by Facebook. Firstly, it serves as a point of re-transmission of the new life in the country of destination. The publications, photos, comments, recommendations, photographs show part of the migrants' life, the part that they want to share. At the same time, it also fulfils a very important belonging function, since in their profiles display and articulate different kinds of affiliations and identities. This means that Facebook is also a space to recreate their cultural roots and to show them to the people with whom they maintain contact in the destination country: to show who they are, how they are and where they come from. From the interactional perspective one of the primary and most commented functions of Facebook in relation to the interaction with the loved ones (family and friends) has been to show daily social activities as a way to illustrate their everyday life in the destination country and also symbolic events such as travels or meetings:

“I usually publish the photos if we go on a trip or if we have a friend meeting on the weekend”

(I11: F, 26 years, hairdresser, Erfurt, p. 145)

“Most of them are travel photos and... Not just what I do on a daily basis. For example, if I go to see a bridge or whatever, so I take a photo there... or if I go out with friends and I take the typical party photo and upload it...”

(I9: M, 26 years, construction worker, Hamburg, p. 118)

Through these images and daily publications, migrants can show their life in the destination country. In terms of the family relationship, the publication of content played an essential

role for parents to learn about their children's daily lives, although most of them recognised that their parents used it mainly 'to watch' but that they interacted little. All of them emphasised the relevance of Facebook as a space for interaction, although more with friends and acquaintances than with the family. Although Facebook has a messaging service, as mentioned above, users preferred to communicate with their families through other applications such as WhatsApp or Skype. This factor was also related to the average media literacy of the parents, as some of the informants commented. With younger members of the family, such as siblings, cousins or friends, they reported having a more extensive experience on Facebook, writing through the messaging service, answering and interacting with posts, tagging other users in photos, etc.

“On Facebook I have my personal account that I use mainly to keep in touch with my friends and to be informed also because, part of the people I follow, post stuff. But most of all, to be connected with my friends”

(I12: F, 29 years, project manager, Berlin, p. 156)

7.2.4 Care Practices: Care as Communication Action

Care or the *care crisis* is undoubtedly a major topic of public debate (Pérez, 2006). Care includes both affective and material work, usually unpaid, but essential to social reproduction. The concept of social reproduction is the way in which social relations are produced and reproduced in community, materialised in social, political and cultural practices and also in behavioural patterns that permeate social life (Yazbek, 1999). Throughout history, these processes of 'social reproduction', such as caring for children, looking after friends or close relatives, maintaining households and relationships in general, have been jobs mostly assumed by women. Until very recently, care-giving was not valued socially or monetarily, being considered free or altruistic activities relegated to the private sphere. And precisely because of this tension between the public and private spheres, a growing number of authors have been critical of the universality of Habermas' public sphere (Habermas, 1991; Fraser, 1992; Klaus, 2001), pointing to gendered categories generated between the public and private spheres, which lead to legitimised structures of inclusion and exclusion. Men are related to the public space, while women operate in the private and affective framework. One of the most noteworthy aspects, as mentioned in the

previous section, is the ability to adapt to the new environment and the very diverse strategies of contact and exchange that are deployed between emigrants and their loved ones in the country of origin. The rise and proliferation of media technologies, as well as the development of digital and networked spaces, have generated not only new forms of communication, but also new ways of relating and understanding the public and private spheres.

Digital and Transnational Care

Migration processes generate new dynamics of social organisation of family life, which has triggered the development of new forms of “transnational care” (Baldassar, Baldock and Wilding, 2007: p. 14). Transnational care involves care and support activities provided at a distance and beyond national borders. In this process, daily dynamics generate new configurations of emotional and caregiving strategies including communicative practices. In the analysis of the media-related practices carried out in the case study, I detected some practices of “emotional care”, defined by Finch (1989) as emotional activities such as listening, giving advice, helping to put their lives in perspective, etc. (p. 33). Care-giving is therefore considered as an added emotional contribution. This analysis has also delved into these changes among family members, providing information on gender relations in migratory contexts with the aim of seeing whether traditional social structures are reproduced in the digital exchange of ‘transnational families’ (Baldassar 2016; Madianou & Miller, 2012; Mahler, 2001). Along those lines, the concept explores the role of digital technologies in caring personal relationships, in maintaining intimacy and especially in *doing family* (Kaufmann, 2018: 882). To define this translation, Leurs (2019) proposed the notion of *digital care labour* to address “the emotional, digital labour involved in maintaining transnational connections” (p. 641). The care usually provided within the families is translated or rather practiced in the digital environment in many different ways. Thus, within the adaptation that I already mentioned, care also finds its place in the new migratory context through the media technologies. The act of communicating and maintaining a *close* (digital) link with family and friends is in itself a form of care. In that sense, it should be noted that it is not something that happens spontaneously (perhaps more on WhatsApp due to the characteristics of the application), but as a general rule, maintaining a relationship over time and distance requires time, (digital) space and dedication. For this reason, they build these spaces to maintain the contact and to avoid freezing the relationship due to

distance. These spaces acquire a great symbolic load, not exempt from certain dispositions and social roles. Thus, for example, videoconferences become meeting rituals, in which the family gets together to chat, update and share. A *must-attend* appointment that becomes part of the daily life of both sides, the emigrant and the family/friends. Although it cannot replace presence, it becomes a way of caring the loved ones when they are far away:

“Skype is a substitute, but at least, when it fits, once a week or every 10 days, you sit down and meet with them”.

(I13: F, 34 years, environmental consultant, Berlin, p. 176)

“When we meet by Skype, we usually do it all together, all my family, and they pass me the camera and I talk to each one of them”.

(I11: F, 26 years, hairdresser, Erfurt, p. 146)

“With my mother, the weather (laughs) is a recurring topic. About personal topics, topics such as health, family health, how is the family, work issues, emotional issues, relationships... If my mother has or hasn't got a boyfriend, or if I have or haven't got a boyfriend? About politics sometimes too. It's very interesting to talk about politics with my mother because she has the television version. So I like to listen to her because it's like listening to the hegemonic discourse. And with my sister very personal, very personal topics, very emotional. Because I have a very strong relationship with my sister, so we talk a lot about the extended family of uncles and so on. About the problems that arise in the extended family... But from a very emotional perspective of how we feel about that problem, how we can help each other... We talk a lot about my mother, her health, her mood, her economy too. Of course, she is our mother, we stay with her. And when we talk to my brother, we talk about very specific issues, we talk on his birthday...”

(I3: F, 34 years, journalist, Berlin, p. 50)

Gendered Patterns in Transnational Care-giving Practices

There are different ways of exercising care through media-related practices. However, what was indisputably illustrated in the interviews is that there are clear gender roles in these media-related spaces. In this work, care is understood as the emotional bond, generally mutual, between the caregiver and the recipient (Hochschild, 1990) in which women play a fundamental role in the maintenance of affective relationships according to the data

provided by the interviews. In transnational mobility, Hochschild (2000) defined feminised global care or affection chains as a series of personal links and care work between people around the world (paid or unpaid) generally formed by women and, in rare cases, by men. In transnational contexts and culturally diverse societies, it is common to find studies on the role of the media in the construction of ethnicity, gender or citizenship, as an influential factor in the creation of public opinion, but less on how media practice constitutes an intrinsic element of everyday life, with political and cultural signification that not only represent reality, but also participate performatively in its construction (Georgiou, 2012, p. 792). According to Holm Sørensen & Meyer (2003) the “new spaces created by the domestication of new media are also gendered spaces or even gendered divides, in the sense that the issue of technology is often closely intertwined with traditional conceptions of gender” (p. 125). In the same line, Radhika Gajjala (2019) pointed out that *digital domesticity* “is produced in relation to feminized reproductive work and tends to be mostly gendered female” (p. 35). In other words, digital spaces are also susceptible to the development of traditional gender roles. International migration provides a new space for further developing the analysis of care in the transnational sphere and how care and support practices can be created and maintained within the migrant's personal networks across geographical distance. Care represents both an affective reality (personal relationships, emotional ties, emotions) and a material one, insofar as it is articulated through certain media practices, in a given space and context, as an added emotional contribution that requires time and dedication. I will also introduce different examples of how women and men experience care in different ways. After conducting and analysing the interviews, an important factor corroborated in the performance of media practice in relation to emotional care-giving is that care-giving roles are mostly assumed by women in different contexts. The first striking fact is that only the women explicitly talked about the importance of care-giving in long-distance personal relationships:

“You don't waste your time fighting anymore. The time you have to talk, is for the conversation and to try to take care of the others as much as possible when you are at a distance. At least in my family I think we have all understood it very well, because I have had a lot of fights with my sisters in my life, because the three of us are very similar and we all have quite a bad temper. But suddenly I left and even when I come back, the relationship has become much easier and much sweeter since I've been away.

I think it is related to the fact that spending less time together makes each moment more enjoyable, so let's make sure that the time we do spend is pleasant”.

(I13: F, 34 years, environmental consultant, Berlin, p. 177)

“Now I value them (the family) much more and when I am there, I try to make the most of the time I spend with them. And it is also a question of care, of thinking more about the other person”.

(I1: F, 27 years, chemical engineer, Berlin, p. 8)

In the case of the men interviewed, the general tendency was to recognise the regular connection with the family, but in general terms in order to avoid worrying the family, especially the mother, rather than as a conscious purpose. In that sense, the role of the mother played a fundamental role in orchestrating the relationship between mothers and their children.

Cross-Border Maternal Care: Caring Media Practices in Migration contexts

The respondents unanimously emphasized the central role of mothers in caregiving and emotional dynamics within long-distance family relationships. A noteworthy observation is that, despite my general inquiries about family relationships, the discussions consistently pivoted towards the caregiving practices of mothers. It became evident that mothers typically assumed the primary responsibility for direct contact with migrants. It is worth taking the time to read some of the extracts in this section because the concurrence of arguments is overwhelming. In the interviews, when inquiring about who assumes a leading role in family conversations or the regularity of contacts, it became evident that, even within transnational and digital contexts, the mother emerges as the primary agent of caregiving. Here are some of the most illustrative quotes:

“Currently, the person to whom I explain the most things is my mother. And with my father I have a very good relationship too, but my father tells me about what he has cooked <laughs> and things like that, but the important things with my mother, in general”.

(I1: F, 27 years, chemical engineer, Berlin, p. 8)

“Yes, I talk on the phone mostly with my mother, less with my father, but I talk to my mother once or twice a week on the phone even though we talk on Skype, but of course, it's still the phone.

I: Who takes the lead in conversations?

R: My mother. My father sometimes we are talking on Skype and I know that my father is there.... (laughs) because from time to time I hear him saying something, but from time to time I have to tell him ‘*dad, lean forward so I can see your face*’ (laughs) My father is not much of a phone talker, but I know he makes an effort because of course, he has to do it because if he doesn't see me or I don't see him? He doesn't like that ‘*tell me about it and so on*’, it's hard for him, he is a man of few words and it's hard for him, but of course, he makes an effort since this is the only way of communication we have”.

(I13: F, 34 years, environmental consultant, Berlin, p. 177)

“R: I think I talk more with my mother. Well, because I'm more attached to her. My mother is a housewife and so I've always been with her, my father has always been working and he has not been at home as much. So since I spend more time talking to her than to him, I talk to her more. I don't know, I usually talk to her about the everyday life, how was the day, what happened that day, what happened to me to be so upset or angry, what happened to me to be so happy, what happened during the weekend, how am I doing at home, or things like that”

(I11: F, 26 years, hairdresser, Erfurt, p. 146)

“My father doesn't have social networks and he doesn't have WhatsApp either, so I talk with him via Skype or through my mother, but not directly.”

(I10: F, 29 years, journalist, Berlin, p. 135)

“My father... Yes, he also has WhatsApp and so on. The thing is that the relationship with my father is different from the relationship with my mother, she talks to me every day.... I don't know, the relationship I have with my mother is not the same as with my father, with my father it's a bit colder.... With my mother it is closer... what am I doing, about the work, if I have dinner, what if I have eaten and I don't know, not much more. It is also true that sometimes I answer her with monosyllables. Because I am not going to speak there so much. But then when I call her on the phone, yes”.

(I9: M, 26 years, construction worker, Hamburg, p. 121)

“Well, my mom calls me sometimes and I say, you're spending money but... (laughs) Once in a week or twice a week I talk to her on Skype and then with my dad every 3 months or so. Because my father doesn't care, I mean my father never even learned how a VHS video works. With that I think you can understand. And he doesn't care about anything digital, and he doesn't want to know anything. In fact, sometimes I send him messages because he sends me first one like 'hey your mother wants to hear you' send me an audio. My father I don't know, my father only asks me about work and my mother asks me how I'm doing like twenty-eight billion times in every video call. Basically, that's it, my father only asks me about work, how is the Ausbildung going and my mother if I have met new people, if I have found a girlfriend, how are my friends, how is Diego, because she has met Diego and Neftalí my two friend here and she asks me about them too and so on. That is, my mother asks me more about emotional issues and my father more about material issues”.

(I7: M, 28 years, construction worker, Erfurt, p. 93)

“I usually talk separately and very little with my father. My mother talks to me a lot about the same things as always, you know that a trait common to mothers who tend to reiterate matters persistently. Well, my mother is very involved now with Podemos and sometimes we talk also a lot about politics and Podemos. Then we talk about my career and my problems and vicissitudes of whether I become the scholarship or not, how the doctorate is going on and so on. Then about my personal situation, if I play sports and if I'm healthy, that's the key question from my mother ‘Do you play sports? Are you healthy?’ ‘Yes, okay. ‘How are you doing with Rosa?’ And fundamentally those topics...”

(I14: M, 33 years, PhD student, Berlin, p. 189)

The great diversity of testimonies in the interviews point to the mother's unquestionable role as digital caregiver. In fact, this is perhaps the most defining pattern in the interviews in terms of the Spanish migrants' relationship with their country of origin. Mothers assume and take the lead in emotional relationships and care for their children. In virtual contexts, the process of media domestication appears as an eminently feminine space (Holm Sørensen & Meyer, 2003) in which gender roles play a very important role. As already mentioned, in the interviews social and cultural conventions are also reproduced in online kinship relationships, which reproduce gender roles and present a certain continuity with traditional parental places. Women, particularly mothers, assume a distinctly defined caregiving role within the private and affective domains of migrants' interpersonal relationships with their country of origin. Of particular interest is the examination of how emotions and affective practices are navigated, wherein not only gender roles are

renegotiated but also family roles, consequently shaping power dynamics in this process. Based on the comments, we see a closer relationship between sons and daughters and mothers. Mothers are in charge of maintaining and organising digital interaction with their children. They are concerned about their physical, psychological well-being and the emotional issues. This role is valued as natural or taken for granted in the family, relegating these activities to mothers. However, although it is valued as something positive, a sign of unconditional love, or as a social and cultural convention, there is also a negative connotation attached to the discourse in which interviewees subtly criticised the intensity of the role, sometimes as annoying and other times expressing a certain feeling of obligation and/or dependence. In other words, migrants reported that this dependence with the country of origin is not only produced for reasons of necessity or belonging, but there is also a certain feeling of responsibility and/or obligation. Taking into account that they have all the means to communicate at their disposal, not doing so would be a sign of abandonment or a lack of attention:

“Before it used to be a hassle because my mother wanted to talk to me every day and I couldn't every day, mostly because I wasn't at home every day and it drove me a little crazy, but I told her. I said 'mom, I have you on Skype, I have you on WhatsApp, I have you on Facebook, I mean.... You're chasing me through the networks. So, I started to distance the calls a little bit. I talk to my mother twice a week, but it depends, for example now that I have a mess with the move and so on, but I like to tell her about...”

(I17: F, 37 years, copywriter, Berlin, p. 235)

“She writes me every day by WhatsApp or Facebook. I don't like to be always available by WhatsApp because sometimes I can't answer because I can't and she worries and write where are you, you're not at home, what happened to you??”

(I10: F, 29 years, journalist, Berlin, p. 135)

“Living abroad you always have to give a sign of life so that others know that you are there, that nothing has happened to you, that you haven't had any kind of accident, that you haven't killed yourself like a crazy goat. And I think that it also helps the family a little bit to be more relaxed, to be able to sleep at night and to be able to wake up calm in the morning”

(I11: F, 26 years, hairdresser, Erfurt, p. 151)

“My mother could keep me on the phone for an hour every day. And then when I started working, I told her, ‘*Let’s see mom, it’s good that we have a relationship every day, to write every day...*’, but the calls moved to the end of the week when I had more time. (...) But there comes a moment in a day when they said: ‘*Hey Raquel, you haven’t called me today, can we call you at noon to see the baby!*’. You have been with mom and dad for half an hour, then your sister wants to talk to you for a while, then your friends suddenly say, ‘*hey I have half an hour free, do you want to make a video call?*’ You feel bad, but there comes a point when you say, okay, it’s enough. It’s not a bad thing, they are social relations but there comes a point when you feel that, if you were in Spain, there wouldn’t be that need to be on the phone all the time.

(I18: F, 32 years, graphic designer, Karlsruhe, p. 242)

The Role of the Father in caring practices

The gendered pattern in the case of fathers is also very pronounced, much more than in the case of the boys interviewed, possibly reflecting the generation gap. In the conversations in which both mother and father meet, the father generally plays a secondary role in the conversations and is totally out of the more intimate or emotional conversations. As I mentioned above, the most common comment was that the mother took the initiative both in organising the meetings and in the course of the conversation. In fact, several of them commented that they are not always present throughout the conversation but intervene occasionally. On the other hand, even in the physical arrangement of the conversation, the fathers took a secondary place next to the mother or even behind her, out of the main frame of the video call:

“Normally I talk to my mother and my father makes comments from behind <laughs> but, well yes, it’s like talking to both of them... <laughs> Because you’re talking and suddenly you hear him from behind and you say, well, okay, bring his comments”.

(I15: F, 36 years, Spanish teacher, Berlin, p. 203)

“No, I don't have that much closeness with my father.

I: And what kind of things do you talk about with your father?

“I talk less with my father, because my father.... Well, now he has retired. He retired during my time here, but when I was there my father was working, so I only saw him on weekends. So, my father, well, only on weekends. With my mother I talk to her almost every day (...) For example now he is coming to Erfurt on Sunday, and we have been talking about Christmas, what we are going to do these days that he is here, how is the trip going, how is the work going, it is not usually much deeper either.”

(I7: M, 28 years, construction worker, Erfurt, pp. 121, 147)

“My mother usually takes over the tablet or the computer and I see my father sitting there doing like this with his hand (waving) <laughs> My father also does local activism, neighbourhood activism, so we have things to talk about. But usually, it is my mother who sends me the message that triggers the call ‘*I haven't heard from my daughter in a while*’ ‘*I don't know, if she has abandoned us*’ and I say, ‘*Ok mom, let's do a videoconference*’.... And yes, it is usually my mother, who takes the initiative”.

(I12: F, 29 years, project manager, Berlin, p. 162)

I: Your mother takes the initiative?

R: In my house yes, because my father always says the same thing to me ‘*tell your mother and then she tells me*’. Then my mother narrates all the conversations to him”.

(I15: F, 36 years, Spanish teacher, Berlin, p.203)

“The one who is always facing the computer, the addict, is my mother, the one who is always on Skype. And my father, if he's awake, then I chat with them together. And if not, always my mother, always. If I tell my mother by WhatsApp at twelve o'clock at night ‘connect’, she connects to the pc and my father would ignore me because he would be sleeping (...) with my father I've always talked a lot, because my father talks more about politics and I argue a lot, and my mother I know she gets angry because we argue about politics.

I: And about personal issues?

R: Less, because sometimes he has the sensitivity of a stone. My mother is more tolerant on that, my father tries to give advice and I always tell him that advice is not given, it's asked for”.

(I17: F, 37 years, copywriter, Berlin, pp. 235-236)

“What do I talk about? Politics, sports, and I don't know, not much else. My father asks me a lot about what I eat and so on, he's sometimes irritating about eating well and so on, that you should buy this, that you should buy that.

(I9: M, 26 years, construction worker, Hamburg, p. 121)

As can be appreciated in the respondents' comments, although they participate in the conversations, they do not have the leading role in the interaction. In fact, in most cases interviewees reported to have a 'different' relationship with both, a difference that is also reflected in the digital realm. With the mother they claimed to have a closer relationship. However, with the father, most of them reported a lack of sensitivity or emotional depth in their conversations. Something that clearly relates to the construction of masculinities and the traditional roles in families. On the other hand, it is also particularly interesting to take into account the topics discussed with their fathers. In all cases, they recognised that emotional and more day-to-day topics were discussed with their mother, while topics such as work, politics, sports or other practical topics were more common with their fathers. Finally, it should be noted that the differences were recognised as a social and cultural convention and it appeared to be accepted as the norm in this context, as if they assumed that this was their particular form of care-giving, sometimes with laughs, or even excusing this difference. In fact, it seems that the division between the private (everyday life, personal relations, emotions) and the public (work, political affairs, sports) around parental roles continues to be reproduced in the digital realm. This quote clearly reflects this:

“With my father I talk more in relation to work and social issues or topics that are more.... I am not saying that what I talk about with my mother is not important, but with my mother it is mainly about everyday life, what did you have for breakfast, what did you eat, how is she doing, how is the weather, how did she sleep, how did you sleep... I mean, those mother issues: "I worry about".

(I18: F, 32 years, graphic designer, Karlsruhe, p. 244)

Digital Caring in Friendship 2.0

Friendship has been a subject of philosophical and sociological reflection since ancient times. Over time, the concept of friendship has evolved, especially with the advent of digital technologies. Traditionally, there have been difficulties in establishing a unified understanding of friendship (Wright, 1978), and the concept has been widely studied and analysed by various disciplines (Crosnoe, 2000). Moreover, friendship is not a static concept; it depends, for example, on cultural factors. The characteristics and nature of friendship relationships can vary or evolve across time and place (Policarpo, 2015). Some studies have focused on distinguishing between friends and close friends (Fischer, 1982), while sociology has sought to understand friendships in context (Adams & Allan, 1998). Additionally, the development of new technologies has given rise to extensive research on the digital practices of friendship (Byron, 2020), highlighting social networks as significant platforms for emotional support that mediate and shape the development of friendships. The internet and social networks have significantly transformed the way individuals develop and maintain friendships. In the digital age, friendship has become democratized and globalized, allowing people to connect across geographic and cultural boundaries. However, this evolution has also introduced challenges and criticisms. Digital relationships can lack the depth and commitment characteristic of traditional friendships, as they often rely on superficial and ephemeral interactions. Nonetheless, few studies have focused on friendships in the digital environment within the context of migration processes (Bork-Hüffer, 2022). Today's paradigm of friendship has changed. Personal relationships can be considered as concentric circles of trust. At the core lies the individual, surrounded by their innermost circle comprising family, partners, and close friends; In the subsequent sphere, other significant individuals in the personal realm, such as additional friends, work colleagues, fellow students, and activists, become part of the structure. Beyond this, the circles expand to include acquaintances, neighbors, and so forth, ultimately leading to the outermost circle encompassing strangers. With the new information and communication technologies and especially with the introduction of social networks, the concept of friendship is becoming blurred. What used to be a small and tangible circle of friends, in social networks grows exponentially, not only including friends with a more distant relationship, but also including strangers who become part of the exchange community and who may come from different parts of the world. Therefore, as social circles change, so

does the concept of friendship. This is clearly noted and recognised in the interviews when we talk about friendship in digital contexts:

“Well, in a way the migration has served me a bit to sift because people who told you 'I'm with you for whatever you need', the typical thing people say, I realised that in the long run, it's a lie. At the end of the day, whoever wants to be there, is there. And in my neighbourhood group of 10 or 12, I maintain the relationship of talking to each other, I don't know, every two or three weeks, only with two of them, two of them. And with the others we have a WhatsApp group.”

(I7: M, 28 years, construction worker, Erfurt, p. 95)

“I always say that I have people on Facebook that I would say hello to on the street, I don't have strangers on Facebook, all the people I have on Facebook are people I know for some reason. There are people with whom I have almost no contact, but nevertheless if I saw them on the street, I would say hello. If I realise that I have completely lost contact with that person, I remove this contact from Facebook. If I have no contact with a person, I don't have in digital life either”.

(I13: F, 34 years, environmental consultant, Berlin, p. 169)

However, close friendships also find their place in the digital realm. For this reason, maintaining close friendships in the country of origin through digital technologies became a relevant category of analysis in the interviews. Despite this transformation of the ‘social’ concept of friendship, personal relationships continue to develop new practices of interaction and care with close friends both in offline and in online contexts. In other words, care relationships with friends also cross media practice in the transnational sphere. However, these care networks do not operate in all friendships, but with their closest circle. Below are some examples of how care in friendships is practised in digital contexts. To maintain the (digital) presence in the daily life of loved ones and staying updated on everything that happens in their life (not only the public but also the private aspect) can be considered a way of caring and feeling cared for. In that sense, the Spanish emigrants interviewed reserved the most intimate contact, in form of space and time for sharing, for the closest circle of friends. In this case, gender roles are less evident than in the case of the roles of mothers and fathers, although an empathetic and care-focused discourse is more explicitly perceived in the women interviewed. As can be seen in some of the selected

comments, there is a tendency to give more importance to making an effort to maintain and care the contact with the loved ones. Here I quote illustrative comments of four of the women interviewed:

“I talk to people less, I keep in touch, I keep the contact in small doses through WhatsApp, but, for example, I always try to call on birthdays or when there are any important news”.

(I13: F, 34 years, environmental consultant, Berlin, p.176)

“I: And with your friends in Spain do you maintain a relationship?”

A: Yeeeeeeees! I have my lifelong friends, my group of friends and we also have our group of friends, and they are there, they don't go anywhere. In fact, sometimes I tell them ‘*How annoying you are*’ because there are a lot of photos and comments.... And I get home, and I have 300 messages, but I like it because they are the same friends as always”.

(I15: F, 36 years, Spanish teacher, Berlin, p. 204)

“With my friends we also call each other almost three times a week and before we used to call each other once a month. When we all left after the university, because each of us had gone to a different city to work, we used to call each other once a month and nowadays we can say three times a week easily. So yes, I can say that going abroad makes you get in touch with those people more. I don't know if it's homesickness.”

(I18: F, 32 years, graphic designer, Karlsruhe, p. 243)

“I often wonder how I did it in my Erasmus. Because of course when I was on Erasmus, we didn't have Whatsapp. And I don't really remember how I talked to my friends then, because I kept in touch, I think it was through Facebook chat? I have always needed to be in constant contact with the people I care about, and it is true that it helps me a lot. When I was a little girl I remember I used to send letters to my friends. But of course, the relation it is not the same. When you talk every day, many times a day... We don't feel it at all. Because we have been talking every day. So, you don't notice it so much. I guess if I didn't that, I would have to try much harder to get something similar in Germany. That at the end it's true like I have the social gap covered by all the people in Spain.”

(I20: F, 32 years, environment engineer, Leipzig, p. 283)

This last quote highlights a crucial factor related to the emotional support that Spanish emigrants receive through contact with their friends in their country of origin. The interviewee explicitly mentions that her social needs in terms of friendship are met. In this particular case, the interviewee had been living in Leipzig for only one year and expressed her desire to build such trusting relationships in Germany as well. Overall, the analysis shows that the interviewed girls placed significant value on both staying in contact with close friends and care their friendships. Maintaining contact with friends in the country of origin and nurturing those relationships is crucial for emigrants for several reasons. First, it provides an essential source of emotional support. Friends from childhood and previous life stages understand the cultural and personal context of the migrant, facilitating a level of understanding and empathy that is difficult to find in new environments. Additionally, these relationships help preserve cultural identity and roots, which are critical to mental health and emotional well-being during the adaptation process to a new culture.

Strong connections with friends from the home country can also mitigate the loneliness and isolation that often accompany the migration experience. Interviewees reported that having people who care and are available to offer advice or simply listen can make a significant difference in the migrant's ability to cope with day-to-day challenges. Furthermore, these relationships create a sense of belonging in a new and unfamiliar environment, which can ease the transition and adaptation to the new surroundings. However, the men interviewed did not give as much importance to this constant, daily contact or to what this *care* meant in the development of a personal relationship. In some comments it is perceived that they gave more importance to direct contact, stating that even if there was not much contact between them, when they returned, they called each other and met as usual. While in other cases, they considered that this communication was satisfied through the collective groups in which they participated. Hence, it was less common to arrange separate appointments to speak separately:

“I do keep in touch, but it is also true that it is weak, a message from time to time and so on. When I’m here the people with whom I have the most contact are the people here (in Germany). When I’m there in Madrid then I do, I call people from the faculty, friends, people from the neighbourhood, we meet for a few beers and I see how life is going. But when I’m here in Germany I don’t do it honestly....

From time to time, I don't know, but most of the communication is with the people here in Germany”.

(I5: M, 29 years, PhD Student, Berlin, p. 62)

“Well, I have less contact than I would like, very little, very little. I have to talk more, I am losing it... (h) No, I'm not losing them, we get along very well but we hardly talk to each other, it's very sad...

I: And with the friends, you were telling me about Facebook, don't you meet by Skype?

R: No, no, no. The last time I met in Skype was with two students as a teacher, a couple of students from Nepal and I was there with them. And then I told Peña (a friend) once but he didn't know how to manage Skype <laughs> I haven't talked, the truth is that I'm very disconnected, I'm very... a bit passive sometimes, and that's a fault... And if you don't take care of people, there comes a moment when you lose contact, you lose them... And you have to take care of that and I'm a bit careless... For example, my partner is every day whatsapping in the family group that she has and, in my case, maybe a week goes by.... and I did not and I have not sent a message to Telegram”

(I14: M, 33 years, PhD student, Berlin, p. 190)

“Not with my friends. It is also true that we are on the groups almost continuously talking. I mean, I didn't have the habit of talking with them in Spain either.

I: But then when you come back to Spain?

R: Yes, when I'm there (Spain) I didn't see that things have changed much. Well yeah, I don't know... Maybe that they got angry and so and you should have told them stuff”.

(I9: M, 26 years, construction worker, Hamburg, p. 123)

“I call them (friends) less, it's mostly message-based. I've been away for a long time, so my habit is: I call you on the phone to tell you the street and the time or the bar where we're going to meet. I'm not the kind of person that talk to you to say, *'hey I need to talk to you, I have to tell you something or so'*. I've never been like that, so I don't have this habit.”

(I19: M, 31 years, aeronautical engineer, Munich, p. 265)

In general, men were less emotionally expressive when discussing their long-distance relationships and caregiving. They tended to base friendships on shared activities, such as sports or hobbies, rather than deep emotional communication. These shared activities are more difficult to maintain at a distance, which may lead to friendships being perceived as less essential when it is not possible to engage in these activities together. Only one of them, Carlos, showed a more emotional exchange when talking about his best friends:

“And with him I have never lost contact, never in my life, and a thousand times, a thousand times you call him crying because you want to go back because you are down. Those guys have supported me a lot (...) For the down times I use WhatsApp, but yes, with Adri or Sergio we do videoconferences once every two weeks, sometimes the three of us together as well”.

(I7: M, 28 years, construction worker, Erfurt, p. 95)

All interviewees acknowledged having groups of friends on whatsapp and sometimes talking on facebook, commenting on photos, etc. The interviewees argued that by being in these groups they were able to keep up to date with important events and news from their home country and their social circle. This helps them feel updated and connected to their Spanish environment. It was also important in relation to the return, either temporarily or permanently. The interviewees commented that maintaining contact is important to be able to return to a context in which you do not feel strange and to be able to keep the role within the group that they had before emigrating.

7.3 Political Practices: Migrants as Transnational Political Actors

The understanding of institutional power has changed in recent decades, especially with the development of digital technologies in the new millennium. According to Mittleman (2000) "the Gramscian framework of resistance must therefore be expanded to encompass new actors and spaces from which counter-hegemonic consciousness is expressed" (p. 169). In other words, the idea is to extend the understanding of resistance beyond conventional boundaries, recognizing the emergence of diverse agents and arenas expressing opposition to prevailing hegemonic structures. In this regard, digital spaces have provided the

necessary arena for the development of various counter-hegemonic groups, eager to construct their own voices and movements. This digital dimension introduces a contemporary and dynamic aspect to the expansion of resistance frameworks, reflecting the evolving landscape of socio-political discourse and activism. However, while digital environments reproduce new ways of understanding or practising power, the new spaces do not definitively overturn the driving forces of globalisation and capitalism and concentrations of power. Moreover, few studies problematise gender, class or rural-urban differences or other economically situated identities as important to the design and adoption of ICTs (Gajjala, 2003). Hence, there is a need to investigate political practices within specific contexts, offering a nuanced understanding of how new centers of power and representation emerge within the network. There are many reasons for migrants to get involved in political movements, depending on the migratory context and personal factors. Participating in politics allows immigrants to meet basic needs in terms of representation, to know their rights, to feel protected and sometimes counteract obstacles and restrictions to participation in the host country (Katsiaficas, 2014). Political collectives have played a fundamental role fulfilling the need for information, counselling, and social protection that public institutions were failing to provide, especially in the early years of migration. However, the patterns of political participation and engagement have also changed in the digital realm. As I mentioned in the introductory chapters, political participation was not specifically included in my research objectives on the media practices of the Spanish community in Germany. Nevertheless, upon interacting with activists from various collectives, I came to recognize that their political involvement was intricately tied to their identity as migrants. Consequently, my interest became actively focused on exploring the profiles of migrant activists, both in social movements and in different political parties. I was interested in exploring their participation, which was largely online and deterritorialised. In other words, how they managed to articulate their participation through media practices. Some of the first interviewees were activists in *Marea Granate*. They spoke passionately about the collective's activities and strategies, mostly online, which had enabled Spanish migrants to have their own voice and discourse regarding their migration process. Thanks to these interviews, I was also able to get in touch with other political spheres within the Spanish community in Germany, as in the movement itself, there were people who maintained a double affiliation, in the *Marea Granate* movement and also in traditional political parties. In that sense, migration had played a catalytic role in the political empowerment of many Spanish migrants. From that moment on, I started asking about

the political interests with the aim of detecting and analysing the different levels of political engagement through media practices by interviewing activists in both political organisations and in social movements. From the first interviews with Spanish migrants, I noticed a clear predisposition of the respondents to talk about politics and to express their opinions on the subject. This fact was quite noticeable in all the interviews. This is partly due to the fact that, according to interviewees, it was precisely the sociopolitical context that triggered their emigration. This factor is closely related to other affective practices, they were *feeling affected* or *feeling the injustice* as the main catalyst for this engagement in politics. In fact, their answers when I asked them about the motivations for their political engagement were quite explicit:

“I initially decided to leave because it looked interesting to live abroad, but it is true that although for a long time I refused to think that I had been kicked out, that I hadn’t left... Maybe they didn’t actively kick me out, but they don’t actively let me go back, or I can’t go back. I could go back but not in conditions that are worthwhile for me. So yes, I think that maybe because of that, because of the lack of security when you go abroad and because we are a bit of a product of what is happening in Spain, that’s why we are more connected”.

(I12: F, 29 years, project manager, Berlin, p. 154)

“When I got fired (in Spain) I was really pissed off and I said, well, now, I’ll do whatever I can. And as soon as I arrived in Germany, I contacted the *Equo* (Spanish political party) colleagues I already knew that here there was a network of people who emigrated. And through them I met a couple of people from *Equo* who were here in Berlin, and we started to be active, we started to be active in networks. I participated in its first European election campaign in the youth network, there were people in Brussels, there were people in London, there were people here in Berlin. (...) the awareness that many of us were here because we had been forced to leave because of the lack of opportunities in our country. Some people maybe not, but a lot of people, including myself, are here because we had no opportunities in Spain. So, when you become aware of that, you become aware that you have done everything right in your life, that you have studied a degree, that you have prepared yourself, that you have simply done what you were supposed to do and then suddenly the irresponsible and austere policies of your government... Maybe it sounds a bit tragic, but they destroy your life. So, you rebel and get angry, which is what happened to me. I came here absolutely pissed off, because I was doing well in Alicante. So, I wanted to do something, and I started with *Equo* because it was the most accessible, but then I joined *Marea Granate* more or less in March, and then I became active in the social movement as well”.

(I13: F, 34 years, environmental consultant, Berlin, p. 174)

“The vast majority of us are people who left Spain because of the crisis, because they had no work, they had no future, they didn't know what to do and to avoid staying at home with their parents, they left. And they moved to Europe, and partly to Latin America, protesting because they realised that a great part of their situation and the responsibility lies in the political and economic class of their country. They realised that politics and the economy had a clear impact on their lives”.

(I5: M, 29 years, PhD Student, Berlin, p. 60)

“I want to support that political trend, because when I share something or write about something it is because it really affects me, as an individual, as a citizen, so that's why I share it. I don't want to openly show, ‘Look, this is my political orientation!’ I publish this, because it upsets me, because it bothers me. Because it affects me. But it's not just an imposture, it comes from my heart when I publish something, it's because it affects me personally”.

