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Social Media and Migration Research
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Abstract

The use of internet technologies in daily life has risen dramatically in recent years, increasing researchers' interest in how social media such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are changing social realities and potentially facilitating innovative research methodologies. As technology and migration are considered prominent drivers of the globalization processes, the increasing interest of migration researchers is unsurprising. Nevertheless, given the relative youth of research in this field, approaches to the topic differ. By taking a step back and viewing the literature from a wide range of disciplines, this paper provides a broad overview of the current state of research on migration and social media in four key areas: 1) the use of social media to trigger and facilitate migration in both positive (networks) and negative ways (human trafficking); 2) the role of social media and migrant integration; 3) the use of social media in diaspora engagement; and 4) the use of social media in conducting migration research. This paper adds to the literature by being the first systematic review of the topic.

Key words: Social Media, Migration Research, Social Networking Sites, Diaspora Engagement, Integration, Facilitation of Migration

JEL Classification: F22, O15, O33, L86, L82, Q55

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Introduction

The use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in people's daily lives has dramatically increased in recent years. This has coincided with the emergence of social media. As of 30 September 2013, Facebook recorded some 1.19 billion active users[3] (Facebook, 2013). This number has risen exponentially since the launch of the site in 2004 and is roughly equivalent to one in every seven people across the entire world population. Researchers are increasingly interested in how social media such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are changing social realities as well as how these new communication technologies can facilitate innovative research methodologies.

Migration researchers can ask a multitude of different questions about how social media affects migrants and migration processes. As Komito (2011) muses:

> "For instance, would the strong emotional support of a community provided by social media lessen the motivation for migrants to make social contacts in the society into which they have recently arrived? Will it make easier for migrants to move from one country to another, because the migrant can "carry" his or her community of friends with them, while also providing easier access to advanced information on new locations? Or, if they decide to return home, will it make it easier for migrants to reintegrate into their home society because they have not really left, in terms of social interaction and participation? (p1084)

Given the relative paucity of research in this field, approaches to the topic differ, and many questions remain unanswered, partially explored, or even unasked. By taking a step back and viewing the literature from a wide range of disciplines, this paper seeks to provide a broad overview of the current state of research on migration and social media to identify directions for future research.

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[3] An active user is defined as someone who has logged into Facebook at least once in the past month

In order to frame the discussion, the paper first reviews some definitions in order to situate the paper within a theoretical context. The remainder of the paper teases out some of the current thinking on four key areas in which social media has implications for migration research: 1) the use of social media to trigger and facilitate migration in both positive (networks) and negative ways (human trafficking); 2) the role of social media and migrant integration; 3) the use of social media with regard to diaspora engagement; and 4) the use of social media in conducting migration research.

Key Concepts

Social media is not as new a concept as one may think. As early as 1979, researchers from Duke University created 'Usenet', which was a worldwide discussion platform that allowed users to post public messages. An exponential increase in internet users (notably the emergence of young 'digital natives') since the 1990s, as well as the development of faster technologies (e.g. broadband) has changed the nature of the internet, leading to the advent of the concept of *Web 2.0* in 2004. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) define Web 2.0 as "a platform whereby content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals, but instead are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion" (p61). Combined with this, User Generated Content (UGC) emerged to describe the different types of media content that are widely available yet created by the end-users. As such, social media is defined as: "*a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content*" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p61).

Thus, social media is a broad term encompassing web logs (blogs), collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia), social networking sites (e.g. Facebook), content communities (e.g. YouTube), virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life) and virtual gaming worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft). Some researchers also consider technologies that facilitate private communication (such as Skype) to be social media, although such technologies do not allow for the creation of user generated content.

For migration researchers, the advancement of ICT technology has led to the development of phrases such as the "annihilation of space" and "death of distance" (Cairncross, 1997 in Komito 2011). In 1971, Zalinsky predicted a super-advanced society in which technological developments would eventually lead to reduced mobility. In current discussion, however, ICT is often attributed the opposite effect. The impact of social media on migration is therefore not clear.

