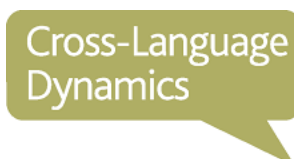


Digital Diasporas: Interdisciplinary Perspectives

International Conference, 6 and 7 June 2019

Public Lecture (in collaboration with Digital Humanities and the Language Acts & Worldmaking project at King's College London)	2
Keynote 1	2
Keynote 2	2
Plenary Panel 1: Digital Media and the Diasporic Self	3
Plenary Panel 2: Polish Communities in the UK: Diasporic Spaces and Media in the Past and Present	4
Plenary Panel 3: Mapping Migrations	5
Panel A: Digital Diasporic Media and Information Networks	7
Panel B: Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches	8
Panel C: Transnational Cultural Production	9
Panel D: (Re)producing Diasporas Online	11
Panel E: Methodological Reflections	12
Panel F: Digital Discourse and Identity	13
Lightning Panel A	15
Lightning Panel B	17



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Public Lecture (in collaboration with Digital Humanities and the Language Acts & Worldmaking project at King's College London)

Roopika Risam (Salem State University)

Mobilizing New Digital Worlds: The Stakes of Postcolonial Digital Humanities

As the emergence of digital cultures have been celebrated for openness, accesses, and the democratization of knowledge, they have simultaneously led to a rise in inequality with respect to race, gender, sexuality, disability, nation, and other axes of oppression. In response, this talk examines how postcolonial digital humanities offers a viable approach to understanding, uncovering, and remediating inequalities in one dimension of digital culture: digital knowledge production. Drawing from her book *New Digital Worlds: Postcolonial Digital Humanities in Theory, Praxis, and Pedagogy* (Northwestern University Press, 2018), Risam explores how the full supply chain of knowledge production – from research to service to teaching – is implicated in an information-age politics of knowledge that has not only reproduced but also amplified dominant cultural values. She further considers solutions that redress this challenge, arguing for the mobilization of cultural workers who are poised to create new digital worlds that more fully realize what it means to be human in the 21st century.

Keynote 1

Mirca Madianou (Goldsmiths)

Technocolonialism: Digital humanitarianism as extraction

Digital innovation and data practices are increasingly central to the humanitarian response to recent refugee and migration crises. In this talk I introduce the concept of technocolonialism to capture how the convergence of digital developments with humanitarian structures and market forces reinvigorates and reshapes colonial relationships of dependency. Technocolonialism shifts the attention to the constitutive role that data and digital innovation play in entrenching power asymmetries between refugees and aid agencies and ultimately inequalities in the global context. This occurs through two interconnected processes: by extracting value from refugee data and innovation practices for the benefit of various stakeholders; and by materializing the intangible forms and 'debris' of colonial legacies. By reproducing the power asymmetries of humanitarianism, data and innovation practices become constitutive of humanitarian crises themselves.

Keynote 2

Jannis Androutsopoulos (Universität Hamburg/Multiling, University of Oslo)

Mediational repertoires and diasporic connectivity: from Senegal to Oslo and back again

Based on on-going research on multilingual practices and digital communication in Senegalese-Norwegian families, this paper introduces the notion of mediational repertoire to examine the performance of diasporic connections and relationships in digitally mediated interaction. The four families in this research use smartphones and other digital devices to text and talk with family members and close friends, in Senegal and elsewhere, thereby drawing on Norwegian, Wolof, English, French, Arabic, and other linguistic resources (Androutsopoulos /Lexander in prep.). Their media practices fit in well with the notion of polymedia (Madianou 2014) as they can choose from several media for digital

interaction, these media choices being meaningful to their relationship to particular interlocutors. This paper argues for the need to extend the sociolinguistic notion of repertoire (Busch 2015, Blommaert/Backus 2013, Androutsopoulos 2014) beyond the dimensions of spoken and written language to account for the semiotic complexity of utterance production that contemporary digital devices afford their users. Adapting the notion of mediational means (Scollon 2001), a mediational repertoire can be thought of as a conglomerate of linguistic resources in various modalities (speaking, writing, or signing), sets of pictographic and multimedia features (e.g. emojis, memes, animated gifs, videoclips), and digital applications that afford the building of message sequences (e.g. WhatsApp, Viber or Telegram). Mediated repertoires are structured socially (they rely on globally-spread technologies and semiotic features, thus enabling comparability and norm-building) and individually (people can tailor their choices to local interactional circumstances). In this talk I use this notion to examine how both adult and adolescent family-members in our research perform (Jaffe et al. 2015, Bell/Gibson 2011) their affiliation with Senegalese culture and construct themselves as members of Senegalese diaspora. Drawing on ethnographically collected excerpts of digital interaction and interviews with family members, I discuss (a) how peripheral membership in the Senegalese speech community is performed through practices of impromptu teaching and learning Wolof, and (b) how political and religious messages circulate transnationally in various modalities and genres, enabling people in Norway to display and sustain affiliation to Senegal politics, religion, and pop culture.

Androutsopoulos, J. 2014 Moments of sharing: Entextualization and linguistic repertoires in social networking. *Journal of Pragmatics* 73, 4-18.

Androutsopoulos, J. / K.V. Lexander (in prep.) *Snakeke wolof, skrive fransk* – the interplay of mode, language and media choices in transnational family communication.

Bell, A. / A. Gibson 2011 Staging language: An introduction to the sociolinguistics of performance. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 15:5, 555–572.