(I17: F, 37 years, copywriter, Berlin, p. 233)

“Spanish political events have devastated us all. We all post more on that. That's my perception. Most of my friends, activist or not in political organizations, are people interested in politics. They also have an opinion, even if they are not activists, even if they do not participate publicly in campaigns. They also have an opinion about current affairs. So, I think that we have all left the diaphanous life of 2010.

I: Why?

A: Because I don't know. Because suddenly the important things have changed. Because 15M was a turning point for everybody. Because it changed the way we think about ourselves. I'm not talking about in a political way. I am seeing publications about politics of people that never before had published things about politics. Friends of mine from school, who suddenly I discover that they are left-wing.”

(I3: F, 34 years, journalist, Berlin, p. 43)

In this context, I decided to delve into the more or less conscious intentionality behind their online posts. I began asking whether they openly displayed their ideologies or political leanings on their social media platforms. As evident from the responses, it was

commonplace for individuals to openly express their political stances, with some explicitly asserting that they did so with a conscious and deliberate intention in their media practices:

“Yes, quite a lot actually.

I: You don't mind, or you want to?

R: No, I do it deliberately, I want to do it. I use social networks to engage in politics, both to disseminate my political ideas, my positions, because I believe that this is the political line to follow, and for political organisation”.

(I5: M, 29 years, PhD Student, Berlin, p. 56)

“It's difficult to hide it, it's not a big problem for me, I'm a person and I have the right to have an ideology. Yes, in my personal Facebook profile I don't have any kind of hiding. Sometimes I think about it because I have too many people there. But I also know that there are many people who don't follow me because I post too many feminist things and'... well, I don't really care”.

(I10: F, 29 years, journalist, Berlin, p. 134)

“Yes, I think I do. Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. I don't use it for example to create debate because I don't like it on my Facebook account, although sometimes it's difficult not to. And well, because I also have family members who are totally opposed to it, and I don't want to get a bad reputation because of a Facebook post. But, yes, it's clear, if you go on my Facebook, you know pretty clearly what I think”.

(I12: F, 29 years, project manager, Berlin, p. 156)

Migrations, but also the development and proliferation of media technologies have challenged the traditional concept of citizenship primary rooted in the origin country. The media technologies have given rise to new forms of digital-based interaction and participation that allow for spaces of translocality, a fusion between the local and the transnational. As a minority, migrant communities develop stronger ties and share information about common concerns. This community building had positive effects in terms of empowerment, as Spanish migrants found a place to voice their needs, concerns and demands, many of which are deeply rooted in the migrant's current situation (such as the right to vote or the difficulty of accessing health care). Moreover, these practices, in turn, were strongly rooted in affective practices. Some feelings are very agglutinative. A set

of injustices can articulate a whole movement if it succeeds in gaining the empathy of the publics. Social movements are active and interactive, generators of content and multipliers of diffusion. Regardless of ideological profile, building a new political subject has to do with generating a strategy and a political agenda that goes beyond the individual. In other words, to generate certain collective practices, that highlight the needs and/or demands of the collective, in the case of the Spanish migrants: the right to vote, difficulties in accessing healthcare, housing problems, labour disputes, etc.). In that sense, Spanish migrants were generating in different spaces a kind of *subaltern counterpublics* that Nancy Fraser (1990) defined as, “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups or women invent and circulate their counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (p. 67).

In general, I detected 3 different types of political engagement depending on whether or not they belong to organised political structures: a) *Political engagement through media technologies, without belonging to any collective or organised structure*. These people just showed interest in politics, but their media practices were more personal expressions and interactions with political issues, for example in traditional forms of text production, distribution and/or consumption. In this type of media practice, the subject uses various media devices to situate him/herself politically through different strategies: sharing content, concerns, assessments, claims, and/or participating in debates, through texts, but also through images, videos, voice messages, etc. Both publicly (through social networks) and/or in the private sphere (through applications such as WhatsApp and Telegram). Moreover, media technologies enabled Spanish migrants to participate politically in translocal and transnational networks and it facilitated the integration of migrants into transnational political structures of various kinds. In that sense their political articulation through media practices challenges traditional concepts of citizenship which are closely linked to concepts of the nation-state. Therefore, migrants were able to join groups of b) *political activism in transnational social movements*, in this case, Marea Granate as the collective representing Spanish emigrants in Germany; and c) *political activism in the foreign federations of Spanish parties* (some of them combined with the activism in German political parties); However, it is worth noting that these are three possibilities for participation, but they were not mutually exclusive. In fact, it was very common during the interviews that some activists participated in both political parties and other collectives. In addition to their participation in the collectives, they also showed their political engagement individually with different strategies

on their personal profiles. Analyzing the political participation of emigrants at these three levels is relevant for several reasons. Firstly, understanding political engagement through media technologies, independent of organized structures, provides insights into the diverse ways individuals express their political interests and affiliations. Examining personal expressions, interactions with political issues, and the use of various media devices allows for a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of political engagement within the realm of media practices. Secondly, exploring political activism within transnational social movements (such as Marea Granate) and foreign federations of Spanish parties sheds light on the collective dimensions of political participation among emigrants. This level of analysis helps uncover the ways in which emigrants, as a migrant community, navigate and contribute to political discourse both within their host countries and in relation to their home country. The involvement in transnational networks challenges traditional notions of citizenship tied to the nation-state, offering a distinctive perspective on the evolving dynamics of political engagement. Thirdly, the examination of political activism at the level of individual profiles, along with participation in collectives and political parties, reveals the interconnectedness and complexity of emigrants' political engagement. The confluence of these three types of participation in their media practices highlights the adaptability and versatility of emigrants in expressing their political agency. This interconnectedness challenges traditional dichotomies between individual and collective political engagement, showcasing the nuanced ways in which emigrants navigate various levels of political involvement.

Personal networks have always played a fundamental role in migrant communities, but technological development has enabled the expansion and sophistication of these networks, challenging geographical distance, enabling the arising of new power relations and online topographies, also within migration contexts. Networked politics have democratised remote public and political participation by incorporating migrants to public political debate. Moreover, it challenges traditional forms of collective political work and organisation, by offering insights on the potential of information and communication technologies for the development of political action. In that sense, Spanish migrants' political engagement was not a merely cultural or identity-based process but acquired new forms of negotiation and media articulation. In this regard, the transformation of everyday subjectivities through electronic mediation and the work of imagination is not only a cultural fact, but also a critical component in reshaping the dynamics of political

engagement, fostering a more inclusive and interconnected civic discourse. The multifaceted impact of electronic mediation extends beyond cultural considerations, influencing and redefining the parameters of political agency in the contemporary era. As individuals navigate the digital landscape, the nuanced interplay between technology, identity, and collective action emerges as an essential aspect of understanding the evolving landscape of networked politics.

Through the appropriation of digital diasporic public spaces, Spanish migrants in Germany experience political empowerment through different strategies of civic, sociocultural, and political engagement within interconnected networks. These migrants, far from adopting an isolative stance, develop their own methodologies for participation. Media technologies serve as facilitators for organizational efforts, fostering the creation of networks on both local and transnational scales. Active involvement in migrant collectives, spanning social movements and political parties, yields enhanced visibility, dissemination capabilities, and garners media attention. These collectives evolve into pivotal platforms, serving as reference points for amplifying the voices of migrants in the public sphere. . In essence, it functions as a central hub where journalists can conduct interviews, gather information for reporting, and serves as a valuable resource for social science researchers. The aim of this section is to identify different forms of digital political participation through media practices (Postill, 2010) in order to deepen knowledge about how migrant communities use digital media technologies to organise themselves politically in order to stay informed and be represented. The experience of the Spanish diaspora in Germany can contribute to the understanding of deterritorialised publics by adding empirical knowledge.

7.3.1 Organisational Practices

The realm of media practices plays a pivotal role in shaping organizational dynamics, operational frameworks, and the potential for remote participation. Rooted in the digital-materialism perspective, as articulated by Leurs (2015, p. 30), the influence of hardware and software extends beyond mere dictation of conduct, instead configuring the environment within which practices unfold, presenting both opportunities and limitations to organizational processes. This perspective delves into the material and spatial aspects of technology, acknowledging that the physical and digital realms are intertwined. The perspective encourages an exploration of how the materiality of digital tools contributes to

the construction of social realities and organizational structures. This nuanced understanding of the interplay between technology and social practices is particularly relevant when examining the organizational dynamics in media practices, as it provides a framework for comprehending the broader implications of the digital infrastructure within which these activities unfold. Political participation among Spanish migrants in both Marea Granate and the foreign federations of political parties is currently grounded in a purely digital organizational structure. Daily operations and internal communication among members rely extensively on digital platforms. Migrant activists utilize diverse communication channels to articulate their political work, including social media networks, chat rooms, mailing lists, and online meetings/assemblies with free software like Mumble. These tools are often complemented by thematic groups on messaging platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram. While gathering varied insights on the use of different platforms in political activism, it is particularly enlightening to highlight the description provided by one interviewee regarding the workings of Marea Granate. This individual offers a detailed depiction of the movement's media-based nature.

“I: Has technological development made it easier for people to be activist from abroad?”

R: Yes, sure. It has facilitated it because basically activism has moved to the networks. I mean, there is a base activism, a field activism, that happens on the ground, that happens in physical assemblies and with physical actions. But I think that activism in general has been transformed. The way activists interact with each other is generally digital, whether you are in the same city, whether you are in Valencia or Malaga, or whether you are in Tokyo, others in Paris, others in Lisbon and us in Berlin for example, right? And in addition, you have a lot of tools to communicate in real time and to share your work in real time. For example, for real time communication we usually use Telegram which has a slightly better encryption than WhatsApp. And now WhatsApp you can also use it on your computer. You can have it as an application on your mobile and then you can download it on your computer, open a tab in your browser and use it there like any other messenger.

You can use project management programmes, which are free software, for example Trello or Asana. If you have a campaign, an objective, in which everyone has to take care of one task, then they are assigned to different people. You can also create some tasks and those tasks are divided into other tasks that you can assign to other people. So, you have organised your project, your working group or the tasks that you have to do specifically. And others can see if you're doing it, if you've completed it, if you need help you can create chats within each task. Then we also use a lot of tools, well, a bit more primitive like Titanpads, which are a bit more difficult to follow but we still use them for

press releases, to write articles that we have been asked to write by a newspaper or columns or whatever. And also, because several people can write simultaneously, they highlight different colours to know who is writing what, you can put comments on what is written, on what you have modified and it is very useful. It allows you to be connected in real time and also, since we are a generation that is practically connected 24 hours a day, when you ask a question there will be someone who will answer you at most 5 minutes later and will tell you the answer or where to find it. You can't do that physically. And in the end, this shortens the distances a lot, whether you are in Paris, Tokyo or Singapore, you can be working.

I: Do you do coordinate actions with migrants from different countries?

R: Yes, yes. Through the internet. You can create a specific channel on Telegram just for that or simply prepare everything with online documents that can be shared so that it is very clear what has to be done, when and where. You can distribute by post; we have distribution lists that anyone can access and Mumbles...

I: The famous Mumbles!

R: Yes! <laughs> Mumble is similar to Skype, it's an open-source programme and it allows you to have numerous online conferences. And it allows us to be connected from anywhere in the world, as many people as possible on the same channel within Mumble. We can all follow each other, we can all participate, so you have an assembly in the same way as you would have it in person, like the ones here in the 15M Berlin or the ones in Madrid, but we are not physically in the same place, right? And there is usually an agenda, like in any assembly, there is usually a moderator, and you ask for a turn through the chat, instead of raising your hand. They assign your turn and that's how you speak. Also, it's a bit complicated to use at the beginning, because you also have to mute yourself because you don't want everyone with the microphone open to make background noise.

I: Online assembly method?

R: Yes, totally online assembly method. Then there are different chat rooms, small spaces where you can separate and say, *'from this assembly you can go to work groups and if you want to, you get out of this general assembly and get into a small corner with other people'*. You can do it, just by dragging your user to the next point and that's it, and it's very useful. They are endless assemblies but... but it's very useful of course, yes"

(I12: F, 29 years, project manager, Berlin, pp. 158-160)

This quote illustrates how they work collectively, and how they are organised in a networking-based form. This digital structure ensures the participation and attendance of

meetings from remote locations, while assembly's minutes were available online for those activists who have not been able to attend the meeting. Through tools such as Mumble, Telegram or Titanpads, activists were able to work collaboratively, in real time, allowing a translocal/transnational coordination. An interesting factor is how the interviewee situates digital practices as one of the main pillars of participation but emphasises the importance of activism on the ground: physical assemblies at the local level and physical actions. According to the information gathered in in-depth interviews, activists in both social movements and political parties use fundamentally the same tools and technologies, although some differences were noted in the organisational structure of the different groups. The following interviewee provides a very detailed description of how Spanish migrants coordinated actions in the political party *Podemos* through digital technologies. The interviewee explains how the participation developed from her first contact with the collective:

“I liked their page on Facebook, I followed their fanpage and went to the next assembly they organized. And I liked it, I liked it. I went to another one, and that was like a black hole. As soon as you say, well, I could do that... That's it, like a drug. That's how it was (...)

It has been all 'learning by doing' (laughs). How do you become activist? Well, there are different ways to be politically engaged because it depends a lot on whether there is 'a circle' or not. According to the census we have about 7000 registered activists abroad, right? Registered means that you receive the bulletins, that you have the right to vote and all these things. That is to say that surely there are more supporters and less activists. 7000 is like the middle ground, the measuring rod. So, activists, not sympathizers, create a 'circle', an assembly. And yes, there is a lot of activism through the media.

There is a lot of activism by forwarding the message through the social media because *Podemos* does use the social media as a tool, sometimes even the only one. The media presence, it is a populist movement, it needs from the people to bounce its message. So, it uses the media, the media presence to bounce it on social networks. Every time one of the spokespersons appears on TV, that TV clip is passed and forwarded on Facebook and Twitter to be seen. We organize ourselves through 'Podemos Exterior' and we have a representative on the State Citizen Council, which is the highest representative body in *Podemos*. *Podemos Exterior* is also in charge of creating certain areas of work related to emigration, for example, it has the area of voting, return, health.... And then it has work teams and among them it has a social network work team. And the social media work team in which I personally participate is composed of all those responsible for social media on the circles abroad. (...)

We are on a Telegram channel. We work through Telegram a lot. And through Telegram we launch national campaigns, although we also create international campaigns to inform about 'the beg vote'. Just today we put out some tweets and Facebooks posts to let people know that the vote extensions have been extended. Last week we launched a campaign on Facebook and Twitter to inform people that they could still beg the vote. As it was retweeted by several important people in the party, by Errejón, Echenique and so on, we became TT in Spain. We also organized ourselves through that.”

(I3: F, 34 years, journalist, Berlin, pp. 44 -47)

Several fundamental factors of political practice can be highlighted in this quote. Firstly, that the first contact with the collective was already online. On the other hand, she placed special emphasis on how participation through ICTs developed organically through their "learning by doing" experience. She also mentions a fundamental issue of Spanish activists' political engagement, which was the visibility and media attention. In fact, as in the case of Marea Granate, she also mentioned the spokespersons to attend the media. Although they also operated by working areas with similar tools to those used by Marea Granate, she describes their organisation, however, with a more defined structure of responsibilities and hierarchies. One of the interviewees (I5), an activist in several social movements and also in a political party, established three main differences between political engagement in social movements and in political parties: the structure of the collective hierarchy/horizontality, institutional participation and purposes ideology/specific causes:

“I: You have experience in the field of activism, what differences do you see between the two types of activism (in social movements and political parties)?

R: First of all, activism in Izquierda Unida is more solid, more constant. In the social movement there is no structure. Well, yes, there is a structure, but it is a purely horizontal structure: there are no delegates, there are no people in charge, there is no *membership* in the sense that you don't pay fees, you don't pay anything. This results in a much weaker link with the movement and makes the movement much more volatile. Normally the social movement survives in waves: sometimes it goes up, sometimes very few people participate, then suddenly another wave starts wave, and you have assemblies with fifty people. On the other hand, activism within a political organisation, within a political party, is more stable, among other things because you have people in charge of keeping it going, of keeping the ship afloat. And then there are two more differences: institutional participation, which the social movement does not

have; the social movement puts forward demands, problems, solutions, but it will not be in the institution itself to do it. In the political organisation, on the other hand, will take part in the electoral processes in order to be a representation and change a little... And depending on the results, it will be able to do more or less. And the third difference is an ideological difference. In the political party there is an overall vision, that is, there is a vision of participatory democracy, of the goal of socialism, of ecology, of economics, of international politics, of feminism.... The overall vision in the political party. And in a way you commit yourself to that vision. Then you also discuss different positions and so on, but you have a given cosmovision. The social movement, including 15M, although it is true that 15M is much broader, in general they don't usually have that cosmovision. In social movements they usually fight for one specific cause: in PAH for the issue of housing mortgages, they are people who agree with that' in other things we don't know. In the Marea Blanca for healthcare... In the case of 15M there was a questioning of everything, a search for participatory democracy, for real, economic and social democracy, but in 15M the political principles are constantly under discussion”.

(I5: M, 29 years, PhD Student, Berlin, p. 58-59)

However, both forms of deterritorialised political participation coincided in their three main lines of work: a) positioning Spanish emigration in relation to the current political events in Spain; b) specific work to make visible and denounce the situation/needs of the Spanish community abroad; and c) political work with the community in the host country and the network with other associations and collectives. Moreover, according to the information gathered from the interviews, the transnational activism of Spanish migrants in Mare Granate and in political parties was very similar in terms of media practices, everyday tools (collaborative networking tools) and modes of organisation (assemblies on Skype or Mumble), networking practices, etc. It follows that deterritorialised condition of migration and diasporic belonging have a clear influence on their modus operandi, that becomes a complex of networked media practices. This framework of political media practices resonates with Bennett and Segerberg's (2012, p. 748) 'logic of connective action' in contentious politics. The authors propose two concepts of political activism. On the one hand, collective action constitutes the form in which conventional organizations such as political parties or trade unions organize collective mobilizations or protests with a common goal. On the other hand, they propose the concept of connective action to define self-organizing processes that use technological mediation to develop their action dynamics. However, these movements are less institutionalized and more focused on individual participation. In connective action, the communicative process becomes the organizational structure of the movement itself (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 760). Under

this theoretical framework, the media-related political practices of Spanish migrants in Germany include forms of collective and connective action. First, they fall within the logic of collective action because they participate in institutionalized networks such as the foreign federations of political parties. However, political parties in this context also called for technologically mediated organization around the world. In fact, in the history of Spanish emigration, this is the first time in which political party activists participate in different political initiatives (such as political campaigns, parliamentary initiatives, dissemination of arguments) globally and interacting in real time in digital media. On the other hand, the participation in the social movement of Marea Granate responds unequivocally to the logic of connective action. It was a movement that emerged from individuals in different countries, calling for the participation of Spanish emigrants around the world to denounce the socio-economic situation in Spain and claim their rights. In this case, the media practices that allowed participation in the movement became the movement itself. However, it should be noted that as soon as Marea Granate evolved as a social movement, organizational structures were developed and not only included digital deterritorialized participation, but also the attendance at face-to-face assemblies and the organization of campaigns with common objectives.

7.3.2 Networking Practices

Considering social interaction as a variable of analysis, I applied the concept of networking as a set of media-related practices that enable different kinds of online relationships between members of the group. This perspective does not imply that networking was technologically determined or solely based on digital tools, but places migrants as potential and remote networking agents. In this context, transnationality and translocality become blurred. Beyond the geographical transnationality, Spanish migrants often worked simultaneously both in the country of origin and in local conflicts of the destination country. Therefore, they create reciprocal links between migrant's homeland, host countries and even with third countries within multidimensional networks. Moreover, coordination through new media technologies did not exclude physical contact, since all interviewees report face-to-face meetings and local work in their groups. This juxtaposition of face-to-face encounters and virtual communication illustrated an important aspect of networking in a digitalised world. Networking practices involved different kinds of digital spaces and

platforms, but also include new political actors, by shifting political engagement patterns and logics of action. Moreover, the appropriation of digital spaces, not only took place on alternative platforms, but also in large commercial social networks such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook or Instagram, thus coexisting with the structures of economic power, with the limitations of the platform. The irruption of social movements in the political scene displaced professional and traditional politics, allowing the incorporation and direct participation of citizens. As the quotations themselves illustrate, the wide range of technologies and resources used for transnational political articulation, showed a progressive relational dexterity in digital environments provided by the experience of political participation. It can be appreciated how they value the capacity of media practices for networking with other activist groups in the same diaspora, but also with activist groups in the country of destination and even with third countries. In that sense, networking in migrant communities created international cooperation networks that respond to an emerging logic of aggregation (Juris, 2012) bringing together migrant activists, not only in physical spaces or squares, but also in digital spaces. In both social movements and political parties these digital spaces functioned as public online agoras where Spanish migrants living in different countries met for collective action, occupying a space that was not physical, but virtual and largely symbolic. Networking practices reported by respondents, included the development of a grassroots networked-based structure, in which they shared content, self-produced information, viral communication processes, etc. Networks, rather than being technologically determined, are part of migrants' media practices for political engagement, and for social and political change. These networking practices also facilitated the collaboration and cooperation with local associations through the networks of the original political group, as the experience acquired through their political participation in the home country increases not only their political skills and knowledge, but the possibilities to get involved in other political contexts or groups. Thanks to social network communication, some interviewees claimed to be more aware and interested not only in local affairs, but also in international politics.

“One achievement is all the bonds we have built, not only on a personal level but also with left-wing forces, with people from the Spanish state. What we did was networking. And one of the achievements of the GAS (*Grupo de Acción Sindical - Trade Union Action Group*) is that in different cities in Germany other GAS have been created and that they were also empowered.

That we immigrants organise ourselves and do things and that these people make other contacts with other groups that are not the same as in Berlin”.

(I1: F, 27 years, chemical engineer, Berlin, p. 6)

“I: And the political participation of the immigrant also facilitates contact with other political formations in the country of destination?”

R: Of course. Of course, whether you have assemblies similar to 15M, like our *Izquierda Unida* assembly, or you are in *Marea Granate*, you get in contact with other people because you see them in demonstrations, because you need a place to meet and those people give you the place, because I don't know, in our case in *Izquierda Unida*, you also have an ideological affinity with *Die Linke* and you are within the spectrum of the European Left. If we didn't have a structure, maybe we would have a few activists here, but they would occasionally go to a demonstration where they would see someone from *Die Linke*, but they wouldn't have contact like we have now. We know many people from *Die Linke*, for example, in our case. Or I also know that *Izquierda Unida* in France, the people of IU France get on marvellously with the people of the *Front de Gauche*, of the French Communist Party, in other words, they have integrated”.

(I5: M, 29 years, PhD Student, Berlin, p. 60)

“I: Have you also had the opportunity to contact other organisations here in Germany?”

R: Yes, through *Equo* we've contacted the Green group here and... Well, the collaboration has been absolute, as if we were part of the party here. And well, from the social movements we have contacted many German civil society organisations. We have established ties of collaboration or at least getting to know each other. I don't know if there have been so many successful experiences of real collaboration with organisations here, or at least I haven't participated in any collaboration of this kind. But we have been invited to events, we have been invited to events, there has been, above all, getting to know each other, that we are there and that there is a predisposition”.

(I13: F, 34 years, environmental consultant, Berlin, p. 175)

“Recently, we have joined IU, *Equo*, and other organisations and we have organised a very interesting campaign in which we have learned a lot and we have organised an event in which, I would say, 100 people attended... or more than 100 people. For a Spanish organising group, that is a great success. And what does that mean? This means that we have been able to have a dialogue with other different agents that have to do with movements here in Germany, but also with French groups such as *Nuit Debout*, *Interbrigadas*, which are people who organise themselves with Latin Americans... This produces very

positive synergies that can plant seeds for us to be better organised in the future and to be able to achieve the goals that we have”.

(I14: M, 33 years, PhD student, Berlin, p. 189)

In these quotes it can be appreciated how contact with other people in other cities allowed for the empowerment of migrant groups and the creation of new power hubs by replicating the work of other collectives. On the other hand, political participation led to getting in contact with other activists and political initiatives, either with ideological affinity or with common objectives. This often resulted in formal contacts, dialogue and collaboration with organisations in Germany, but also in third countries. All this work was coordinated through ICT, from the collective elaboration of texts, online meetings through videoconferences, published content, dissemination, the calling of events and mobilisations, and even the search for places to meet. However, fleeing from mediacentric approaches, they also underlined the need to integrate media practices with offline collective action:

“But of course, it is necessary to have a real presence on the street, it is necessary to be present. What happens is that you can't be present beyond going to a demonstration in front of the consulate or holding a concentration. But it is necessary that people go to the places where you can be seen. Sometimes it seems that by clicking you've done everything; by giving a like you've done everything and by saying that you like a protest post it seems that you've already done your political action for the day. I believe that they help, that they empower, but people should not forget that they also have to help, and they have to be present”.

(I13: F, 34 years, environmental consultant, Berlin, p. 175)

“I do believe that the media have a certain constitutive power. They can change you, but for me, I would put the fundamental question on power relations and the resources and the type of organisation in general, more than on the media. But it is not only facilitating, it can also be constitutive. That is to say, if you have a certain organisation with a very powerful base, you can use digital platforms to build a very rich organisation. But for that you need to have the necessary conditions before you have those possibilities to generate activism”.

(I14: M, 33 years, PhD student, Berlin, p. 187)

“I: And how is your activism from abroad, how do you stay connected to the party?”

R: Well, let's say the first connection is through the internet, then between the comrades who are here.... In fact, a couple of weeks ago I went to Nuremberg with two comrades from there and we try to get together whenever we can. Because in the end it's not the same to do political work with someone you know as with someone you don't know personally, obviously. And every time I go down to Spain, I usually have a meeting with someone from the direction to tell them how everything is going. But physical meetings in Spain are usually face-to-face meetings to tell each other what's already been told on the internet basically unless there's something concrete at that moment”.

(I7: M, 28 years, construction worker, Erfurt, p. 90)

Digital technologies play a crucial role in aiding and empowering individuals, facilitating political practices., but they are not a sufficient condition for political work. While acknowledging the "constitutive power" inherent in media-related practices, respondents emphasize the necessity of organizational capacity and available resources to challenge power correlations. Additionally, it is noteworthy that contacts with political structures in Spain extend beyond the digital realm. Respondents highlight the importance of face-to-face meetings during their travels as an additional avenue for strengthening these connections. This dual approach, integrating digital platforms and personal encounters, exemplifies the nuanced and comprehensive nature of their political strategies. In essence, the intersection of virtual and physical engagement forms a dynamic framework that amplifies their collective impact on the political landscape.

7.3.3 Collaborative Practices and Working Tools

Another important aspect of media practices of the Spanish migrant community is the use of collaborative work tools that enable collective work: from pads, documents in drive, online voting tools such as Doodle, etc. The decentralisation and collectivisation given by new technologies and collaborative working tools, undermine hierarchies and facilitate the communication between groups, underlining the potential of social media to facilitate participatory democracy. This is particularly noticeable in the activism of *Marea Granate* that can be grouped in the so-called “crowd-enabled connective action” (Bennet & Segerberg, 2015, p. 7) characterised by large-scale mobilisations, with few central organisations and

leaders. In international federations of political parties, the trend was to look for new organisational structures, avoiding intermediate political positions and enabling the direct participation of base members. The use of collaborative working tools not only allowed and facilitated collective and deterritorialised work, but also disturbed traditional hierarchies and created specific modes of interaction and communication. The interviews showed that the use of these tools responds, on the one hand, to the need to share the work and fill the immediacy needs of media imperatives, but also, especially with *Marea Granate*, to work consciously and collectively to achieve common goals. In other words, 15M fostered the democratisation of political participation which, supported by new digital tools, aimed to generate new logics of collaborative work and development:

“Titanpad is a great thing, you write a text and people modify it and so on. It's great and apart from that, just like Titanpad, the tools for creating collaborative (political programmes, the platforms for online voting... all of these tools are fundamental. On the one hand it makes things much easier technically, but on the other hand it also has, from my point of view, another philosophy behind it. The policy of everyone collaborating, of collective and horizontal elaboration”.

(I5: M, 29 years, PhD Student, Berlin, p. 57)

“R: Well, Telegram is quite popular now. At GAS (*Grupo de Acción Sindical - Trade Union Action Group*) we have a mobile application called Wunderlist in which we write down the tasks and someone's name. It doesn't matter who writes it down, for example, I write down 'Rafa has to do this task', then everyone sees it and when Rafa does it, he crosses it off.

I: Does everyone have access to this?

R: No, you have to be invited. I mean, you download the app, and they have to invite you to the list. The application itself is also used to make your own lists. For example, I have a shopping list. But this one is ours; you have to be invited. And MG also uses Mumble, similar to Skype but without video. It makes it much easier for us, also by email, especially the pads that are documents where several people can work at the same time even if they are in different places. That's good. The doodles, which are like surveys... I don't know, many tools, I don't know, there are more and more. For example, when I was in Spain we used N-1, which is another social network that was also used by the nodes (of *Marea Granate*)”.

(I10: F, 29 years, journalist, Berlin, pp. 133-134)

Respondents showed an incredibly high media literacy characterised by the use of a large variety of online tools for collaborative work: from Websites, blogs, social networks, collaborative working tools as Titanpad, to online voting tools (Doodle and voting platforms), mailing lists, online meetings and assemblies (Mumble), chat rooms, online organised events, editors of audiovisual content, mobile applications and groups (WhatsApp, Telegram). Some of the interviewees reported as well significant learning on new online collaborative working tools that they had never used before: for instance, the use of Mumble an open source voice communication application for online meetings, which improved the efficiency of online meetings, or '*Plaza Podemos*', an open online platform developed by Podemos activists where users can participate, discuss and share information. Finally, also noteworthy is the awareness and sensibility with the topic of data protection and privacy of the communication.

7.4.4 Discursive practices: Representation and Production of Media Content

Social networking can be considered as political participation as these activities constitute the creation of a public self, the first step to developing a citizen identity (Harris, 2012). In these structures of civic participation, the transfer from the private sphere to the public takes place, since migrant everyday life becomes a public element, both in the origin and other countries. The personal becomes political, as such political presence takes place also in and through networks of family and friends (Siapera & Veikou, 2013), making visible situations and problematics, that years ago would not have found room in politics. In that sense, the diffusion of migrants positive and negative experiences, exponentially increases both the possibilities of contact with other groups and/or social movements, and the recruitment of new activists. The political media practices of Spanish migrants in Germany have not only allowed them to gain visibility as a community. This visibility became a condition of possibility for the participation of migrants in certain sociopolitical spaces, generating political identities and proposing new forms of remote participation:

“We are not only helping people to organise themselves, but we are also helping people to empower themselves and we have also acted as a loudspeaker for some of the problems of many workers, such as nurses, and we have used

the media for this purpose. Many media, both in Spain and here, are interested, some because of sensationalism and others because the German left is very interested in organised immigrants, so we have used this focus as a loudspeaker”.

(I1: F, 27 years, chemical engineer, Berlin, p.5)

“On the one hand, you have to report or publicise what is happening in your country regardless of what the establishment press says. And on the other hand, you have to inform the people there (in Spain) about the country you are in, in this case Germany. We reach this goal. People in Spain know about it, they know what the ‘begged vote’ is, the political parties talk about it and it is possible that if pressure is kept on, this question will be abolished. And *Marea Granate* seems to me to be a clear example of this”.

(I5: M, 29 years, PhD Student, Berlin, p. 60)

“If it wasn’t for the new media, our presence would be rather anecdotal”

(I13: F, 34 years, environmental consultant, Berlin, p. 171)

“I: What do you think you have achieved with this activism in this period of time, what are the achievements of your activism?”

A: Well, first of all, that they remember that we exist, which I think is important. That they remember not only that we have left but that we have had to leave and that we would return if we had the necessary conditions to do so. So, I think it is very positive to talk about it, because there has always been this image that we are adventurers and that we have left because we wanted to and so on. And the vast majority of the people I know, it is not like that, we left because of lack of opportunities. Then we have also focused on very specific issues such as the vote, the descendants law. If we do not address it, no one else will. People here do not know what I have to go through every time I have to vote. So, in that sense, I do believe that it is necessary for us to put some issues on the table, otherwise they would be totally and absolutely ignored in Spain. And then I think that we have forged quite a few international relations.”

(I20: F, 32 years, environment engineer, Leipzig, p. 285)

The visibility of these groups exceeded the mere presence in the media. It allowed the creation of a public citizen identity for the Spanish emigrant community. It involved the creation of an alternative discourse to highlight the needs and demands of the Spanish community abroad, which for political reasons had been systematically ignored or misrepresented. In other words, to turn the private, the everyday life of Spanish emigrants into the public sphere, generating a progressive media attention. In this way, Spanish emigrants created their own loudspeaker. It also served to increase the possibility of new contacts, the recruitment of new activists.

Finally, in the case of media-related practices in both social collectives and political parties, and intimately related to the issue of visibility is that migrants are producers and emitters of their own online content, what is considered in present research as discursive practices. Political media practices included the appropriation of networks and new technologies to develop a counter-discourse to fight against the idealised discourse about the Spanish migration in mainstream media. The public institutions discourse about the Spanish migration, was often associated with great success and professional development in destination countries, neglecting the precariousness of Spanish migration. In that sense, the aim of migrant's counter-discourse was to dismantle the discourse of the voluntary nature of the Spanish emigration. To illustrate the call for independence of *Marea Granate's* discourse in this regard, one of the respondents reported a common request of *Marea Granate*: the live intervention in TV and radio programs, in order to avoid the video edition and/or the potential manipulation of the discourse. In both social movements and political parties, respondents reported the spread of their own content in social networks such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram as well as the elaboration of reports, press releases and opinion articles for digital press. At the same time, different campaigns were launched to defend the rights of Spanish emigrants, that included videos, mailing, Facebook posts, campaigns organised through Twitter, presence in different media. Various activists of *Marea Granate* reported the great success of the campaigns in traditional media such as radio, television and newspapers in the interviews.

“Suddenly it was like the hot topic, right? When they (the media) have to fill space in the news, then people start to concern about the expatriate vote. And well, it was like... (laughs) All the media began to contact us! First the smaller media called and suddenly *La Sexta* (Spanish broadcast TV) sent us a message saying that they were interested in interviewing someone of *Marea Granate* ... It was like wow! *La Sexta*, *El País*, *El Mundo* (Spanish newspapers)! And well, we

started making noise in the social networks and then we created a press working group and they organised themselves with professional journalist, they arranged formal press releases and so on. And well, it was like that, we have an internal Facebook group for press and communication and suddenly they said, '*journalist from the international region wants to talk to someone from the vote group this afternoon, who can?*' So, if there was someone available, they say so, and if there's no one available, they normally tagged you. Well, they were four people who usually spoke. And it was, I remember for the municipal and regional elections it was one (interview) after another. We had interviews all the time. It was in vogue because it was not a partisan issue, it was an issue affecting everyone equally, we couldn't vote! And indeed, the figures were shocking, the process was so complicated ... and it attracted a lot of attention, people were wondering why it is so difficult to vote from abroad?"

(I13: F, 34 years, environmental consultant, Berlin, p. 173)

As a result, *Marea Granate* not only put the expatriate vote into the Spanish media agenda, but the claims of the collective also became part of the electoral program of some Spanish political parties such as *Podemos*, *Izquierda Unida* and *EQUO*. Although political parties specifically follow their political action plans with the ultimate objective of conquering public institutions, the discursive axes of *Marea Granate* and the international federations of the political parties under research were very similar, focused on claiming and supporting the rights of Spanish migrants abroad:

"*Marea Granate* is the movement, 'the tide of emigrants'. It is called *Marea Granate* because of the colour of the passport and it basically has three lines of work or demands: one is the 'begged vote'. In the past the voting papers used to arrive directly at home if you were registered at the consulate when the elections came. Now you have to beg for the vote. It is a complicated administrative process in which a lot of people get lost. In fact, in the past 30% of the people abroad voted and now fewer than 4% do. And well, that is the problem. There is also the issue of the health card, that after three months Spaniards are no longer covered by Spanish health insurance and in many cases, they are either left without any kind of coverage or they have to pay a lot of money... And the third topic is the return plans. Giving people the opportunity to return to Spain with certain types of aid, employment benefits"

(I5: M 29 years, PhD Student, Berlin, pp. 60-61)

"I: And beyond the campaign for the 'voto rogado', has 15M or *Marea Granate* carried out any other campaign?"

R: *Marea Granate* works above all on two fundamental lines of work: the vote and health. Because if you are an emigrant sometimes it is difficult to get health coverage abroad. In other words, to have health coverage beyond the ninety days established by Royal Decree 16/2012. All the people who are abroad for more than ninety days are not going to be covered by the European health card. So, *Marea Granate* understands that this threatens the universality of the health system and, well, we have been carrying out a campaign, sometimes together with *#yosoy sanidad universal* (*I am universal health care*), which is a group that also defends the right to healthcare of immigrants in Spain or people who have lost their access to healthcare in Spain”.