Migration is an inherently multidisciplinary field. The convergence of migration systems theory from geography and migration network theory, from sociology and anthropology, illustrates one of the ways in which migration studies has become an inherently multidisciplinary subject. The basic premise of migration systems theory is that a range of different, interacting, macro- and micro-level structures, not solely economic factors, mediates migration. Micro-level structures refer to the social networks of migrants that can facilitate their migration. Concepts such as 'cultural capital' and 'social capital' are often applied in this context to understand how personal relationships can assist migrants in the process of migrating as well as in the process of settling into a new location (Castles & Miller, 2009). In addition, through different feedback mechanisms such as information sharing or remittances, the costs of migration can be reduced, thus helping to explain the formation of migration networks and systems (de Haas, 2010). Within this theoretical framework, social media can act as a feedback mechanism as well as a tool facilitating the mobilization of different forms of capital, but evidence confirming this role is limited (Hiller & Franz, 2004).

It is also widely recognized in the transnationalism literature that people can be simultaneously engaged in two or more places at one time (de Haas, 2006; Dekker and Siegel, 2013), and that the advent of space and time compressing technologies such as the passenger jet and VOIP technologies can facilitate this process (Portes et al, 1999). Glick Schiller and colleagues (1992) define transnationalism as: "the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement...transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to *two* or more societies

simultaneously"(p1-2; original emphasis). Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) describe this as a process 'in which migrants, to varying degrees, are simultaneously embedded in the multiple sites and layers of the transnational social fields in which they live' (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007, p130). Social media represents one such site in which migrants can operate, and the internet can then become a potential fieldwork site for migration researchers. Cohen (2008) argues that, because global diasporas are in constant flux, the methodologies used to study them should be equally flexible. Additionally, the advent of Web 2.0 has opened up new digital spaces. In many ways these spaces can be regarded as social fields and can facilitate the process of transnationalism through allowing users to be engaged simultaneously with two or more physical localities (Ros, 2010).

It is these intersections between offline realities and 'virtual worlds' have sparked the curiosity of many researchers. This emerging literature comes from a range of disciplines and offers a rich variety of insights into how new technologies are transforming human experiences. Being interested in the transformative possibilities that mobility offers, and acknowledging that its complex nature requires multidisciplinary approaches, this paper explores a broad range of current literature to examine the interactions between migrants and social media.

Social Media and the Facilitation of Migration

Many researchers conceptualize the relationship between social media and migration by considering how it facilitates social ties between individuals (Haythornthwaite, 2002; Komito, 2011; Dekker and Engberson, 2012). Dekker and Engberson (2012) argue that new communication channels opened by social media can transform migrant networks and thus facilitate migration through four key functions: (1) by strengthening strong ties with family and friends; (2) by creating weak ties to individuals that can assist in the process of migration (and integration); (3) by creating a network of latent ties; and (4) by creating a rich source of 'insider knowledge' on migration. Combined, these functions can serve to reduce the costs of migration through both reducing the emotional cost of separation and

through allowing access to both information and contacts that can assist the migrant in having a smooth relocation. The implication of this is that social media can have different impacts on social relations.

Based on previous research and a review of the literature, Haythornthwaite (2002) findings suggest that where ties are strong, communicators can influence each other to adapt their behaviour through verbal exchanges via different communication channels. Where ties are weak, communicators were historically more reliant upon formal means of communication; new media, however, allows previously unconnected people to communicate and can thus strengthen their network of weak ties. Komito (2011) has similar findings. On one hand social media facilitates the creation of weak ties through brief offline interactions or superficial online encounters based on a shared interest (for example, via a social networking sites, gaming environment, or forum). On the other, social media enables migrants to passively monitor past social connections, which can help to sustain community, even across distances. This leads to the observation that social media may slow down the process of integration while encouraging the mobility of migrants from one society to another given that it is increasingly possible to stay connected. It has been observed that 'new technologies made snowball migration easier by increasing the number of friends and relations abroad who can be found and might be willing to provide assistance' (Komito, 2011, p1077).