Blommaert, J. / A. Backus 2013 Superdiverse Repertoires and the Individual. In: Ingrid de Saint-Georges, Jean-Jacques Weber (eds.) *Multilingualism and Multimodality. Current Challenges for Educational Studies*, 11-32. Rotterdam: Sense.

Busch, B. 2015 Expanding the Notion of Linguistic Repertoire: On the Concept of *Spracherleben* – The lived Experience of Language. *Applied Linguistics* 2015, 1-20.

Jaffe, A. et al. 2015 Introduction: Heteroglossia, performance, power, and participation. *Language in Society* 44, 135–139.

Madianou, M. 2014 Polymedia communication and mediatized migration: an ethnographic approach. In K. Lundby (ed.) *Mediatization of Communication*, 323-348. Berlin, De Gruyter.

Scollon, R. 2001 *Mediated Discourse: the nexus of practice*. London: Routledge.

Plenary Panel 1: Digital Media and the Diasporic Self

Sandra Ponzanesi (Utrecht University)

Digital Diasporas: Migration, Media and Affect

Diaspora figurations provide new possible cartographies to map the self in relation to increasingly complex patterns of globalization and localization, avoiding closures and the negative effects of identity politics. This talk explores how these new worlds on the move are mutually shaped by the affordances and possibilities offered by new digital technologies and the transformation of border politics. What are

digital diasporas and how do they come to encode transformed notions of home, transnational belonging and postcolonial spatiality? How is difference rearticulated online and how is affect reshaped through connectivity, by remediating distance and intimacy? This intervention proposes a critical overview of the notion of the digital diaspora, and its many disciplinary takes and media-specific variations, in order to grasp contemporary human mobility as shaped by and constitutive of an unevenly interconnected world and new patterns of belonging.

Alex Georgakopoulou (King's College London)

The digital curation of diasporic selves: Technological affordances, algorithms & the role of language

The study of digital diasporas in the 1st generation of new media presented a clear focus on the (re)formation of (largely supportive) communities, where belonging and membership were mainly signalled with the use and mixing of language varieties. Since then, the multi-semioticity of resources has been emphasized, especially in relation to the construction of hybrid, cosmopolitan, trans-localised identities. What is still lagging behind especially in sociolinguistic research is the shift away from a focus on community and group membership to the construction of diasporic selves, as part of individual users' tapestry of self-presentation and life-sharing practices. This is a much needed focus in the context of the dominance of ego-centred social media (e.g. Facebook and Instagram), on the one hand, and, on the other hand, of the increasing media-design and engineering of communication. This 'curation' of self by media affordances and algorithms directs to specific self-presentation projects, while constraining others. In my talk, I will draw on my latest work on how apps curate self-presentation (www.ego-media.org), to put forward three directives to users for communicating a 'diasporic self': localizing experience; templating experience; showing life-in-the-moment. I will specifically discuss the connections of these directives with specific types of portable language and with specific relational processes that navigate the, often competing, demands of attention with 'affection economy' (Abidin 2017).

Plenary Panel 2: Polish Communities in the UK: Diasporic Spaces and Media in the Past and Present

Janet Zmroczek (British Library)

Polish diaspora communities in the UK 1830-1863: Re-examining diasporic identities, cultural spaces and cultural heritage creation

This paper will build on my previous research into the Polish diaspora communities in the UK in the period 1830-1863, which has focused on the social and cultural lives of these communities, their role as writers, editors and publishers and their attempts at image management through their interventions via the contemporary British press and popular culture. Given that the impetus for Polish migration at this time was primarily political, understandably, the major focus of research into Polish communities in the UK during the mid- 19th century has been on their political engagement. My research is concerned rather with the social and cultural activities, formal and informal diaspora groups and institutions through which these Poles expressed, developed and maintained their cultural identities. These groups also helped them to maintain strong cross-border relationships and connections, especially with the far larger diaspora communities in France, as well as the population which remained in partitioned Poland. While the predominant expectation of this diaspora was to return home, they also went to considerable

lengths to record and preserve diasporic heritage and cultural memory, demonstrating their commitment to the continuation and development of independent Polish culture in the face of oppressive cultural policies imposed by the partitioning powers.

The paper will seek to revisit research on these mid-19th century Polish diaspora communities through the prism of more recent research into translingual and transnational diaspora communities and their cross-border communications and relationships, looking also at their cultural and linguistic spaces, and their role in cultural heritage creation in an analogue world.

Caroline Tagg (Open University) and Agnieszka Lyons (Queen Mary, University of London)

Digital dynamics: the development of Polish migrants' semiotic repertoires in mobile messaging interactions

Our paper explores the ways in which migrants develop their digital inter-semiotic repertoires through interaction with others as they respond to varied and shifting communicative contexts. Our research data come from a large AHRC-funded project called *Translation and Translanguaging: Investigating Linguistic and Cultural Transformations in Superdiverse Wards in Four UK Cities*. In this paper, we focus on the digitally mediated communications of two women of Polish origin living and working in the UK, looking specifically at their use of mobile messaging apps including WhatsApp and Viber. We take a discourse dynamics approach to the digital data in order to trace how multilingual and multimodal semiotic resources are taken up, re-appropriated or resisted by these two Polish women and their interlocutors in the course of their everyday interactions. We focus in particular on the ways in which interlocutors collaborate in – or challenge – the co-construction and curation of inter-semiotic repertoires and the various social relationships that these reflect, enable and constrain. Building on the work of Pennycook (2017), Androutsopoulos (2014) and others, we detail how emergent inter-semiotic repertoires take shape in processes of *repertoire assemblage*, and highlight the importance of everyday interactional encounters in understanding how migrants exploit digital technologies as they adapt to changing circumstances.