(I13: F, 34 years, environmental consultant, Berlin, p. 174)

In fact, another example mentioned by the interviewees was the electoral campaign conducted by the coalition *Unidos Podemos* (coalition *Podemos* + *Izquierda+ Equo*) in Berlin in 2016: *Unidos Podemos Volver* (United We Can Return). Three of the points of the campaign consisted of the same discursive axes of *Marea Granate*: expatriate vote, health coverage, and return plans. Through these campaigns, both in *Marea Granate* and in political parties, Spanish migrants became agents in their own representation, using digital spaces to perform alternative identifications (Leurs, 2015, p. 25). This digital identity performativity was not only related to the visibility of these identities, but also to how they were articulated, performing actions and practices that bring forth certain identities or values (such as composing a nickname, posting a status update, and choosing profile photos) (Leurs, 2015). The commented media patterns, distinct but interrelated, were linked to the development of a clear migrant political identity. As mentioned above, the notion of diaspora is constructed through mutual recognition, consumption of imaginaries and information exchange that takes place basically through networks. In this regard, Spanish migrants began to join groups of common political interests and to participate politically through networks and collaborative work platforms, that became an *agora publica* to work and share massively their feelings and information. In this context, political engagement played an essential role in the construction of the identity of the Spanish emigrant. On the other hand, *Marea Granate* became the reference collective for the Spanish community abroad. In the realm of migration studies, the conceptualization of identity formation among Spanish immigrants has been deeply influenced by the ideas of Manuel Castells (1998). Castells introduces the notions of 'resistance identities' and 'project identities' to elucidate the intricate dynamics that unfold within marginalized communities. 'Resistance identities' emerge as responses to the structures of domination that confine individuals to disadvantaged positions, while 'project identities' represent a proactive construction of new

collective identities aimed at reshaping societal roles. These identities, rooted in collective resistance against oppression, are not static entities but rather undergo continuous transformation. The narrative of Spanish emigrants' political participation exemplifies this fluidity in identity dynamics, wherein 'resistance identities' have the potential to evolve into 'project identities.' Moreover, this transformative process can lead to the legitimization and dominance of these identities within society. As such, the political engagement of Spanish emigrants not only seeks recognition as full citizens but also serves as a mechanism for empowerment, enabling critical development within their communities. In the following extract, the interviewee explains how his political identity was intrinsically linked to his migrant status:

“The activism here is related to Spain but it is also our form of meeting here. That is to say, it is not only that I am going to give a continuity to the activism I used to have in Spain, I am going to continue it here, but in a way, I am going to constitute myself as a political subject here, as an immigrant. For me it is very different, that is why we have a lot of discussions in our group, we have two sides to it, right? One that looks towards Spain, observes what is happening there and in some way acts as a reflection of what is happening there. And then another side that is related to our construction as a political migrant group, which has come to be called Podemos Berlin, but which could be called *Mafalda*. In other words, we are very different to what is happening in the Spanish state, we are a specific group of migrants doing politics and that leads us for example when we came to the coalition, it (the process) was something very different to what happened in Spain, precisely because we were migrants”.

(I14: M, 33 years, PhD student, Berlin, p. 185)

By "different" the interviewee means that the coalition or collaboration with other political parties and social collectives was easier because they all focused on common objectives that were related to the Spanish community abroad and its demands/needs.

7.4 Media-Related Pervasive Practices

There are no defined boundaries between media practices. As outlined in the theoretical chapter on media practices, there are different types of practices that intersect with other practices. Upon analyzing different sets of practices across social domains, I detected two overarching categories of practices (not two specific practices) that cut across and intersect

with all the types of practices analysed, which I define as *pervasive practices*. These three types of practices are: *multiplatform practices*, *affective practices* and adaptation practices. Multiplatform practices are related to the structure of the media-related practices described, as they involve using media technologies in a transversal way, combining different types of artifacts and platforms in the same social domain (and other social domains), transnationally and simultaneously. On the other hand, emotions and their embodied affective practices trigger many other practices. In that sense, all the practices analysed as a whole included a combination of different devices and platforms and a primary affective driving force. In a way, this ‘*being a digital migrant*’ that was intended to be explored at the beginning implies a new way of fragmenting and disconnecting different aspects of life that find their space in digital contexts. However, this deconstruction implies a new process-oriented space, a new form of everyday life, crossed by multiplatform practices in all spheres of life, from family life, at work, friendship relations, etc. On the other hand, affective practices with emotional motivations are part of this repertoire and cross and intersect other practices as the human beings that we are. In that sense, there are no objective practices, free from emotion. Emotion is innate, but it is also experiential and situated, as every external stimulation acts on our sensitive capacity, which, together with cognition, generates a response. This embodied response is the object of practice theories, and in this dissertation, what affective responses materialise in communication actions. Ultimately, media-related practices evolve over time. In order to maintain contact with family and friends, it is necessary not only to adapt to the new tools or functions of digital technologies, but also to particular realities and needs. Thus, practices inevitably evolve over time, according to material elements or artifacts, new possibilities or even the media literacy of users. This is especially noticeable in how, over time, mobile applications were changing the media patterns, as well as the motivations and the performances. This evolution of tools and their uses is clearly noticeable in all types of the previously mentioned practices. Every practice evolves and changes, adapts, acquires new meanings and social roles.

7.4.1 Multiplatform Practices: Transnational and Simultaneous Connection

Communication has always been a fundamental element in the development and activity of societies. The media experience as a whole can be considered as a great complex mix of

media practices that are not only not exclusive of each other but are combined and articulated in the intricate mesh of the network society (Castells, 1996). In that sense, the media convergence (Jenkins, 2006) should be understood as a social and cultural process rather than a simple technological evolution. Internet and technological advances have revolutionised the classic patterns of communication, both at a relational and identity level. The communication scenario, based on human relations and networked sociability, has also changed: new communication processes are becoming multidirectional, transnational, transcultural, challenging the very concepts of time and space, generating new meanings and codes of interaction. These innovations are driving profound social transformations in different areas of society, from the social, economic, political and cultural spheres (Castells, 2001). However, not only the macrostructure has changed, but also the microstructure, the way in which we communicate with our immediate environment, the way in which we interact and recognise ourselves in society.

This process has also been reflected in the migratory experience. Within the Spanish community in Germany, the interviews pointed to a complex network of multiplatform practices both between the host and the origin country. That means that migrants use different forms of communication in their daily lives, simultaneously combining different types of media (legacy media, digital media, mobile applications) and devices for an effective transnational communication. This transnational communication involves both new networks in the destination country, forms of information and self-referencing and forms of linking/personal networks with the country of origin. Nevertheless, the usage of these media platforms is definitely not arbitrary but responds to the different needs and forms of interaction that compose the concept of media-related practices as a theoretical tool. Internet offers a wide range of communication possibilities, information services and digital applications for social interaction in migration contexts, both in countries of origin and destination. Initially, it might be assumed that the user can personalise the media experience, that they choose the technologies or services they want to use and in what form. However, the media practice is influenced by certain social conventions, contexts and even fashions. In fact, as will be discussed, media practices change and evolve over time. Platforms and applications are constantly being renewed, offering new possibilities for improvement, new versions and spaces. Today's media (in a variety of formats) fulfil a very important socialising function and work as mechanisms at the service of interpersonal relations. The most noteworthy features of the new forms of simultaneous and

multiplatform communication practices of the migrants interviewed in the new digital environments are: a) *Ubiquity and immediacy*: New technologies have enabled migrants to participate effectively in private and public or semi-public spaces, both in countries of origin and destination. It allows for constant and real-time connection. b) *Hybridisation of interaction context*: The migrant is no longer a simple receiver in both the country of origin and destination, they consume, produce content and interact. Digital spaces fulfil, at the same time, different functions within the participation process. In other words, the same platform can generate different forms of embodied media practice. Media practices are defined both by the context of interaction and also by competences (media, linguistic fluency, etc.) in different senses. c) *Mobile practices: transfer of platforms to mobile phones*. This multiplatform experience is now channelled through mobile phones. Increasingly, for reasons of convenience, mobile phones are becoming the daily base of operations. The mobile phone, therefore, brings together many of the media practices deployed on different platforms, accompanying the user throughout the day and taking part in their daily interaction. Mobile media and smartphone convergence have been studied not only from the field of communication, but also from different disciplines such as game studies, psychology or art. Even in media and communication studies mobile communication can be studied from different perspectives such as production, distribution or consumption. Hence, while early studies focused more on material aspects of cell phones (Agar, 2003; Katz & Sugiyama, 2006), more recent studies focused on the affordances and uses of smartphones (Evans et. al, 2017; Humphreys et al., 2018; Schrock, 2015). Mobile media practices encompass a broad range of activities, including but not limited to communication, information retrieval, social interaction, entertainment, and content creation, all facilitated through mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. Kathleen M. Cumiskey and Larissa Hjorth (2013) highlight the dynamic and multifaceted nature of these practices, emphasizing the evolving relationship between individuals and mobile technologies. The authors underscore the significance of considering the socio-cultural contexts within which mobile media practices unfold, recognizing that these practices are deeply embedded in the broader social fabric. Mobile media practices exemplify a seamless convergence of smartphones and everyday experiences. However, this fluidity not only pertains to the transition between the device's realm and the physical environment but also extends to the transition and convergence between devices (from laptops to smartphones, from smartphones to tablets). This is the case, for example, of migrants who used Skype

for video conferences and phones for calls; now, those functions are covered by applications such as WhatsApp or Telegram, which enable both functions.

7.4.2 Affective Practices

New media technologies change and transform context and circumstances of media practices, but also how and which emotions are digitally communicated, with what frequency, and to/by whom: “within the work on migrant emotions, there are focal points evident around the experience of specific emotions related to migration” (Alinejad & Olivieri, 2019, p. 66). However, responses to new environments are consistently intertwined with the emotional and communicative aspects of the migration experience. These responses can manifest in diverse and emotionally charged ways, influenced by localities, personal circumstances, and broader structural processes. Essentially, the emotions expressed through media practices represent a tangible connection to the impact of the migration process. This concept is often described as 'affective publics' (Papacharissi, 2015) and 'affective media practices' (Lünenborg et al., 2021) in scholarly discussions. The management of emotions can be seen as a process of constant transformation and redefinition and is accompanied by performative acts: “such acts, gestures and enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence of identity that they otherwise purported to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means” (Butler, 1990, p. 136). These manifestations not only become conventionalised but can also be routinised and the same occurs with affective practices. Just as in language and body acts, affective practices can also perform through media practices. Of course, affective practices and emotions, must be understood in context. Through affective practices, emotions are articulated through different tools and/or technological platforms. Affective practices, like multi-platform practices, are pervasive in the everyday life of migrants, and are connected to many other practices. Simultaneously, although generating collective synergies, these practices manifest differently depending on the users. While structuring this complex field based on inductive findings from interviews, I have observed common emotional patterns among the interviewees. The following are some of the emotional pattern codes detected in the first round of analysis:



Figure 7.1: Visual Representation of emotional patterns in qualitative interviews.

Affective practices refer to aspects related to the expression and management of emotions and affects. In this sense, these emotional patterns can also be articulated as affective practices, insofar as they involve actions and behaviours through which affects are expressed, produced, and circulated in social and cultural interactions. In the first rounds of analysis, I detected emotional patterns, and in the second round of coding, I abstracted the ways in which these emotions are reproduced, converted into affects, and routinized practices. Affective practices intertwine with the everyday experiences of migrants, creating connections with diverse practices in their socio-cultural milieu. Delving into these emotional expressions rooted in media engagement provides valuable insights into how individuals articulate their emotions throughout the migration process. Below, I will describe how some of these emotional patterns materialise in digital venues and what social and cultural role they play in personal relationships across the borders. For example, the love or affection/care shared within families and friends is not only an intangible bond that survives through migration processes, but also enacted and reproduced in digital contexts and especially through the media-based caring practices discussed in other sections. In the following quote, the interviewee talks about his nuclear WhatsApp group:

“My two sisters and my parents. It is a group that is not overwhelming, nor is there a lot of messages, but it is a group with a lot of love. We tell each other our stories and how it goes, lots of kisses all the time, and it's a group that I've had for quite a long time, but since I came to Berlin it's been working so well. I don't know, with so much empathy above all. Sometimes it works as operational support and sometimes it's personal support, in the family we support each other a lot”.

(I2: M, 27 years, master student, Berlin, p. 16)

Although the connection to countries is often spoken of in cultural and identity-based terms, on the basis that individuals need to keep reaffirming the bonds of belonging, it is often overlooked that in many cases this bond is also based largely on the strength of affective relationships between people. In this chapter, I explained how there is a strong bond between mothers and children that crosses borders and adapts to any environment, including the digital contexts. This emotional support is given, received, and needed in both directions. Families and friends serve as indispensable pillars of emotional support, fostering reciprocal care dynamics related to the new forms of togetherness developed in other sections. These affective relationships, in turn, generate other emotions, such as empathy and feelings of responsibility. This responsibility is twofold, migrants feel compelled to stay connected and keep their families informed about their lives, driven by the affectionate bonds they share. Moreover, there's a profound commitment to sparing their loved ones from unnecessary worry. Notably, interviewees uniformly shared positive experiences in their destination countries with their families while discreetly concealing any negative or challenging situations. Furthermore, the concept of care circulation in transnational families (Baldassar 2016; Madianou & Miller, 2012; Mahler, 2001) underscores the reciprocity inherent in emotional support. Migrants may perceive the act of shielding their families from distressing information as a form of care, reciprocating the emotional support they receive from their families. This practice is not merely a concealment of hardships but a nuanced expression of love and concern within the context of transnational relationships. Moreover, this phenomenon is also deeply rooted in the intricate dynamics of transnational relationships and reflects a complex interplay of emotions, cultural expectations, and the desire to preserve the familial well-being. The act of migration itself is frequently laden with expectations and aspirations not only for the individual migrant but also for their families left behind. Migrants showed a profound sense of responsibility to uphold the positive image of their chosen destination, often shaped by societal ideals or familial expectations:

“I try to avoid telling the bad things, when I tell them the bad things it's because they have already happened, *'hey look I've been feeling upset, or I've had an argument with Juan or whatever'*... I tell them about it later. But I usually tell them practically everything, avoiding, as I said, the things that might worry them”

(I17: F, 37 years, copywriter, Berlin, p. 236)

“I didn't have any secrets with my mother and now I don't have them but there are certain things that you keep hidden because, I don't know... For example, three weeks ago at work there was a guy who bullied me at work. If that happens to me in Spain and I would tell my mother about it, because I have no secrets, but I know that if I tell her when I'm here, I know she's going to have a hard time, you know? So, in order to relieve her of that bad feeling, I don't tell her. In the end I only tell her the nice things because I know that if I tell her the bad things, then I know she's going to have a bad time, and if they're going to have a bad time, I'm going to have a bad time too, you know?”

(I7: M, 28 years, construction worker, Erfurt, p. 94)

“No. I mean, for example, it is true that there have been some moments, for example last winter, when I was having a hard time and no, they didn't realise that I was having a hard time, neither them nor anyone else in general”.

(I9: M, 26 years, construction worker, Hamburg, p. 122)

“What happens is that my mother has such as a radar, a mood detector. And although I always maintain neutrality when I talk, i.e if I am worried about something, my tone is the same. But I don't know how, but she always detects it. It's true. I start talking about something *'yes, very well, we have done this and that, then I have a date...'* Suddenly she stops me and tells me: *'There is something wrong with you, you are sad'* or *'this or that is not going well for you'*. I always say, *'no, no, everything is fine'*. The last thing I want is to worry them, that is clear. And I have been doing that for... how many years I have been away? Nine years. Sometimes I have hidden from her that I was sick, many things. Because I know how long-suffering my mother is, and I am not going to let her suffer. I have to be very careful because she is very smart, and she notices it.”

(I19: M, 31 years, aeronautical engineer, Munich, p. 262)

In this last quote, he clearly shows this willingness to hide negative experiences. But at the same time, he also illustrates in great detail how mothers play a fundamental role in the affective sphere. However, although the determination to tell only the positive things was a very common practice in their relationship with their families and loved ones, they also rely on their support when they need them. The emotional support they receive from their

families is essential in dealing with difficult situations. In fact, in the next quote, one of the interviewees speaks directly about this emotional dependency:

“I had a period in Luxembourg in which I had a very bad time because I didn't see the point of being there, because all my friends had left, most of my workmates had been fired, who were in fact my friends too, because we were all immigrants, and in the same situation. And something I never thought about, because I didn't use to explain my problems of that kind to my parents, but even though they were in Madrid, they were a great support for me. And if I hadn't had all these means, they wouldn't have been able to do it, for sure. But then maybe it also creates more dependence with the things you have left behind, maybe in the past they would simply break ties or send each other a letter every 'x' months and that's all they would know about each other, maybe we didn't have so much emotional dependence with what they left behind”.

(I12: F, 29 years, project manager, Berlin, p. 163)

“The Internet helps us to be, besides being more informed, to be lucky to be in contact with our family. To be able to talk to them if we have any problem and they can help us to solve them if necessary. If we didn't have Internet that wouldn't happen, so we would have to solve things however we could”.

(I11: F, 26 years, hairdresser, Erfurt, p. 147)

Migration is not an easy experience and often homesickness, missing loved ones, makes migrants feel lonely in some moments. In fact, every cultural practice largely reproduces some degree of belonging. Even the homesickness as a background, reinforces a sense of belonging at the same time. This loneliness is also a driving factor in many affective practices such as seeking new friendships and emotional support. This is expressed directly by one of the interviewees when she talks about Facebook groups such as 'Spaniards in Berlin' where people can find new friends. In fact, it is commented that getting closer to co-nationals is the easiest and quickest way to build these new emotional bonds:

“But I think it's also a way to meet people.... There are people who are very lonely, and I think they just need someone to talk. I think it's a pretty easy way to reach people who can understand your situation. So, there are lot of people who come here alone and well, they just have to say, 'hey, who wants to meet for a coffee' and 4 or 5 people answer, and those 4 or 5 people joined in for a coffee, and I think it's fantastic, I think it's something that.. If it wasn't for Facebook, I think it would be very difficult to make it happen”.

(I15: F, 36 years, Spanish teacher, Berlin, p. 200)

Another form of homesickness and cultural attachment is precisely how they remain continuously connected to the country of origin. Finally, this connection with the country of origin in combination with the new life in the country of destination may sometimes prove to be overwhelming. In fact, it often leads to some confusion in terms of absence/presence. In the next quote, the interviewed explained that her media consumption was predominantly Spanish and that she only seldomly consulted international or German media, it raised the question of living digitally in the country of origin:

“A: Very rarely. Internationals sometimes 'The Guardian'... Mostly... Just like in the case of the Spanish media I go to look for them, the German media I access more by aggregation. That is, I see that Noemi who reads a lot of German press, for example, puts on Facebook an interesting article of *'Taz'* or *'Neues Deutschland'* or *'The Frankfurter Allgemeine'*... And I read it. But I don't go to their websites to read them. In fact, I know very little about German current affairs, I don't really live in Germany....

I: Where do you live then? (laughs)

A: In Spain... (laughs)

I: Digitally?

A: Absolutely, absolutely. No doubt about it. I mean, sometimes I find out about things that have happened in Germany from the Spanish press and then to get more information I go to.... Let me give you an example. I heard about the events in Köln during the New Year because I saw it in the Spanish press and then, to get more information, I read about it in German. But the news came to me through the Spanish press.”

(I3: F, 34 years, journalist, Berlin, p. 40)

This emotional attachment, in combination with the offline life in the country of destination, had also consequences at the identity level, giving rise to hybrid identities generated from this confusing feeling of belonging:

“I feel that I live neither here nor there. On the contrary, I feel that I'm not from here, nor will I ever be, and when I go back to Spain, I think, I'm not

from there either. I don't know where I'm from, but.... I'm not from anywhere. It's quite an uncomfortable feeling.”

(I15: F, 36 years, Spanish teacher, Berlin, p. 207)

“When I am in Spain, I don't feel Spanish, or I don't feel Spanish anymore. When I'm here, I miss Spain a lot, but I don't feel like I'm from Germany either. But then when I am in Spain, I feel like I am more German. Not more German, because I feel more Spanish, but like I belong more now in Germany. It's a feeling that you never know where you are.”

(I18: F, 32 years, graphic designer, Karlsruhe, p. 245)

Often migrants feel these changes in their bodies as processes of identification. They can no longer return to the spaces, to their Spanish identity as if their experience in Germany never existed. In the same way that she will never cease to be Spanish no matter how many years she lives in Germany. On the other hand, the construction of the migrant identity in the Spanish case was progressive, this interviewee explained in great detail:

“I came here because I wanted to. So, at the beginning it was very hard for me to say that I was an immigrant, because I did not consider myself in this category, so I had to learn 'to be a migrant'. What was an emigrant actually like? My uncle was an emigrant, he went to Argentina in the 60's, poor people. Then, since we thought we were middle class (laughs), suddenly I could be... Who was an emigrant in Spain? But of course, when you emigrate in 'first class', because I already told you that I came with a scholarship or very protected. At the beginning it is hard for you to understand that you are a migrant. It is the very contact with other people who are in the same situation as you that leads you to see that there is a common life experience. And this common life experience is framed within immigration as a subject.”

(I3: F, 34 years, journalist, Berlin, p. 37)

The interviewee introduced here the question of the migrant in a privileged situation with respect to other waves of emigration or even with respect to other migrant experiences. However, it depends on the context and the different correlations of power. In the established cultural framework, the one they had lived for years was that Spain was an economic and political power in Europe. But that correlation of power changed and with it the material conditions and the lives of many people. However, it was difficult to assume

at an identity level, as she explained. On the other hand, lower transport costs and the technological capacity to maintain the link with the country of origin reduce the romanticisation of the migratory process. In other words, the myth of the migrant as isolated.

7.4.3 Adaptation Practices: The Instability of the Practice

One of the most relevant aspects of the reported media-related practices is that they evolve over time. The temporality factor and the constant evolution of information and communication technologies play a fundamental role in media-related practices. This evolution can be perceived throughout the conversations. The common point is to keep in continuous contact with family/friends over time, something that has been facilitated thanks to the ever-evolving information and communication technologies. While in the early years of Internet tools such as email or telephone played a fundamental role in the communication with loved ones in the country of origin, they have been gradually replaced by other tools, such as Skype or Whatsapp, for example. Something that is expected to continue to happen in migration processes. In fact, throughout the interviews, I also perceived how the irruption of new tools or functions in mobile applications was changing the media patterns, as well as the distribution and purposes of the practices, for example, with the incorporation of video calls in WhatsApp. This evolution of instruments and their uses is clearly noticeable in the interviewees' discourse:

“Years ago when I moved abroad for Erasmus there was no WhatsApp, I also communicated by Skype and also by email. But that it is already lost, I don't write emails to my mother unless it is something very specific like... I don't know, to share some information. I don't know, for example she says to me 'make me a list of what you want me to send you in a packet'. So maybe I send it to her by email to keep it closer to hand, because as in WhatsApp we talk, it gets lost in the conversations. But no, I for example have noticed that my mother uses the mobile much more, and me too, than the computer. Sometimes I don't turn it on for the whole weekend because in the cell phone I have everything there too. Yes, I can also check my email from my cell phone”.

(I10: F, 29 years, journalist, Berlin, p. 136)

“My family had to adapt to that as well. Of course, coming from a traditional family that has all their children there (in Spain) except one, they try to explore technology in order to communicate with their children. And that's what happened, my mother is now a master on Whatsapp, almost a secretary: 'Mom, send me that document I need'. Boom! Picture! Anything.”

(I19: M, 31 years, aeronautical engineer, Munich, p. 261)

In all these comments we can perceive this process of continuous adaptation and how the ways of interacting have been changing over time, from calls or emails to conversations via Skype or WhatsApp: Interviewees illustrate this transition from the telephone to other media, and pointed out how email is falling into disuse in their communication with the family, and even begin to point out that communication through mobile devices and applications are also gaining ground in this space. On the other hand, the practices' adaptations are also related to the access and technical skills of the people concerned. In this case, more than access to the Internet, it is a matter of skills to use the different platforms. A noteworthy factor in this regard is that the degree of media competence is sharply diverse between the generations of the parents and their sons and daughters surveyed. Therefore, media literacy and the digital divide (of parents especially) have also played a fundamental role in this adaptation process. This adaptation process is important because it must go “beyond the simplistic dichotomy of digital divides and studying differentiated media uses” (Smets et al., 2019: p. liv) In other words, beyond the obvious difference between media competence, there is a process of adaptation between generations, which define their strategies to achieve an effective communication with their families, either by changing tools, adapting them to the context or initiating a learning process. This ongoing process is reinvented and evolves every day and is closely related to the context, characteristics and needs of the families. It will not only mediate this communication, but will also take part of the way and the context in which they communicate, allowing more or less intimate spaces, group or individual conversations, etc. In fact, one of the main reasons given by the interviewees for using Skype or WhatsApp with their families was precisely related to their *media literacy*. This is why, for example, parents presented a rather passive use of other social networks such as Facebook or Twitter. When a son or daughter goes to live abroad, families must find ways to adapt skills and lifestyles in order to meet effective communication. From that moment on, a new digital-

based interaction is forged between parents and children that evolves with the users' own tools and knowledge.

“With my mother, she is the one with whom I talk the most. As my mother does not control Internet so well, I have managed to teach her to make audios by WhatsApp and then I talk to her like this, I send her audios, audios, audios, audios....Because she also writes very slowly, so I'm sending audios, audios, audios (...) Now I'm talking continuously with my mother because although she doesn't see, it doesn't mean that she doesn't talk to me Since I talk to her a lot, it relaxes her and then she doesn't ask me to Skype. In fact, I do Skype more with my brother because he does control the Internet and so on and with him I usually do it, but about once a month, not much more”.

(I11: F, 26 years, hairdresser, Erfurt, p. 146)

Therefore, there is a process of reciprocal adaptation of family and friends with the migrant and vice versa. The social needs remain, but each family adopts and adapts the practice according to the material aspects, availability of means, the context and the media competence of the users. I would like to end this section with a beautiful extract from the interviews that summarises and illustrates in great detail this process of adaptation in which the family seeks new spaces where it can develop its bonds. The interviewee told me about her relationship with her mother in the distance:

“My mother said to me something beautiful, well, she didn't say it to me, it was on Facebook. I posted a photo of the monument to the Emigrant's Mother in Asturias, and I wrote: 'The emigrant's mother, looking at the sea'. And my mother commented: 'Now mothers no longer look at the sea, but they look at the computer screen'. It made me smile, because of course, in her wisdom, this genuine mother wisdom, I know it's true, my mother is facing the computer, looking to see when I write her. And yes, I think she's handling it better, otherwise she would have bought a flat rate to call Germany and she would be calling me, for sure, because that's what she did the first year, she didn't have a computer and she bought a flat rate to talk on the phone with me”.

(I17: F, 37 years, copywriter, Berlin, p. 235)

7.5 Retracing Media Practices of the Spanish Diaspora in Germany

The presentation of the findings is organised in sequence under the major categories and subcategories identified. In the analysis of media practices, it is crucial to comprehend the elements that comprise them, but also how these materialise into concrete communicative actions. Media practices encompass a wide range of activities, routines, and behaviors that individuals engage when interacting with media. In this sense, it is fundamental to identify the specific components of these practices, such as the technological devices used, the chosen platforms, daily routines, as well as the social and cultural norms that guide them. In the following I provide a visual representation of the major categories and their relationships to reconstruct the media-practices of the Spanish Diaspora in Germany. I created a simplified visual reconstruction of how the categories interact with each other. The diagram is based on Strauss and Corbin's (1990) paradigm model in which a central idea or event is produced, and a set of actions/interactions are set in motion to manage it. The authors' model "link subcategories to categories in a set of relationships denoting casual conditions, phenomenon, context, intervening conditions, action/interactional strategies, and consequences" (p. 99). In this dissertation, the digital diaspora constitutes the *phenomenon* that is given by the *casual condition* that in this case represents the economic crisis as part of the broader shifts in the socio-political context and that propitiated the departure of thousands of people in search of job opportunities abroad. As I mentioned in the introductory chapters, Spanish emigration did not have any institutional support during the first years, so that the organisation of both personal migration strategies and the organisation of the Spanish community in Germany was managed and articulated by the Spanish migrants. On the other hand, political polarisation led to interested messages about the phenomenon of Spanish migration. Therefore, the *contexts demanding* actors was the organisation of the Spanish diaspora itself in Germany. The intervening conditions were the digital spaces in which migrants had to interact and the particularities surrounding each practice. The *action/interaction strategies* are the practices they carried out to organise their lives from the point of view of media practice, combining the whole complex mix of practices that allow the diaspora to interact with both the country of origin and the country of destination. The *consequence* was not only the articulation and creation of the diaspora, but the generation of a sense of belonging, support networks and, ultimately, the search for representation.

The Spanish digital diaspora is a process, not a space nor a group of people. Its practices and relationships shape the community, the processes of identification, the exchange of information, the consumption of imaginaries. However, despite the traditional concept of diaspora, which refers to people of the same nationality dispersed in different territories, the digital diaspora is a transnational phenomenon that goes far beyond national borders. The concepts of space and distance are transformed and negotiated, towards relational concepts that constitute practices. This 'complex of practices' (Shove et al., 2012), among them, the media practices, include subjectivities, collectivities and also materialities, from aspects related to communication, representation, interaction, intimate relationships/spaces and how digital technologies mediate emotions in different migratory contexts. This chapter has described how Spanish migrants organise themselves digitally, focusing not only on how the sense of community is generated, but how it is enacted. In this chapter, I discussed a series of interconnected media-related practices that Spanish migrants interviewed perform in the public-private sphere. To this end, I established 4 repertoires of media practices corresponding to 1) media-related practices in the destination country, 2) media-related practices in personal relations with the origin country, 3) media-related political practices and 4) media-related pervasive practices. Throughout this chapter I have unfolded different types of media-related practices revealing the richness of practices and interactions that Spanish migrants perform in their daily lives. The analysis has not focused on the isolated actions but on all aspects related to the practice: from motivations, contextual and cultural factors, objects and their uses, cognitive dispositions, etc. I sequentially connected practices and established relationships between them. Nevertheless, through this visual representation, I provide a synthesis of how these media practices interact in the Spanish diaspora in Germany.



Media-Related Practices of the Spanish Diaspora in Germany

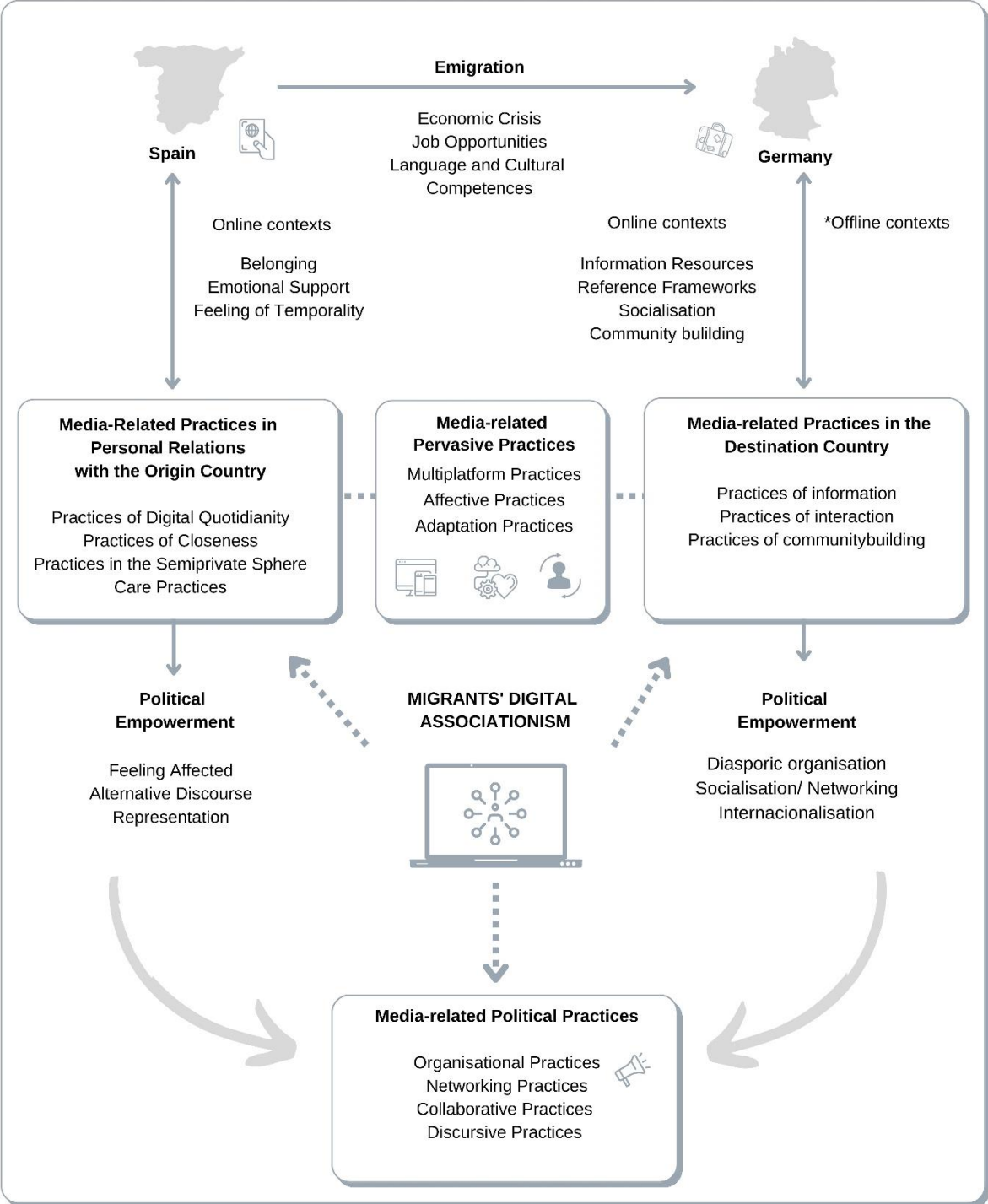


Figure 7.2: Visual representation of the media-related practices derived from the qualitative interviews.

The economic crisis and the search for new opportunities in Germany constituted the two main motivations for migration for the participants interviewed. For Strauss & Corbin (1990) context cannot be considered as static actions or interactions, but as ongoing movement that changes, move and respond to the conditions of action. Once in the destination country, the offline process of settlement, integration and socialisation was also reflected in the digital realm. Through the media-related social practices in the first category, migrants implement different types of social capital, deeply influenced by linguistic and cultural competences. These media-related practices in the destination country included: the informational practices, which addressed the processes of learning and adaptation to the new environment, but especially how they built the frames of reference in transnational scenarios; the practices of interaction, that include socialising patterns, the personal relationships of migrants in the destination country and how these relationships are enacted in their day-to-day through digital media practices. Finally, in the last subcategory I discussed migrant digital communities, i.e., how Spanish migrants organise themselves digitally. These first experiences illustrate the fundamental role of the migrants' personal connections and relationships with their countries of destination, and how they integrate them in their digital locality.

However, when analysing the social relations of Spanish migrants in Germany, I became aware of the strong link to Spain, which they not only maintained but also practised on a daily basis. The Spanish migrants interviewed did not lose the link with Spain but integrated it into their new life through a complex and multi-layered combination of media-related practices. In this process, the migrant has to renegotiate relationships and spaces, and transform and adapt them to their new reality. In the category of personal relations with the country of origin, I discussed how Spanish migrants create and recreate practices of digital quotidianity, new spaces of closeness, integration of relations with both the country of origin and destination in semi-private environments such as social media. And very significantly, how transnational care develops in digitalised migration contexts. The real challenge of this chapter was to illustrate how these media practices do not take place parallel to the migrants' offline lives in the country of destination but are integrated into their new life as part of it, even interacting with the new spaces digitally, what I referred in this study as 'digital locality'. This link with the country of origin is intimately related, as already argued above, to the processes of belonging, emotional support and the feeling of temporality. On the other hand, practices are not static, but evolve and are related to other

practices. For example, migrants' capacity to connect and participate with Spain produced an unexpected political empowerment and articulation. All the migrants interviewed showed some degree of political engagement, albeit at different levels of involvement, defining the causes and consequences of their emigration as fundamentally political events. This threshold of political participation materialised in different forms of media-related political practices, deeply influenced by feeling affected by the economic crisis, the need for mutual support, representation and the will to create their own alternative discourse that truly described their reality. These practices defined their potential for community organisation and networking, collaborative engagement and a discursive effort to gain visibility. Finally, all these practices are crossed by media-related pervasive practices, which are related to the wide range of tools and platforms that are combined in the implementation of the repertoire of practices, the capacity to change and adapt to new situations and needs, and finally, the emotional driving forces behind each practice.