Human Trafficking

While social media may provide migrants with information about the destination country, social media could potentially play a role in the recruitment of trafficking victims (Boyd et al 2011). The development of online technologies allows traffickers to access a greater number of victims and to advertise their services over larger spatial distances. The diffusion of different types of technology and websites (adult classified websites, social-network sites, pre-paid cellular phones) allows traffickers to develop complex recruitment strategies that can be difficult to detect (Latonero, 2011). However, the technologies

themselves may also be used to the advantage of law enforcement (Latonero, 2011; Kennedy, 2012; Thakor & boyd, 2013). One of the key benefits of computer-assisted technology is the possibility to identify possible cases of trafficking within a large data corpus, which is particularly helpful given the sheer mass of activity on social networking sites such as Twitter (currently estimated at 500 million Tweets per day) (Twitter, 2013). Nevertheless, technical experts must be engaged in the process of developing appropriate data reduction and analysis techniques.

There are limited yet innovative attempts to investigate the ways in which social networking sites are being used to identify possible victims (Latonero et al, 2012). Latoneo (2011, 2012) advocates for tools such as data mining, mapping and advanced analytics that can be used to increase prevention of trafficking, protection of victims, and prosecution of traffickers using data derived from social media. For example, one research study involves the use of the Twitter Search Function. For a period of one week in June 2011, posts were collected that contained the world 'escort'. After filtering out noise (such as 'police escort', 'Ford escort'), a sample of 315 posts containing this term was found (Latonero, 2011, p28). With this data the researchers performed several analytical techniques including the creation of 'word clouds'. Word clouds allow users to better visualize a corpus of text by giving great prominence to words that feature more frequently within the text. This can be used to identify common features of posts such as geographical areas which can be used to further refine the tools used to identify possible traffickers online.

Another study reported in Latonero (2011) looks at the potentials for online network analysis using a combination of human experts and computer-assisted technologies. For a period of three months a computer-assisted programme mined data from the Los Angeles Backpage website, which is an online classified service. The programme collected 55,000 potential advertisements using term frequency analysis to filter articles with age/gender indicators, such as 'young' and 'girl'; indicators of nationalities and ethnicities; and transitory indicators such as 'visiting'. Experts could then input various permutations of these indicators in order to identify possible advertisements by human traffickers. A similar technique is used with TrafficBot to automatically police online classified

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advertisements with minimal human resource input (Wang et al, 2012). Despite these innovative approaches, Latonero et al (2012) is concerned that social media is often neglected by law enforcers in favour of adult classified sites, which are more visible and accessible for investigation.

There is a lack of research focusing on the perspective of victims of trafficking, which is in part due to the gate keeping role of NGOs working with the victims of trafficking, making it difficult for researchers to gain access to trafficking victims (Latonero et al, 2012). There are anecdotal media stories, however, about the use of social media platforms to reunite victims of trafficking with their families. For example, a recent news article reported that a Chinese man who had been internally trafficked after being kidnapped as a child was reunited with his family 23 years after his abduction with the help of an online community explicitly started to help trafficked children identify their families and communities of origin. Through the online forum 'Baby Come Home', users share their memories about their childhoods and abduction experiences, which volunteers use to identify possible source communities and potential birth parents (Hooper, 2013).

Elliott & McCartant (2013) try to understand the use of technology by victims of trafficking by conducting in-depth interviews with professionals working with victims of trafficking in the UK. They find that technology can act as a form of additional control that allows the trafficker to better monitor their victims. While it may be assumed that access to technology would be restricted by traffickers to avoid victims seeking help, this highlights a complexity which is inherent to the human trafficking literature: notably the degree of agency that can be involved even when one is in an exploitative situation.

Social Media and Migrant Integration

One of the main debates within the literature is whether ICT helps or hinders migrant integration.