Androutsopoulos, J. (2014) Moments of sharing: entextualisation and linguistic repertoires in social networking. *Journal of Pragmatics* 73: 4-18.

Pennycook, A. (2017) Translanguaging and semiotic assemblages. *International Journal of Multilingualism* 14/3: 269-282.

Plenary Panel 3: Mapping Migrations

Dana Diminescu (Télécom ParisTech/DiasporasLab)

e-Diasporas Atlas. Exploration and Cartography of Diasporas in Digital Networks

Recent trends in the migratory phenomenon show that, today, the migratory path goes through digital territories simultaneously with – and sometimes before – physical territories.

The *e-Diasporas Atlas project*, with I coordinated since 2008, intends to explore, map, archive and analyze the *occupation* of digital territories (in a quasi-geopolitical sense) by “connected migrants” (Diminescu, 2003, 2008).

The *e-Diasporas Atlas* project is different from a standard atlas on migrations, which is traditionally focused on flux, trajectories, or the dispersal of moving populations in physical territories. Our atlas map presences, links, configuration of different diasporas' networks on the web. It is grounded on the assumption that studying the web involves a *commitment to technology*: the digital matters not only as object/field of investigation but also and inseparably as means/tool of research.

The project is based on a *methodological or sociotechnical chain* composed of the following intertwined steps: 1) semi-automatic exploration and *web corpus*; 2) automatic crawl for “prospecting” and validation of the corpus; 3) network visualization and corpus cartography; 4) archiving. Such a chain is completed by a *digital toolbox* for geolocalization, content analysis, language identification, web 2.0 data mining, etc. Eighty social and political scientists and developers were involved in the conception, development and improvement of such methods, tools and contents.

I propose in my intervention to provide an overview of this project by drawing on the outcomes of [30 case studies](#) of researches conducted for the *e-Diasporas Atlas*. I will conclude by focusing on one of the crucial goals of the project, namely to generate an interface between human and social sciences on the one hand, and computer sciences on the other hand; in other words, to introduce *digital methods* in diasporas studies, and promote a “digitally equipped” sociology, as well as to develop an engineering informed by social sciences.

Funda Ustek-Spilda (London School of Economics)

Ethics of Refugee Statistics and Social Imaginaries of Migration

Migration numbers have been on top of the political agenda in the last five years. From reducing the net migration rates to capping numbers of asylum-seekers and refugees, number seem to become the single most important matter of concern. But how are these numbers produced? In this paper, I will look at the production of refugee statistics with a particular focus on ethics and data practices in order to analyse the social imaginaries of migration that come to be enacted through them. I will present five data practices: 1) collection, 2) compilation, 3) verification, 4) analysis and 5) dissemination. I will argue that each of these practices contribute to the social imaginary of refugee statistics as certain, objective and representative, obscuring the known issues with them. Here, I will focus particularly on ethics of refugee statistics, and responsibility for ensuring the privacy and security of the individuals which might entail contradictory outcomes for individuals to be represented in data and policy.

Tobias Blanke (King's College London)

Migration, data, humanitarian apps and platform economies

This paper explores the performative effects of digital humanitarian technologies developed for refugees in the wake of the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ in Europe since 2015. Drawing on the work of Michel Serres, we develop a method of ‘acts of parasitism’ as distinctive from ‘reverse engineering’. We have seen a proliferation of digital technologies and data processing in the work of humanitarian actors. NGOs operate globally and rely on data infrastructures to connect, gather information and reach out to their target communities. ‘Digital humanitarians’ have tended to concentrate on the success or failures of their digital projects. Have digital infrastructures really helped the communication in organisations? Have migrants taken up the digital offerings of NGOs? In this paper, we propose to focus on the

performative effects of digital humanitarian technologies developed for refugees in the wake of the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ in Europe since 2015. To this purpose, we develop a series of methodological experiments in interdisciplinary collaboration to research digital technologies. We show how ‘hacking the blackbox’ of digital technology has led us to approach digital technologies as ‘parasitic’, drawing on the work of Michel Serres. We thus develop earlier suggestions to conceptualise the digital as parasitic in a methodological direction through ‘acts of parasitism’. We start with a discussion of the key methods used to open blackboxes and then show how we deploy ‘hacking’ as a collaborative method distinctive from reverse engineering. In a second stage, we discuss the insights that this method has yielded and their limitations. Thirdly, we argue that the understanding of refugee apps as ‘parasitic technologies’ allow us to develop a critical method as ‘acts of parasitism’.