There are two fundamental questions that I would like to address here. Firstly, to seek an answer to the question: *what does the Spanish Digital Diaspora mean?* But specially, how it materialises from the point of view of the media practice. Migration no longer occurs simply from a spatial point of view with cultural implications. Rather, the integration of digital technologies has enabled a digital social development that not only coexists but also influences and intertwines with *offline* social processes. It happens in general at the societal level, not only in migration experiences. In other words, everyone is already interacting with 'their digital life'. The social construction in digital spaces turns the Internet into an immersive virtual world which is expected to be further developed in future projects such as the metaverse. We all have a digital presence that we not only combine, but that is part of our offline reality. In the particular case of migrants, this digital interaction is more nuanced and transnationalised as it includes participation in both the countries of origin and destination, with a component of combination and adaptation to the new environment. The isolated migrant thus becomes a migrant who keeps the link with his or her country of origin intact. This has consequences on an emotional and affective level above all, because the ties of emotional support are not broken, they are maintained and practised every day. On the one hand, this helps the migrant to feel more supported by their environment and, to a certain extent, more accompanied. Of course, this link also has, as we have seen, effects at the level of media practices in the destination country, for example, in terms of access to information. On the other hand, the capacity for effective participation in the

country of origin also required representation. In this need for communication, representation and community identification that digital diaspora arises. However, digital diaspora do not constitute an abstract concept, but rather, as Gajjala (2019) pointed out, these subjectivities take place within specific spatio-temporal engagements and under specific socio-cultural contexts. Thus, the practices described were mediated by specific social, political and economic contexts. This dissertation aims to provide insights into how these situated subjectivities are articulated around media practice.

This chapter has defined the exchanges that have taken place within the community, how Spanish emigrants in Germany have found each other, what mechanisms they have set in motion offline, how it has been reflected in the digital realm and what new processes and literacies they have inaugurated. This repertoire of practices explains the articulation of media practices of a group of Spanish migrants in Germany, in depth and empirically, through concrete examples. However, these practices can also provide insight into social processes that can be extrapolated to other migration processes. On this basis, this chapter ends with a conceptual proposal, 'Migrant Digital Associationism' as a way of conceptualising how Spanish migrants have organised themselves digitally in Germany. I understand 'Migrant Digital Associationism' to be a contribution to the debate on digital diasporas. In the following section I add more nuance to this concept.

7.6 Conceptual Contribution: Migrants' Digital Associationism

Several relevant conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the media-related practices of the Spanish migrants interviewed. Firstly, the relevant role of media technologies for migrant socialisation processes, both at an organisational, adaptive and socialising level. The media-related practices of Spanish migrants in Germany enable the reconstruction of the digitalised everyday life in migratory contexts. On the one hand, it highlights how the new life in the destination country is integrated into the migrant's existing digital networks. On the other hand, the media-related practices of the interviewees have allowed the development of different strategies for an effective connection with the country of origin. This, however, has not stopped migrants from seeking association with their co-nationals in the country of destination. But they did it in a different way as in previous migrations, with new associative strategies in which media-related practices not only play a fundamental

role, but also a constitutive one. Throughout the dissertation I have described, for example, the importance of personal relations with the country of origin, in this case, Spain. Thus, I described how, through various media-related practices, Spanish migrants maintain a daily relationship with their loved ones, through a process of adaptation that generates new spaces of intimacy, forms of care and togetherness. Media technologies and especially platforms such as Facebook through groups such as "Spaniards in Germany, Berlin, Munich, Hamburg..." played a fundamental role in the imagination of the Spanish community in Germany, fulfilling functions of support, information, socialisation, etc. Finally, I reported on the importance of media-related political practices in the creation of the Spanish community in Germany, both online and offline. The combination and interrelation of all the media practices described above generate an exhaustive map of the forms of migrant socialisation that are currently generated through media technologies that are reminiscent of old forms of associationism but adapted to the new digital contexts. The new information and communication technologies have enabled a very rapid development of the social and personal relations of individuals in migratory contexts. According to Babiano (2002), developing migrant associations and centres served as an adaptive response to the new situation: "the associations functioned as a space for socialisation and as an instrument to recreate the culture of origin. Some of them, moreover, acquired a critical awareness of the emigrant condition" (p. 561). The associative movement generated migratory networks that provided support in the reception country, especially in terms of language support. These first contacts were fundamental for the newcomers, who were able to find accommodation and even work in some cases. These spaces and associations also made possible the transmission of news and the exchange of information among migrants. The associations were created in many cases on the initiative of migrant networks, formed by family ties, friendship or just for sharing the same place of origin. These organisations became a reference space for the Spanish community abroad, with an important social support function as "beyond constituting spaces of sociability and trying to preserve the Spanish identity, the centres offered social counselling, according to their possibilities" (p. 572). According to Babiano, participation in this kind of spaces played a fundamental role in the creation of a specific cultural identity "forged through a series of activities and rituals that recreated the popular culture of origin" (p. 575). Therefore, they played a very important role not only in terms of logistical and practical support for the arrival, but also at a cultural, identity and emotional level (through accompaniment). All these functions fulfilled by the associative movement of Spanish emigration in the 1960s and 1970s have

been identified and adapted to the new context in the media-related practices described in this chapter. Nevertheless, the contact networks among emigrants that formerly operated mainly in local circles linked to associations or the so-called *Casas de España*, have not only been digitalised, but also transnationalised among emigrants in different destination countries. All these functions that used to be carried out by the migrant associative movement are now managed through media technologies: contact between migrants in the destination country, the positioning in relation to the country of origin, the exchange of information, the consumption of imaginaries, offline/online contact, political participation and, as a novelty, the digital development of emotional ties with the country of origin as a new element in the equation of migrants' daily contexts.

Drawing on this, in the early years of the 2000's, many studies focused on the analysis of diasporic media. This type of media not only reflected information of interest to migrants but was also a very useful channel for institutions to reach out to migrant audiences. However, these *diasporic media*, which were an important part of the 'diasporic communication' and public representation of migrants, have experienced many changes with the development of media technologies. In that sense, the proliferation of new forms of diasporic media practices has transformed the *traditional diasporic media* (understood as newspapers, magazines or websites aimed at migrant audiences) towards a process-oriented diasporic communication. This does not mean that diasporic media have disappeared, but that they have had to adapt to contextual communicative environments: inserting themselves in the dynamics of social networks and in the media practice patterns of migrants. In that sense, more than *diasporic media*, new communicative processes emerged in migrant communities. In this dissertation I described them as situated media-related practices. In other words, it is the diasporic media experience that gives rise to *diasporic media practices*. In short, in recent years, digitalisation has enabled the creation of other, more interactive spaces for diasporic communication and socialisation and for the public and political articulation of diasporas. In parallel, these spaces have also allowed for the transnationalisation of other information and communication media, such as national media or the development of chat tools and the confluence of all of them through interactive platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.

Migrants digital associationism' is therefore a process-oriented concept to define migrants' new digital forms of association, as an adaptive response and as a way of generating community. Traditional migrant associations have evolved over time, from mutual support

organisations, recreational clubs, micro-territorial entities in parishes or small municipalities, or politically oriented ones. However, many of these associations were in fact multifunctional in nature, fulfilling several of these roles simultaneously. The digitalisation of personal and social relations brings new forms of connection between migrants but does not replace traditional face-to-face forms - it *transforms* them. In the specific case of the Spanish migrants, the digital associative forms that I suggest conceptualising are based on four pillars, as discussed in this chapter: a) the generation of supporting and emotional digital links with the country of origin, creating transnational spaces for interaction. This meets the question of emotional support and also the need for information; b) networked-based platforms and exchange spaces, being Facebook groups one of the main reference spaces for exchanges between migrants; c) Social Movements (Marea Granate/15M/Precarity Office) and their activist articulation through ITC; d) foreign delegations of political parties and their political participation through ICT. However, it should be noted that the main characteristic of these new digital associative forms is that they are not isolated spaces or forms of participation but constitute multiple places of belonging that fulfil different social and cultural functions. The roles played by these media-related practices at the associative level include: a) exchange of information and social capital; b) sharing and maintenance of cultural identity; c) political participation/engagement; d) international networking with individuals and movements. These functions are articulated through the different media practices developed in this chapter, but they are not concentrated in a specific media or platform, but their essence is that they are intersections between spaces of belonging. The associative movement acquires very diverse and interconnected forms in digital environments. This new concept can serve as a starting point for the development of the migrant associative movement today from the approach of the media practice.

7.7 Digital Diaspora and Communities of Support

In this chapter I discussed the analysis of the data collected in the first empirical phase of the dissertation. As mentioned in the methodological chapter, I applied the concept of media-related practices (Hobart, 2010), a broader concept that includes those practices related to the media in everyday contexts, or in other words, that consider media practices as indissoluble elements of the everyday life. Chapter 7, the most extensive of the

dissertation, aimed to provide a description of the media-related practices that play a fundamental role in the everyday life of the Spanish emigrants interviewed. To illustrate this, I provided a visual representation of the thematic categories and how they form structured groups of media-related practices.

The chapter presented four major categories of media-related practices: a) *Media-related Practices in the Destination Country*. In this first section of the chapter, different perspectives were developed, such as the informational perspective, or how Spanish emigrants construct their cognitive frames of reference in the migration process; the socialising perspective, which is related to the networks deployed in the host country; and, finally, the interaction between Spanish migrants and the creation of the Spanish digital community in Germany; b) *Media-related Practices in Personal Relations with the Origin Country*. One of the fundamental contributions of the development of digital communication and information technologies was precisely the ability to remain permanently connected to the country of origin. However, few studies have focused on how this relationship in which the country of origin is integrated and materialised into the everyday life of migrants in the country of destination from the perspective of the media practices. In that sense, this section addressed fundamental questions such as digital quotidianity, digital closeness or digital caring practices and their gender roles; in the category c) *Media-related Political Practices: Migrants as Transnational Political Actors*, I discussed the unexpected process of political empowerment enabled by digital technologies, but also by the social ecosystem generated in the context of Spanish emigration. In that sense, I analysed the complex systems of deterritorialised political participation of migrants at different levels of political engagement. This category was closely related to the previous two, since the political participation of emigrants was linked to both the country of origin and the country of destination. It has focused on organizational aspects, networking or visibility practices of the Spanish community in Germany. Finally, the category d) *Media-related Pervasive Practices* that intersect with all the practices analysed above, which are related to the simultaneity and relation of the practices and the affective perspective of digital action. These practices were not only related to the countries of origin and destination but constituted an intrinsic part of the other practices.

In the final section of the chapter, I proposed a new conceptual contribution: *migrant digital associationism*, as a way of conceptualising the digital forms of associationism in contexts of migration. Unexpectedly, through the analysis of the data, I began to notice how the mosaic of media-related practices was drawing a new form of Spanish digital associationism abroad.

I began to recognize how the functions formerly covered by transnational immigrant associations and collectives began to have a digital reflection, not only in the ways of getting in contact with other Spaniards, but also in the way of experiencing emigration and transnational organisation. Spaces for cultural recreation and community building spaces moved to digital agoras, which also allowed the development of new links, support networks, cultural integration and political participation. These forms of organization have not only been increasingly digitalised but have even allowed for their transnationalisation. That means that they are no longer only linked to the country of origin and destination, but also allow for real-time participation with other Spanish emigrants in other destination countries to defend common causes. Therefore, Migrant digital associationism can be defined as the tendency of migrants to develop digital associations and connections to articulate their migration experiences. This tendency materialises in the active search for online communities, the use of social networks to maintain ties with their country of origin or with other fellow migrants, and the development of diasporic identities that reflect and connect both their cultural heritage and their new life in the host country.

Chapter 8: Qualitative Content Analysis on Facebook

“The layers of the diasporic space are the layers of identity construction. The home, the public, the city, (the nation), the transnational and the scheme of their interconnections and autonomies become the layers of identity construction and community building”
Georgiou, M. (2006, p.3)

In Chapter 7, I conceptualised the media practices of Spanish emigrants based on the in-depth interviews. The objective of this chapter is to deepen the concept of media practice by focusing on the content produced by selected interviewees over a limited period of 3 years in 8 selected profiles. The in-depth interviews were a very interesting and enriching experience. Most of them turned into a long and deep conversation, about media practices but also about migrant life. I recognised in their accounts their concerns, emotions, and fears... The account of media practices is, in a way, the account of daily life and personal connections in migration contexts. This picture of media practices gathered from the interviews, allowed me to reconstruct the complex mix of practices involved in the digital diaspora: how it is articulated, what relationships are established both internally and externally, what social domains it influences, and with what dispositions and capabilities. I analysed in depth how Spanish emigrants keep a strong link with Spain and how they integrate both realities (origin and host countries) in their daily lives. The triangulation of methods, in this case in-depth interviews and qualitative content analysis, contributes to validate and enrich the research findings. The objective is to compare the perceptions of users obtained through in-depth interviews with the content posted on their social network profile. Qualitative content analysis offers detailed insights into specific topics, predominant narratives, and communication strategies used in this social network. The data provided additional information to understand the media practices in the everyday life of Spanish immigrants in Germany. Mayring (2015) emphasizes the critical importance of establishing a specific procedural model of analysis in qualitative content analysis that concretizes the study objectives and develops a category system (p. 370). This line-by-line but category-based system of analysis is what differentiates qualitative content analysis from free analysis. Nevertheless, in this study, the categories of analysis were not pre-designed beforehand but were developed during the analysis process according to the grounded

theory procedures (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). While this approach does not rely on fully standardized instruments, it facilitates the use of inductive category formation procedures, thereby ensuring both the comparability of results and the reliability of the analysis.

For this purpose, I selected Facebook as one of the platforms most frequently mentioned in the interviews to convey their migrant experience. Once the interviews were completed, I asked users if they would like to continue participating in the second phase of the research, which included analysing their Facebook profiles. I selected 8 of the 20 interview respondents to analyse their Facebook profiles. The sample consisted of 3 men and 5 women, 4 of them living in Berlin, the place with the highest population concentration of Spaniards in Germany, and the remaining 4 from different cities in Germany. I analysed the profiles individually, seeking a total immersion in the participant's life, getting to know their tastes, their ways of interacting, etc. I decided to analyse their profiles for three years, which would generate a large amount of information. In each profile I selected manually through the filter option the year and month I was going to analyse and scroll down to the oldest post of the month. To organise the material, I designed my own data matrix in Excel where I could comfortably record and work on my notes. I defined sections to facilitate descriptions or summaries of each post as communicative units or environments. To document the descriptions of each post I first set up the control sections to register the year, date and post number. In the next section I recorded the literal text of the post. This part was essential to be able to go back to the posts whenever I needed it via the keyword search tool. I then set up a 'post description' section to record a brief account of the shared post, content, pictures... I also included two sections to record notes on the interaction between users (comments, more elaborate interactions, debates or discussions, tone of the comments, relevant aspects of the context of communication) and a section to record the number of reactions to each post. This would later allow me to compare and check which posts generated more interaction. Finally, I set up a section for field notes, (cultural aspects, highlights, observed patterns, theoretical memos, etc.). Although it took me several months, the operationalisation of the data allowed me to work more efficiently, to make comparisons and to review my notes faster and more effectively. In this chapter I will develop the results of the qualitative content analysis on Facebook. Through grounded theory analysis procedures, I developed a set of categories interconnected within the discursive practice:

Qualitative Content Analysis on Facebook Profiles

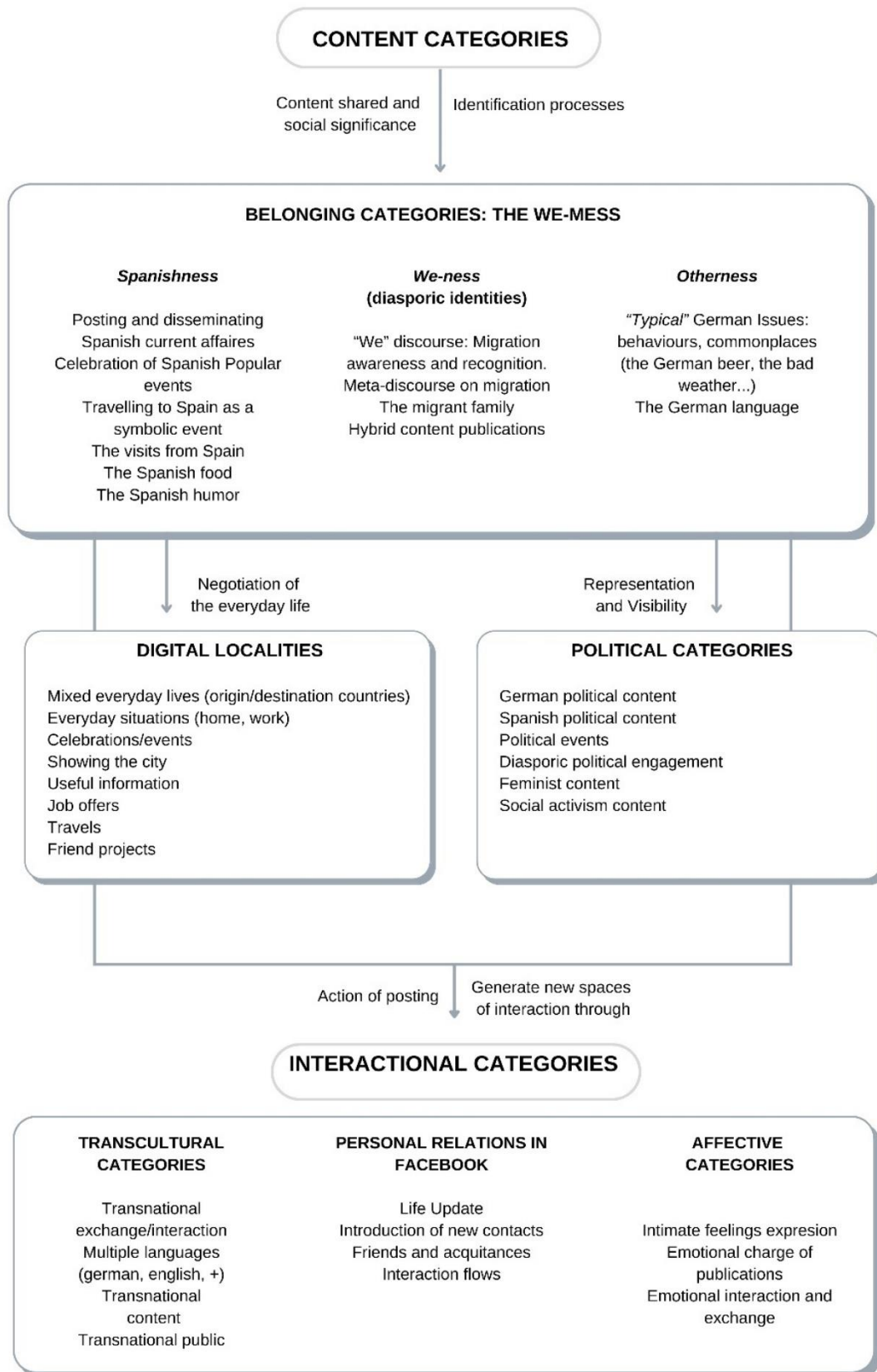


Figure 8.1: Visual representation of the developed categories on Facebook profiles.

In the model the categories are classified into two main groups: content categories and interactional categories, which are then subdivided into more specific subcategories. In this chapter, I will explore the results derived from the qualitative content analysis, providing context for the categories and sharing selected excerpts from the analysed profiles. Additionally, I will describe the interconnections between them.

The 8 profiles of the interviewees analysed were very different from each other. In fact, there is a very personal component in each of them, which is related to people's tastes and/or personalities. In fact, several studies suggested that personality influences users' Facebook behaviour (Moore y McElroy, 2012). There are numerous studies on the interaction of Facebook profiles in public groups or pages. However, it is less common to find content analyses of personal profiles to investigate the semi-private practices of users in their daily lives. First, I present the content categories. Content categories are thematic or conceptual groups created to organise and classify the information extracted from content. In the context of personal Facebook profiles, these categories identify patterns, recurring themes, and meanings in the analysed posts. These categories emerged from grouping similar codes into broader categories after reviewing and refining them. In the first subcategory, "belonging categories" I address specifically the processes of belonging, in particular, how the construction of Spanishness and we-ness/otherness have an embedded and embodied basis that is clearly reflected in their practices on Facebook. Then, I reconstruct the digital locality of Spanish migrants in Germany through their discursive practices, highlighting how lives in the country of origin and destination merge and interact in Facebook. Finally, I present different types of political discursive practices on Facebook profiles. In the second part of the chapter, I develop the interactional categories. This category focuses on how interactions and social dynamics are manifested in posts and activities on the platform. It also encompasses other subcategories that address the nature of conversations, tone and style of communication, responses to other users' posts, among other aspects. For example, I discuss how the concept of transculturality is produced and reproduced in digital contexts, describing how the fact of migration permeates the content. Moreover, I address how the offline socialisation of the individuals interviewed was gradually integrated into media practice: how they start interacting with friends from Germany and other nationalities, through the use of different languages in interaction, publishing content in other languages, diversification of audiences, etc. Finally, I develop how interpersonal relationships on Facebook and affective categories arise in the content.

8.1 Content Categories: Facebook as a *Field Site*

Digital places constitute new spaces for social activity. The application of the concept of media-related practices does not imply a sharp division between offline and online spaces. Rather, it is about how media practice is embedded in the contexts under investigation. Moreover, digital environments add a tension, the idea of text as interaction, i.e., analysing online interactions that take place exclusively in the form of written communications. In that sense there is a debate among qualitative researchers about "whether the object of analysis is live interaction or simply traces of interaction" (Robinson & Schulz, 2011). In this dissertation, discursive practices are understood as a process and Facebook profiles as a digital space for socialisation and imagination of the Spanish Diaspora. Therefore, this phase involves the analysis of posts, but also the whole range of interaction that takes place in the space under investigation: the shared content, the interaction with other profiles, the digital contexts, motivations, actions such as tagging, liking, memories... In this sense, the post content in Facebook constitutes a space for negotiation. Posts have a symbolic meaning, but they also have a purpose, fulfil a social function, and seek for interaction. When a person enters a room everything in it communicates: the people with their gestures, their clothes, how they speak, what they say, the layout of the space, the decoration, everything is part of the performance. In the digital space, and on Facebook in particular as a social network, presence materialises differently. The main unit of interaction is the written post and the tools available to the users to generate interaction and reaction which also have a discursive form. In the following, I develop the different content subcategories.

8.1.1 Belonging Categories: The *We-mess*

In this section I will develop the belonging categories. Migration is always an existential transformation of great transcendence for any person, crossed by different factors, personal, psychological as well as the material and socioeconomic conditions of the process. This new *life experience* challenged fundamental questions such as the feeling of belonging, facing, on the one hand, the separation and rupture with Spain and, on the other hand, the new beginning in Germany. And this also entails identity transformations. Migration involves many identity conflicts as different identities interact and merge in the everyday

lives of migrants. They started a new life experience in a new social context, and they had to learn not only the language, but also the social keys to be able to move successfully in the new environment. Thus, migration became a fundamental biographical fact for the social development of the participants, something that will always remain and will take a definitive place in the identity of the migrants: “a shift in the character of spaces and routines that one utilises in daily life has a bearing on identity processes and constructions of sense of belonging” (Christensen & Jansson, 2015, p. 1478). In this regard, transnational interactions are not only present in macro-structures, but also are present in everyday life, at the microlevel (Tsagarousianou, 2019). In this section I will focus on the micro-level, on the concrete practices that take part in the process of identification and belonging, or, in other words, how Spanish migrants materialise in their Facebook posts the negotiation between both sociocultural environments and how they situate themselves on it. For this purpose, I will address the identity-building process through different content categories, as discursive practices have a great symbolic capacity.

I approach the identity building processes by focusing on the user’s experiences manifested through different content categories including their narratives and interactions, post content, specific symbolic accounts, statements of interest, etc. This intersections between the online and the offline define the significance of the content practices, how the everyday life of Spanish migrants is enacted or performed through the bodies: “online production of self-expresses the bodily physicality through the acts of knowledge and ignorance, conversation habits, recognizable movements within familiar sites, and memory encoding. Such engagement in self-production constructs knowledge of self, others, and the interactions with others through building objects, or, literally, doing” (Rybas & Gajjala, 2007, p. 6). The aim is to explore content reflect diasporic identities, which are linked to ethnicity, transnationalism, community, and multiple identities. Migrant use new media technologies to symbolically re(situate) themselves in origin and destination countries (Mădroane, 2017). Content practices can also reveal how people position themselves, selecting those ideas and aspects of their experience that are relevant. Identities are not delimited or static elements, but rather they interact with each other, they develop, and they are in continuous movement. Towards a more holistic approach, taking into account the complex and nuanced nature of identities I will analyse three identity processes that take place (among others) in the content analysed: the construction of the *Spanishness*, *we-ness* and

otherness. In transnational contexts identities are not static but dynamic elements, socially constructed and negotiated within communities, where migrants work, live and participate.

8.1.2 Re-constructing *Spanishness*: Spanish Cultural Backgrounds

The qualitative content analysis of the selected profiles was an opportunity to analyse how these aspects of migrants' media practice materialised in a limited space and time, in this case, through the social network Facebook. According to the information gathered on the in-depth interviews, Facebook, along with mobile applications, was the most frequently mentioned digital platforms when talking about the daily life of the Spanish migrants in Germany. In addition, interviewed developed a clear discursive link between the digital diaspora and the communicative exchange that took place on Facebook. In fact, every time I asked if they thought there was a digital Spanish community in Germany, users immediately and spontaneously referred Facebook without hesitation. In the interviews, participants reported a permanent contact with Spain, not only through the media, but also in the articulation of personal relationships. Spanish migrants were continuously connected to their country of origin through social networks, mobile applications, and video conferences. This situation implies that the input of information received from Spain also takes up a considerable amount of time in the everyday life of Spanish migrants. In that sense, social and cultural contact with Spain was never lost, it was experienced parallel to the migratory process. The *Spanish-ness*, the feeling of belonging, and the cultural dispositions involved in this process were always present. In some ways, they still inhabited Spain, but digitally, participating in the public agora of the country of origin as well as of the country of destination. Moreover, most of the interviewees referred to the process of emigration as a temporary process, not as a long-term life project. This, undoubtedly, has an effect not only on how they relate to their environment, but also on the depth of their social and cultural articulations in the destination country. This factor would explain why those people who, even though they have the linguistic competence, decide to continue to be linked to their Spanish customs and habits, giving a limited space to the receiving country. Facebook constitutes a wide field of social research, where a lot of information of different nature can be gathered, both quantitative and qualitative. However, it is important to stress here that in this research I intended to avoid instrumental approaches of media and communication technologies that interpreted the link between ICT and migration

processes as facilitating tools, or simple transmission channels. On the contrary, here I introduced *media-practices* as an inextricable part of migration processes, considering that migration is also mediated and digitally experienced. The objective was, therefore, to explore the different ways of 'inhabiting Facebook as migrants' (as Spanish migrants) in a digital space where identities can be reproduced by publishing content through personal reflections and, of course, through the interaction with other users. I will develop how the fragmentation and reproduction of their frames of reference are reflected in Facebook media practices through the content that they share, their comments, experiences, memories, and longings. These constitute private elements of their everyday life that become public through the publication and exchange in their profiles. In the following, I will analyse some of the content published the private/public life of the subjects, which have turned into elements of identification related with national identity. In this first section, I will address some of the categories linked to the construction (and preservation) of the *Spanishness*.

a) Publishing Spanish current affairs

Migration does not imply a disconnection from the country of origin. Media technologies allow a direct tracking of the news and current affairs in the countries of origin. While years ago, the diasporic media fulfilled the community function of providing migrants with information about different events and developments in their country of origin, interviews revealed, as we commented in the previous chapter, that with the direct digital access to the national media this function is no longer necessary. The observation of the analysed profiles confirmed this and pointed to a live tracking of current affairs in Spain. In general, users share a lot of content and material from Spanish media, press, and televisions. Even though they no longer live in Spain, all the profiles contained publications on current affairs in Spain, news and events occurring in different places of the country but, especially, in the interviewees' local territories: a fire, an attack, a court ruling... I found many publications of this nature, here are some examples:

La Sexta article on homophobia: An outrageous transphobic bus tours the schools of Madrid: "Boys have penises, don't be fooled".

(...)

Post text: This is not apology of anything and therefore no one will be in court for it

Video of CAIGROUND video about the Doñana fires

Profil 6 – M- 27 years, Nüremberg

Post Text: 20,000 cows = 4 million litres of water per day (more than ALL the city of Soria). Waste, twice as much as ALL Castilla y León (9 provinces, let's remember).

Article: Soria prepares the ground for the largest milk farm in Europe: 20,000 cows.

(...)

They don't talk about methane gas, but a lot of pollution with a megaproject that will kill small producers. And the "best" of all...ALIENATED, EXPLOITED and MISTREATED cows like the ones we see in the photo.

Profil 7 – F – 29 years, Berlin

Article: La Sexta. All plastic bags will no longer be free by law from this Sunday.

Profil 8 – F – 26 years, Erfurt

This shows us that Spanish emigrants keep up to date with Spanish current affairs through digital media; they get involved, give their opinions, share, etc. In this section we are not interested in analysing the content, but we are interested in detecting in which of these contents they show their cultural link with Spain. On the other hand, they not only address national current affairs, but they are also very engaged with their local communities of origin. In fact, it was very common to share local content such as neighbourhood initiatives, events, and even offers or promos:

Madrileñ@s! (People of Madrid)

In Hortaleza (a neighborhood in Madrid) there is a group of neighbors who are organizing to promote waste composting and they need your support to continue reducing the waste we produce. They want to expand to the other districts to transform our garbage into natural compost <3 (Link to the initiative)

Profil 2 – F – 29 years, Berlin

Post texts: Madrileños and Madrileñas! (People of Madrid) Here is an app to connect with your neighbors! Cool, isn't it?

She shares a link to a new social network/app for neighbors: ¿Tienes sal? (Do you have salt?) is a social network for neighbors, to bring solidarity and fellowship back to the neighborhoods.

Profil 4 – F – 36 years, Berlin

Article from a local newspaper in Cordoba reporting an event in which The National Police are looking for a missing 81-year-old woman in Ciudad Jardin.

The woman's family has raised the alarm on the social network Facebook.

Article from Córdoba: The IES (High School) Averroes denounces a "global deterioration" due to a 50% budget reduction.

Profil 6 – M- 27 years, Nürnberg

Post text: Yujuuuu!!!!

The post includes a local press article: The Ministry's request to suspend the remunicipalisation of water in Valladolid is denied.

Profil 7: F - 29 years, Berlin

Offer for the fairgrounds of Madrid: Is your name Oscar or Pilar? Well, this is your week and your friends' week. Now during this week you can enjoy a 50%* discount on admission for you and up to 3 companions. #NameOfTheWeek

Post text: Take advantage this week hahaha! (tag three friends/family members)

Profil 8 – F – 26 years, Erfurt

It should be noted that political current affairs were dominant category in the publication of contents about the country of origin. However, it will be discussed in more detail in the section on political practices. On the other hand, the content shared pointed out their different publics, or, in other words, to whom their posts were addressed. Taking into consideration that they no longer live there, and that usually were posts in Spanish, when

they shared local events, they were targeting people living in Spain who may consider it relevant, thus establishing an informational connection with the contacts in Spain.

b) Celebration of Spanish Popular Events

The cultural celebration has a great symbolic significance in Spain. Throughout the year people celebrate different kinds of festivities, some of them familiar or linked to former economic, pagan or religious activities (the last perhaps the most popular due to the Catholic tradition of the country). In that sense, analysing the profiles, I observed that it was very common to publish content related to the celebration of popular festivities in Spain. This reproduction of cultural celebrations through media practices took different forms in the profiles: sometimes by sharing information about festivities, but also participating in those festivities, whether in Spain or in Germany. Popular festivities are not only highly symbolic but also emotionally charged:

She shares her status- I feel nostalgic.

Post text: My dearest festivities. The best of the celebrations.
It includes a photography in a popular festival of her town

Profil 8 – F – 26 years, Erfurt

I also found Christmas-related content that was a very symbolic celebration in the profiles analysed because all of them returned home during those days. As a result, the content shared was usually published *from Spain*. Between the most symbolic elements of the Spanish Christmas, I found content related to the Spanish tradition of eating twelve grapes during the New Year's Eve chimes. The twelve good-luck grapes are a Spanish tradition that consists of eating one grape with each stroke of the clock at midnight on 31 December to welcome the New Year.

Post text: Happy new year 2018! It includes a picture of a table with the 12 grapes ready to eat.

Profil 4 – F- 36 years, Berlin

I also found content related with the Night of the Magi on January 5th, eating the typical *roscón de reyes* (a cake in the shape of a rosca). In Spain, tradition states that the Three Wise Men bring Christmas presents to children on the night of the 5th to the 6th of January. On that same night, Spaniards eat the traditional sweet *roscón de reyes* that contains gifts inside.

Post text: You are my best gift. It includes a picture of a “roscón de reyes”.

Profil 8 – F – 26 years, Erfurt

On the other hand, it was also common to find territorial or local cultural festivities, such as the San Fermines Festival held in the city of Pamplona and known for the running of the bulls.

San Fermines paillotos two thousand and seventeen!

It includes an album with 7 photos of the group of friends in the San Fermines. Photos of partying, hugging, drinking, sleeping in the tent. Showing the "paillotos" t-shirts that were made for the event with their numbers, names and the typical San Fermines sash and red handkerchief.

Profil 1: M – 31 years, Munich

It was interesting to observe how these cultural celebrations awakened emotional reactions easily detectable in their profiles. As a very specific example it is worth stopping at the Carnivals of Andalusia, a very symbolic celebration for any Andalusian.

Youtube video of the Comparsa "The millionaires" |

Post text: I had the opportunity to see this ‘comparsa’ of the master Juan Carlos Aragon live in the streets of Cadiz when they had already won the first prize and I could not but get excited even though I had already been following them throughout the contest. Poet of the people with revolutionary lyrics, let no one forget it.

Video of the "Perravieja" band in the Preliminaries of the "Popurri".

Post text: My hair stands on end

Profil 6 – M – 27 years, Nüremberg

Carnivals in Andalusia are much more than just costumes and parades for any Andalusian person. The Andalusian Carnivals constitute a whole festival cycle in which music contests of *comparsas*, *chirigotas*, *coros* and *cuartetos* (musical groups that combine music and humour, that use irony to parody kinds of daily situations) capture the attention of the whole Andalusian population. In fact, one of the users told me in the interviews that since a couple of years ago it has been possible to follow the carnival contest in streaming for Andalusian migrants. There is a clear media adaptation here to enable Andalusian emigrants to participate in the festivity from abroad. For instance, one of the users posted a video of the *Comparsa Perravieja* (a group of female singers) in his profile in the preliminary phase of the *Popurri* contest. The description text in the post just pointed: “*my hair stands on end*”, reflecting the emotional feelings when watching the video. It is interesting how watching that video explicitly generated a reaction in his body. Moreover, I also detected how Spanish migrants also reproduced other national cultural symbols from territories such as the Basque Country or Catalonia, where people celebrate typical regional events such as the Basque *Korrika* or *Sant Jordi*, respectively.

External post: Hey cousin, how is everything going? Are you going to the Korrika or the after party tomorrow?

A friend writes to her to invite her to go to the Korrika, a typical Basque event organized in Berlin every year.

(...)

Facebook event (German): Literary Cabaret - Sant Jordi: Very beloved poetry eaters, lyrical livers, awkward performers and wine gourmets of all kinds,

the day of the book and the lovers are here again.

Catalan tradition invites us every April 23 to celebrate "Sant Jordi." Coloured by roses and books, the streets and squares of Catalonia come alive on this day, the day when everyone gets up from their own reading chair and read poetry loud with others and with awakened senses.

Profil 3 – F- 27 years, Berlin

Korrika is a running race held in the Basque Country in support of its language, *Euskera*. In the last two decades, the Basque diaspora has been organising these cultural events in their cities abroad during the respective editions of *Korrika*. On the other hand, on Saint George's Day (in Catalan ‘*Diada de Sant Jordi*’) it is traditional for couples and loved ones to exchange

roses and books on this date, making it one of the most popular days of the year. St George's Day has a vindictive aspect of Catalan culture, and many balconies display the Catalan flag. The most evident materialisation of these cultural elements was the fact that some of these celebrations were reproduced in Germany, bringing together other Spanish emigrants to celebrate. This celebration was later published on their Facebook profiles to show the performativity of their traditions. Therefore, this cultural reproduction shows that they were not only concerned with the symbolic representation of the cultural event, but also with the practice, in a cycle of cultural exchange that involves both offline and online realities. These examples show the importance of cultural roots. Indeed, the user was part Catalan, part Basque and this was reflected in her Facebook profile.

c) Travelling to Spain as a symbolic event

Travelling to Spain was not only a reason for joy among Spanish migrants, it was also an important date to share in their Facebook profiles. Nevertheless, the trips or visits to the place of origin had also a material component, since not everyone can afford to travel under the same economic conditions and with the same frequency. And in close relation with this factor, I found a clear emotional component that varies depending on individual's situation. In that sense, trips to Spain are not experienced in the same way when migrants travel to the country of origin on a monthly basis as if they would travel once a year. In any case, it becomes a noticeable event in any migrant's life, leading to numerous posts, photographs, and comments in their Facebook profiles. The publications display a wide range of formats. In fact, from a trip to Spain often derived in a series of posts corresponding to the outbound journey, the stay and the return:

The outbound journey: Before departure, I observed many posts showing impatience or simply announcing the trip, sometimes accompanied by pictures at the airport. They showed happiness in these posts, often using exclamations.