In the past, migrants were often viewed as being 'uprooted' from their country of origin, but it is increasingly recognized that ICT technologies such as social media can facilitate retained connections between migrants and their countries of origin (Diminescu, 2008). While historically, contact with family and friends back home would have required either expensive phone calls or lengthy waits between the sending and receiving of letter and cassette messages, the advancement of technology allows for immediate communication. From the perspective of psychology, this can represent a way of coping with familial separation which can have implications for one's mental health (Bacigalupe & Cámara, 2012). Thus, while in the past a feeling of loneliness may have prompted migrants to seek companionship in the country of destination, social networking can act as an 'emotional buffer', decreasing motivations to integrate (Komito, 2011). Social media allows migrants to carry their friends and family from one place to another, reducing the need to establish local connections and potentially prompting further migratory movements (Komito, 2011). A similar finding is made by Brekke (2008) in her study of young refugees in Norway. Brekke observes that 'by using the Internet they are not so dependent upon finding friends and developing social networks in their geographic proximity, and regard online friends as being just as adequate as the people they meet face-to-face' (p111).

Furthermore, Komito (2011) finds that ICT strengthens bonding capital more that bridging capital, meaning that social media is more likely to internally reinforce communities as opposed to connecting them to different communities. In other words Lampe et al (2005) find that users mostly use Facebook to build connections with people they have met offline, and are less likely to use social media to establish new connections. Thus, the use of new technologies has the potential to virtually segregate migrants from the wider society in which they live. There is however a theoretical argument that proposes that the building of a coherent migrant community can actually assist integration (Aretxabala & Riezu, 2012). In a study on 70 teenage immigrants from the former Soviet Union living in Russia, Elias and Lemish (2009) find that the internet reinforces a strong Russian identity and does not always contradict integration and can in fact represent a valuable resource to young immigrants navigating their way around a new society (Elias & Lemish, 2009).

Previous studies have demonstrated that media is a useful way of getting information about the host country to migrants, which can assist in their integration (Hwang & He 1999; Walker, 1999). It is likely that social media can perform a similar role. There are a plethora of online forums, Facebook Groups, Twitter Feeds and blogs that can provide both official information by governments, such as U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services[4], or local migrant support services such as the Berwick Migrant Support Centre[5].

In addition to this, a recent policy brief[6] highlights the potential role of ICT in helping migrant families overcome feelings of isolation when they first arrive in a country by 1) making information available to new migrants (often in their own language); 2) allowing the exploration of migrants' own cultural heritage as well as the cultural practices of the destination country; 3) providing learning and training opportunities particularly in the area of language acquisition; and 4) promoting integration into schools for young immigrants by providing inroads into social networks and promoting language aquisition (Redecker, Hache, & Centeno, 2010). Communications technologies can also be used by migrants seeking financial support from the government for cultural activities (Tammsaar, & Sousa; Laanpere, 2011).

The INCLUSO project[7] aims 'to deliver a verifiable proof that ICT, and more precisely, social software tools, can facilitate social inclusion of marginalized young people' (INCLUSO, 2013). The project finds that some social software tools have the potential to facilitate interactions between welfare organizations and vulnerable youth as well as among youngsters because social media presents a less threatening environment for expression of feelings. Despite this, there is evidence that it is often the staff at welfare organizations that struggle with technology (Dekelver, 2008) and, as such, the full potential of social media as a way of reaching out to vulnerable youth has not been fully exploited.

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[4] https://www.facebook.com/uscis?fref=ts
[5] https://www.facebook.com/TheBerwickMigrantSupportGroup/info
[6] Prepared by the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS) in collaboration with DG Education and Culture, Directorate A, Unit A1 (Lifelong Learning: contribution to the Lisbon process) and DG Information Society and Media, Directorate H, Unit H3 (ICT for Inclusion).
[7] An EU-financed project under Action line 3.7 'ICT for independent living and inclusion' that ran from September 2008 to September 2010

Despite the suggestion that ICT may undermine integration because of its facilitation of connections with the homeland, transnationalism literature increasingly shows that integration and transnational engagement are not mutually exclusive (Erdal & Oeppen, 2013; Dekker & Siegel, 2013). Social media presents one potential avenue for research given its role in facilitating simultaneous engagement with two or more societies.