Panel A: Digital Diasporic Media and Information Networks

Gaoheng Zhang (The University of British Columbia)

Digital Media and Recent Chinese Migration to Italy

This presentation is based on my forthcoming book titled *Migration and the Media: Debating Chinese Migration to Italy, 1992-2012* (University of Toronto Press 2019). The Chinese migrant community in Italy has captured worldwide media attention because of their entrepreneurship and economic and media clout. Much of the mainstream Italian media coverage of the community tends to blame it for urban degradation (in Milan and in Rome) and loss of Italian jobs (in Prato). But pro-Chinese Italian and Chinese migrant journalists, filmmakers, and academics argued otherwise. My talk focuses on their use of digital tools in the aftermath of a major protest in Milan’s “Chinatown” on April 12, 2007, which followed from newly-implemented, stringent, and apparently racist street laws regulating the use of pushcarts and other vehicles for commercial activities in the neighborhood. Journalists Romano and Sceresini captured pre-protest footage of Italian patrols who ignored Italian violators (themselves carrying a pushcart and hiding a camera inside a box), which was released on *Corriere della Sera*’s website as evidence of blatant discrimination. My second example concerns the website of the documentary film *Giallo a Milano*, <https://www.corriere.it/spettacoli/speciali/2010/giallo-a-milano/>, which was curated by the filmmaker Basso and the sociologist Cologna. The website uses interactive features of maps and video clips to construct a narrative about Milan’s “Chinatown” that contended with the prevailing story in the press. Finally, I will speak about a representative Chinese migrant, bilingual website <http://www.associna.com/it/>. In the Italian mediascape where Chinese migrants’ voice was rarely featured, the forum provided them with an outlet. In a post after the protest, Chinese Italians staged a determined defense of their rights when a presumably native Italian visitor smeared the community’s reputation without foundation. I argue that the immediacy and accessibility of digital media helped nurture anti-hegemonic discourses about Italy’s Chinese.

Oksana Morgunova (University of Edinburgh)

“Deciding on the future without sharing the past”: migrants’ digital networks in the post-referendum Scotland

The paper explores some issues of diasporic networks’ digital mapping with attention to political dynamics. It examines the process of political integration of migrants which remains largely ignored at both the normative and theoretical level of scholarship. The paper traces how the opinions of post-

Soviet migrants settled in Scotland are informed by and shared through the Russian-language digital networks. The data is centered around migrants' discussions about two issues of national and international importance: Brexit and Scottish independence.

The paper reflects on the sources of information migrants engage with to form their opinions. The study maps several types of information networks in the diaspora: local and regional digital hubs in both English and Russian language, national media outlets of their native countries as well as local content produced by migrants. It also discusses the strategies of networking employed in the communication: whether the texts aim at binding together members of already existing migrants' networks, or whether they embody the strategy of bridging, familiarising migrants with new local, host country networks. The issues of class and status are also intertwined in these communications.

The presentation argues that discussions in the migrants' native language represent a space for the new national identity negotiations, but these debates are largely isolated from the native population political discourses, while migrants' activism is separated from the established UK channels of political engagement.

This paper presents the results of a new strand of research emerging from my recently published work (Morgunova, Byford 2018). Methodically it is based on the Political opportunity structures theory and uses Social Network Analyses methods.

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Panel B: Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches

Pedro Oiarzabal (Oiarzabal&Oiarzabal)

Affective capital online and the case of diaspora Basques on Facebook

Based on the results of original user-based research regarding the Basque diaspora-association groups on Facebook, the largest online social network site (SNS) on the Web, this paper analyses the implications that information and communication technologies (ICTs) have on migrants and their descendants' identity discourses and identity construction. It explores the concept of affective capital online from transnational and diasporic perspectives. By focusing on the Basque diaspora case, I contribute to the research on the meaning of non-state (ethnonational) diasporas in the digital age and on the role of ICTs on international migrant diasporas. Particularly, the chapter illustrates how technology enables, reinforces and maintains identity and belonging; and how shrinking-temporal and physical distance technologies, especially SNSs, facilitate the construction of common networked-emotional/affective transnational communities across the planet.

Quentin Lobbe (Télécom ParisTech)

Where the dead blogs are: A Disaggregated Exploration of Web Archives to Reveal Extinct Migrant Collectives

The Web is an unsteady environment. As Web sites emerge and expand every days, whole communities may fade away over time by leaving too few or incomplete traces on the living Web. Worldwide volumes of Web archives preserve the history of the Web and reduce the loss of this digital heritage. Web archives remain essential to the comprehension of the lifecycles of extinct online collectives. In this paper, we propose a framework to follow the intern dynamics of vanished Web communities, based on the exploration of corpora of Web archives. To achieve this goal, we define a new unit of analysis called Web fragment: a semantic and syntactic subset of a given Web page, designed to increase historical accuracy. This contribution has practical value for those who conduct large-scale archive exploration (in terms of time range and volume) or are interested in computational approach to Web history and social science. By applying our framework to the Moroccan archives of the e-Diasporas Atlas, we first witness the collapsing of an established community of Moroccan migrant blogs. We show its progressive mutation towards rising social platforms, between 2008 and 2018. Then, we study the sudden creation of an ephemeral collective of forum members gathered by the wave of the Arab Spring in the early 2011. We finally yield new insights into historical Web studies by suggesting the concept of pivot moment of the Web.