Post text: Let's go to the Feria! PS: Levante (wind), I heard you are thinking about coming too...I hope you stay at home this time...You still have a lot of summer ahead!

In the post he reports his upcoming trip to Spain. It includes a Google picture mapping the route to Chiclana.

Profil 1: M - 31 years -Munich

Post text: It was time to see each other this year.

By the bay I want to be a sailor, by the bay, under the blue of the skies in the sea of Andalusia!!!! (Heart emoticon)

Accompanied by a picture of the Seville airport with the thermometer reading +15 degrees.

Profil 7: F - 29 years, Berlin

Post Text: Let's start!

With this post he starts his holidays in Spain. He includes a picture with 4 friends drinking beer.

Profil 6: M - 27 years, Nüremberg

The stay: Displaying the country of origin perhaps represents the most explicit way of articulating Spanish identity in the content, serving as a means to present and bear witness to cultural roots. A notable aspect in this type of publication was the use of possessive articles to reference the territory: expressions such as 'my land,' 'my roots,' 'my beautiful city,' 'my Andalusia'... convey a profound sense of rootedness. In these posts, individuals articulate various clear symbolic elements related to their local (and former) everyday life for their audience: photographs depicting the city and their social activities, gatherings, and meals. They frequently showcase celebrations, popular festivities, as well as introduce their family, friends, and Spanish folklore.

Post text: Cabo de Gata Natural Park Album 2017

This is an album with 17 holiday photos. It includes pictures of the beach, with the dog, with the couple in different places of Cabo de Gata, eating and drinking with the family, several pictures of the sunset at the sea.

Post text: Family holidays (Emoticon laughing)

Attached is a photo sitting on the terrace of a bar with his partner, his dog and his father.

Profil 6: M - 27 years, Nüremberg

Post text: There is no better definition of happiness possible...
Accompany the text with a picture of a meal by the sea with fried fish and other typical tapas.

Profil 7: F – 29 years, Berlin

The return: These publications are often accompanied by nostalgic photographs and texts. As can be appreciated in the posts, the emotion and the strong link with the territory is very clear. In fact, an unexplored and relevant aspect is the need to show the place of origin and explain its characteristics.

Post text: The Castilian countryside, with its various shades, is the school of painters.

Goodbye Castille, I hope to note on my return the grace of your green branch, as Machado would say, who spent so many hours writing about you.
(Only text)

Profil 7: F - 29 years, Berlin

The journey is over and winter is beginning...

The post includes a photograph of the user with their partner in the car looking at the camera with sad faces.

Profil 6: M - 27 years, Nüremberg

A noteworthy factor in this type of content was the publication of the posts in English and German. This underscores the idea that this content was not directed at their Spanish audience but rather was part of their affiliation within a transnational community. However, it also reflects the desire to share typical Spanish cultural elements with their community. This demonstrates that cultural dissemination is not merely about asserting national identity but actively participating in the construction and promotion of a transnational collective identity.

d) The visits from Spain

Migratory movements have also led to the development of new family models and practices, as I have already commented in previous chapters. The transnational family is characterised by the dispersion of its members in different countries due to the migration of one or more of its members (Le Gall, 2005, p. 30). A key aspect, for this investigation was to deepen the dynamics and family ties through their media practices from a transnational perspective. Once the trips to the country of origin have been discussed, it is important to address as another important symbolic element: the visits that migrants receive in the country of destination. The re-encounter with family and friends always constitutes a reinforcement of the ties between migrants and their country of origin. In the phase of the interviews, Spanish emigrants expressed the importance of being able to share their migratory experience (everyday life, the new friendships, the new spaces in which they participate, the new culture, etc.) through the different media and communication technologies. By posting the daily aspects of their lives, their families, friends and acquaintances can learn about *their new life*. However, when the loved ones finally receive the visit of their family and friends, they have the opportunity not only to show on-site their everyday life, but also to experience it with them.

First visit of many! (Emoticon with sunglasses)

It is accompanied by a selfie of the user with his two friends in front of the cathedral. And another picture with other friend.

Profil 5: M - 28 years, Erfurt

This weekend I had a visit from a big guy who has become bigger since the last time we met! Attached, a picture of a group of friends drinking beer.

Profil 6: M - 27 years, Nüremberg

External post: I could not have found better company for a trip to Berlin, no matter how many years I would have wished for it. It includes a group photo of Spanish friends at the Marx and Engels monument in Berlin.

Profil 3: F - 27 years Berlin

Therefore, this implies much more than a touristic visit. Visitors will finally be able to know the life of their loved ones, to visit their home, to meet their friends and close surroundings, the supermarket where they shop every week, in short, to share a piece of their lives. This constitutes a reinforcement of the personal and emotional bond between immigrants and their loved ones. In the profiles analysed I found a large number of publications on the visits of loved ones in Germany. Visits of friends/family members to the destination countries were configured as relevant symbolic events, both for the visitors and for the visited ones in terms of visibility in their profiles. Both visitors and visited post photo albums reporting the experience and tagging different persons. These pictures usually show the celebration of the meeting, enjoying the company of their loved ones and sharing their life in the destination country. The pictures were usually placed in emblematic spaces, sharing food, beer, pictures from photo-booths, and German symbolic/historic elements as a faithful reminder of the visit. Moreover, the visits do not only generated content during the time frame in which they were taking place. We also find grateful posts after the trip, often looking forward to the next meeting, accompanied by photographs and always highly emotionally charged. Finally, the visits also remain as a space for memory, often recalled thanks to the Facebook tools that remain users of events in the past. Some users used this type of reminder to comment and reflect on the trip and wish for the return of loved ones or for the visit to be repeated.

(Name of the friend), it's been 4 years... Wow! I'll be waiting for you here whenever you want to come back.

She shares a memory of a friend visit. The post includes a photo with a friend beside a piano.

Profil 4: F - 36 years Berlin

e) Spanish food

Food is not only a way of satisfying physiological needs, but also culture and identity. It also evokes historical and cultural elements of the daily life expressed in gastronomic actions. In that sense, the gastronomy is one of the most representative elements of the cultures, the food as a fully social construct (Barthes, [1961] 2013). Beyond a collection of products, it involves a form of communication, usages, celebrations, rituals and behaviour.

Food produces and reproduces culture through its preparation, its consumption and also when it is published as a symbolic element on the Facebook wall. Therefore, we can consider it a form of cultural communication. The Spanish gastronomy and the quality and variety of its products have historically enjoyed great international reputation. In fact, food, along with tourism, constitutes one of the strategic axes in the positioning of the *Spanish brand* in the world. In that sense, Spanish cuisine therefore not only generates a certain sense of pride between Spaniards, but is also strongly rooted in the Spanish imagination, as an intrinsic element of Spanish culture and identity, celebrations, and the way of life in general. Food is always present in the Spanish traditions, the rituals, the collective memory and the daily life of the people, and thus, it was also very present in digital environments such as the Facebook profiles analysed. The publication of content related to Spanish food was a very frequent topic in all the analysed profiles, both when they were a couple of days in Spain, but also and specially in their daily life at the destination country. These kind of gastronomic posts were always accompanied by photos and often by hashtags. A widespread practice among migrants when they returned home was to enjoy the typical meals of their place of origin and report them with photos showing details of the table, group pictures with family and/or friends, where the food is always the protagonist. However, they did not show whatever they ate during these days, but rather the most typical Spanish dishes: paella, potato omelette, croquettes...

Post: Hangover in Benima. Mediterranean way of life.

The picture accompanying the post is a close-up of the food on the table, typical Spanish food: spicy potatoes, croquettes and cuttlefish

Profil 3: F - 27 years Berlin

Post text: Finally, it's all right!!!

The post includes a photograph of a Spanish potato omelette.

(in the same event)

External post: Andalusian dinner with Spanish omelettes and gazpacho included for the cold hahaha #deutschland #erfurt

The post in which the user was tagged in the same event also includes a picture of 9 friends around the table showing what they are eating. Among them is the user.

Profil 5: M – 28 years, Erfurt

Sunday Rice #Nürnberg #Customs #ChapataMortal #CleaningTheFridge

The post includes a photo with 5 friends sitting at the table eating a typical Spanish rice dish.

There is no Bavarian cold that a good "migas with chorizo" (typical Spanish dish), peppers and seasonal oranges can't combat.

The text is accompanied by a close-up photograph of the "migas" on the table.

Profil 6: M - 27 years, Nürnberg

And of course, there is no lack of mention of the eternal discussion about what is in a paella and that not all kinds of rice are paella:

Article: Link from "El comidista" blog with an article and an old photograph of a couple of ladies making paella: Paella did have chorizo in it.

Has paella always had a closed list of ingredients, and does anyone who dares to go outside its limits deserve public scorn? According to history, no and no. Oh, and 150 years ago they used to add chorizo without embarrassment, like Jamie Oliver.

Post text: (The user tag two friends) The boiled egg is missing hahaha

Profil 8: F - 26 years, Erfurt

With comments such explicit as: 'Mediterranean way of life' they show how important food is for the Spanish identity. Moreover, the pictures of typical Spanish meals also appeared in different events in the destination countries, sometimes just showing what they have cooked and often becoming the reason for the meeting, being very common the pictures of groups of friends around the table enjoying the food. In this migratory context, food was clearly intended as a link with the place of origin, as a meeting point, for cultural and identity expression. In that sense, food and communal practices around the food, food preparation or celebratory meals in migrant communities, are impregnated with great emotional and cultural significance, strengthening the sense of belonging and experiencing

locality through the production, preparation, and consumption of foods (Parasecoli, 2014). In the digital sphere the *food-oriented practices* formerly private, are now published and thus incorporated into the (semi-public) migratory narratives. In the same way that through the food, migrants include their cultural traditions in their daily rituals, recreating the lost home (Rossi, 2013), these practices have also been transferred to digital communities generating content and new forms and meanings associated to the Spanish gastronomy.

f) Spanish Humour

Humour is a universal element, but people around the world do not laugh or joke about the same things or in the same contexts. There is, therefore, a clear cultural factor in humour: “humour often mirrors deeper cultural perceptions and offers us a powerful device to understand culturally shaped ways of thinking and feeling” (Driessen 1997, p. 222). In Spain, everything can be made fun of, even the most serious and delicate things, a factor that is also historically reflected in the country's cultural production: literature, theatre, and music. In Spain, any everyday situation is likely to end up as a joke. Not surprisingly, humour as a fundamental element of Spanish identity, also permeated different aspects of the media experience on Facebook. In this way we often came across jokes about their migration experience, political events or everyday life situations. Humour was an important symbolic and cultural element for the Spanish community in Germany in all the profiles analysed. Humour permeated the entire media experience on Facebook materialising both in the interaction between users and in the publications. In all the profiles, they publish a huge number of memes, sketches by comedians and TV channels, newspaper comic strips... The walls of all the profiles analysed are filled with a multitude of humorous content. Sometimes they even refer to the migration process or the country of destination:

Post text: That's right folks, that's right...

Share a joke video/sketch: "When cows have a better summer than you". The video shows cows on the beach.

Profil 4: F - 36 years Berlin

Meme:

- German level?
- Du
- You don't have any idea, do you?
- Du hast
- Get the hell out of here!

Profil 4: F - 36 years Berlin

This is related to what I have observed in other posts with respect to the weather as a recurring topic among Spanish emigrants. This is clearly an indirect reference to the concept of migration; they do not mention it but they speak about Germany. Always in a humorous tone. In the second example the joke makes indirect reference to one of the best-known German songs in Spain, Du Hast by Rammstein. Here another example:

Post text: I'M A BARBARIAN BY ADOPTION

He shares a video of a Spanish journalist communicating German elections news. She said 'Barbarians' instead of 'Bavarians'.

Profil 5: M – 28 years, Erfurt

Post text: Ganz Genau (Exactly in German)

Post the typical meme of the boy from the movie "The Sixth Sense" on the park bench asking Bruce Willis when the spring is coming. The other replies: It's Berlin. And the boy cries.

Profil 7: F - 29 years, Berlin

In the profiles, there was a lot of interaction with the humorous content, users were tagging each other, commenting on it, laughing. Other times it was not explicitly humorous content, but the comments and reactions were.

All the categories addressed are explicit symbolic elements that materialise the users' link and sense of belonging to Spain. From these content practices, it is possible to make some theoretical considerations. The formation of transnational delocalised communities and tensions between national and transnational links challenges the concept of Nation-State and the sense of belonging. Geographic mobility and migrations constitute a challenge for the reference frameworks, overcoming the State-Nation models, and generating

transnational contexts in which, as we have discussed, both structural and local factors are integrated. However, in the context of Spanish emigration, a re-examination of national identity is still necessary in this context. The economic crisis, the growing inequality, the precarisation of employment and the growth of internal nationalisms have highlighted the crisis of the Spanish identity. Migration processes always awaken latent bonds of belonging, either because they were not perceived before, or because they were not perceived as their own. Furthermore, as we commented in the introduction chapter in the Spanish case the national symbolism was always problematic as it implies references to the political right and far right. Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish between nationality, as the awareness of belonging to a nation, something that is deeply rooted in our identity, and the use of nationalist symbology or patriotism. In that sense, in Spain there coexists (not always in peace) a neutral Spanish identity built on democracy around the new national myth, with another one deeply rooted in the political right. Moreover, Spain is diverse at the identity level within its borders, so that in territories such as Catalonia or the Basque Country, there is a clear rejection of Spanish identity, as they understand that it does not integrate the internal plurality of the country. It involves a complex debate that goes far beyond the objectives of this research. Nevertheless, the most important point here was that there are different forms constructing this *Spanishness*. In that sense, it is important to contextualise and understand that in many cases the *Spanishness* was based more on *Spanish culture* and *folklore* than on the concept of Spain as a nation. However, it was quite common that in migratory processes there takes place a reinforcement of *the national*. It does not mean, at least in the case of Spanish emigration, that it is verbalised. However, it is performed through other media practices, such as those reported during the interview phase such as the informational media-related practices or the permanent connection with the origin country. The interviews report that rather than being an occasional consumption of Spanish media responding to the logical interest about what is happening in the origin country, it points to a monitoring of the political current situation in Spain. It was a pattern that has been identified in all the interviews. As part of their everyday life, the interviewees consulted on daily basis Spanish media, press, radio, television and different accounts in social media. In fact, the consultation of German media was described as a one-off or occasional consultation, often linked to specific events. In the case of content practices, the same has happened, with a high percentage of interaction with the country of origin through the different types of publications which I have described above, with a strong symbolic component. The over-dimensioning and idealisation of the country of origin constitute a

part of the migratory grief, in which people build a space of nostalgia as a refuge and protective resistance to face the new context (Calvo, 2005). As discussed, in this phase, individuals implement psychological mechanisms *to preserve* their identity that are materialised in different social practices, among them, the content practices. In this section I analysed the content categories associated with the construction of *Spanishness*. In fact, the interaction with the country of origin dominated the whole media experience on Facebook, both at content and interaction level. Nevertheless, over the three years analysed and throughout the migration process, I have also been able to verify that they also develop other forms of identification and mixed interactions over time. In their everyday life, migrants post other kinds of contents that reproduce symbolic elements of the *Digital Spanish Diaspora* delimiting a certain sense of *we-ness* as I will develop in the next section.

8.1.3 Diasporic Identities: Between We-ness and Otherness

In the analysis of the selected Facebook profiles, I appreciated a clear identification with the Spanish community in Germany, or in other words, in recognising themselves as *Spanish migrants*. In the previous section I argued how *Spanishness* was articulated through the content posted on Facebook. In the qualitative content analysis, I detected different kind of posts with explicit or implicit mentions of the fact of migration. In this section I aim to analyse how the processes of identification and hybridisation reflect on the media production. Through the qualitative content analysis of Facebook profiles I observed different media-related practices linked with the development of a potential diasporic identity, i.e. the recognition of the users as migrants from the most evident ones, such as the publication of content related to the Spanish migration process or targeted at migration publics, the reporting of the migration experience itself, the participation in forums and platforms directed to Spanish migrants, to other more indirect one such as, the publication of content in different languages, the variety of the pages followed and the interculturality of the digital bonds.

a) The Metadiscourse on Migration

In this section I discuss the metadiscourse as a rhetorical resource, underlying the reflective potential: how migrants speak about themselves, or in other words, different ways of articulating the metadiscourse (metadiscourse strategies and comments). This category clearly showed the relation between the media experience/selection of content and migrant identity. As I have already mentioned, the allusion to the “migrant fact” is a feature that crosses and permeates the entire media experience, in more or less explicit ways. From the content, the interaction with other users, the comments, etc. It is therefore not uncommon to find comments that refer to the migratory process indirectly, even if the published content is not related to it, such as “*how fast you have become a Bavarian*”, “*we miss you*”, “*hope to see you here again*”. This means that the context of migration materialises and frames discursively different aspects of the interaction. Notwithstanding, beyond the more or less explicit mention of emigration in their comments, a very clear pattern that I observed in every profile was to share articles addressing *Spanish emigration* or *the emigration experience in general*. All profiles, with no exception, shared this type of content. This points to a clear identification with the migrant community. In fact, on many occasions, the text of the post itself suggested or explicitly expressed the identification with the shared content. Moreover, these posts generally generated debate and discussion among those contacts who were also living the experience of emigration. In the following I discuss some examples of metadiscursive posts that directly or indirectly address the Spanish emigration. In general terms, these metadiscursive strategies and content fulfil two specific functions: a) *explaining the migratory experience* with the aim to cover the day-to-day issues of migration as well as the emotional dilemmas of living between two countries; b) *social denunciation*, visibility of the difficulties and limitations in migratory process, and also, c) *political/activist initiatives* of other Spanish emigrants and political issues associated with the country of origin. It is worth stopping to analyse some examples of articles shared by respondents, since some of them have been shared in several profiles. This is surprising because the selected users do not know each other and live in different cities, but nevertheless they have concurred on the publication of some of this content. Below I present some examples of this type of post:

Migratory experience

Post Text: I couldn't have said it better.

The user Shares an article from GQ Magazine about going on holiday to Spain when you are a Spanish emigrant. Headline: "If you left Spain, the worst thing you can do is come back during the holidays. Returning home can be a source of joy, but also of absolute confusion".

Profil 5: M - 28 years, Erfurt

The article, from GQ Magazine, addressed the different social and emotional dilemmas of coming back home for holidays. The user showed a clear identification with the shared article; indeed, he wrote in the text of the post: "*I couldn't have said it better*". It also referred to the idealisation of the country of origin. Moreover, the article develops the 'compulsory nature' of returning home on holiday, referring to "*the tremendous financial effort this entails and resulting in the feeling that you are literally ruined, and you have spent almost all of your holidays in that fundamental right (from your point of view) / moral obligation (from your mother's) which is to return home*". This was interesting because it has already been noted in the interviews when we talked about contact with the family through ICTs. Similarly, some of the respondents commented that having available all the means to talk to each other, they felt a certain *compulsion* to communicate with their families. On the other hand, it was also striking that the article cites Facebook as part of this complex exchange with the reality of the country of origin: "*Sometimes I wish that people would not take it badly that they saw on Facebook that I passed through Spain and did not inform them or, on the contrary, that I would not be upset if someone did not change their usual routine to meet me even for a while*". This reinforces the idea of the visit to the country of origin as an event that will later be reported as a "symbolic event".

Post text: The fucking reality...

The post provided a link to an article about the return of Spanish emigrants. Headline: "Deciding to return to your country after migrating is almost as hard as moving away"

Profil 5: M - 28 years, Erfurt

In the same vein, another example of article from the *New Code* magazine also addresses the emotional implications of the migration process. Firstly, it discussed the topic of the return and the inverse culture shock that takes place after so many years abroad. Moreover, also mentioned the idealisation of Spain in migration and the process of transition (hybridisation) that migrants go through during the years they are in contact with other cultures. Finally, it addressed the frustrated expectations of return because the migrants who left are no longer the ones who return, and relations are not the same as when they left. This article includes some fundamental elements that appeared in the interviews and also in the qualitative content analysis: again, the idealisation and overestimation of the positive attributes of the culture of origin, including the character of the people, that I have already mentioned in previous sections. Also, the migrant identity since the article said that when migrants return, they realise that they are no longer the same, that they have changed and that the relationships with friends and family are no longer the same as when they left. It is worth of mention that this article was shared in a second profile. It stresses once more the importance of finding the same articles shared in diverse and unconnected profiles of Spanish migrants in Germany. Currently, the only coinciding content in the profiles were those shown in this category, which reveals a process of community identification. This identification was also manifested in the comments, that often expressed agreement with the published content.

Post text: The National Institute of Statistics in 2012 estimated that some 225,000 people had left Spain since 2008. According to González-Ferrer's calculations, this would be around 700,000. In 2013, for example, Spain was the second country that sent the most workers to the UK. The first was Poland.

The disparity with the official figures, the researcher explains, is due to the fact that "the official data are based on the deregistration process, which only takes place if the emigrants register in the Spanish consulates. This registration often does not take place even if the person lives abroad for years".

He shares a link to an article on contemporary Spanish emigration and inaccurate statistical figures. Headline: "We will return".

Profil 6: M - 27 years, Nüremberg

This article had a first part where the statistical data and the demographic profiles of the Spanish emigration were discussed and a second part with personal stories. It included also an interview with the authors of "*We Will Return*", a book containing testimonies with

different and paradigmatic cases of Spanish migrants. The journalist stresses that this book was necessary because it contributed to sharing the emotions experienced during migratory movements, the feelings of being uprooted, ultimately, the untold story of the contemporary Spanish migration. Finally, I also found content about other waves of Spanish emigration/exile. Between the examples I found a documentary video shared by one of the users about Spanish Republicans in concentration camps and an article shared by another user about the struggle of Spanish women in Republican exile.

Social Denunciation

Post (no text): She shares an article by Marea Granate on Spanish emigration in Germany in which they demystify the foreign minister's declarations on the Spanish emigration. Headline: "A letter from Spanish migrants to the Minister of Foreign Affairs: Don't call it inquisitiveness, but desperation".

Profil 2: F - 29 years Berlin

This was an open letter signed by *Marea Granate* denouncing the Foreign Minister's statements 'de-dramatising' the departure of thousands of young Spaniards abroad in search of employment: "*Moving abroad to live, to work, enriches, opens the mind and strengthens social skills*". In the letter, *Marea Granate* aimed to make visible "the true reality" that involves emigrating to another country and demystified the idea of emigration as an enriching adventure. They also denounced the lack of proper protection by public institutions, talking about the "rage and helplessness". They shared also other examples of publications of *Marea Granate* that dealt with the difficulties of voting from abroad and a workshop about the situation of Spanish emigration *#NoNosVamosNosEchan*. These articles reflect political engagement and a range of emotions, including frustration and anger towards Spain, as illustrated in the following example:

Post text: Right, Spain is over...
The user shares an article from a disappointed Spanish emigrant. Headline: "Spain, we are over."

Profil 5: M - 28 years, Erfurt

This was a very emotional article written in the form of a letter. The author personified *Spain* and spoke to Spain as if it were his partner, as if they were breaking up. The user who shared the article wrote in the post: “*Right, Spain is over...*”. The article talks about the false hopes, the disappointment, the corruption, how he had to migrate and how difficult it was. About the tough times and the good times in the destination country and about empowerment. Finally, the article concludes that he would rather stay in Germany (his new love) than continue missing Spain.

To conclude, the large volume of articles shared in posts dealing with different aspects of the Spanish emigration identified in all the profiles, shows a clear identification with the Spanish migrant community. On the other hand, it is curious that even though the immigrants interviewed agreed both in the interviews and in the analysis of their profiles that they avoided publishing the hardest aspects of *their* migration experience, they nevertheless shared this type of content that pointed to the difficulties they experienced during the migration process.

b) The Migrant Family

Emigration colleagues have always played a key role in migration narratives. In “emigration colleagues” I do not only include migrants of the same nationality, but also people with other nationalities, for example, Italians, historical emigration partners of Spanish migrants. The strong ties and bonds that are generated between the emigration partners, symbolise the essence of the migrant identity. Moreover, in the narratives I observed not only a strong sense of community, but almost a family relationship. The interviewees often referred to the migration partners either as part of the family or directly as *their family in Germany*. Of course, these affective links between migrants were also reflected on the Facebook profiles analysed, not only in the shared content but also and specially in the interaction. In this regard, the most common posts were the photographs with friends, usually in leisure activities tagging the people involved in the picture: when they get together for lunch, outdoor activities or parties. A strong sense of community was perceived in these kinds of publications, so much so that several of the users referred directly to these ties as *family*. This means that the strong ties between migrants were not only visible on the walls but also

explicitly reflected in their quite emotional posts texts, here I show some examples of this posts:

“Dancing, singing and laughing in the kitchen... Lucky to have a soul sister in Berlin (Emoticon red heart) #noheartache”.

The user tags a friend in the post to report how much fun they had the last time they saw each other. The post includes a photograph of the two friends.

Profil 4: F - 36 years Berlin

“My friends, my family in Germany, my people, thank you for everything and so much, I love you! #family #friends #big”.

The post includes a group photo of 13 people celebrating a party.

(...)

How I miss you brothers!

He shares a memory of a photo from 2017 that was called: "Das Erfurter Ghetto".

Profil 5: M - 28 years, Erfurt

For more birthdays like this one, thank you very much for being by my side, for those who are present and for those who could not be because of the distance. In these days and in all of them, because there are no letters in the alphabet and no words in the dictionary to express how I feel. Because you are my family here, and day after day we support each other. For many years together, more laughs and why not more alcohol, even if the hangovers are the worst thing hahahahahah I want you by my side for better or worse.

The post includes an album with four photos of the celebration, eating, drinking and a corner where the gifts were left with balloons.

Profil 8: F - 26 years, Erfurt

Here it can be appreciated that the new forms of digital interaction are combined with offline interaction, as these relationships are physically established in the places of destination. In fact, according to the migrants interviewed, they are the people they most

rely on in their everyday lives and possibly the people with whom they meet and socialise the most. It is remarkable to observe in their narratives how certain aspects of their life in the destination country progressively integrate into the everyday life of digital spaces. The incorporation of these people in their digital narratives and spaces implies providing these relationships with a symbolic space in their lives and the integration in their networks and digital localities.

c) Hybrid Content Publications

The *hybrid content* concept refers to a kind of content that concerns or relates with both Spain and Germany, that mixes cultural elements of both countries and is often explicitly related to the fact of migration. This kind of publication has been regularly found in all the profiles that I have analysed. News, articles, events, or content that merge both worlds of Spain and Germany. This kind of content was commonly shared by Spanish migrants in Germany in their Facebook profiles. Sharing this content on their walls was very relevant at an identity level, since they illustrate with them the cognitive frames in which they feel comfortable. In that sense, I have observed a wide variety of content on the profiles of different subjects, where the point of meeting was always the involvement of both countries. Several posts contain travel offers, advertisements, mix of traditions, Germans with business in Spain or vice versa. Here are some examples:

(No post text)

The user shares a Spanish article from Traveler.es. Headline: This bakery (run by a Navarrese and a German) is revolutionising the city of Erfurt.

Profil 5: M - 28 years, Erfurt

(No post text)

The user shares a video of: "Despacito" auf Deutsch" from Best trend videos.
Article/Report

Profil 6: M - 27 years, Nürnberg

Post text: Wonderful :)

He shares a link from "El Portal de Cádiz" informing that from that moment on it will cost 22.70€ to travel from Cádiz to Berlin.

Profil 1: M - 31 years -Munich

(No post text) The user publishes another version of "despacito" in German: Together with Ayo Hope we bring back the summer. Warm your ears with Despacito in Swiss German!

(...)

The user shares a post from Madrid Secreto magazine: Litre beers and German sausages: Oktoberfest is back in Madrid! Paulaner beer in litre mugs and Bavarian sausages - What more could you wish for in a weekend? Oktoberfest, one of the most globalised local festivals in history, arrives this Thursday in Madrid and will be here for two consecutive weekends.

(...)

The user shares a Nutella Ad: Good morning. Heute genießen wir Nutella mit spanischen Churros! (Today we will enjoy Nutella with Spanish "churros"). The poster is an illustration of the Sagrada familia (Spanish cathedral in Barcelona) and some churros (typical Spanish sweet) on a blackboard with a pot of Nutella.

Profil 8: F - 26 years, Erfurt

Here I provided several examples in which both Spain and Germany play a leading role in the publication. From some more quotidian ones such as the announcement of flights and offers between the two countries such as "El Portal de Cádiz" posting an attractive offer of flights from Cadiz to Berlin, to others with more symbolic content. I found for example two profiles that shared a video with a version of "Despacito auf Deutsch" (the song 'Despacito' in German). The video showed two different German versions of the Spanish song. Another user published an article from Traveler.es (Travel & Lifestyle Magazine) about a very successful bakery in Erfurt run by a German and a Navarrese. I also found a post with an advertisement by Nutella that incorporated both languages and introduced Spanish cultural elements into the photography. The slogan was: "Buenos Días. Heute genießen wir Nutella mit spanischen Churros!" (Good morning! Today we enjoy Nutella with Spanish Churros). The advertisement showed in the background an illustration of the *Sagrada Familia* in Barcelona and some *churros* on a slate plate with a pot of Nutella. Yet in Spain

churros would never be eaten with Nutella, but with hot chocolate. However, since it involves the cultural codes of the country of origin, it seems to appeal to the Spanish migrant public in Germany. On the other hand, I also detected post with the replication of German cultural elements in the country of origin. One of them, for example, referred to the well-known Oktoberfest, which was also celebrated in Madrid. One of the users, who comes from Madrid, shared it on her wall in part because of the audience that she had in the city, but it also has an identity component because she lives in Germany.

As a variation on this practice, it was also very common to find content that did not mix cultural elements, but which involved the development of information about the other country. For example, Spanish media reporting on German current affairs or German media covering Spanish events or initiatives. For instance, I found Spanish content from Deutsche Welle (DW) which is Germany's foreign broadcaster and publishes in different languages and even some reports on the German television. Along this line, I detected a significant volume of content on both countries, such as a TV report of the German channel *Das Erste* about the Mosque of Cordoba (the place of origin of one of the interviewees): “*Kathedrale oder Moschee: Mezquita und Hagia Sophia*”.

Here a couple of examples extracted from one of the profiles analysed:

Post text: Right now, on German TV (*Das Erste*) José G. C. from SAT (Sindicato Andaluz de Trabajadores) showing the exploitation of foreigners in Andalusian agriculture.

(No post text) The user shares a report in German from *Das Erste* about the Mosque of Cordoba. Headline: *Kathedrale oder Moschee: Mezquita und Hagia Sophia* (Cathedral or Mosque: Mezquita and Hagia Sophia).

Post text: I was watching a German film in the background in the original version to take a nap and suddenly the main characters started talking about Buenaventura Durruti. My head almost exploded. (Durruti was a famous Spanish anarchist, syndicalist and revolutionary)

Profil 6: M - 27 years, Nürnberg

The provided examples illustrate a notable pattern in the digital content created by individuals within the transnational community, specifically regarding the integration of information about the other country. In addition to mixing cultural elements, a common pattern involves the dissemination of information related to current affairs and events in the host country. For instance, German media covering Spanish events highlights the cross-cultural exchange of information. The reference to Spanish content from Deutsche Welle (DW), exemplifies how individuals engage with media sources that publish in different languages. The inclusion of reports on German television, such as the one about the Mosque of Cordoba from Das Erste, further demonstrates the desire to share Spanish cultural references. Another example was the TV report on Das Erste exposing the exploitation of migrants in Andalusian agriculture. This example showcases the user's engagement with German media to shed light on socio-economic issues in their origin country local context. Moreover, the user reporting about the mention of Buenaventura Durruti in a German film, a renowned Spanish anarchist and revolutionary indicates with the expression "My head almost exploded" the surprise of encountering a very particular reference to a significant historical figure from their home country in an unexpected context. Overall, these examples underscore the multifaceted nature of transnational digital interactions, encompassing both cultural elements and informational exchanges, thereby enriching the digital narratives of individuals experiencing cross-cultural identities. On the other side, I also found posts about Spanish media reporting on current affairs or interesting facts about Germany:

(No post text) The user shares the link to an article from the digital newspaper Público.es Headline: "Berlin plans to hold a referendum to expropriate thousands of houses from big companies".

Profil 1: M - 31 years -Munich

(No post text) The user publishes a video report discussing how Spain is portrayed in the foreign press.

Profil 6: M - 27 years, Nüremberg

Post text: Really good (emoticon heart) I've never tried it out because of laziness hahaha....

Share the article from EL MUNDO: The world's hardest nightclub bouncer. A report on the doorman of the legendary Berghain nightclub in Berlin. It doesn't matter if you're a tourist or a world-class celebrity. If he doesn't want to, you don't get in.

Profil 7: F - 29 years, Berlin

(No post text) The user shares an article from La Sexta (Spanish TV broadcaster) about the world's largest indoor water park.

Can you imagine where the biggest indoor water park could be? We probably think of sunny places, with good temperatures all year round, but it's in Germany.

Profil 8: F - 26 years, Erfurt

These examples continue to showcase the dynamic interaction between individuals' digital narratives and their transnational identity. In this context, users not only engage with cultural elements but also with the interaction between both countries that reflects their current situation. This active engagement contributes to the continuous construction and negotiation of their transnational identity in the digital realm. Virtuality implies, as I have already discussed, the development of hybrid, multiple and de-/multi-territorialised identities (Appadurai, 1996; Haesbaert, 2011). In that sense, identities can be considered as a meeting point, “the point of suture, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate', speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken'” (Hall & du Gay, 2011, p. 5-6). From this point of view, identities are subjective and temporary positions that lead us to discursive practice. In this research, sharing content can be also considered as a discursive practice that addresses the individual's identification. Users like to share this kind of content that involves both Spain and Germany and this materialises what has often been theorised as 'hybrid identities', illustrating a space in which they feel comfortable and represented in both of their realities.

d) *Otherness*

Like we-ness, otherness is also negotiated and situated. This can be clearly observed in the symbolic relation of Spaniards with Germany, and especially in this migratory process. Since they are migrants (foreigners) and at the same time share a European identity with Germany - in fact, depending on the contextual positioning in both physical and virtual spaces, the status and correlation of powers may change (Seller & Urry, 2006, p. 212). This is important because although they recognised themselves as migrants, they were also aware that other types of migration included much harder situations. This may have a relation with the context in which the interviews were conducted, with the “*Welcome Refugees*” very close. In any case, migrants sometimes have to deal with certain feeling of being “out of place”. Often, they also feel less valued and to some extent also socially limited in a context with different social keys. On the other hand, different aspects of behaviour will reveal people as different, as foreigners. According to the interviews the most recognised factor was the language. In that sense, the major difficulty that puts barriers to interaction and that was mostly reported at different levels, was the language competence as the greatest limitation in migration process. The language barrier clearly crossed and defined the entire socialisation experience, as well as the media experience. Lacking the most basic communication tool, the language, some of the interviewees claimed to feel less valued or less able to interact in a foreign environment.

However, awareness of the other does not have to mean isolation. *Otherness* or recognition of the others, can also be considered a constitutive part of the migrant identity, overcoming the question of the binary differentiation. Indeed, according to Hall (1991) any identity depends on “difference” and “denial” with respect to some other term (p. 21). Thus, another form of social recognition as immigrants, is also to recognise and show the German culture and its peculiarities as the *other*. In fact, a further communicative pattern reflected in the different Facebook profiles analysed was the publication of content on “typical German issues”, which are recurrent topics among Spanish emigrants. It is presented as a form of expressing their *German mastery*. This type of post usually appealed to the sense of humour and often received comments in other languages, English, German, which denotes the empathy and interaction of friends of other nationalities. As examples, I observed topics such as language, German beer, and the weather:

German language

In general, the subject of languages was a recurrent topic in all the walls analysed. It is very common among Spanish migrants to find posts and content about speaking different languages, language curiosities and accents. More specifically, there was a preference for content related to the German language. These kind of posts usually had also a touch of humour. Here some examples:

(No post text) The user shared an illustration by the Danish artist duo Mikael Wulff and Anders Morgenthaler. The picture shows a man tied to a bed surrounded by priests: "For the last time! I'm not possessed! I was just speaking German".

(...)

(No post text) She shares a post of "Ich liebe Deutsch" (I love German) with a picture of a proofread text with many misspellings marked in red.

Profil 8: F - 26 years, Erfurt

The chair game in Germany is called "Reise nach Jerusalem" (Journey to Jerusalem). Facebook status: Feeling confused.