Social Media and Diaspora Engagement

A growing body of research has found that the internet has influenced the creation of diasporic identities by creating a space in which identities and narratives can be expressed, explored, and strengthened (Ackah & Newman, 2003; Hiller & Franz, 2004; Bernal, 2004, 2006; Georgiou, 2006; Kissau and Hunger, 2010; Mano & Willems, 2010; Parham, 2004; Peel, 2010; Komito, 2011.) Social networks on the Web can transform the way people relate to space and place, specifically for members of the diaspora (Marchandise, 2012, p3) by creating a transnational public sphere where narratives of history, culture, democracy and identity can be forged (Crush et al, 2011a; Marchandise, 2010; Hirji, 2006). However, diaspora activities online can also reflect fragmentation in offline communities, (Asal, 2012)

One targeted research project on social media and diaspora engagement is the e-Diasporas Atlas[8] (Diminescu, 2012). The shift to Web 2.0 has also influenced diaspora communities with an expansion of websites run by individuals without specific IT expertise alongside social networking platforms that greatly enhanced the opportunities available to migrant communities to organize online. However, relatively little research has been done to understand these online archives. The e-Diaspora Atlas archives and observes the interaction of around 8,000 websites created and managed by migrants and provides an innovative approach to the research of online diaspora interaction and behaviour. Within this context, an e-diaspora is a migrant collective that organizes itself and is active first and foremost on the web; its practices are those of a community whose interactions are

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[8] Developed within the framework of the *Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme* ICT Migrations programme and coordinated by Dana Diminescu. For more see information see: http://www.e-diasporas.fr/

'enhanced' by digital exchange (Diminescu, 2012) while acting as both an online and offline entity.

Social media has played an interesting role in coordinating the uprising and spreading of information, video, and images during the Arab Springs, both within and beyond state borders (Chebib & Sohail, 2011). In fact: 'the Arab Spring uprisings have sparked polarized debates about the role of the Internet and social media tools in political mobilization' (Anden-Papadopolous & Pantti, 2013, p2186). Ekwo (2011) argues that there is a strong connection between unrestricted information flow and effective democratic governance, as it provides a platform for people to criticize home governments and generate international support. In this sense, ICT could be seen as tools for democratic political change and mobilization (Harb, 2011). Despite this, little is known about the impacts of diaspora media on democratization processes.

Nevertheless, it is important that researchers do not disconnect online activities from offline realities. Kissau and Hunger (2010) find a connection between online participation and offline political activity: Kurdish and Turkish migrants are more politically active when involved in internet information exchange. This leads Kissau (2012) to later conclude that offline participation is often the best predictors of online activity (Kissau, 2012).

Social media can also be a way for governments to reach out to their diaspora. Murti (2013) analyses the use of the Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC) website[9] for expanding economic engagement of the Indian diaspora by the India state. The study finds, however, that states often lean towards one-way communication efforts, through the provision of information, which undermines the potential of Web 2.0 in establishing two-way communication.

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[9] www.oifc.in

Social Media in Migration Research

It has long been recognized that the use of the internet to reach participants for surveys can be a useful tool for researchers by reducing costs of survey implementation and increasing the geographical area that can be covered by surveys (Bryman, 2004). They have also been hailed for their increased potential inclusion of hard-to-access groups (Hesse-Biber & Griffin, 2012). In migration studies, for example, online surveys could increase access to irregular migrants who may feel less threatened in completing an online survey compared to a face-to-face interview (Reips & Buffardi, 2012). Nevertheless, internet methods have also received criticism for gathering biased data. This is in part due to the fact that access to the internet is not universal (the 'digital divide'), invitations for surveys can either be automatically or manually designated as 'spam', and online methods lack the personal touch associated with face-to face methods (Bryman, 2004).

Thus, the use of internet-mediated technologies (IMT) is an emerging but not entirely new methodological approach. Social media has already been used by a number of researchers in creative ways. This section reviews some examples of the use of social media in migration research in order to contextualize the advantages, disadvantages, and ethical issues posed by the use of social media in migration research. Two main ways in which social media can be used are explored: 1) as a way of reaching participants or retrieving data; and 2) as a research site.