Panel C: Transnational Cultural Production

Gergely Szabó (Eötvös Loránd University; Open University of Catalonia)

Linguistic activism online? – The case of the Hungarian Örökségünk 'Our Heritage' project

Research on linguistic ideologies has committed itself to reveal relations between language, speakers, and their linguistic activities, which are assumed to be “natural”, and which are created, maintained or modified by metadiscursive practices about language itself (Kroskrity ed. 2000). As in the post-national era nation-states and their elites are constrained to set up new ideological frameworks on language and culture to seize dominance (Pujolar 2007), novel forms of language activism can gain relevance as well. However, the reflexive modernity of these sort of activities are only being examined recently (Pietikäinen et al. 2016). My paper considers how online presence reframe practices and actions dealing with language, nation and ethnicity. I closely examine a bottom-up organized movement, which gained public policy support later, and which is promoting the “preservation” of Hungarian language through the internet. The Örökségünk (“Our Heritage”) video clip contest was announced in the autumn of 2015 on a Youtube channel with the aim of encouraging Hungarians all around the world to publish their cover of a song thematizing sentimental attitudes towards the Hungarian language. As the movement became supported by Hungarian governmental institutions and popularized offline by personae in governmental programs, a special case of mediatization (Agha 2011) emerged, in which a mutual linkage was created between processes of communication and dissemination of political stance. Social media platforms in sociolinguistics are seen as sites for social interaction which complements users’ offline positionings, and they also provide opportunity for transgression and to make non-official discourses visible (Leppänen–Kytölä 2017). In contrast, I argue that in this case campaign organizers, by their adaption into new social media settings according to governmental agenda, engaged in boundary maintenance over national belonging through partial control over participants and reproduction of well-known ideologies and

discourses in connection with language and nation.

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Jennifer Duggan and Anne Dahl (Norwegian University of Science and Technology)

A challenge to Anglo pop-cultural hegemony in the era of multicompetence: SKAM fans, translation, identity, and power

The transnational success of the Norwegian multimedia series SKAM is a prime example of how fans' translation, communication, and dissemination practices can lead to a series' international success. This paper presents the findings of a study of SKAM fans' meta discussions of translation in the comments section of the official SKAM website. We argue that fans' discussions evidence tensions and contradictions between fans' pride in and desire to share local languages and cultures as opposed to their protectionism of what is seen to be "theirs" (Chin & Morimoto, 2013; Hills, 2002; Pennycook, 2003), while at the same time suggest fans' desire to develop a participative community (Jenkins, 1992/2013) in which they can collaborate transnationally to provide accurate and cohesive translations.

Our discussion will focus on identity and power relations relating to linguistic knowledge and use within the fan community, informed by previous work in both fan studies and English and a Lingua Franca (ELF) studies. We argue that fan translation of SKAM emphasizes the value of bi-/multilinguality by positioning Norwegian as a resource within a transnational online community, while simultaneously masking the ways in which translation into English normalizes English as the global language of communication. Contrariwise, we argue that fans' online translation and dissemination of non-Anglo media into English subverts the very colonization it actualizes by carving out space for non-Anglo linguistic expertise and positioning linguistic knowledge and the multicompetent language user as valuable (cf. Cook, 1991; Cook, 1992). Fans' use of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) positions it as a democratic resource available to all language users (cf. House, 2013) yet also problematizes its use within what is assumed by many fans to be a Scandinavian milieu (cf. Chin & Morimoto, 2013; Hills, 2002).

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Panel D: (Re)producing Diasporas Online

Beatrice Ivey (University of Stirling)

Colonial Nostalgia and Urban Topography in 'Pied-Noir' Websites

This paper will analyse a selection of non-institutional websites that represent colonial-era postcards and photographs of urban space associated with the French colonisation of Algeria (1830-1962). In 1962, nearly 1 million European settlers and Jewish Algerians (now known as 'pieds-noirs') 'repatriated' to France following Algerian independence. Since the 1990s, 'pieds-noirs' have used websites to maintain a connection to their sense of a lost homeland. Indeed, 76% of these websites have a commemorative function, creating digital 'sites of memory' (Matos, Lagae, and Lee, 2013). By collecting, scanning, and reproducing postcards and photographs of colonial landscape, these websites aim to reconstruct a lost topography of houses, shops, streets, and towns that have been renamed and rebuilt since independence (Scioldo-Zürcher 2012: 487). In doing so, they nostalgically reproduce the 'visual economy' of French Algeria (Welch and McGonagle 2013). Importantly, the websites are often established and run by individuals but claim to represent entire virtual communities of former French settlers. Furthermore, despite the radical 'connectivity' presented by the internet, these websites rarely create connections between the different 'pied-noir' associations, or other French settler groups (e.g. from Morocco, Tunisia, or Vietnam). This apparent isolation of these digital sites of memory could be described by what Andrew Hoskins has called the 'sharing without sharing' of digital memory (2018). However, the paper will suggest that this model of self-curated colonial nostalgia has permeated, in limited but influential ways, Algerian-run websites and Facebook groups devoted to the cultural heritage of their towns and cities. This paper will conclude by reflecting on how I have also engaged with this virtual reconstruction of urban topography in Algeria, through the production of an online 'Cartography of Exile' for the AHRC project 'Narratives and Representation of the French Settlers of Algeria': <https://www.pieds-noirs.stir.ac.uk/map1/>

Julia Borst (University of Bremen) and Danae Gallo González (Justus Liebig University Giessen)

Afrodiasporic Communities 2.0 – or: How Identificational Spaces of Afrodescendance Are (Re-)Negotiated Online on the Iberian Peninsula

This presentation deals with the question of whether Afrodiasporic communities use digital media and the World Wide Web as a space to (re-)negotiate Afrodescendance as an identificational space of

belonging that gives rise to –potentially transnational– afrodiasporic identity constructions. To discuss this issue, we focus on representative digital platforms created and coordinated by African and Afrodescendant people from Spain and Portugal. We argue that, by sharing and articulating mutual narratives online, these narratives create a sense of belonging to a community as the internet acts as a space where Afrodiasporic communities are being imagined. To that effect, our presentation not only builds on theoretical reflections on how Blackness and Afrodescendance are conceptualized both in the internet and within ‘Black Spain’ and ‘Black Portugal.’ It also offers an interpretation of selected posts, allowing us to deduce the main narratives displayed and the diverse identificational spaces intertwined in these narratives. Moreover, our goal is to show that these platforms challenge biased perspectives on Afrodiasporic communities and establish alternative, decentred–national and transnational–networks of community building at the intersections of the ‘real’ and the ‘digital’ world, based on shared experiences of displacement, exclusion, resistance and self-empowerment.