Profil 6: M - 27 years, Nürnberg

The typical German beers

A symbol of the German culture. There are many types of German beer, each region has its own style, craft beers and clubs with a long tradition of home brewing. It was quite usual to find posts drinking a beer with friends and with visitors. Even one of the users posted photos at the Oktoberfest dressed as a Bavarian with his friends. Logically, it is not accidental that they show content and photographs drinking beer, it is a symbolic representation of their life in Germany.

Post text: Oktoberfest! Zickezacke zickezacke OI OI OI!!!!

Facebook status: Feeling festive at the Oktoberfest in Munich. Post to report on his experience at the Oktoberfest. The post includes a photo with a friend with both beer mugs and Tyrolean costume.

Profil 1: M - 31 years -Munich

Post text: Post externo. Al solecito.

The post includes a photograph of the group of friends in a park in Berlin, sitting under the sun, drinking beers.

Profil 2: F - 29 years Berlin

(No post text) He shares a photograph of his dog lying next to a box of German beer sleeping

Profil 6: M - 27 years, Nürnberg

Post text: No text, but she tags three friends. The post included a photograph with four German beers in the foreground.

Profil 8: F - 26 years, Erfurt

Moreover, in the section on visits to Germany I already discussed how drinking beer is an important symbolic element to show that they are in Germany. Most of those posts showed the group of people drinking beer.

Bad weather

The bad weather in Germany was also undoubtedly a recurring theme on the walls of the Spanish emigrants analysed. Some of them were testimonials posts, such as photos with snow. For example, different users published photograph of the streets covered with snow.

We are having an enviable Easter weather this year (irony). By the way, it snows on Tuesday. Emoticon crying.

(...)

How funny the Rammstein "hier kommt die Sonne" they say... The post included a link to the official video song: Rammstein - Sonne (Sun)

Profil 4: F - 36 years Berlin

Post text: April macht was er will (April does what it wants)

(...)

People who arrived in Berlin at the end of the summer are probably freaking out: seven months of uninterrupted autumn-winter. What more could you ask for?

(...)

It seems that today the Universal Flood Vol. II is taking place in Berlin.

Profil 7: F - 29 years, Berlin

Post text: CRAZY WEATHER!!!!

Profil 5: M - 28 years, Erfurt

Post text: First snow in Regensburg. The post includes an album with 6 photos of different landscapes of snowy Regensburg.

Profil 8: F - 26 years, Erfurt

The topic of bad weather in Germany is a recurring subject in all the profiles analysed. It is not only a defining component of the territory, in this case Germany, but it is also an entirely cultural factor. Spain is known for being a sun-drenched country (except in the north). Therefore, in general, Spaniards are used to the good weather. The lack of sunshine was not only become a regular feature of digital environments, but also of the offline everyday life. Not always from a negative point of view, but also sometimes from a humorous one. This recurrent feeling of discomfort with the weather was shared by other migrants who also come from sunnier areas. However, it would probably not be a recurring topic for a Norwegian or an Icelandic person. In that sense, we see how the reaction to certain components is situated and cultural. However, when it comes to interacting with Spaniards living in Spain, the situation changes. Living in Germany means that you get used to lower temperatures, and to rain and snow. That confers a certain degree of acquired

competence. For example, in another post, one of the users was laughing about the last snowfall in Spain. This post was published in the context of a snowfall in Spain, which is quite unusual. The user, already familiar with the snow, wrote a post laughing at the attention that the snowfall generated in Spain:

Post text: WARNING COMES PEDANTRY! 4 shitty snowflakes fall and all of you freaking out... (Four emoticons with sunglasses)

Profil 5: M - 28 years, Erfurt

It is curious because although they consider it to be something typical of Germany, when it happens in Spain, they consider themselves to be experienced in cold weather. This is an explicit example of how identities and evaluations are situated in context. Therefore, talking about otherness, goes far beyond a process of assimilation of cultural discourses. It is not so much a question of integration, but rather the process of social and cultural positioning both in the country of origin and in the destination. How they 'fit in' to the new social space, a fact that can be achieved with more or less success and also a new space of recognition and belonging in the host country. Eisher, Wauthier and Gajjala, (2019) worked in their intersectionality studies “against the homogenisation of otherness into a hierarchy” (pp. 53-62). This study also refuses the question of *otherness* as a homogenising category, and argues that the concept of *otherness* implies many variations and developments: *when are they the other? In what sense? In what context? Why?* In fact, in practice, as argued above, *the self* and *the other* are not two opposite modes of identity formation, but are entangled (Christensen & Jansson, 2015).

8.1.4 Building migrant digital Localities on Facebook

In this section I will discuss those aspects of content publication that influence the construction of digital localities. While I was analysing the selected Facebook profiles, I detected a tendency to recreate and fuse both lives on Facebook walls. All the interviewees already had a Facebook account before they migrated. Therefore, these accounts already brought their own dynamics of posting and interaction. It seemed particularly relevant to me to analyse through qualitative content analysis *when* and *how* migration experience was integrated into the content in the Facebook profiles, and also how it evolves over time. On

the other hand, what I found is that not only is the new life integrated, but also people continue to participate in the local issues of the country of origin, so that relations and interactions with Spain were still very present in the digital locality of the participants. Below, I describe the content categories in the profiles where interactions with the two countries converged. As I already mentioned, it is important to note that all the profiles analysed on Facebook existed before they undertook the experience of migration. It is logical to assume, therefore, that in the early stages of emigration, content focused on the country of origin had a much greater presence. In other words, when migrants began to build their own everyday life in the destination country, it began also to be reflected in their publications, in this case, on Facebook. Everyday practices, and in this specific case the content practices through the generation and exchange of information through their posts, offer information about how the everyday life in the destination country began to merge with the previous communicative practices they had in Spain. Posts directly or indirectly related to the migration process and the life in the country of destination increasingly took up more and more space on the profiles analysed. In this section, I will discuss the seven subcategories of content that Spanish emigrants published about their new life in Germany. *Everyday Situations*. In general, the users liked to show their house and other everyday tasks, at work, sports, parties, habitual environments, and everyday situations in general. For example, publishing pictures in the work environment, shopping, etc.

Post text: Jet Skiiii!

The user publishes his experience doing Jet Ski. The post includes a gif of him doing Jet Ski.

Profil 1: M - 31 years, Munich

Post text: Summer in Berlin (original in English)

This is a post about summer in Berlin. The user includes a photograph with his partner on the roof of a building in Berlin looking over the city's skyline.

Profil 2: F - 29 years, Berlin

Post: An improvised trip to Leipzig.

The post includes a selfie of the three friends in the car.

Profil 6: M - 27 years, Nüremberg

Probably the best restaurant in Berlin...and the best beer I've ever tasted!

The post includes three pictures in a bar in Berlin. One of the pictures is a close-up shot of a pint of beer.

(...)

There is nothing nicer than Berlin on a bike...

The post includes a picture of the user cycling through the streets of Berlin.

(...)

Berlin, ich liebe dich ♥ (Berlin I love you)

The post includes a picture of a sunset on a lake in Berlin with people swimming.

Profil 7: F - 29 years, Berlin

Post text: Moving with... Tagging 4 friends

The post includes a photograph of a boy in the middle of a street who has put himself inside a moving bag and only his face is visible.

Profil 8: F - 26 years, Erfurt

- a) *Celebrations/events in the destination country.* They also reported social life and leisure. The walls were filled with photographs reproducing recreational situations: eating, drinking, celebrating, parties, markets... Migrants show the nicer aspect of migration, those leisure activities in which the user is *having a good time*. A pattern that has been repeated on every wall and that has been already announced in the interviews. On the other hand, they also often shared the upcoming events in the destination country/city.

Extern post: Görlitzer Park.

The user includes in the post a panoramic picture of a party in Görlitzer Park.

(...)

Post text: Some photos from two weeks ago that I had not uploaded. More beautiful people and more white trash. The post includes 8 pictures of a barbecue. People chatting, playing the guitar, preparing the barbecue...

Profil 3: F - 27 years Berlin

Post Text: Attending Folsom Berlin Street Fair (official) She tags 3 friends.
The post includes a photo of the group of friends taking a selfie with the festival in the background and the street crowded with people.

Profil 4: F – 36 years Berlin

- b) *Showing the city.* They publish posts showing emblematic and/or recognisable elements of the destination city. A remarkable example was a post published by one of the users showing a map of Berlin hanging on a wall. On the map, all the 'important places' were highlighted with a marker: bars, places where they play football, have barbecues, their friends' houses, etc. I found it particularly interesting on an identity level, since it constituted a visualisation of her community and practices.
- c) *Useful information for Spanish migrants.* Posts with useful content for the everyday. Some examples I found were rooms/car rentals, furniture sales, deals, moves companies, etc... Another example would be an article shared by one of the users that was aimed directly at the Spanish diaspora in Germany:

Post text: In 2017 we will continue to be critical about Germany but compare what has changed in the new year and how things are here.... there is no comparison.

The post includes a press article. Headline: "Everything that has changed in Germany in 2017 and you should know". It provided content about everything that has changed in the field of new employment laws, pensions and social assistance, health and dependence, transport, taxes, consumption and energy.

F - 29 years, Berlin

(No post text). The user tags a friend.

The post includes a link to a private Facebook group called: Compro - Vendo - Regalo Berlín (original in Spanish) (Buy - Sell - Give Berlin)

(...)

Post text: Sehr professionelle Mitarbeiter. Ich kann nur euch alle empfehlen!
(Original German) (Very professional staff. I can only recommend it to all of you!)

She recommends a job counselling. The post includes a link in German: It supports job-seeking immigrants in their career launch in Germany and finds appropriate staff for companies looking for employees.

Profil 4: F - 36 years Berlin

- d) *Job offers.* The users published both job search posts and job positions that might interest the target audience. These types of posts were mostly published in Spanish; hence it can be deduced that they were aimed at the Spanish public, both in the country of origin and in the destination country.

Post text: Anyone looking for a job in Barcelona? My company is looking for Destination Managers for Spain and Portugal in Barcelona. Please find attached link to the job offer on the website.

Profil 2: F - 29 years Berlin

Post Text: Hi berliners and berlinars! I'm looking for Spanish teachers, freelance or not, to work in an academy. If you are interested or if you know someone, please contact me. Best regards!

Profil 4: F - 36 years Berlin

Post text: The user tags a friend

The post includes an article: Looking for Spanish candidates to work in Germany for 3.000 euros per month and with paid training for months.

(...)

(No post text) The user posts an offer from the leading German railway company seeking new train drivers: "For 3,000 euros gross per month and with more than a year of paid training, this could be the perfect job opportunity".

Profil 8: F - 26 years, Erfurt

- e) *Travel*. Getaways in Germany and holidays. All users posted a multitude of trips with full photo albums on their profiles. Posting trips to other cities or countries was one of the most common practices on Facebook in general. Mobility was undoubtedly a recurring topic in the analysed profiles: Flights, travel, restrictions, offers...

(No text) The user shares a news report from 'The Independent'. Headline: Stansted delays: 'Thousands of passengers' flights cancelled as lightning strikes spark bank holiday chaos at airport.

Profil 4: F - 36 years Berlin

- f) *Diffusion and support of 'friend projects'*, both in the country of origin and/or destination. It constitutes a pattern that has been identified in all the profiles analysed, even when the events or initiatives shared took place in Spain. To give some examples, I found in the profiles a post publicising a friend's book, other promoting the work of a tattoo artist friend, and more practical posts such as helping a friend to sell an apartment or helping a friend to find his lost clarinet.

This does not mean, however, that once the new life is incorporated, the link with the country of origin disappears, but rather, it is transformed and combined in the digital environment. Therefore, one of the objectives of this chapter was also to establish how the relationship with the country of origin is transformed. In the interviews, the participants told me about their relationships with their loved ones in Spain. However, through their Facebook posts I was able to explore more deeply and also from a symbolic and identitarian point of view what happens in social media contact with the country of origin. In fact, interaction with the country of origin continues dominating the media experience on Facebook, keeping the loved ones informed of new developments in their lives and their everyday life in general. Facebook represent for migrants more than a platform to report their lives in the destination country. In fact, they continue participating in the country of origin and also reporting in their Facebook profiles their cultural link with Spain.

New forms of *digital territoriality* are an inextricable part of migration processes. Appadurai (1996) defined "locality as primarily relational and contextual rather than scalar or spatial" (p. 178). In this dissertation, the definition of community and locality is based more on shared digital media practices than on the physical condition or presence of the community members. Therefore, locality is understood as a processual concept that involve' both offline movements and online practices

and realities and between them, the media-related practices. Following Bourdieu's concept of *social field*, Facebook can be considered as a *game place*, a framework in which users act and relate. If we consider Facebook as a place where people inhabit (digitally), what is lived and shared there becomes cultural heritage with socialisation patterns and rootedness of a *particular 'we' in a certain place and time*. Thus, through their publications, Spanish migrants show a hybrid life with participation in both countries. And that, of course, has implications at the identity level. In the following section I will discuss content practices related to different identity processes and how they are materialised through the publication of certain symbolic elements.

8.1.5 Political Content on Facebook

Only recently migrants' political engagement began to raise academic interest, considering migrants formally as "political actors" and not as passive recipients of public policies (Peró, 2008). As discussed in previous chapters, the in-depth interviews Spanish migrants in Germany already reported a notable interest in politics. These practices took place both in the country of origin and/or in the country of destination. When selecting the profiles to be analysed in the second phase of qualitative content analysis, I tried to build a diverse sample, avoiding a muster constituted only by activist profiles, as activists according to the interviews primarily made a political use of their social networks. However, after analysing the activity of the selected profiles on Facebook, I was able to identify different degrees of political engagement in their media practices. In general, even the least engaged profiles showed their political positions through the shared content (especially those related to political developments in Spain) that they published. The content on German politics or explanations of the German political context were less frequent in their walls, but it was also present in some posts:

a) German political content

(No post text) The user shared an article by Jacobine Magazine: On this day in 1953, a strike in Berlin turned into a nationwide rebellion for workers' power in East Germany.
June 17, 1953, was a watershed for German socialism.

Profil 6: M - 27 years, Nüremberg

Post text: Emoji with a clenched fist. The user shared a post by Naturfreundejugend Berlin to subscribe to their newsletter. It included an infographic: Liberté, égalité, fuck AfD

Post text: Heute in Berlin (Today in Berlin)

It shows a picture of a church where a banner was displayed saying: "Rechts populismus schadet der Seele" (Right-wing populism harms the soul).

Profil 2: F - 29 years Berlin

Although there was no remarkable interaction to consider the wall of the interviewees as a debate space, I detected a huge volume of political content, even more than the users recognised in the interviews. In the analysis phase, I noticed that they shared many articles addressing current political events in Spain. This type of post was the most common in the profiles. Some profiles included content from political parties and links to face-to-face assemblies.

b) Spanish political content (partisan and non partisan)

(No post text) The user shares a link to the Izquierda Unida open assembly event.

(...)

Post from Izquierda Unida Exterior informing about the rallies for the 8th of March in different European cities.

(...)

Post text: They always told us that it was impossible, that history was written And it's not true: UNITED WE CAN (Emoticon 3 hearts with the colors of the Republican flag: red, yellow and violet)

#LaHistoriaLaEscribesTú (You write the history)

Share video of the Unidas Podemos election campaign: "You write history"

Profile 1: M - 31 years -Munich

However, all profiles showed a certain degree of political engagement: either through disseminating content on current political events in Spain / Germany or through non-partisan posts:

Post text: Happy Holidays (heart emoji)

The user shares a post from another contact as a Christmas greeting. In the image we can read: If you are going to wish me health, it should be public, universal and free.

Profil 2: F - 29 years Berlin

In 1994, the first season of Friends, Monica hires a catering waitress for \$10 an hour. In Spain, we will reach that level in 2050 if that's even the case.

Profil 6: M - 27 years, Nürnberg

c) Political events

I also found in the profiles users commemorating special dates associated with political events. Basically, such posts are a memorial of past events:

Post text "We must turn the page". Automatic informative post.

Includes the republican flag in his profile picture in commemoration of the 14th April anniversary of the second Spanish republic.

Profil 1: M - 31 years -Munich

Tomorrow if you have the opportunity, do not miss the 4th Diada Diabòlica, if I were not in Berlin, I would go... Tabals, fire, party...!!!!

This was a post announcing a party for the celebration of the Diada (National Day of Catalonia). It was accompanied by a promotional video of the event.

Profil 3 – F- 27 years, Berlin

Between the observed profiles, I noticed also an internationalisation of the conflict that was materialised through the publication of news and articles about the current political situation in Spain in other languages. As a transnational social complaint, some of the profiles retransmitted what was happening in Spain to their German/non-Spanish publics.

For example, one of the users shared a video in English about corruption in Spain. On the other hand, other users also gave diffusion to social movements content such as Marea Granate, such as the campaign for the right to vote or the campaign “Equal salary for equal work” for foreign care workers in Germany that I have already mentioned in previous chapters.

Post Text: Let's see if Netflix will release this season of Narcos...
(Ironic comment comparing the Spanish government with the series Narcos). The post includes a video in English about corruption in Spain from the Despertador 3.O. website.

Profil 1: M - 31 years -Munich

d) Diasporic political engagement

I also detected political content related to the Spanish diaspora, often originating from social movements such as Marea Granate or GAS (Grupo de Acción Sindical), two key organizations within the diaspora. I found a campaign from the Spanish Union Action Group (GAS) in which they denounced the abusive clauses in the contracts of Spanish nurses. Although the campaign was developed by Spaniards (in Spanish) the user included the text of the post in German (internationalisation), which indicated that it was aimed at the public in the destination country:

Post Text: Gleicher Lohn für gleiche Arbeit für ausländische Pflegekräfte in Deutschland #thefinekillsme

The post includes a link to the GAS (Trade Union Action Group) of 15M Berlin/Garnet Tide. Headline: Campaign “Gleicher Lohn für gleiche Arbeit für ausländische Pflegekräfte in Deutschland” (Equal pay for equal work for foreign nursing staff in Germany).

Profil 3: F - 27 years Berlin

This seems to be an attempt to make visible the problems of the Spanish community in Berlin. It was also usual to find posts of Marea Granate, as I already mentioned in the meta-discourse categories. Their posts, as a social movement reference for the Spanish community abroad (not only in Germany), are widely shared. Here, for example, the user shares a Marea Granate post calling migrants to an international workshop in Berlin.

(No text post) The user shares a post of Marea Granate. Headline: Taller sobre la situación de la emigración española (Workshop on the Spanish emigration situation) #NoNosVamosNosEchan (#wearenotleavingtheyarekickingusout)

Profil 6: M - 27 years, Nürnberg

e) Feminist content (in different languages)

Moreover, another important feature of their political engagement was the remarkable volume of feminist content, the 8M demonstration and women's rights in general. In addition to content referring to current Spanish politics, feminist content was present in all the profiles analysed:

Post text: Happy International Women's Day!!

Post celebrating the 8th of March. The post included a black and white photograph of a suffragette being arrested by the police.

Profil 2: F - 29 years Berlin

Every 8th of March! Frauenkampftag! (International Women's Day)

She shares a video of Leftvision to celebrate International Women's Day:

Frauenkampftag movie trailer. Mehr als 100 Jahre nach dem ersten Internationalen Frauen*kampftag haben wir noch allen Grund am 8. März auf die Straße zu gehen – am 8. März ist wieder soweit! (International Women's Day movie trailer. More than 100 years after the first International Womens Day, we still have good reason to take the streets on the 8th of March - it's time again!)

(...)

Post text: Kisses. Tagging two friends.

The post includes a link to a website with 127 books on feminism, theology, history and gender studies.

(...)

She shares HuffPost article: Pay gap: women work 58 days a year for free (and it's worse in Spain)

Profil 3: F – 27 years Berlin

Post text: So ist das Leben :((That's life)

Video: Was die Frauen nie sagen würden (What the women would never say)
The video shows two women engaging in a 'typical male' behaviour and talk.
Source: Extra 3. Source: Extra 3, *Das erste*.

Profil 4: F - 36 years Berlin

Post text: Micromachismo

The post includes a video in which different women politicians from different parties talk about how they have suffered from daily sexism.

(...)

Post text: It's not so difficult to understand... Is it?

He shares a vignette in which a boy and a girl are in bed. She looks worried and he asks what's wrong, what she needs... 'If you're not sure, don't go on'.

Profil 5: M - 28 years, Erfurt

These are just a few examples of the dozens of posts with feminist content that have been found in all the profiles, both in the profiles of men and women participants in this investigation.

f) Social activism content

Finally, the non-partisan political practices also included social activism dedicated to make visible certain social initiatives or social denunciation: such as situation of other migrants/refugees (empathy), freedom of expression in Spain, solidarity initiatives (animal protection organisations, NGOs such as Save the children), pollution and environment, denunciation of injustices (right to vote), discrimination of women, homophobic aggression... Below some examples of this kind of posts:

(No post text) The user shares a video denouncing the lack of racial diversity in the fashion world: 'Fashion should have no colour'.

(No post text) User posts a Video on the right to equality: Can a CV with no photo, age, marital status, or date of graduation be elected?

(No post text) The user shares a post with a report from La Sexta about an eviction: He entrenches himself to try to avoid being evicted from his house bought by a vulture fund.

(No post text) The user shares a link from La Sexta with a video about a right-wing extremist group that tried to boycott the pateras: The most racist boat in Europe #laSextaPásalo

Profil 8: F – 26 years, Erfurt

Post text: This social centre on my street, which has been a space for collectivity, neighbourhood empowerment, protest and struggle for 13 years, is being evicted. The speculation vultures are turning this city into a focus of neo-hippie-hipsters who will pay exorbitant amounts to live in this street, in this neighbourhood, in Neukölln, a place where it is very easy to feel part of such a heterogeneous identity, but a place where humble people who have built the neighbourhood, leaving their lives in it, are thrown out.

If you want the monster to stop destroying everything, don't be conformist and keep on fighting. For the social and neighbourhood projects. Let them know that we are against their disgusting gentrification now and always.

The post includes the eviction poster in their neighbourhood.

Profil 7: F - 29 years, Berlin

(No post text) On the occasion of the 22nd anniversary of her death, the user shares a video of Ana Orantes in which she described the abuse she was subjected by her husband. A few days after her intervention on television, she was murdered and became a symbol of the fight against gender violence. Video by Spanish Revolution

(No post text) The user shares a post with an initiative of a high school in Cuenca that published video that denounces some pieces of music and how harmful these messages are for women.

(No post text) The user shares a meme with a photograph of an explosion in Gaza with the following ironic message: Calm down, it's not Notredamme, it's Gaza.

Profil 4: F - 36 years Berlin

Many of these posts were highly emotionally charged. With this heterogeneous political engagement, they showed the importance of the civic and political practices of migrants, who affected by the social, political and economic contexts that take place in the country of origin and destination, reacted politically through their media practices.

About Content Practices

The individual's social identity is constituted by the feeling of belonging to a group or a social category (Tajfel, 1984). Social or collective identities are also linked to individual identities insofar as social identities are also part of a person's individual identity. Facebook is a space where identities are negotiated, constructed and reconstructed. Through the content categories, I have described how the link with the country of origin and destination was represented and how a diasporic identity was progressively developed. First, I analysed how Spanish emigrants reproduced their everyday life in the destination country on their Facebook walls. This practice had a twofold purpose. On the one hand, it had an identity function to show them part of their new context, i.e. how their life has changed, what they do, what events they attend, how they feel... In a way, it constituted a reflection of their new life in the destination country. These content practices also worked as a report for loved ones. Through this kind of posts, the emigrant provided a testimony on the experience of emigration. Users decided what they publish on their profile, therefore, to some extent, it constituted a representation of their life, what they decided to show to their contacts. It is noteworthy that despite the fact that in the interviews all participants agreed that migration is a hard experience that requires a great capacity to adaptation, their posts in Facebook did not reflect this discourse. From the qualitative content analysis of their profiles, it can be deduced that migrants tended to show only the positive aspects of their lives, but not the negative ones. This had been suggested in the interviews when users said that they avoided sharing bad experiences in order to avoid worrying their loved ones.

I also argued how the Spanish emigrants represented *Spanishness* in their profiles with different symbolic contents that linked them to Spain. Through these content practices, the Spanish emigrant showed their roots and reaffirmed themselves culturally. On the other hand, they also let their new contacts know about their life in the destination country, where they come from, what their context in Spain is and their loved ones. To some extent, the link with the country of origin also represents how the migrant situates him/herself in the social context and even in the offline context. In that sense, the link with Spain, with other Spaniards and the cultural references within their everyday digital space, means that in their daily life the migrants also continue to have a strong link and contact with their country. This, in addition, can be supported by the analysis of the interviews in which they advanced the permanent connection with the country of origin through different interaction devices

and practices. In Facebook, this permanent connection and belonging was clearly reflected in the form of content practices. The platform offered also a space to get in touch with other Spanish emigrants. A point of exchange of information and mutual support. Thus, I observed in the profiles that they participate in different migrant-oriented networks, such as the typical groups of "Spaniards in Berlin, in Munich..." and other diasporic groups such as the social movement Marea Granate. Through these groups, they share practical information and establish mutual support ties. This generates a digital community of migrants that many related in the interview to the concept of digital diaspora. In these spaces they got informed about important events for the Spanish community and they can also ask questions to their contacts. These types of posts appeared on all the profiles, offering or requesting help on different aspects related to the migratory experience.

The migration experience crosses and redefines people's life, a fact that is also reflected in the digital environment. Indeed, following the analysis of the interviewees' Facebook profiles, the fact of migration permeated the whole media experience, not only symbolically but also discursively. Facebook walls were often replete with more or less explicit references to the migratory process: both in the content and in the reflections and interactions, migration was always a recurrent element. In migration contexts, discourses and practices emerge that allow the development of new identities. This process of identity transformation does not have to imply an abandonment of the identity of origin in order to overlap other identities, but rather, it can be considered a dynamic process that includes the incorporation of new frames of reference and even the reinforcement of some beliefs, cultural references, values, and symbols related to the country of origin.

The concept of *diasporic identity* is closely linked to "ethnicity" or "ethnic identity" that refers to the "awareness of belonging to a group with particular characteristics (e.g., territorial, cultural, religious, linguistic, customary) and the consciousness of *us* in relationship to *them*. *Ethnicity* is a socially constructed and relational social fact—that is, it is produced and reproduced in social interaction between the in-group or self-adscription (the identity that is claimed by the people themselves) and the out-group adscription (the identity that is attributed to them by others)" (Molina & Rodríguez-García, 2018, p. 1). Nevertheless, as I argued above, recognising the importance of cultural identity does not mean to consider a distinctive and isolated migrant identity with respect to the countries of origin and destination. On the contrary, it articulates how migrants manage to connect and coexist

with both realities and how they construct their cultural, social and even political positions in the society. The interaction of multiple identities in emigration processes results in the formation of diasporic identities, as an adapted, renegotiated identity to recognise oneself in the country of destination. In other waves of Spanish migration such as the Spanish migration to Latin America in the last century, there were limited possibilities of telephone access to contact their families. In fact, often they did not meet the family for years if they ever met again. However, far from renouncing to these cultural, social, and affective needs, Spanish migrants were articulated as already mentioned in the introduction chapters, through cultural associations, music, dance, literature... Spaces in which they meet symbolically their home country. Today, this connection and exchange occurs, mainly through ICTs, social platforms, and available applications to create and maintain personal ties and to participate in the public sphere. The contradictory and fluid nature of identities, proved sometimes to be overwhelming. In fact, many of the interviewees showed identity turbulence, not feeling fully from anywhere and from everywhere at the same time. With some humour, I have called this complex interaction as the *we-mess*, as one of the most common reactions in interviews when asking about belonging, was precisely confusion.

When I asked in the interviews whether they thought there was any “*Spanish community*” or “*place of reference for Spanish emigration in Germany*”, the answer was strong and clear, practically most of the interviewees related the Spanish community to the groups like “*Espanoles en Berlin*”, “*Espanoles en Alemania*” in Facebook. These online communities were constituted as the public agoras of Spanish emigration in Germany where different kinds of interactions related to the migration experience took place. They also referred to the groups associated with 15M in Germany or *Marea Granate*, as social hubs in which they were able to develop ties with other Spaniards. It is striking that none of them named any type of cultural association but referred directly to these Facebook groups or activists such as *Marea Granate* with which they felt strongly represented. In that sense, the articulation of the narratives about Spanish emigration, was often closely related to politics. In fact, several interviewees spoke of the need to give visibility to the Spanish migratory movement and to develop their own discourse in order to avoid its political instrumentalisation. In that sense, Facebook was used as representational and interactional spaces, for public and political participation of migrants. This was also reflected in the qualitative content analysis on the Facebook profiles analysed.

8.2 Interactional Categories

In the previous sections I have discussed the most relevant content practices of the profiles analysed. In this section I will address the interactional patterns that are not only related with the content published, but also with the interaction dynamics that I observed in the analysis process. When I faced the profiles for the first time, I had a very clear idea of what kind of information I wanted to gather from the qualitative content analysis. In the interviews I was able to capture their discourse on their habitual practices within a wide range of platforms, digital tools and devices that combined to create their digital locality. My main objective was to find out what Spanish migrants *do* on their Facebook profiles, not what they *say they do*. Before creating my data matrix, I first dived into the profiles to see what kind of information I should observe and how I would operationalise the data. I immediately realised that it was a very different analytical environment from offline spaces. Looking at the Facebook profiles, I realised that the action was illustrated in the form of posts in which people published information and other people interacted. Building on these reflections I began to consider of the discursive practice but, at the same time, the movements of social interaction that were taking place there. That is, to dissociate content categories from interactional categories. In other words, I began to consider not only the topics covered in the posts, but also the interaction patterns that emerged from those publications. Although this may seem a simple task, in practice it is not, considering that all the material with which you are working are written texts accompanied by photos, symbols and icons. It was also important to stop seeing the profiles as just personal spaces and instead start looking at the motivations, the contexts, the people who interacted, the external posts, the comments, who commented, the dynamics, the uses, etc. With this first reflection, I composed my working tool, my data matrix. With this basis, I started to look at the profiles. The first thing that struck me was the diversity of the profiles because each user made a quite different use of their profile, with different styles and personalities, with different content. y. There were certain aspects that I already knew because they told me about them in the interviews, but through their profiles it was possible to learn a great deal about their lives. Some of the interviewees showed their lives more openly or gave their opinions on different subjects, and others were more reserved in their content. And, of course, their musical tastes, their concerns, even their political orientations. The second challenge was therefore to seek to draw general conclusions about the spaces I observed.

However, that was a task that would come much later, namely in the second round of analysis when I started to see the common patterns.

A Facebook profile is a personal account that 'represents' an individual, yet collective dynamics of interaction also take place on the platform. When the users register in Facebook for the first time, they give them a profile, but the user is ultimately in charge of managing their account. In the digital space users can add friends and family and share personal photos, videos, and updates about their life in general. Only the people added as *friends* are able to see the content, as the user can manage the privacy settings of their profile. So, we are talking about semi-public spaces of interaction. Through the content categories analysed in the first part of this chapter, some of the uses and social patterns that derived from the processes of identification were already addressed. In the following, I will define the most relevant aspects of the interactional patterns that influence the generation of this hybrid and digital everyday life. Hybrid because it implies online/offline interactions, but also because it is based on the translocal exchange of migrants, with the country of origin, the country of destination and also with third countries.

8.2.1 Transcultural Categories

The concept of transculturality tends to be oriented towards the linkage and interaction of migrants with different territories. Hepp (2009) proposed “transculturality” as a research perspective to explore the deterritorial forms of media culture. In the concept of translocality, media cultures are considered as *cultural thickenings*. The cultural thickening term, coined by Löfgren (2001) was applied to explain the relation between questions of territory and translocality. According to Hepp (2009), in a globalised world, communicative connectivity became more and more deterritorialised, pointing to the need to address the subject of study from a translocal perspective that could be methodologically applied in many different ways. With the transcultural approach, Hepp proposed overcoming the binary analysing the process with an “international approach without excluding the state and the nation as a possible reference point of comparison” (p. 8). The perspective applied to the praxeological studies (Reckwitz, 2005) integrates according to Hepp (2009) three perspectives: a mentalistic (emphasizing the relevance of classificatory systems), a textual (emphasizing the relevance of discursive formations) and a praxeological (emphasizing the

relevance of everyday meaning production through practices). In his own words, the analysis of media cultures should “look for cultural patterns in all three perspectives, ‘patterns of thinking’, ‘patterns of discourse’ and ‘patterns of practices’ or ‘doing’, while reflecting at the same time on their interrelation” (p. 9). In the section on belonging categories, I discussed in depth the management of identity and how content practices produce symbolic processes that link the migrant to different types of identities. This process of hybridisation also materialises in the modes of interaction in the Facebook profiles observed. Identity and everyday life are made up of a plurality of cultural elements that may belong to different cultures. Therefore, the cultures of hybridisation are also a way of negotiating diversity. According to Castles, Haas de & Miller (2014), migrants often develop “a consciousness of their transcultural position” (p. 368), which is reflected both in their cultural and artistic acts, and in their socio-political participation.

In all the Facebook profiles analysed, it can be appreciated a transcultural perspective in the interaction flows as their media contents involved different territories and the mobilisation of different cultural competences. In the following, I will describe different ways in which this transcultural perspective is concretised in the content. Analysing the interaction of migration in digital contexts, particularly on Facebook, allowed me to observe how digital localities were articulated and converge in specific posts and how they relate with this *being a Spanish migrant in Germany*. The first factor that I detected in the profiles is the transnational character of the Facebook exchange of the Spanish emigrants. Firstly, the most evident transnational exchange was the interaction between the country of origin and destination, in this case, between Spain and Germany. The Facebook space becomes a platform where different interactions with both countries not only take place, but also merge in the digital environment. On the other hand, besides the interaction with Spain, the users not only interacted with Germans, but also with people from different countries. This points to transnational socialisation and friendships. For example, apart from German friends, I also found above all interaction with French and Italian Facebook friends. Indeed, migration does not constitute a dual exchange between countries of origin and destination. The migration experience places users in international contexts from the early stages of migration. For example, in language courses they meet people of other nationalities who are also in the process of learning the language or also at the workplace. This generates new transcultural social relations. On the other hand, the migration process and the expansion and creation of new networks facilitates mobility. In addition, in the case of intra-European migration, mobility to other countries within the European Union can take place without

major bureaucratic complications. In fact, two of the profiles analysed have reported in the interviewees a process of re-emigration, i.e. it was the second emigration experience. They (Profil 1: M - 31 years - Munich; Profil 2: F - 29 years, Berlin) have first migrated to France and Belgium respectively, so in their cases, comments in French were already part of their acquired communicational habits. The migrant moves in a context that transcends borders and cultural differences. This does not mean, as I have already discussed, that the links with the country of origin disappear, but it does mean that they are transformed.

Proficiency in different languages is crucial for fostering intercultural understanding. In Facebook communication, users frequently engage in code-switching. The linguistic implications of this process stand out as one of the most readily apparent aspects within the transcultural perspective. Not surprisingly, the use of different languages was a common variable in all the profiles analysed. Code-switching was used in this case to introduce new audiences and to call them to participate. The linguistic and communicative competences, as well as the processes of acquisition of the second (and third) language, hold an important place in the sociolinguistic integration of immigrants in the host communities and undoubtedly in the development of their daily life. In fact, some studies specifically address the role of language in migratory flows and immigration policies (Bermejo, 2008). The transnational aspects most commonly reflected in the profiles were performed through the use of different languages on a daily basis. In this case study, the introduction of different languages besides Spanish in the interaction on Facebook was not limited to the language of the destination country, in this case, German. The progressive introduction of different languages was a more than remarkable fact in all the profiles analysed, a fact that grew and developed over years. It was noticeable that parallel to the sociolinguistic integration of the user in the destination country, the number of publications, content, and interactions in other languages was growing and gradually becoming a part of their everyday life. Users shared and disseminated a variety of articles and news in other languages. Thus, it was not unusual to find content in the analysed profiles in other languages such as videos, music, BBC sketches, articles from international newspapers such as *The Guardian* or *The New York Times* or from German newspapers. This was slightly related to the process of the offline socialisation: as long as Spanish migrants integrated in Germany, meet people, prosper with the language, more and more comments appeared in other languages, more native friends from the destination country, but also, and very significantly, friends of other third nationalities. In some particular cases, the use of language made it possible to discern to whom the publications were addressed. For example, in some publications of the trips to

Spain the texts were written in German or English. This means that the publication was aimed at their new contacts, as a way of introducing their cultural roots, their life or their family/friends in Spain:

Post text: Mit meinem Bruder (With my brother)

The post included a selfie with her brother in Spain. They were both in the car, while her brother was driving.