Reaching Participants

Crush et al (2011b) find that, as well as being a space where diasporic identities can be forged, social networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn are also a place that can be used to collect data from the diaspora. They find that, in the absence of known sampling frames, social networking sites can provide access to a wider, dispersed community. The functionalities of social networking sites such as Facebook therefore allow researchers to search for potential participants when conducting research. For example, Facebook groups established for particular diasporas can be searched for (Ragab, McGregor & Siegel, 2013),

and social platforms established for specific migrant groups can also be identified (see for example Guyana UK[10]).

Information Retrieval from Social Media

In its simplest form, social media sites can be repositories for data that can be gathered for use in more traditional forms of data analysis such as discourse analysis and qualitative content analysis (Bryman, 2004). Reips and Buffardi (2012), for example, created a data-set from 100 Facebook profiles and analysed the data to identify markers of biculturalism (for example having multiple languages appearing on one's Facebook wall).

Within the context of the UniteEurope Project[11] a tool is being developed to assist local governments in the monitoring online discussions about immigrants and ethnic minorities in the interest of developing better policy interventions – not dissimilar to its use by private companies to monitor customer demands. One concern about this approach reflects conventional criticisms about the use of online data collection tools: response bias. By using social media to mine data on perceptions of migrants, there is a risk that only extreme views will be extracted that are not truly representative of general feelings towards migrants. Basing policy decisions on information mined from online sources therefore remains conceptually problematic.

The internet can also be used to map networks and connections between, for example, migrant organizations. Kissau and Hunger (2010) conduct a structured website searches using search engines and snowball sampling to identify 800 websites created and used by migrants from the former Soviet Union, Turkey and Kurdish areas in the Middle East living in Germany, Switzerland and Austria. As they were interested in examining organizational structures, they used a network visualization tool (Issue Crawler), a software tool that allows the user to locate and visualize connections between websites. The authors concluded that 'analysis of internet sites, their uses and thus emerging communication paths can add to the understanding of migrant' bridging behaviour as well as the

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[10] http://www.guyanauk.com/
[11] http://www.unite-europe.eu

differences and similarities within and between transnational communities and diaspora' (Kissau & Hunger, 2010, p247). A study of web-based networks of Palestinian communities in Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Australia, the United States, Canada, Spain, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay finds that links between diaspora and non-diaspora actors within the destination country are more prominent than those found among Palestinians living in different countries (Ben-David, 2012). Thus online network analysis can be a useful way of complementing our understanding of how diasporas organize themselves.

Social platforms can also act as sites for discourse creation. An example of this is the ILO Asia-Pacific Knowledge Network on Migration (AP-MagNet[12]) portal, which brings together policy makers, academics and other stakeholders to discuss different issues such as circular migration.

Social Media as a Research Site

The internet can also be used by researchers to investigate migration issues through other methods traditionally associated with off-line research (such as participant observation or social network analysis). In other words, "instead of regarding social networking sites as simply a means to communication between two given localities, it is also possible to start thinking about social networking sites as a place in which people in some sense actually live" (Madianou & Miller, 2012, p156-7).

Here the concept of *polymedia,* first introduced by Madianou & Miller (2012), is useful. Polymedia refers to the shift from communication being limited by access and cost to certain technologies towards a reality in which people can choose between a number of different communication methods. The term evolved during research on the communication of migrant domestic workers with their children in the country of origin (Miller & Horst, 2012). In the context of their work with Filipino mothers and children, the emphasis of *polymedia* is not on how new media can mediate the relationship between mother and child but more about how 'the struggle over the concept of being a proper mother mediates how we choose and use polymedia' (Miller & Horst, 2012, p13). Research

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[12] http://apmagnet.ilo.org/

should focus on technological access and literacy to understand how and why people choose different mediums to communicate with given a broader cultural context. This is also supported in the work of Tacchi (2012), who finds that it is not so much the uptake of technology that is important but more the role of culture in determining how technology is used. To understand the parallels between on- and off-line worlds in the context of migration, one must also consider how the facilitation of communication via online platforms affects migration.