Panel E: Methodological Reflections

Iris Lim (SOAS, University of London)

Digital Ethnography vs. User Experience Research: Comparing approaches to studying ‘users’ in the digital government of immigration

With the digital government of immigration on the rise, this paper compares and contrasts the ‘user experience’ (UX) and ‘digital ethnography’ (DE) approaches to understanding the digital dimension of migrants’ experiences of engaging with the state. UX research refers to a variety of methods used in the systematic investigation of user needs and requirements in the design of websites and mobile applications. This is an already well-established research methodology used in the private technology industry, and governments are increasingly incorporating UX research in digital policymaking for migrant ‘users’. As a digital ethnographer examining migrant ‘users’ of government websites, I was struck by the different characteristics present between user experience research for DE, which is more of a direct application of traditional ethnographic methods that tend toward long-term immersions and observations of participants, and UX research, which modifies some of the same traditional ethnographic methods to fit the more utilitarian demands of industry. Informed by semi-structured interviews conducted with UX and DE researchers and supplemented by the existing literature on these research approaches, this paper examines the strengths and weaknesses of these similar but distinct methodologies. I first describe the unique characteristics of UX and DE. Then, I illustrate these two research techniques in action through interview excerpts from researchers and identify problems encountered or overcome. Finally, I address how researchers exploring the intersection of migration and digital technologies can best deploy and/or adapt these methods in their work.

Belén Fernández Suárez, Antía Pérez Caramés and Tatiana López Gonsálves
(University of A Coruña)

Spaniards in Paris: Analysis of the Role of Weak Ties for Intra-European Mobility Strategies through an Imagined and Virtual Facebook Community

In this paper we will analyse the new wave of Spanish emigration to France in the context of the economic crisis that struck Spain in the period 2008-2014 (Arango, 2009; González-Ferrer, 2013; Domingo and Blanes, 2015; López-Sala and Oso, 2015; Pérez-Caramés, 2017). This phenomenon of intra-European migration has articulated a network of support, information and socialization through

the creation of an imagined and connected community in Facebook (Diminescu, 2008). Thus, the virtual groups of “Spaniards in...” enhance weak ties, creating a vague associational fabric gathering this migratory group (Bryman, 2016; Hannerz, 2003; Koikkalainen, 2012). Social networks allowing the virtual interaction of individuals have caused an increase in social capital, thus breaking the problem of distance (Koikkalainen, 2012). These groups can be understood as “digital diasporas”, meaning a collective of disperse immigrants sharing their belonging, a certain hybrid identity and some common cultural codes (Brinkerhoff, 2009). These virtual communities take also part in the processes and mechanisms for inclusion and exclusion of a certain “virtual citizenship”, as the debates on membership (separating the Spaniards born in Spain from the those who are descendants of immigrants) are recurring in these Facebook groups. In order to analyse these processes, we have conducted a virtual ethnography of the Facebook group “Españoles en París” (“Spaniards in Paris”). This paper will also present some deontological and methodological reflections on how to conduct virtual ethnographies, dealing with questions such as: How to deal with the enormous amount of information? How to get the consent to participate in the research from all members of the Facebook group? Which is the best analytical approach to deal with the collected data? This paper is part of a larger research project dealing with the phenomenon of recent Spanish emigration to Europe.

Panel F: Digital Discourse and Identity

Mariza Georgalou, Theodora P. Saltidou and Eleni Griva (University of Western Macedonia)

Greek neomigrant identities in social media: A discourse-centred online ethnographic study

Since the onset of the Greek crisis, thousands of – mainly young – highly educated and skilled Greeks have chosen or/and have been forced to migrate in search of better career prospects and living standards. This neomigratory wave is broadly known with the neologism ‘brain drain’. Considering 1) the transformative impact of new media on the lives and experiences of migrants (Madianou & Miller 2012), and 2) the pivotal role of social media in (dis)identification and identity construction processes (Leppänen et al. 2017), this study aims at exploring the ways in which Greek neomigrants (re)construct their identities in their social media discourse.

Based on a synergy between the constructionist approach to identities (Benwell & Stokoe 2006), a social semiotic approach to social media (Zappavigna 2012, 2018) and discourse-centred online ethnography (Androutsopoulos 2008), we present and discuss empirical data from Greek neomigrants settled in the UK and Germany, who write about their migration experiences on their blogs, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts. Our analysis demonstrates that Greek neomigrant identities are multifaceted, realized through a complex of linguistic and multimodal means. Having the neomigrants’ own voice and perspective at the heart of our analysis brings to the surface crucial social, cultural and psychological aspects of the current Greek brain drain, often downplayed in economic and political analyses of the phenomenon. In this fashion, the potential of social media discourses to heighten awareness of neomigrants’ dis/integrating processes is confirmed.