Profil 8: F - 26 years, Erfurt

I also noticed how 'official' communications, such as for example informing people that they had lost their mobile phone, were intentionally made in different languages. But also, in everyday life it was possible to appreciate how users sometimes addressed all their contacts in several languages:

Móbil perdut, móvil perdido, Handy verloren (Lost mobile phone)

Profil 3: F - 27 years Berlin

Feliz año a todos! Os deseo un año cargado de “hacer lo que os de la gana y ser felices”/ Happy new year to you all! I wish you a year full of “do whatever you want and be happy”

Profil 4: F - 36 years Berlin

Ich vermisse die Sonne.
Mi manca il sole.
I miss the sun.
Je regrette le soleil.
Echo de menos el sol.
(...)

I cant explain how I love you in these days, Berlin.
Ich bin eine Berlinerin (Emoticon laughing)

Profil 7: F - 29 years, Berlin

¿Se te ocurre una forma más bonita de viajar? Is there a more beautiful way to travel?

*The post included a photograph of the user driving with his dog's nose resting on his shoulder.

Profil 6: M – 27 years, Nürnberg

The diversified use of languages defined the audiences, as the language used provided information on who these posts and content were aimed at. Although the most used languages were English and German, comments in French and Italian were also very frequent. This had a direct influence on the interaction on the posts. Logically, interactions with people of different nationalities and in other languages appear mainly when the post appeals to them, either because the post itself is in English or German or because they understand the content. In addition, they interact with the “Reaction” function, which was used indistinctly by both Spanish and other nationalities to react, for example, to photographs.

It should also be noted that the introduction of new languages was a progressive process in all profiles analysed, both at the level of posting and at the level of interaction. Expressions or exclamations in German (mostly) and English gradually became part of their usual repertoire, not only in publications, but also in the responses or external posts. This can be observed over time and especially on particular occasions such as birthday greetings where the concentration of extra posts on users' profiles made it possible to contrast the volume of posts in other languages. On the other hand, a noteworthy feature of the practice was that most of the users interviewed reported posting content mostly in Spanish, and less frequently in other languages. However, in practice, I identified a significant volume of publications and content in other languages, what indicates that transcultural exchange was a very common practice between the user profiles. They usually shared international events or news taking place in third countries. It is not surprising that living abroad, migrants may have a broader perspective or awareness of the world, so that it is more common to have a natural interest in what is happening in other countries. It follows that the interviewees were unaware to what extent it involves an everyday practice. In fact, they demonstrated in these posts a clear linguistic proficiency in both English and German. Precisely because it was an everyday practice and not something exceptional, it went completely overlooked in the interviews. In summary, I detected in their profiles a clear evolution in the socialisation processes along the years, which became clearly evident

not only by the diversification and internationalisation of the content, but through a growing use of the language of the country of destination and even of other languages, or the incorporation into the contexts of interaction of new German friendships and also from other nationalities. Nevertheless, the transcultural categories involve much more than just knowing and using new linguistic signs. Understanding the cultural context of communication is fundamental to effective communication. The process of cultural awareness involves changing familiar ways of looking at the environment in order to be able to welcome others' point of view, without renouncing their own cultural identity. Although Spanish cultural identity represented an important aspect of the content practices, I could notice that the feeling of we-ness, the migrant identity, also played an important role in their publications. This process of identity hybridisation, as I have already mentioned, was largely based on the symbolic combination of elements from both countries. However, this hybridisation also shows a development of a sensitivity and awareness towards for example, other migratory processes and intercultural environments as a symbolic space in which they feel comfortable. Thus, it was a very frequent practice to find posts alluding to other migratory processes and to transcultural spaces:

The user shares a video about an immigrant in Seville demanding citizenship rights and criticising the Spanish far-right.

Profil 1: M - 31 years -Munich

The user shares a link to an article from the digital press: I'm from New York and this is how spending three years in Spain has changed my life.

Profil 4: F - 36 years Berlin

Post text: "The Spaniards don't really know who they are, because they don't know who they were". The user shared an article about other waves of Spanish emigrants and how important they were in history.

Profil 6: M – 27 years, Nürnberg

Post text: The world is full of good people.

The post includes a video by Spanish Revolution: "I'm 74 years old, I live with two refugees, and this is better than an Erasmus".

Profil 5: M - 28 years, Erfurt

In fact, transculturality and migration experiences was a recurring topic in the examined profiles. I detected that users posted content related to different cultures. This may be related to their own experience as migrants interacting with other cultures. For example, I detected a video that was shared by 3 interviewees. Since it was not a particularly viral post, it's worth commenting this video. This consisted of a TED talk about the history of the "Décima" (poetic form) performed by the musician Jorge Drexler. In the video, Drexler talks about the origin of rhythms, demonstrating that all the rhythms, not only have roots, but are an evolution of other rhythms and cultures. Through this video he talks about transculturality and how we are all related to other cultures. Sharing this content was a representation of the identification with the concept of transculturality, as a part of a hybrid identity that I described in other sections. In fact, the participants already revealed in the interviews their identity transformations, in the sense that they felt from one place (Spain) and the other (Germany), or from a place in-between their two lives. This evidences that all these forms of emotions and feelings, of how they are socially situated between the countries of origin and destination, were also always reflected in their media content.

8.2.2 Personal Relations on Facebook

The way we interact with each other has significantly changed with the emergence of social networks such as Facebook, Twitter or, more recently, Instagram or Tinder. Offline relationships continue to exist with their particularities, but the processes through which we establish relationships are being changed, adapting and even generating new spaces and temporalities of interaction. It is therefore a technological transformation, but also a cultural one. In general, I appreciated in all the profiles an effective exchange between the country of origin and destination.

With regard to contact with the home country, social networks undoubtedly make it easier to contact others, but in the process, they also lose certain levels of privacy and intimacy that are sought in other spaces, as I argued in the analysis of the interviews. One factor that caught my attention when reviewing the interaction profiles, i.e. the people who posted or commented on the posts I was analysing, was to try to figure out from the context the relationship they had with the user in question. One observation that struck me was that in the family spectrum I only found interactions from the youngest members of the family. For example, comments from cousins and siblings were common, but I did not detect any comments from the parents or grandparents of any of the users. This is clearly related to media competence, which was already mentioned in the interviews as a common limitation. In fact, in the interviews some users stated that their parents had Facebook profiles only to follow their children and to know what they were doing abroad, but that they did not interact with them. I only detected a couple of comments from the aunt of one of the users, in which she published two posts on her wall. The interesting thing was that they were the kind of private messages that are usually written in private chats. This clearly illustrates the question of the media literacy. The clear pattern, however, was that the network was more oriented towards exchanges with friends, co-workers, fellow emigrants and to broaden social relations. But not for the exchange with the family, which according to the interviews took place mainly via Whatsapp or Skype videoconferences. Communication with Spain through Facebook had a strong cultural component, but it also helped to maintain contacts with the country of origin. Thus, users posted about their life in Germany, their work, their free time, their day-to-day lives in general. In addition, they were also able to participate in their friends' profiles, react or comment on their posts and even share their posts on the walls of their, which was also a common practice. In short, the platform offered an effective way to keep their loved ones up to date and *vice versa*, to find out how the lives of their loved ones in Spain were evolving. With regard to personal relationships in the host country, I was able to see how interaction with Germans and other nationalities has clearly increased over the years. These contacts begin to take up a symbolic place on the participants' walls and to interact in the posts, whose content became increasingly transnational. As long as users start to post in English or German, people of other nationalities start to interact. Finally, it is worth highlighting communication among Spanish emigrants, which represented a significant proportion of the overall interaction. Primarily, because of the close friendships that are generated, becoming, as I mentioned earlier, fundamental links in the process of socialisation. On the other hand, because they share a life experience and

with it, also virtual and offline spaces, which was clearly reflected in their media practice. Thus, the space allows for the confluence of personal ties both in the country of origin and destination, as well as contribute to the development of the digital diaspora.

Social networks made it possible to reach more people, generate new ways of establishing links and relationships, and expand the circle of friends and acquaintances. Nevertheless, it is important to consider that the concept of friendship has changed in social media contexts. On Facebook, the definition of *friend* relates to whether or not people are among Facebook contacts, and how the users interact with them. The social searching function allowed users to expand their *usual* circle of friends, so the concept of friendship was more related to interaction between acquaintances than with closeness. And even the concept of *acquaintance* itself acquires new nuances, since the *acquaintances* of digital socialisation no longer necessarily include a personal bond or an offline (albeit brief or casual) contact. Through the Internet people can get in touch without having any physical contact and even interact with people who in other pre-networked social contexts may never (or rarely) be in contact with, such as artists or celebrities. They could even join different groups without even knowing their members. In fact, the new platforms begin to incorporate new functions as *best friends* to select the content and reception audiences. Thus, we are dealing with a confluence of personal relationships with an offline background, and others with weaker ties. In general, I've noticed that posts containing personal content generate the highest interaction, encompassing both reactions and comments. It's noteworthy that the number of comments doesn't always align with the number of users commenting, as users often initiate conversations within the comments themselves. For instance, they may start by commenting on the post and then ask additional questions like, 'How are you?' or 'When do you plan to return to Spain?'. Furthermore, in the case of personal posts, those with accompanying photographs tend to generate more engagement. Notably, personal content resonates with all users, regardless of nationality or interaction language. However, it should also be considered that the volume of interaction has been different in the profiles. This is related, first of all, with the character and digital presence of the user: if the person is an active user, tends to post frequently, interacts with other profiles, responds to comments... There are users, for example, who challenged the public asking questions, generating debate. Other users, however, merely shared external or personal content but without generating much interaction. Another factor that impacts on the volume of interaction is related to publication timing. For example, I observed a noticeable decrease in interactions during the summer holidays. This is reasonable given that many people travel or simply

spend more time outside. It was common to find posts reporting where they had been on holiday, the places they had visited, etc. But there was a noticeable decrease in the regular pattern of interaction, posting less news or external content. However, it did not happen during the Christmas holidays. As I argued in previous sections, this was related to the fact that Christmas celebrations have a strong symbolic component. This was reflected in the content published in the form of family meals, Christmas markets or traditional customs.

The next factor to be considered was *who* interacts, *how* the cross-cultural flows of interaction are combined. Logically, the most obvious indicator of audience fragmentation was the language used to communicate. The language used in the posts largely determined the interaction and response of other friend profiles. The language applied both in the text box of the post and in the shared content itself. Although not definitively, because as I mentioned above, the photographs also generated a reaction from profiles from different parts of the world, not only from Spain or Germany. However, there were also spaces where all personal relationships converged. For example, in those posts published in several languages, appealing to the whole group of friends. Or especially on dates such as birthdays, when friends from other countries spontaneously sent greetings in other languages. Although it may seem an unimportant factor, the birthday greetings allowed me to objectively observe how the interaction with profiles from other countries was increasing year by year. Nonetheless, the interaction with Spanish profiles remained predominant in all the profiles analysed, especially in terms of the content posted by external users. An important factor in this regard was the clear predominance of humorous comments, which already constituted an important feature of the content practices. Only one of the profiles generated wide-ranging discussions in the comments. This was related to the fact that the participant used to post deep reflections especially on political issues, raised debates, asked questions to the audience and offered critical comments. Finally, another type of posts that generated significant interaction were precisely those that addressed the diaspora, specifically the content that I described as meta-discourse about migration, hybrid content or 'typical German issues'. This type of content generated the reaction from the migrant community. Users received a large volume of comments and signs of empathy.

8.2.3 Affective Categories

The identification process has a strong emotional component. When we speak about *identities*, for example, about the Spanish identity, it does not concern only a territorial, but rather an affective issue, the sentimental ties that migrants publicly manifest with respect to their own origin. These types of expressions are then translated into practices that seek to satisfy expressions from nostalgia, happiness, or pride, to sadness, anger or rancour. Their personal stories or experiences, their reflections on the migration process or the public exposure of feelings belong to an intimate sphere that was transferred to the visible space by the choice of the users. In that sense the Facebook wall also represented a place for personal reflection and expression, about the life, about the environment, often as a place of letting off steam, something that was already noted in the interviews. To share fragments of their life experiences in form of posts or photo galleries, was also a way to show the intimate, personal and ultimately emotional aspects of migration. In fact, by exploring their profiles it was easy to discern the mood in the tone of the publications or the music they shared, being the music a resource widely used to transmit emotions. They often feel touched by cultural symbols of their place of origin, transmitting messages of nostalgia and homesickness.

These practices often coincided with the celebration of popular festivities in which they could not be present. They, therefore, symbolically commemorate these moments through the photos and publications. I found also signs of affection, caring and nostalgia both in the posts of the users analysed and in those written by their contacts. Another common feature was the use of possessive articles to indicate belonging but also emotion:

Post text: The last sun of the year in my country, in my village and on my beach.
New year. He writes to say goodbye to the year 2016 from his homeland.

The post includes a photograph with the sunset on a beach in his hometown.
He appears in the photo sitting on a small wall with a lost and nostalgic gaze.

Profil 1: M - 31 years -Munich

Damn, how I miss my neighborhood... (Emoticon crying) #Barrionalismo
(neighbourhoodism)

Profil 5: M - 28 years, Erfurt

Post text: Andalustalgia.

Profil 7: F - 29 years, Berlin

Like these examples I found dozens of publications that very explicitly expressed their emotion, in this case, nostalgia. Even in the last quote, the user made a word game combining the words Andalucía + nostalgia = Andalustalgia. Andalustalgia, as expressed through posts like the one above, embodies the profound nostalgia and emotional connection migrants maintain with their country of origin. The Facebook wall serves as a platform for them to share fragments of their lives, especially during times of celebration or when immersed in cultural symbols that evoke a sense of longing. The posts become a virtual avenue for symbolic commemorations of festivities missed and a means to navigate the emotional terrain of migration. Through poignant words, emoticons, and creative expressions like wordplay, users not only convey a deep sense of belonging but also offer a glimpse into the complex interplay of emotions that define their migrant experience. Some of the users performed in their profile very deep and emotional reflections, about life or about how they felt. One user even wrote a very profound post to her mother on her birthday showing the love she felt for her and how much she missed her, thanking her for saying good night and good morning every day on her mobile. Indirectly it highlights the question of caring through digital media technologies. In fact, the special dates, such as the birthdays, brought also a good opportunity to write and receive emotional posts: Messages of affection, love, good wishes, celebration. Often the migratory fact was mentioned, with congratulations naming the host city, pointing out their absence or the desire to celebrate together when they see each other. Their birthdays were the events that got the attention and interaction from the contacts in both the origin and destination countries. A moment when diverse messages converge with congratulations from both the origin and destination countries, in Spanish and in other languages, with expressions of affection and good wishes. I detected certain nostalgia in those comments, by highlighting their absence, the distance or the desire to celebrate together when they see each other again. In the analysed profiles, I found direct and indirect mention to the migratory fact such as “*what a pity I cannot celebrate*

with you", "have a good time in Berlin", "let's see if we can meet in Germany". In parallel it was also common to show pictures of the birthday celebrations in Germany, surrounded by friends, food and gratitude. In these moments it can be also appreciated how every year it is possible to find more greetings in other languages.

The practices I have mentioned are related to the migratory fact, but basically all the posts were emotionally charged, whether to convey joy, excitement, sorrow, nostalgia ... In fact, everything is arranged in Facebook to allow the user to express these emotions, for example through the emoticons that were widely used in publications. In addition, Facebook created the 'Reactions' option to express emotions beyond the "like" function by creating an extension to express other kinds of emotions such as "I love it", "I'm amused", "I'm amazed", "I'm sad" and "I'm angry". It also enabled the option of attaching the emotion to the post with statements such as: "I feel sad, excited, happy, confused...". All these resources were detected in all the profiles. Through the expression of these emotional states, the posts not only offered symbolic data, but also affective and emotional data.

8.3 Facebook content and Memory

In *Communicative and cultural memory*, Assmann (2008) revisited Vansina's (1985) past forms to explain the differences between communicative and cultural memory: while communicative memory contains memories and refers to the *recent past*, the kind of memories that people share on a daily basis with their contemporaries. The cultural memory refers to fixed points in the past as symbolic cultural events. However, the two types of memory interact and transform the changing present. In that sense, media-related practices cut across the two types of memory because they involve deep symbolic structures and everyday life at the same time. The lives of the participants documented through their media content in Facebook, with apparently banal actions such as posting content, texting messages, life conferences... constitute a huge digital media archive of the present that is constantly growing. These individual accounts, with their life stories, struggles, desires, and longings are framed within larger social formations and meanings that generate memory practices, embodied, and materialised through the use of media technologies in everyday life. In each profile Spanish migrants reported a different life story, different links with the territories and personal preferences. The forms of interaction were also diverse depending

on the personality of the person, some being more shy, others extroverted, or more audacious. However, beyond personal preferences and interests, what I was really interested in for this study was to detect in the profiles those media practices that define what it means to be 'digital migrants', the 'digital diaspora'. In other words, *the memorable moments to remember* related to the migration experience (the return home, the visits, the celebrations, the symbols, what they selected from their own lives to show and to share). At this point, the boundaries between private and public life became blurred, the intimate became a public fact, a visibility in which the public and the private depend on what users want to narrate about their own lives and on the accessibility of their contacts to that information. In that sense, Facebook content can contribute to the reconstruction of memories and imaginaries of migration, illustrating its processual, networked, plural, transcultural and mobile character.

The reflection on the daily practices of individuals, and among them, media practices, allow us to better understand the contemporary world. After analysing both the interviews and the Facebook profiles of the research participants, I have observed that media practices are also part of the personal narrative of the individuals' history as a new genre of digital history. In other words, if media practices are already part of the life of the emigrants, they are also part of their history. This experience of in-depth research into the media practices of the Spanish diaspora in Berlin has been a way of recuperating the individual and collective experience of the community, adapted to the new ways of life in which media technologies already play a fundamental role. In that sense, the analysis of media content constitutes the most basic form of materialising the digital experience. The perspective of memory succeeds in overcoming the traditional dichotomies that associate memory with an abstract construct that belongs to the mind, as opposed to the external memory understood as a recording medium. On the other hand, it also overcomes the contrast between the private and the public, since media practice is pervasive in both spheres. Memory constitutes the willingness to retrieve what happened in the past, but also in the present. This perspective recognises, therefore, the agency, motivations, interests, and cultural/social concerns of individuals/groups who construct their past through their present and past through their daily practices.

This chapter analysed how Spanish migrants strategically activate recognition by mobilising symbolic resources on Facebook, generating new forms of identification in order to position themselves in the new translocal contexts. In that sense, platforms and social

networks such as Facebook, also become spaces of belonging and identity negotiation. The negotiation of identities is continuously reactivated in the repertoire of media-related practices in the everyday contexts and have an enormous capacity to mobilise affects. They often represent symbols of the culture of origin with great potential to mobilise processes of recognition and also affect sadness, longing, pride. In this process of analysis, I have witnessed the incredible narrative and remembrance capacity of media content. Memory is strongly connected with belonging. According to Assman (2008) “memory is the faculty that enables us to form an awareness of selfhood (identity) both on the personal and on the collective level” (p. 109). As previously discussed, diasporic identities are closely related to the way in which the immigrant lives his or her own migration experience (both in the country of origin and destination). Their migration strategies were traversed by media technologies and the networked and transnational nature of their personal relations. With these shifts in their everyday life, the way they experience memory is also transformed: “remembrance is not just about repeating the same story over and over again. As a communicative practice, it is fundamentally transferable, and this means that remembrance is also a resource for redefining the borders between ‘them’ and ‘us’” (Rigney, 2018, p. 253). Therefore, diasporic identity, as other identities, is an eminently social process experienced in community. The diasporic identity was created, re-created and imagined through their content practices. However, this imagination does not only have a symbolic component, but also a material one. That is, this process of imagination is embodied, handled through different social practices, among them, the discursive practices described. Their experiences and cultural bonds and connections develop over the time specific communication scenarios, patterns and practices that reproduce this migrant identity related with processes of hybridisation. Nevertheless, this “hybridity does not refer to hybrid individuals, who can be contrasted as fully formed subjects with ‘traditionals’ and moderns. It is a process of cultural translation, which is agonistic because it is never completed” (Hall, 2019b, p. 113). In other words, hybridisation is not a process of transformation from one point to another, but a constant cultural negotiation process. The connection between identity and memory is closely linked to the autobiographical nature of memory. The compulsion to archive is not only a social or institutional issue, but rather it also constitutes the way in which we relate to ourselves (Nora, 1989). The emerging 'archives of the shelf' that users accumulate in their digital profiles may pose potential future opportunities to expand the memory studies. Beyond the archival capacity of individual memory, that is, the capacity to accumulate meanings, memory is assimilated as shared and agreed knowledge and meanings

associated with certain identities and past events. Memory is then a space of multi-referential negotiation between the present and the past, the private and the public, the individual and the social. However, digital identity is not only negotiated in digital spaces but is also linked to offline contexts and experiences. In that sense, “there is not, nor has there ever been, a sharp distinction between private and public, but every act of memory involves a negotiation of these spheres” (Van Dijk, 2007, p. 13). Similarly, there is not a dichotomic divide between the online and offline realms, but rather, they are entangled as a part of everyday life. In the qualitative content analysis of their Facebook profiles, I was able to analyse how they mobilise cultural and symbolic capitals for the identity negotiation. At that moment, I was fully aware of the importance of the migratory process in their lives, which was also reflected in their Facebook profiles, as described, in a very explicit way. Through the media production, they generate an interactive narrative about their migratory experience in which they also negotiate their symbolic positioning in the new context. On the other hand, this information remained archived as a testimony of their migrant everyday lives. In the scenario of hyperconnectivity, new media technologies become the organising and habitual condition of memory, so that the traditional social, cultural and biological divisions associated with memory become increasingly blurred (Hoskins, 2014). Digital media are transforming the temporality, spatiality and mobility of memories, which leads to the mediatisation of time itself (p. 666). From this perspective, the contemporary forms in which memory operates are completely traversed by the processes of digitalisation and technological development. The open question is to offer empirical data on how this is happening. In fact, nowadays there are increasing numbers of academic contributions that illustrate the growing interest of media researchers to approach and develop new concepts and social and cultural interpretations of memory in relation to the media. In that sense, practice theory can offer empirical insights on how this individual cognition and the new technologies are materialised and connected in relation to memory. Practice theory visualises and expands different aspects of memory construction beyond cognition, incorporating the social and cultural perspective, as well as the materialities associated with the performance of memory. The generation of new theoretical concepts through practice theory allows multidimensional approaches that encompass the hyperconnectivity and transnationalisation of the processes of memory.

8.4 Drawing conclusions from the Qualitative Content Analysis of Facebook Profiles

This chapter discussed the results of the second phase of analysis corresponding to the qualitative content analysis in the 8 selected profiles. In this phase, I had the opportunity to analyse how the users materialised some of the media practices mentioned in the interviews. Performing the qualitative content analysis was a decisive step, not only to deepen the understanding of community media practices, but also to further develop the processes of belonging through concrete examples. I worked with a large amount of information that I recorded in a flexible data matrix in order to keep track of user publications and interaction notes, which grew exponentially throughout the analysis. Thanks to this tool I was able to operationalize the data in an effective way, generating new categories of content and interaction.

I described how media production of Spanish migrants is linked to the processes of belonging, concretising the media practices that operate in the construction of a sense of *Spanishness* and *we-ness* as form of migrant identity. In that sense, I explored in depth how different cultural elements of the identity negotiation were materialised in concrete practices on Facebook. In this section I described the multilayered forms of belonging: the diasporic identities that I refer to in this dissertation as “*we-mess*” and define the identification as 'we migrants'; the practices associated with 'being Spanish' or *Spanishness*; and the practices that point towards a certain sense of *otherness* or the recognition 'of the other'. Secondly, I reflected on how the media content constituted a negotiated *migrant digital locality* that simultaneously integrated content and interactions with Spain and Germany. This migrant digital locality constituted a place of interaction in which different processes of identification convey. Thirdly, I presented the different forms of political engagement through their Facebook profiles, and, fourthly, how emotional aspects crossed their media practices. Finally, I described interaction categories that include socialisation dynamics and the negotiation and management of the communicative environment with other user.

Chapter 9. Theoretical Contribution Development

Media-related practices are sites of contestation and negotiation. Throughout this dissertation I have illustrated how media practices developed in contemporary Spanish migration intervene in the process of meaning-making in online/offline contexts, influencing its historical progress and opening up future challenges and scenarios for future migrations. Empirically speaking, they illustrate the role of media technologies in the networked quotidian activities of everyday life, which profusely and reflexively combine different aspects of information, communication, networking, political participation, and self-representation. I selected the practice theory in this dissertation, as an essential theoretical framework in the understanding of the social as situated, embodied and routinised. I locate this dissertation within the “critical cyberculture studies” (Silver, 2000), in which the main concern is the social and cultural implications of producing, consuming, and using technology in different contexts. Therefore, beyond the identification processes and the description of the Spanish diaspora’s media-related practices, this research seeks a broader theoretical approach that focuses on their processual, relational and situated character of the concept of “digital diaspora”. The aim of this dissertation was not to list different types of everyday media-related practices, but to analyse how they relate to other practices and especially how it influences larger social structures. For example, how it has influenced their everyday lives, their political engagement in both countries or their processes of belonging. I developed a purely qualitative approach (in-depth interviews and qualitative content analysis), with a broad enough theoretical umbrella to unfold the experiences of the Spanish migrants that participated in this project. The media practice approach, however, not only has implications for the analysis of other people's media practices, but also implies a diverse and comprehensive view of the object of study. In this regard, this perspective also challenges the own research activity and the practices as researchers. In fact, the choice of the methodology was already a practice that will mediate the results of this dissertation. The way to approach, operationalise, and create theory, also implies social practices. For this reason, I decided to combine the analysis of the media practices with the theoretical and methodological procedures of the GT in order to make the data emerge directly from the material analysed. Through GT, the data speak inductively, revealing patterns that allowed

me to establish both generalisations and divergences. Through the data provided in both methodological phases, I describe how the mediatisation has profoundly transformed the everyday, private and public spaces of Spanish migrants. I also describe how they develop new forms of identification and belonging that are embodied in their everyday media practices. In this chapter I will theoretically situate the results and I will put them in relation in a final reflection about the practice-based approach to digital diaspora. In the previous chapters I have presented and developed the complex of media-related practices performed by Spanish migrants in Germany. I developed the empirical work in two methodological phases aimed to answer the research questions that have guided this study throughout the empirical process:

RQ1 How do diaspora communities develop their personal relations and public-political participation within the network?

RQ2 How do contemporary Spanish migrants in Germany symbolically construct a sense of we-ness, Spanish-ness and otherness through their media media practices?

RQ3 Which role have the ICT and media practices in the construction of transnational communities and identities?

The research questions are closely related to each other. Therefore, the aim of this research is not to answer them separately but to understand the processual character of *the Spanish Digital Diaspora* as a complex of media-related practices that constitute the daily, transnational, and interconnected lives of the migrants interviewed.

9.1 Conceptual contribution: Migrant Digital Associationism

RQ1 addressed both personal relationships and the public/political participation of Spanish migrants in Germany. The combination of all the media practices allows for an in-depth understanding of how digital tools are integrated into migrants' everyday environments, in what context, with what motivations, objectives and strategies. In all these media-related practices I detected patterns that reminded us of other behaviour and needs from pre-digital times. This means that the new digital tools do not necessarily generate new uses but can also constitute a form of adaptation to the new media and mediatised societies. This transition, as I mentioned in previous chapters, is not a linear transition, but a progressive

combination of old and new tools to meet needs in very specific situations. From the analysis of these practices, I observed that migrants still need to organise themselves in communities of support in the process of integration. However, I found also new practices, such as a mixed online-offline interactions, transnational and transcultural socialisation, which not only involves the country of origin and the destination country, but also other people from third countries and contexts. On the other hand, perhaps one of the richest contributions of this work has been the development of affective needs and their diversification through media-related practices, including those involving new spaces for developing relationships and caring practices. This leads to new migration strategies and new ways in which migrants organise themselves abroad. To explain these new forms of organisation I propose the practice-based concept: Migrant's Digital Associationism.

Digitalisation has allowed the emergence of new formats and different 'networked-based platforms' that allow contact between emigrant communities. They translate the traditional forms of association into different spaces for exchange and socialisation: a) supporting and emotional digital links in both the country of origin and the country of destination, creating transnational spaces for interactions; b) networked based platforms and exchange spaces, being Facebook groups one of the main reference spaces for exchanges between migrants; c) social movements (Marea Granate/15M/Precarity Office) and their activist articulation through ITC; d) Foreign delegations of political parties and their political participation through ICT.

The socialisation process of Spanish emigrants abroad has changed, firstly, because media technologies have facilitated some aspects of emigration. They are no longer uprooted migrants, but migrants in continuous connection. Before leaving, in the pre-emigration process, they can access a large amount of information about the destination country and can even establish contacts with people in the destination country. Most importantly, they do not lose their link to the country of origin, so they can always rely on the emotional support of their loved ones. However, this does not mean that the Spanish migrant gives up the offline socialisation process or that they renounce contacting with their co-nationals, but it does mean that they do it in a different way. The functions that used to be carried out by migrant associations in the past are nowadays more diversified and are partially managed in the digital realm with different strategies. For example, Facebook was the platform that mainly absorbed and agglutinated the contact between emigrants that formerly operated in local circles linked to the former associations. As I retraced in chapter

7, especially the function of transferring practical information for the first stage of adaptation through groups such as “Spaniards in Berlin” or “Spaniards in Germany” became not only a place of reference for the exchange of information and the creation of new contacts, but also in their narratives, they directly associated these groups with the Spanish digital diaspora in Germany. Another space for socialisation, support and activation of the political engagement of Spanish emigrants were the social movements and the affiliation to political parties. The personal and affective relations were also present in the media-related practices analysed in the three forms of political media-practices. However, this emotional support was partly fulfilled by the possibility of a parallel, permanent and continuous contact with the loved ones in the country of origin. In that sense, this function became less commented in this new wave of emigration, indicative of the heightened ease in establishing personal connections. This is attributed to the emigrants' elevated educational background and linguistic competence, which, in turn, contributes to their increased social adaptability in destination countries.

The association of migrant communities of culture did not emerge with digital platforms, nor through the tools that the platforms facilitate. This participation is not only not new but is even linked to the type of associationism that took place before the emergence of social networks or the Internet. It is not unusual to come across articles on the Spanish associative movement during the emigration waves in the 60's and 70's -mainly in Germany, Switzerland and France. As discussed in previous chapters, these migration waves were characterized by a pronounced sense of temporality. During that period, the migratory projects involved a temporary sojourn of a few years, with the overarching goal of accumulating savings to enhance living conditions upon returning to Spain. However, the migratory movement evolved and changed, and as happened in those years, many of the migratory experiences took longer than expected. Many of these associations still operate and combine their offline and online practices with the new spaces of interaction of migrant communities. Nuñez (2014) has recently argued that the traditional Spanish historiographical debate on the associative movement of Spaniards abroad has focused more on territorialisation and on the descriptive accumulation of associations and their differences than on the search for more transversal issues. On the other hand, the author pointed out that some studies tend to over-privilege the study of associations as the most visible and identifiable expression of the diasporic imagination. Microsocial historians place informal networks and everyday environments of exchange as the most relevant aspects of

interaction: "the study of associations meant concentrating simply on the "foam" of the migration phenomenon, on its most anecdotal and less relevant aspects" (p.40). However, from the 1990s onwards, new variables began to be introduced in the study of migrant communities, considering them "as spaces of power, as spheres of negotiation of collective identities and symbolic dispute, of recreation of political and social projects and even of reinvention of the modalities of expression of collective identity" (p.41). Associations begin increasingly to be considered as spaces of transnational articulation in which flows of exchange arise between different associations. This capacity for reinvention is powerfully enacted through media practices. Along this line, 'migrant digital associationism' aims to explore the transnational perspective through the articulation of media-related practices. However, these are not always associations in the traditional sense of the word as a collective. The digital space allows for meeting and interaction in a more flexible and ad hoc way. While traditional associations agglutinated most of the spaces for exchange and recreation of culture, the digital realm offers more diversity of interaction: from exchange platforms to participation in social movements, in foreign federations of political parties and establishing support networks that are no longer limited to the diaspora, but also include relations with loved ones in the country of origin. Thus, the diaspora imagination is much more complex and also includes exchanges at the transnational level.

The concept of *migrant digital associationism* dialogues not only with spaces of cultural recreation, but also with the political engagement of migrants, both in social movements and in political parties. In the context of the social movements in relation to ICTs, Lance Bennet and Alexandra Segerberg (2012) proposed a new development of *connective action*, as one of the most influential proposals in categorising forms of political action and protest organisation in digital contexts. Bennet and Segerberg established three types of large-scale action networks: (1) crowd-enabled connective action networks, (2) organisationally enabled connective action networks, and (3) organisationally brokered collective action networks. However, the migrant associative movement has some very specific characteristics, which are not always related to the forms of organisation in contentious politics. Collective action and connective action are different forms of activism. In the case of *migrant's digital associationism*, it also implies the perspective of socialisation, and many aspects of the migrant's everyday life. Migrant associationism includes forms of connective and collective action, but is, at the same time, closely related to fundamental aspects of diasporic identity, to the way of recreating the digital diaspora. This new concept is intended to follow the research on traditional associative movements in migratory contexts. In that

sense, it is limited to the migration experience, with certain functions related to the process. However, it does intersect with the concept of connective action in the sense of exploring how digitally networked action works in an era of increasingly personalised participation, looking for new logics of digital participation, but focussing on the media affordances of migration processes. The aim of this dissertation is to offer information about how media-related practices are organised in migration contexts, and with which motivations and purposes. The concept of migrant's digital associationism involves the way in which these networks are organised and the forms of digitally adapting and creating new digital logics of migrant participation. It incorporates the public and political articulation 'within' the diaspora. The concept can be applied as a meeting point for the study of identities from a transnational perspective, of social mobilisation and spaces of interaction. It contributes to the understanding of the conformation of digital diasporas as processes and how it evolves within the digitalised everyday life. When I proposed the research questions, my interest was focused on everyday exchanges, however, as I delved deeper into media practices, social meanings became increasingly consistent, generating complex explanations that motivated their actions and had unexpected effects on other areas of migrants' lives, from family organisation, access to new social relations, processes of belonging and the public and political articulation of the diaspora. As a concept generated through the methods and procedures of the GT, it is an open concept that can continue to evolve through its practical application in other case studies, providing further nuances and monitoring new forms of migrant associationism in the digital realm.

9.2 Discursive Practices and Belonging Processes

The RQ2 addressed the processes of cultural identity and community development. Chapter 7 already discussed in depth the concept of digital communities and the processual character of home and host country links. The aim of the qualitative content analysis was, firstly, to deepen knowledge on how they enact these practices in a specific communicative environment, Facebook, as a place of reference for the organisation of migrants abroad and, on the other hand, to delve into the symbolic and identity questions through the content published on Facebook and the forms of expression and interaction. This, at the same time, constitutes the materialisation of these identities. Chapter 8 discussed specifically discursive practices connected with different processes of belonging with the

aim of illustrating how these identities are embedded in concrete realities and contexts. Some media-related practices emerged in the interviews, were expanded and completed thanks to the information gathered in the process of qualitative content analysis on Facebook profiles. The permanent and ongoing connection with Spain on a daily basis of the migrants interviewed, their ability to access public debates and current events, as well as the repeated interference of Spanish symbolic elements in the content, has not only reinforced but also had a permeating effect. In this phase I also explored the migrants' self-identification, and their perception of the *we-ness* i.e., the imagination of the Digital Spanish Diaspora in Germany. Finally, I also approached the question of the *otherness* as the capacity to become aware of one's own individuality while looking at oneself from an outsider's perspective.

Through their discursive practices on Facebook, the qualitative content analysis enabled me to track the daily digital activities of the analysed profiles. I was able to fully understand their lifestyles, their emotions, their desires. As I progressed in the analysis of their profiles, I gathered more and more personal information about their jobs, their friends, their relationship with their family, their tastes and even their characters or moods of the day. There were three aspects of the profiles that struck me powerfully in the process of identification. The first was the biographical potential of their profiles. Analysing their media practices by reading what they wrote, how they interacted with their families and friends, at work, the kind of content they shared, their musical tastes, generated such a detailed portrait of their migration experiences that it was very easy to empathise and understand the lives behind their narratives. Secondly, the emotional and affective nature of their contents, which I had already detected in the interviews, but I was able to observe how it materialised in their Facebook profiles. And third, the potential of profiles to create social meanings, a shared diasporic identity. The social network does not constitute a substitute for face-to-face contact, but it provided a scenario for visibility and also for practising social skills. Facebook can be considered as a semi-public space in which users show, through their discursive practices and participation in communities, different forms of social affiliations. Following Oiarzabal (2012) migrant users build up digital communities as social realities in which rules, codes and meanings are shared: “diasporas are networks of transnational migrant communities comparable to nodes (individuals, groups or organisations) in a social network connected by a set of affiliations” (p. 1470). In that sense, Facebook offered a very valuable tool for reproducing collective identities. In Kozinet’s netnography approach (2010) the concepts of community and culture were

related and addressed as an important dimension of the digital media experiences. Nevertheless, Kozinet stresses that “the term community appears appropriate if it is used in its most fundamental sense to refer to a group of people who share social interaction, social ties, and a common interactional format, location or ‘space’ – albeit, in this case, a computer-mediated or virtual ‘cyberspace’” (p. 15). Facebook not only offered possibilities for interaction, but also for meetings and association. Hence, it implied not only a question of new forms of interaction, but of new forms of socialisation. The content practices that I described on Facebook are linked to the process of socialisation, having a direct influence on both the creation and development of social bonds, as well as on the creation of individual and collective identities.