One study that treats Facebook as a fieldwork site is that of McKay (2011). The site of her fieldwork was the newsfeed produced by 43 respondents from the Philippines who she has encountered in previous research and have become her Facebook 'friends'. She uses this to explore the role of profile pictures in projecting certain individual and collective identities. Oiarzabal (2012) complements four years (2002-2006) of fieldwork with the Basque community with four years of looking specifically at their online communities (2006-2010). It is the first study of its kind to specifically investigate diaspora-associations on Facebook, and he argues that it 'opens new venues for future multi- and interdisciplinary analysis' focusing on why people use social networking sites and how this affects different aspects of their offline behaviour. He finds that SNS allow diaspora organizations to create online spaces in which identities can be expressed and information about their objectives can be better disseminated. Oiarzabal's study was timely in the sense that it was towards the end of his initial fieldwork that the 'webscape' of organizations online started to change and more diaspora organizations started to appear on Facebook.

It is clear that online and offline worlds are inherently connected, which could potentially be explored using a multi-sited approach. While challenging to implement, multi-sited research allows for the collection of rich descriptive data that better reflects a complex social reality than single-sited research (Mazzucato, 2008). It is possible that social networking sites could be taken as a distinct site of analysis, which can help researchers better comprehend the different impacts that social media can have on migration and integration processes, and transnational engagement.

Discussion

This paper has provided a broad overview of the current state of research on migration and social media in four key areas: 1) the use of social media to trigger and facilitate migration in both positive (networks) and negative ways (human trafficking); 2) the role of social media and migrant integration; 3) the use of social media in diaspora engagement; and 4) the use of social media in conducting migration research. It is clear from this review that further research is warranted to better understand the social implications of social media for migration.

Regarding the facilitation of migration, an important point to highlight with regard to these studies is that they generally only look at the use of social media by migrants, and few look at users in the origin country (Benitez, 2012). It is of interest to investigate social media from the perspective of individuals in origin countries to better understand how social media may factor in to the decision to migrate and the choice of location. It is also pertinent to assess how social media can change family dynamics by, for example, being used to garner familial support over borders or passively monitor and/or control migrant family members from afar.

Another underexplored sub-narrative relates to the use of social media in the passive monitoring of others. This could relate to human traffickers monitoring their victims or governments monitoring the activities of 'activists' but equally to families in the origin country monitoring migrants to ensure that they are not 'forsaking' their identity and identifying too much with the destination country culture. Additionally these uses need not only apply to migrants. In the Netherlands, for example, there is currently a decline in the use of Facebook by Dutch youth, which is largely explained by a fear of being monitored by parents, and thus social media can represent a form of social control (PCM, 2013). Thus social media has the potential to represent a form of social control and is far from being immune to power relations existent in offline worlds. Research on the impacts of social

media need to consider how social media technologies are being used and adapted by users situated in very different contexts.

While the idea that social media may act as a substitute for migration has been alluded to, this theme has not really been explored in research. One extreme way in which this may be true and has received significant media attention in recent months relates to the phenomenon of 'web cam child sex tourism'. In the Netherlands, Terre des Hommes, a Children's Right charity, have recently handed over the dossiers for 1000 online child sex offenders to Interpol (Terre des Hommes, 2013). These were identified through the use of a computer generated virtual girl named 'Sweety' who was used to catch predators using online sites to solicit the sexual services of minors using webcam software.

Almost all of the literature on human trafficking and social media is based in the United States and focuses on the loss of control that social media brings to law enforcers. The empirical work on this, however, is limited and focuses on online classified websites such as Backpage.com and Craig's List (Kennedy, 2012). It is clear that the use of social media by human traffickers merits further research and, by better understanding the use of social networks in the recruitment of victims of trafficking, it is possible that tools to address it can be refined. This will evidently require a multidisciplinary approach involving experts from a number of disciplines such as computer science, sociology, anthropology, criminology, and psychology.