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Jin Kyeong Jung (University of Pennsylvania)

Reconnecting to the heritage language and culture through a digitally-mediated transborder network

Digital technologies open up more possibilities to cross borders physically and virtually in this interconnected world. This study calls attention to the role of the digital in creating accessible and equitable opportunities for immigrant youth in the field of language and literacy education. Utilizing digital tools in a digitally mediated transnational network, this research was designed to (re)connect a group of immigrant youth with their heritage language and culture by engaging in mediated composing with peers in their home country. Through mediated multimodal and multilingual communications, this research reinforces heritage language learners’ linguistic and cultural repertoires. The goal of this research is to provide a digitally-infused curriculum for immigrant youth so that they can leverage their linguistic, cultural, and historic resources and contemporary lived experiences with a networked audience beyond their local community and school.

Given the sociocultural background, this study is situated in New Literacy Studies (Gee, 2015; Street, 2003). I employed design-based research (Barab & Squire, 2016) to explore how the unique interactions between immigrant youth and heritage peers impact their language and cultural identities. The researcher, teachers, and students designed curricula focusing on three main mapping activities across three design cycles, mapping students’ individual and communal resources and experiences. Multiple data sources were gathered—artifacts, interviews, surveys, analytic memos, field notes, group chats—and analyzed using content analysis (Neuendorf, 2016; Saldaña, 2015). Findings indicate that students not only developed biliteracy skills and addressed/appreciated their cultural traditions, but also took up positions as flexible global citizens who can understand cultural diversity by mobilizing their transnational identities. The findings of this study can contribute to the role of digital in the field of literacy education, particularly for immigrant youth who have few opportunities to engage their heritage language and culture at school.

Lightning Panel A

Fortunat Miarintsoa Andrianimanana (Universitat Pompeu Fabra)

The Malagasy diasporic websites: an exploratory study

Internet is a privileged space fostering the emergence, connection and gathering of physically separated, unconnected and voiceless individuals. This ongoing exploratory study aims at understanding the role of the internet, especially the websites, as a shared space of dispersed, "invisible" and "silent" migrants as the Malagasy abroad. Thus, it analyses (i) if the online presence of connected Malagasy abroad reflects their physical gathering spaces pattern (ii) to what extent does the internet allow them to emerge and show (iii) what identity do they portray online. Following the approach of e-Diaspora Atlas project, the techniques used in this research are based first on the quantification of the websites "by and for" the Malagasy abroad as well as the networks they form and then a qualitative analysis of their content. The preliminary results are surprising: the websites are mostly individuals, isolated, and form a weak visible network between them. They are geared to facilitate information about individual charitable initiatives carried out in the country of origin or the religious and festive gathering within the country of residence. These results are still under analysis in order to know if they stem from the samples delineation or the prediction of a diasporic community in-the-making.

Hannah Connell (King's College London and the British Library)

Curating culturally themed collections online: The 'Russia in the UK' Special Collection, UK Web Archive

The recently launched curated special collection, 'Russia in the UK', is part of the UK Web Archive, hosted by the British Library. This collection comprises a selection of websites created for and by Russian-speaking population in the UK.

I will discuss the challenges in determining the parameters of this special collection and the difficulties in delimiting the selection of sites for culturally themed web archiving. I will examine the ways in which the specific cultural context of Russian migration to the UK influences the character of this collection. I will also reflect on the influence of the intended audience and the institutional context of Web archiving on the curation of this collection.

The 'Russia in the UK' collection is now public but still growing and I would welcome the opportunity to reflect on how a broader community could be involved in the curation process and the development of the collection in the future.

Rana Arafat (University of Lugano)

Towards a New Understanding of Digital Diaspora Politics: A Case Study on Arab Refugees

Unlike native citizens whose political activities are normally located in one place, Refugee's political engagement and activism takes place in three spaces: origin countries, host countries and transnational (cross-border) spaces. While the political participation of migrants gained considerable attention by scholars (e.g., Adamson, 2007; Hanlin, 2010; Kissau, 2012; Harlow & Guo, 2014; Burgess & Mesegner 2014; Gabrielli et al., 2017), insufficient research focused on the refugees' involvement in politics in spite

of the particularity of their situation. While refugees have usually no rights to participate in the formal state politics in their host countries until they are naturalized, they may also encounter challenges to engage in the out-of-country votings because of the fear of the backlash of the existing oppressive regimes in their homelands (Bekaj et al., 2018).

Therefore, a wider understanding of the role of internet and social media in fostering new types of citizenship and online spheres for public discussion and political practices still requires further investigation. Examining how ordinary refugees use social media as an alternative platform for expressing political opinions and how refugee activists utilize social media as tools for communication, organization, mobilization and recruitment for protests and political activities is the main goal of the current study. In this context, Arab refugees provide an interesting sample as conflict-generated diasporas moving from authoritarian to democratic regimes, drawing a bigger picture of how homeland and host country politics influence each other.

The study employs 40 semi-structured interviews with long-settled Arabic refugees and 20 semi-structured interviews with Arabic refugee activists in the three language regions of Switzerland. The study develops an initial theoretical model describing the relationships between the homeland and host countries' politics and the refugee's online political participation, showing how each of the three elements is influencing the other. The research takes a further step towards linking this refugee online participation model to the concept of repertoire of electronic contention (Costanza-Chock, 2001) adopted from the social movement theories to explore the role of digital media technologies in online activism.