The information collected from their profiles was very personal, from statements to loved ones, reactions to certain events (both from public and private spheres), pictures, interactions between users... In fact, one of the main challenges of the analysis of their profiles was precisely to depersonalize their media practices. That is, being able to define their media practices without showing their private life but unfolding the patterns and common elements of the different profiles. As I proceeded with the analysis, I often reflected on the vast amount of information stored in those profiles: the life stories (and practices) that encapsulate our interactions on social networks. Analysing media practices also meant analysing life stories. I then understood how these spaces are also part of the daily life, of what happens every day, far from being communication channels or mere data repositories. If someday we wanted to write down our memories, surely everything that happens in our social networks or in the chats of different applications would help us to remember, to recall situations, memories and emotions.

In this phase I also explored the relation between discursive practices on Facebook and memory, as the way to approach the epistemological debate on the construction of memory as a situated space of negotiation, through certain social and communicative practices. It is well known that migratory processes have always been related to multiple identities. Chapter 8 answered this question analysing the construction of those identities as a cultural instance and therefore, as a cultural process: “The question is rather which identities are limited, to what extent, by which structures and in which contexts. Identity is well understood not only as a voluntarist issue -a simple question of what you decide to make yourself into- but also of what (specific and limited) forms of cultural and economic capital your social position provides you with, out of which you can construct your identity”

(Henriques et al., 2018, p. 52). Through the reconstruction of discursive practices on Facebook I outlined the offline-online interaction of migrants' everyday lives.

This debate implies two fundamental questions, the mediatization of memory and the epistemological reflection on memory in digital contexts, and very specifically, the digital memory in migratory contexts. Memory and culture studies have prioritised the study and theorisation of retrospective and nostalgic memories; however, there are other authors who propose a change in the epistemological approach, proposing the study of *prospective memory*, i.e., the production of memories. (Hajek et al., 2016; Hoskins, 2014; Koselleck, 2004). The story that is always narrated, cannot be considered as an objective or reproductive action, but a choice mediated by social, cultural, political and economic issues. Thus, memory and remembering are not only “backwards-looking undertakings: rather, they carry the agents, objects and circumstances of remembering along the temporal continuum between yesterday, today and tomorrow” (Hajek et al., 2016, p. 1). This process is mediated through a variety of media and platforms, a whole media ecology that is embedded in our everyday life. Thus, concepts such as Koselleck's (2004) *future past* or the *communicative memory* of Assmann (2011), refer to those specific pasts that are constructed in the present and will be remembered in the future. Memory unfolds as a fundamental aspect of cultural identity and transnational identities and communities. Different types of media have traditionally been used to store individual and collective memories. Today we are all digital scribes of our own life through our media practices that leave traces in what we know as the datafication turn. However, this does not involve a description of how past events are mediated, but rather looks for new arenas in contemporary communication scholarship towards a practice-based conception of memory - or, in other words, how individuals and collectives remember and reconstruct situations in their everyday practices. Nowadays the idea of the archive as a *repository* or *store* is influential in contemporary media memory discourses. Diana Taylor (2003), for example, outlined the presumed fixity of the archive: “Archival memory exists as documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains, bones, videos, films, CDs, all those items supposedly resistant to change” (p. 19). However, in digital contexts media practices cannot be regarded as a repository or as 'a channel' because memory, like one's own life, is also a process experienced through media practices. We have memories about conversations on social networks, about other people's posts, and or those posts we published when we were sad and happy. Increasingly, we can speak of a digital memory based on digital practices. That part of our life, in which we socialise

and create digital links is part of our history and not just a channel. This reality, in the case of migration, becomes more evident because there is already evidence of this digital in-between life in both countries.

The datalogical turn, therefore, also has cognitive and cultural effects on memory production. Alongside the datafication of migration and mobility, there is a strong link between new forms of memory and technologies, an emerging regime of cultural production of memory, mainly through digital tools. In that sense, the processes of identification, belonging, and especially the construction of migrants' context-awareness constitute essential elements of the media related practice of memory. Furthermore, some authors (Smet et. al., 2009) underline that in addition to quantitative advances in datafication processes, the datalogical turn should also be approached qualitatively. In that sense, big data and small data collection may not necessarily be opposites: “the visual, spoken and written word are all important for constituting and archiving personal memory, which is also always relational” (p. 51). Drawing on these reflections, there is still room to deepen in the concept of memory connecting with media-related practices in the context of digitalisation. Memory experiments also a process of *transnationalisation* (Assman & Conrad, 2010; Assman, 2010; Erll, 2011) in which memories transcend national borders to become part of an emerging *global public sphere* (Assman, 2010), opening up a new era in memory praxis and theory, and with it, in the conceptualisation of the spaces in which memory is concretised and negotiated. It is within this theoretical framework that this dissertation aims to contribute.

Facebook and other social networks constitute a great space for memory and identity construction. What we experience today and capture on our walls will become tomorrow the memories of encounters, shared words, moods, desires, longing, relationships with other users. The cultural heritage is strongly linked to the absence and offers a window to lean out to *our lives in a certain time and place*. In other words, media practices produce sociocultural and situated time-space compressions. The development of these narratives includes the reclaiming of past memories and the construction of new memories that illustrate the new stage of life. These are memories influenced by a certain political, economic and social reality that is also reflected in these narratives and practices. It is important to analyse them, otherwise they will be lost as soon as the platforms are replaced by others. We now remember how we used to access the Internet in the early years or how we talked via web messenger. Users do not only carry the embodied memories in mind for

as long as they live, but the process also has a material dimension, the memory is practiced, shared, embedded and embodied for memory through media communication technologies and through all the available platforms. In that sense, the example of the media practices of the Spanish Diaspora in Germany and more specifically their belonging processes illustrate how life experience is remembered and captured in digital media practices, the agency of migrants in this process, as well as their motivations and purposes. Practices involve not only the embodied character of the activity, i.e., the relation of the practitioner to things, but also the relationship between subjects and even the relationship to oneself, including one's body, as well as one's motivations and emotions. How these practices interconnect, how are they organised, how they change over the time, is nothing but a memory of a specific time and space, with specific relationships. The media-related practices analysed leave traces dispersed in different social media platforms, applications, and devices. All these traces contain very valuable information about a life stage that will be recorded and may or may not be retraced. The process of rearticulation in digital environments accumulate cultural memory, since what today constitutes a shared routinised practice may tomorrow turn into traditions. It will be a real challenge for cultural studies to explore how to keep all the information contained in these formats. This implies that we must rethink the quality of practices as cultural, but also as historical and situated, and even contingent (Bräuchler & Postill, 2010). The use of ICTs and the development of new communicative practices in the context of emigration, especially the range of connections through social networks and mobile applications, has led to a significant change not only in the management and experience of migration, but also of memory processes. Those practices shed light on the particular matrices of socialisation and subjectification, which generate certain forms of bonding with territories and hybrid identities.

The belonging processes, as I have already discussed, take place individually and collectively, in different formats and applications, in diverse contexts. Media-related practices have a very great influence on the identity and social positioning of the person in the digital sphere and also in the real sphere. In fact, there are people who have made from these narratives and practices their success and their way of life. According to the data collected during the study, this we-ness, otherness, Spanish-ness was partly constructed through media-related media practices, becoming a process of construction of the story of emigration. As I introduced above, collective memory is constructed through individual

memories, which were undoubtedly shaped through the experience of users through different media-related practices in very interconnected different ways.

Another relevant aspect are the crossed memories or memory intertextuality: Spanish migrants shared memories from other times, which are part of their past and also of their present. The transposition of memories generates intertextuality. This phenomenon that already takes place in our cognitive dispositions, materialises in the social networks where memories become recorded. How the past is present in our current practice implies a reflexive relationship. Moreover, when practices are reproduced over time, they assume character of (practice) tradition: “When participants engage in activities in the pursuit of projects, they do the things and they speak the lingua that are characteristic of the practice and enter relationships building on the 'memory' provided by the practice tradition” (Nicolini, 2017, p. 104). According to Nicolini, these practices are only intelligible within a pre-existing set of cultural-discursive, material, economic and sociopolitical conditions that allow the practice to develop and also limit and condition it. Different social networks and mobile applications are also designed as a space to practise one's own memory, in fact, Facebook or Instagram already include tools such as “Memories”, to point out and commemorate important dates and/or publications: Reminding the user publications what they shared a year ago, two years ago... Likewise, the analysed users not only used this type of tools offered by the platform, but in all the profiles different memory practices were detected: a) obituaries, calling the memory of deceased people, whether they were acquaintances or celebrities; b) ephemeris remembering the birth of famous persons. Or merely the commemoration of historical dates and places. Perhaps most interestingly, however, is that their profiles also captured their everyday life stories, situated in a particular time and space.

9.3 A Practice-based Approach to Digital Diaspora

Finally, the RQ3 constitutes the synthesis of the first question and the second, combining the conclusions drawn in both the public-private interaction and the identity analysis phase. In this section I will offer a practice-based approach to Digital Diaspora. I will show how the media experience not only traverses but has transformed the meaning and experience of migration through mixed everyday practices, the development of hybrid localities, new spaces of exchange, and continuous negotiation of practices.

The objective of this research is to contribute to the body of research on diasporas in relation to information and communication technologies with a practice-based empirical case study. The first decade of the new millennium and especially the first half of the second, brought along a wide spectrum of studies on digital diasporas and digital transnational communities (Gajjala, 2019; Georgiou, 2006, 2016; Alonso, 2010; Alinejad, 2011). Nevertheless, the concept of digital diasporas remains theoretically contested. In most studies on diaspora in relation to the media, the concept of diaspora referred directly to the 'online networks' used by diasporic people with different purposes. However, the networks in these approaches were often shown as passive subjects, since they were used by migrants or considered as a place where different social or cultural events take place, but not an embodied part of the process. On the other hand, the concept of digital diasporas is such an abstract and overarching concept that it can constitute a continent for theoretical developments in different aspects of the interaction between migrants and the media. What remains underexplored, however, is the embodied and embedded character of the *digital diaspora* epistemology based on empirical studies addressing the micro and macro levels of the practices and material perspectives. In that sense, chapters 7 and 8 provided a broad context of practice-based interaction that redefines some aspects associated with the definition of the concept of Digital Diaspora. Moreover, in analysing and semantically reconstructing the new processes mentioned, I have identified a lack of conceptualisation of a fundamental aspect of the media practices of the Spanish community in Germany: the new forms of associationism in migration contexts that transcend the media and the consumption of diasporic media, which were very relevant in the first decade of the 2000s.

In this section I will discuss not only the cultural perspective, but also the material perspective, the physical matter of the bodies, which involves not only the movements to use a certain device, or the very materials used (technologies) but also includes, for example, the material-discursive production and even the use of language itself, whether spoken or written. Therefore, the answer was not intended to offer a purely descriptive input, but also a process-oriented one, exploring the creation of identities in relation to the associated media-related practices and their social meaning.

In the two analytical chapters I developed in depth the role of media practices in socialization and organization strategies, in the construction of everyday life from the private and public point of view and, finally, the media-related practices of belonging. Traditionally, diasporas have been studied from a cultural and identity point of view that defines the "imagination" of a community of people abroad. However, the construction of the digital diaspora, beyond its symbolic conception of information exchange and consumption of imaginaries, embodies different types of media practices with a material base. Diasporic communities are those that try to maintain connections and commitments - real or imagined - with their country of origin and, specially those that recognise themselves as a community (Sendín, 2014, p. 4). Therefore, it is precisely this exchange, which in this study is analysed through media practice, that constitutes the diaspora as such. For this reason, people who only reside outside their communities of origin do not constitute a diaspora per se (Tölöyan, 1996). As we can see in the visual representation, what we understand as Digital Diaspora is the result of the complex set of media-related practices analysed.:

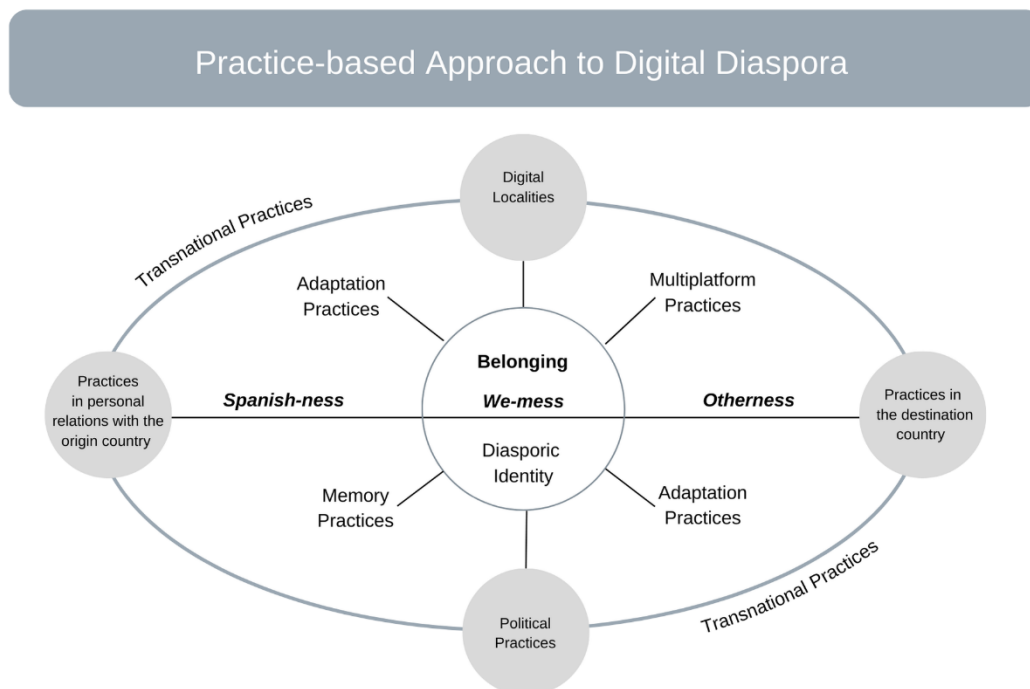


Figure 9.1: Visual representation of the practice-based approach to digital diaspora

All the aspects addressed in the different phases of the research have provided relevant information to understand not just what the *digital diaspora* means, but how a digital diaspora materialises in communication actions. In that sense, the analysis chapters have provided evidence of the importance of media-related practices in the socialisation processes in the destination country, in the process of adaptation, reorganisation, and reinforcement of personal ties with the country of origin. Political participation has also proved to be a fundamental element in the imagination of the Spanish Diaspora in Germany. As I have argued throughout the study, in order to understand media practices in general, it is also necessary to attend to material and offline realities. In the case of contemporary Spanish emigration in Germany, as mentioned in the introductory chapter of the case study, the migration process was not only ignored in the first years of the crisis, but the government tried to deny it for political reasons, trying to avoid acknowledging that a new wave of emigration was taking place after the financial crisis that the country was experiencing. This sociopolitical situation has marked the entire media experience for the Spanish migrants interviewed, and also their Facebook profiles, with two particular consequences. On the one hand, this situation favoured the emergence of these digital platforms of support and exchange, since the institution was not providing any kind of support. It is important to highlight in this regard the solidarity networks that they created, not only among Spanish migrants, but also, as we have seen, with other migrants of other nationalities and local networks in the country of origin.

The large number of devices and platforms offered by the Internet has not only technically multiplied the possibilities of exchange and networking both locally and internationally. It has also contributed to the generation of the Spanish community's own imaginaries in Germany. The Internet increased the potential for networking locally and globally. Migrant websites and Facebook pages functioned as weak ties and/or nodes (Granovetter, 1973; Pizarro, 2000). In the cases analysed, although some of the main personal relationships were projected transnationally, there was also a greater preponderance of establishing and fostering local ties. Conversely, it has favoured the development of different forms of political participation, in order to develop their own voice. This situation encouraged the development of “subaltern counterpublics” that functioned dynamically as “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups or women invent and circulate their counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (Fraser, 1990, p. 67). It has had a fundamental relevance in

the construction of diasporic identity, as discussed in chapter 8. The *diasporic consciousness* was largely associated both with the exchange groups and communities, but also with reference groups such as Marea Granate, which became the voice of Spanish emigration and an uncontested point of reference in the community. In the qualitative content analysis, I was able to observe and analyse without interfering with those described practices, and some others that they were not able to verbalise or simply were not aware of. According to Hall (2019), the term community is often associated with a strong sense of group identity; however, this identification does not necessarily imply a homogeneous group, cohesive, with strong links between them, separated from the real world. Although they effectively develop distinctive social customs and practices, they are not locked into a static tradition, but “traditions are variable from person to person, and even within persons, and are constantly being revised and transformed in response to the migration experience. There is very considerable variation, both of commitment and of practice” (p. 107). I took into consideration this variation when I reported the media practices. Digital diasporas are constructed through the interaction of all these media-related practices, linked to both the country of origin and the country of destination. In that sense, the intersections of online and offline worlds, underlines the significance of the context. Media practices represented a new logic in personal relationships at a distance, fostering the development of a connected presence (Diminescu, 2011, 2012) that allowed the participation both in the country of origin, Spain, and in the country of destination, Germany. Digital presences are increasingly moving beyond connecting spaces to become an integral part of migrants' everyday reality and practice - what I have referred to on several occasions throughout the analysis chapters as their *digital locality*. A relevant factor in that sense was the capacity of media-related practices to generate spaces of transnational care, new forms of closeness and togetherness in relationships with loved ones in Spain. In the family approach from the perspective of its relational dynamics in the distance, the division of productive/male/public and reproductive/female/private Zapata (2016) apply in families with migration experience. Gender dichotomies in care-giving illustrate how private care continues to be the responsibility of women for two fundamental reasons: 1) it is ascribed to the domestic, reproductive and private sphere, and 2) it involves not only material support, but also affective and emotional support, and women are, as Hochschild (1990) pointed out, the ones who invest more feelings, actions, knowledge and time, which is why they are considered to be women's own activities. (p. 21). Chapter 7 showed specifically how motherhood becomes a fundamental aspect in the affective relationships of transnational

families. In that sense, this research provides empirical data on the “transnational motherhood” (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997) of mothers who stay in the country of origin and what strategies they develop to exercise care through the new information and communication technologies. It is an adaptive process over time. Moreover, media technologies have allowed Spanish migrants to live digitally between the country of origin and the country of destination, getting involved in their families' daily lives, participating, expressing their opinions, and making decisions without being physically present. It should be noted that media practices also have an effect on interlocutors and offline relationships. There is a process of adaptation on both sides, as they also assimilate some concepts of the new transnational experience.

In this chapter I theoretically situated the results and I put them in relation in a final reflection about the practice-based approach to digital diaspora. To this end, I began by explaining how I answered the research questions and then I discussed my conceptual contribution: migrant digital associationism and media-related memory practices. This new concept contributes with a new empirical basis for further research. To conclude, a fundamental aspect that I would like to stress is that media technologies are constitutive and entangled part of a reality rooted in the offline world. In that sense, this dissertation has had the firm objective of moving away from media-centric approaches. The theoretical contribution materialises these links with concrete examples that highlight the importance of the social, political, and economic, as well as the personal and affective context of individuals. Technological development should be understood not only as the proliferation of new media technologies and support, but in the interactive process of adapting to new digital realities. It is therefore a never-ending process. I do not claim that media-related practices determine social action, but they have a definite influence on the way they organise our life and care on a transnational level. In that sense, it is necessary to further explore the epistemology of new forms of digital interaction and how they are embedded in our everyday lives.

Chapter 10. Conclusions and Future Prospects

The impact of the Internet and digitalisation processes have deeply influenced migrants' lives, thus rendering a revision and rethinking of the migrant's everyday life and identity processes indispensable. In the early 2000s, Diminescu (2002, 2008) inaugurated a new paradigm with the *connected migrant*, situating emigration within a culture of bonds, displacing the traditional conception of the migrant as uprooted, and redefining basic concepts such as distance, space, movement, and presence/absence. Diminescu (2008; 2019) has influentially established the basis to explain the transnational communication of migrants, which breaks with the idea of the uprooted migrant towards the connective presence that operates on different levels. The *connected migrant* is cultivating a digital life, a phenomenon no longer exclusive of people living transnationally, but indicative of a societal shift. Media technologies serve not only to connect, but also to foster a sense of belonging. This progression extends beyond mere connection to a realm of active participation, termed as digital locality in the analysis chapters. In this sense, *digital locality* is part of the overall experience representing more than a mere connecting point. Media technologies empower individuals to construct their own networked digitalised environment while engaging with the digital landscapes of others. Importantly, these environments are dynamics, continuously updated and renegotiated influenced by different exogenous and endogenous factors, development of technologies and emerging new channels. Therefore, the focus lies not on a static *presence* but on the dynamic *process*, on the assemblage of media-related practices in the digital everyday life. On the other hand, the media practices contributing to this connective presence, extend the individual who performs the practice. Media practice encompass not only the action taken *doing*, but also the manner, context, and consequences of these practices, affecting both the performer and their interlocutors. In essence, media practice involves a broad spectrum of actors, including the family of migrants who must adapt to new communication strategies and the digital everyday routines of their loved ones.

The digital revolution has also reshaped the approach and analysis of communicative phenomena. Due to its prolific nature and the instability of the object, the study of the Internet is always in a preparadigmatic state (Hine, 2005). The continuous evolution of the medium and its capacity for production, reproduction, and intertextuality render it difficult to establish general conclusions or paradigms in which to encompass all mediated phenomena. For this reason, approaching the subjects from empirical-based case studies,

such as those presented in this dissertation, may offer new insights to understand digital developments, relationships, interactions, and social practices in other migration contexts. This study aimed to broaden the information on diasporic populations, with the objective of gaining a better understanding of the complex process of emigration and transnational identity formation through media-related practices. As explained in the theoretical framework, this study draws on different theoretical approaches to media and social practices, which are necessary for a critical analysis and in-depth understanding of them. I was focused on the processual character of these practices: how they relate to each other, their meanings, and how the performativity of these practices influence larger social structures such as the diaspora's public and political participation, personal relationships, and the processes of identification. With this aim, present research proposed an ethnographically inspired project. Through in-depth interviews and qualitative content analysis, the dissertation addressed highly complex interaction contexts, social/local/supralocal media practices, and their social meaning. In that sense, I would like to highlight the enormous importance given to media practices as performative tools, since the analysis of their components and the relationship between them lead to symbolic processes. Therefore, beyond exploring the space, it delves into the understanding of the practice, not only observing it, but also questioning it, looking for the situational delimitation, that is, the relationship with the social, cultural, economic, and political processes that intervene in the practice. According to Hine (2000), cyberspace can be understood and analysed as a place where culture is produced, but also as a cultural artefact. She criticised the ethnographic studies that focused on cyberspace as a delimited social space, thereby overemphasising the separation between offline and online. In this project, it is assumed that new technologies generate contextually situated practices, often involving online-offline relations.

A general conclusion that I can draw from the results is that media practices had a clear impact on the routines and lifestyles of the migrants interviewed. The wide range of devices, digital platforms, and applications that migrants use simultaneously have allowed the development of new and adaptative forms of networked relations and interaction, which have also generated a digital transnational everyday life that combines offline/online interactions with both the country of origin and the country of destination. The repertoire of media practices embodied in this transnational living also had a definitive influence on identities and collectivities. The main analytical concern in this dissertation was, therefore, to situate the practice: when it was produced, how it was produced, with what motivations

and what spaces it generated, concluding that networked relations and this transnational everyday life, outlined new diasporic practices and spaces with basis in the media technologies.

In terms of the relations with the country of origin, the social and emotional significance of the continuous contact with the culture of origin and with loved ones is worth highlighting. According to González-Rábago (2014), academic literature has dealt with the process of integration of immigrants in destination countries in a very limited way, largely alluding to the discourse of bi-directionality. On the one hand, the author pointed out that the analysis of integration processes has overlooked the importance and role played by the society of origin, and the bond that migrants have with it, focusing primarily on the receiving society as the place of integration. On the other hand, adaptation to a new sociocultural environment should be considered a complex process that requires learning (Bravo, 1992). The description of the media practices shows how migrants must acquire the competencies and skills necessary to manage in the environment effectively. Building upon the findings, the interaction with the home country emerges as a fundamental aspect in the emigration journey. The intensive use of media technologies has allowed the preservation of a strong emotional connection with Spain. The Spanish migrants interviewed maintained continuous and daily contact with their homeland, employing various convergent devices and practices. This engagement multifaceted effects, influencing both the maintenance of personal relations and the ongoing involvement of the emigrant in the country of origin. It also provided very valuable information into the nature and social dynamics of both real-time (synchronous) and delayed (asynchronous) interpersonal communication through digital media. However, the extensive array of interconnected devices represents just the initial phase of a comprehensive transformation in the migration process. The significance lies not merely in their act of connecting; instead, this connection has become an integral component of their media practices. In the Spanish Digital Diaspora, offline and online contexts of participation and affiliation are combined in the everyday life of migrants. Through media practices, they developed new spaces of intimacy, new forms of togetherness, and care practices. In a very particular way, relationships between families do not change but adapt to the new contexts, building new practices and rituals to maintain links with their loved ones. In that sense, the constant evolution of new technologies plays a fundamental role in media-related practices, which has generated a pronounced flexibilisation of users' capacity to adapt to new digital contexts. Moreover, another important factor to highlight is the instability of the practice

itself, in the sense that they evolve over time. When a child, a brother, a sister goes abroad, they look for new strategies for transnational families. These strategies do not constitute closed contracts of activities or practices; rather, they adapt to the day-to-day needs, timetables, and also to the novelties offered by the platforms, testing other ones, etc. In that sense, it always constitutes an open process of negotiation in which multiple elements come into play, as previously discussed.

The media practices analysed included both interpersonal communication (albeit transnationally), as well as media practices associated with professionally produced media, i.e., the way in which migrants inform themselves about what is happening in the world. This informational adaptation also included transnational media-related practices in both the home and host country, as well as devices and formats, from legacy media to the wide range of digital platforms. The development of media-related practices does not represent an abrupt, bounded or even contingent change, but a process of social adaptation. Migrants adapted to the needs of interactivity and multimedia that the context requires, generating interaction strategies, and even adapting content and formats to their needs in the destination country. Among the strategies most frequently identified was the use of social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram as a 'base of operations' where both lives can be brought together. Nevertheless, practices evolved over time converging with mobile applications. Digital tools and platforms were increasingly used on mobiles and less on their computers. Mobile phones, in turn, were increasingly used as portable personal computers than as telephones. Because of the integration of these technologies in the everyday life of migrants and their interactive capacity, they played an increasingly important role not only in the behaviour, but also in the processes of socialisation in both the country of origin and destination.

The concept of socialisation is not only concerned with how migrants relate to each other in the destination country, but also with how they build community. In this context, I proposed a theorisation of the new processes of networked migrant associationism. The irruption of the internet and new technologies in the socialisation landscape has undoubtedly played a decisive role in the migrants' associative movement. The Internet offered new possibilities for exchange through websites, email, forums, social network groups and chats that bring together groups of people with common interests/needs. These have enabled the creation of true diasporic digital communities that largely fulfil the functions of the former migrants' associations. On the other hand, this new paradigm also

opened the doors to the political participation of migrants with new media-related practice structures of participation, with different spaces and levels of engagement. In this context arose not only local digital communities, but also transnational networks of participation, in which local nodes connect with other nodes and share their experiences. In that sense, the convergence of media technologies has enabled the creation of new social structures that disrupted the correlations of power to a more inclusive paradigm of participation. This new paradigm tends towards decentralisation, displacing the traditional (and exclusive) niches hitherto reserved for the establishment and opening possibilities for the development of “subaltern counterpublics” (Fraser, 1990, p. 67). They thus generated sociopolitical capital with the aim of influencing policies in the country of origin (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003). The Internet and media practices generated spaces and dispositions for self-production and empowerment beyond the big media conglomerates and hegemonic media. Migrants expanded their possibilities, both from a consumer point of view, as they could select the content and platforms they wish to use and consume and also, from the participatory point of view, as they became creators and disseminators of content. In this context, media practices themselves performed in a condition of opportunity to generate new processes and diasporic spaces for political participation (for example, the experience of Marea Granate, the foreign federations of political parties, and even their representation in institutions).

Finally, it is worth highlighting the emotional perspective that crosses all of the media practices analysed. Even with similarities and differences in media practices among migration experiences, migrants share similar concerns, feelings, fears, and hopes that are reflected in their media practices. A fundamental aspect that stems from relationships with the country of origin is the emotional support of loved ones. It does not only imply symbolic support since it was materialised and practised on a daily basis. This continuous contact did not necessarily mean assuming a deficient integration, because it also depended on the articulations and decisions that migrants take in their offline life. In fact, contrary to the common assumption that a close contact with the country of origin or with co-nationals can hinder the integration process of the migrant, the data provided in this study describe another, more complex social scenario. The fact that a migrant has access to rich and effective communication with his or her networks in the country of origin does not diminish his or her predisposition, for example, to meet people in the country of destination or to inform himself or herself with German media. According to our interviewees, the choice of media was often related, for example, to language competence or to the time

spent on news consumption in everyday life. On the other hand, feelings such as empathy, loneliness, fear, and anger are part of our lives and have to be taken into account when analysing social processes. Feeling cared for in one's country of origin or with a co-national can generate a certain feeling of empowerment that encourages participation in other spaces. This dissertation provided examples of how love and affection are transmitted through media practice based forms of care, how loneliness is combated through regular contact with loved ones, and by seeking new contacts on Facebook groups; how they articulated their political participation as a form of emotional release to the feeling of helplessness derived from economic migration: sometimes with simple statements on a Facebook wall, others by encouraging themselves to participate in social movements such as Marea Granate. Sometimes they went a step further by joining a political party in Spain to participate in a deterritorialised way. Recently, Ponzanesi stated that “migration and integration have overlooked the critical role of emotions and affect, which is quintessential to understanding the motives, experience and impact of migration, and the nature of diasporas and long-distance relations. The nature of emotions, affects, feelings, and sentiments is essential in comprehending the dynamics of migration in sustaining bonds and keeping in touch transnationally” (Ponzanesi, 2020: 988). There were not irrational or isolated emotions but negotiation processes. For this purpose, I analysed affective practices, that beyond incorporating the emotional dimension into practices, aimed to analyse the affect, that is, the collective side of emotionality (Papacharissi, 2015) and its material perspective, explaining how these affects were articulated, through what means and with what social significance.

Finally, as already mentioned, ICTs challenge traditional imaginaries and transform the ways in which identities are constructed. Identity, based on the collective referent and the feeling of belonging, was situated and articulated in new spaces of symbolic production. Identity, far from being a unitary and inevitable concept, was a situated construction process, not only on the Internet or in the digital space, but in offline interactions. This dissertation introduced different kinds of media practices associated with the processes of construction of *Spanishness*, *we-ness* (diasporic identity), and also *otherness* as an indissoluble part of identity insofar the recognition of belonging means setting apart other places. While some identities are more constant, others evolve over time according to the scenarios and contexts in migrants' lives. In that sense, identities are fragile spaces, in continuous movement, subject to “a never-finished construction, open to temporality, contingency, a relational positioning that is only temporarily fixed in the play of differences” (Arfuch,

2002, p. 21). However, the fundamental aspect of this analysis was to show that identities, despite being considered abstract constructs, also have a material basis related to media practices, the devices through which they are performed, and the dispositions developed for their recreation. The identity and belonging processes also take part of the history of the contemporary Spanish migration, its relationship with the country of origin and its integration/participation in the place of destination. In that sense, I described the potential of social networks as a biographical space in Chapter 8. Although this dissertation does not focus on the history of this wave of emigration but on its media experiences, media practices constitute non-linear spaces for the articulation and negotiation of identities which expose different aspects of the emigration experience. Therefore, these contextually situated diasporic identities through media-related practices contribute to the maintenance of the collective memory of this wave of Spanish emigration. Private and semi-public communications (emails, posts, text-messages, videos, photos) generate a huge amount of data. However, although the information currently seems readily accessible, future research has yet to determine what will eventually happen to all this information.

10.1 Final remarks and open questions

Despite the wide scope of migration and communication studies, there is a certain consensus about the lack of research exploring the relationship between activities, meanings, and materials beyond practical concepts of 'use' (Morley, 2017). In that sense, the “praxeological family of theories” (Reckwitz 2002, p. 244) offer a theoretical framework open enough to allow further and wider theoretical reflections in different areas of knowledge from sociology, anthropology, and of course in media and communications studies, towards a more inclusive paradigm. This does not necessarily mean abandoning other larger questions or neglecting previous theoretical approaches. Beyond the theoretical disputes of the past between media text centralism, production structures, audience research, and political economy, media practices open a new space to explore social practices and the meaning-making processes involved. In the case of migration studies, the hypertextuality and multimodality and the rapid evolution of digital technologies propose very challenging spaces for further analysis, not only because of the complexity of the practices analysed, but also because of their transnational character.

Finally, I would like to mention two of the fundamental challenges of the analysis and approach of media practices in migration contexts for future analysis: a) the instability of the practice and its relation to symbolic constructions and b) the generational divide. Recent debates about action and activity assumed the latent “instability of practice” as a dynamic concept within social structures (Schäfer, 2016). The plurality of practices resembles the plurality of textual and visual discourses, and their range of never-ending embedded meanings, which illustrate the complex, changing, symbolic, and yet fascinating nature of the social. This instability refers to the capacity of media practices to vary and adapt to different contexts. On the other hand, theories of practice emphasize both the routinization of actions, and the materiality and embodiment of social actions through tools, artefacts, and media (Reckwitz, 2002). Repetition does not aspire to become standardisation, but rather routinised practices in migrants’ lives. However, the development of media practices also includes a strong subjective component. In some cases, the social patterns were so evident that all users concurred on the media practices associated with a particular event or meaning. This is the case, for example, of the role of the mother in family communication. However, it was also possible to observe variations in practices that had common purposes and meanings. In these cases, the importance does not only lie in the repetition of practices between users, but in the background content and meaning associated to these practices. If the same event, motivated by the same reasons or emotions, is enacted by two different media-related practices, the important question is not whether the practices are different, but whether they embody a shared meaning in their variation. In the case of the interviewees, the most significant aspect was not that they shared exactly the same content, but rather that they shared, for example, content about the migration process or that they reported travelling to Spain as a memorable event. This theoretical unclearness, rather than being problematic, allows further and wider theoretical developments to work in more including paradigms, especially regarding the meaning embedded in practice.

The generational divide also requires a special consideration. In the case study analysed in this dissertation, the generational divide in terms of media skills was very pronounced between parents and children. Nowadays, as active publics, we are just learning how to become content producers in the wide range of digital media available. The increasing speed of technological development is a real challenge for new migratory movements, which will continue to evolve in parallel with new information and communication technologies. In a few years, the new generations of digital native migrants will be experienced, with much more developed media skills and familiarity with online environments. Although this is not

a trend that will take place automatically, it is a transition that will become increasingly evident in future migration processes. In a context of extreme hypertextuality, studying how the processes of information, interaction, and meaning-making of these new migrant generations of digital natives will evolve, will undoubtedly be a major challenge for communication and immigration studies.

To conclude, I would like to add a final brief reflection on the concept of digital diaspora. What we commonly understand as *digital diaspora* (also known in other academic works as the *e-diaspora*, or *virtual diaspora*) is a transnational community connected through media technologies. Nevertheless, not all displaced populations that establish transnational links can be considered diasporas. The term *digital diaspora* that gives its name to this dissertation refers to that transnational community formed through mutual recognition and the enactment of common imaginaries. Yet, at the same time, it is a term that refers to a space of contestation and negotiation, in which subjective elements, emotions, and contexts also play a fundamental role as indissoluble components of the space. Moreover, *digital diaspora* are not, despite what it may seem, an abstract concept. The main objective of this dissertation was precisely to show how the phenomenon is embodied and unpacked into concrete media practices that, over time and through interaction, generate shared meanings within the community. In the case of the *Spanish digital diaspora*, it was developed as a space of negotiation but also as a space of empowerment. The diaspora also became a space for public and political participation linked to different communicative environments and practices that I have called here *migrant digital associationism*. Finally, *digital diaspora* is also related to self-awareness, and as a way of storytelling through their content practices. Identity is based on memory, on the faculty of reproducing what has happened, and this reproduction is always articulated by selecting events and/or symbolic elements. This is the memory we transmit from one generation to the next, but it also constitutes the memory that we generate every day. In the same way that memory selects those aspects of history that we recall being remembered (or forgotten), we also select those aspects in media practices. Regardless of the socio-historical moment, this is the testimony of an economic emigration, narrated through the media-related practices that determined its development in a certain way. A testimony of the present for the future.

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