Though internet-based research is a relatively recent phenomenon, there has been a large increase in both the number of internet-based tools as well as number of researchers using them. There is a clear argument that the use of social media is on the rise and that researchers will benefit from embracing new technologies (Reips and Buffardi, 2011). The practical application of social media as a site for social research poses many new questions for researchers, however. For example, how does one define the boundaries of the field site when researching in an online environment? How can a researcher define their sampling frame, or ensure representativeness within the context of a frequently changing

population? How does one manage the large amount of data generated on social media each day?

On the basis of these questions, 'scientific research on internet phenomena must draw on a variety of different research methods in order to get the most differentiated picture of online reality possible' (Kissau & Hunger, 2010, p249). It is not surprising to find that most research connecting migration and ICT from 2004-2008 was found in the disciplines of sociology, anthropology and political science (Borkert et al, 2009). The advent of 'digital anthropology' (Miller, & Horst, 2012) and a call for an 'electronic sociology of migration' (Diminescu, 2008) as a distinct field of investigation, along with terms such as 'polymedia', signals that interactions with technology are a significant part of the modern age.

Nevertheless, there is also a clear need for multidisciplinary research teams to move the research forward within a truly digital age. Diminescu (2008), for example, highlights the need for ICT specialists to assist in the development of innovative research tools. For example, in computer science, there are a number of developments that seek to extend the knowledge base on information retrieval from social networks. In 2012, the Journal of Information Retrieval published a special issue on information retrieval for social media (H. Wang et al, 2012).

Despite the potential advantages of internet-based research, a slew of new ethical questions arise with its use. Particularly where social-media sites are viewed as a potential field-site for participant observation (such as Williams et al.'s [2006] article on the social life of guilds in World of Warcraft), the issue of 'lurking' comes to the forefront. This is when a researcher does not tell those they are observing that they are a researcher. This can be done due to concerns that the behaviour of individuals will change under the knowledge of being observed, but there are also inherent challenges associated with obtaining informed consent online due to the constant flux in users at different points in time. Social networking sites, such as Facebook, also raise ethical questions in the sense that 'the line between personal and public data becomes blurred' (Hesse-Biber & Griffin,

2012, p57). Citing texts obtained from online sources also makes it harder to ensure the anonymity of participants as a simple search will usually find the original source of the text (Hesse-Biber & Griffin, 2012). This paper only provides some thoughts on the ethical issues surrounding the use of social media in migration research. Any project designed with the intention of using these tools should think through the ethical issues that arise.

Thus multi-sited research embedded in the transnationalism literature that focuses on online *and* offline spheres, considers the perspectives of both the migrant and their networks in both the country of origin and destination (and potentially in third countries), embraces a multidisciplinary approach, and considers the ethical implications of such research seems to be an ideal way in which to develop the knowledge base on the connections between migration and social media.

Concluding remarks

This paper is a first contribution and only scratches the surface of an emerging field of study and as such there are unanswered questions and opportunities for further research. This paper is intended to spark dialogue and thus, welcome feedback providing significant contributions to the knowledge base on the connections between migration and social media. For example, it is acknowledged that the role of social media in the management of human displacement merits further investigation and will be the topic of a future paper[13].

Nevertheless the following questions may be useful in guiding future research on social media and migration:

- Do migrants use social media more or less than non-migrants?

- Do migrants use social media in different ways than non-migrants?

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[13] For example, in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, volunteers from around the world have been sifting through social media content to provide aid workers with real time maps of who needs help and where (Micromappers, 2013).

- Is social media a substitute for mobility?

- What is the role of social media in displacement? For example how can crowd sourcing and the geo-tagging of social media output be used in better organising humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of natural disasters and conflict?

- Are the effects of social media different from the effects of ICT technologies more generally?

- What is the role of social media, and technology more generally in knowledge transfer?

It is clear that social media cannot be considered in isolation from other ICT technologies or from the context within which the technology is adopted. It is also clear that a multidisciplinary approach will prove most beneficial in seeking to understand how social media may be transforming social realities in the area of migration.

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