Guillermo Echauri (Pompeu Fabra University)

Blurring boundaries: Social media usage and streaming consumption by international students living in Barcelona

The mobility of international students intertwines inexorably with the digital in multiple ways. As a case of voluntary and temporary migration (King, 2002), the experience of international students distinguishes from other diasporic communities in terms of how they understand issues like the local, the distances or the digital itself.

Through a short-term ethnography (Pink & Morgan, 2013) that also incorporates features of the so called expanded ethnography (Beneito-Montagut, 2011), this ongoing research explores how the digital (understood in terms of social media usage and streaming consumption) is experienced by international students in Barcelona during leisure time throughout their mobility periods. In doing so it aims to understand the blurring, either between the digital and the analog as well as between national borders that increasingly marks out the contemporary digital life.

Lightning Panel B

Maria Jimenez (Universidad Autònoma de Barcelona)

The digital companion: accessibility, communication and information hub for migrants, local population and Public Administrations.

With the increasingly high number of refugees and migrant flows in Europe, the need to overcome the challenges of managing and integrating these communities is vital. Communication is often an obstacle both when gathering background information (i.e. legal status) and in the process of integration in their host countries. This article proposes Information and Communications Technology (ICT) as a tool to support local authorities in managing the migrants in their region and migrants to build a new life integrating with the local society.

The aim of this article is to present and evaluate the potential of a digital companion for migrants that will enable personalized two-way communication using chatbots. Because of the various languages spoken and alphabets used by the arriving communities, pictograms, images and other signs will be used as a “visual language” that will facilitate communication and ensure understanding.

The tool will provide migrants with information on the available services and will allow them to interact with the local contexts in general. In addition, the information gathered using the digital companion will be used to collect factbased information on migration which will be fed to Public Administrations (PAs) for service provision purposes; and to the local population, in order to enhance the perception of refugees among the local communities.

A number of co-creation workshops, interviews, observation and surveys will be carried out for the creation of the digital companion. This personalized tool will be user-centered and will take into account user feedback from the beginning of the project.

The tool is expected to facilitate communication with incoming migrants and provide factual, useful information to PAs and local communities. The results from the project will be disseminated among key stakeholders and the tool will be designed so that it can be adapted to different contexts and countries.

This project is part of REBUILD, a major proposal from various European and international organizations that aim at improving management procedures of the local authorities and the life quality of the migrants.

Elena Ruiz Cortés (University of Granada)

The role of digital technologies in supporting diasporic communities’ first experiences in the host country

Although it is clearly understood that digital technologies can be of assistance to diasporic communities, the specific measures that may lead to this objective need to be identified. One of the first contacts migrants have with the host society is through its authorities, given that they are expected to obtain the administrative documentation that proves their right of residence. In our view, how digital resources, either provided by the authorities or by other social actors, may help in this contact is vital since it is crucial to enable migrants to acquire residence. In our research we analyse one of those social practices,

the application process for a residence card for family members of EU nationals in Spain and in the UK* , with a view to identifying which digital practices, materials and technologies are in place to help these migrants before, during and after the process. Our results reveal differences between Spain and the UK in how they support, or do not support, migrants in terms of the resources available and the translated materials available. Obviously, our results also detect different ways in which the authorities approach digitally mediated communication in their multilingual societies.

*The results can be applicable to other immigration processes in the UK.

Indra Ekmanis (Public Radio International)

Reimagining stakeholders: Digital humanities and public media in migration storytelling

The media play a significant role in shaping public understandings of immigration, yet media organizations in the US rarely self-reflect the populations they are covering. First, I ask, is it possible to democratize coverage of indigenous, minority and immigrant communities by removing embedded hegemonic funding structures? In this practitioner research as a fellow in a non-profit media institution, I use my training in interdisciplinary area and cultural studies to analyze the impact of crowdfunding immigration stories with donations from diaspora communities themselves (rather than donations from traditional public media consumers). I also consider the effect of elevating first-person perspectives in immigration storytelling and consumption. Does a public platform for self-ethnography increase the resonance of public media among diaspora communities? I consider how bringing immigrants into the media production process as stakeholders and writers affects access, expression and representation. Second, I consider how public media can amplify the work of critical digital humanities research and break through disciplinary silos. How can scholarly research be better translated to the communities about whom knowledge is produced? Using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, I argue that public media serves an important role in bridging the metaphorical gap between the ivory tower and the public.

E. Marie Thaut (SOAS, University of London)

Language documentation and description with(in) a digital diaspora: The SOAS Sylheti Project

The practice of language documentation and description (LDD) has traditionally involved a 'lone-wolf' linguist venturing to a far-off land, to spend several months at a time with an isolated community of speakers of the target language and 'bring back' records to be analysed in academia. However, there are few truly isolated minority language communities these days that don't have internet connections where text, images, and video can be shared on various social media platforms with trained linguists and amateur language enthusiasts equally participating.

The SOAS Sylheti Project (SSP) began work with the Sylheti-origin users of the local Surma Community Centre in Camden, after the invitation of the Centre's director who noticed how the older immigrants weren't speaking the 'same language' as the newer immigrants from Sylhet. Face-to-face linguistic documentation work with the local diaspora community in London, complemented with social media participants' input and feedback, took on a connected international scope, with speakers in other diaspora communities around the globe, as well as in the homeland of Sylhet, participating 'virtually'.

The SSP's online component has helped gain a greater picture of dialectal variation, has had a role in script revitalisation, worked on spelling conventions, etc.