Migration, Diaspora, and Information Technology in Global Societies

Edited by
Leopoldina Fortunati, Raul Pertierra
and Jane Vincent

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Foreword

*Leopoldina Fortunati, Raul Pertierra
and Jane Vincent*

The world today is being consistently transformed by internal and external migration and, indeed, if the external migrants were to constitute a country it would most likely rank among the first ten globally. This book aims to do justice to the great diversities of the multicultural, multilingual and multiethnic population of migrants. Coming from elsewhere, and using ICTs, migrants may choose to escape the inertia and fixity of their new local culture or they may interweave it with their own cultural differences into one new fabric. The everyday life experiences explored in this volume derive from understanding and comparing the activities of migrants in these different cultures in which they have built their new lives.

As the authors of this book describe, ICTs are the new ecosystem in a migrant's life, which span the elsewhere and the here, the present and the absent. Social and familial bonds are maintained, developed and denied; emotion and affections are experienced, memories are more or less recorded, the old and the new cultural identities negotiated, the masculinity and femininity continuously elaborated, the generations shaped and reshaped and different languages practiced: in sum, ICTs are the environments in which migrants, as the new locals, live their everyday life.

This book retraces migrants' practices of using these technologies on all the continents—Europe, Asia, Australia, the Americas and Africa—but it also deals with relevant theoretical issues which constitute problems still open in migration studies. Looking at migrants through the lens of ICT use offers new knowledge about a body of humankind on the move with a mobile phone in their pocket or access to the Internet to guide them, keep them in touch and maintain their life wherever they may be.

Preface
Mediating a Restless World

Daniel Miller

In a way it is strange that something so enormous and profound can at first sound so bland. To announce that this is "a book on media and migration" as a string of words does not of itself jolt us out of our attention to the everyday concerns we are busy with. But it should, and it does once we engage with our own knowledge and imagination of what these words imply. Let us start with media. We begin with a relatively obvious image: journalism and newspapers. Already we can start to appreciate that the role media plays in relation to migration is not merely reflective but determinant. In the U.K., where I live, the topic of migration, certainly immigration, is seen as central to politics, a key issue in the election of governments. It is perhaps *the* topic that generates right wing political activism and one which certainly frightens the rest of the political spectrum. Increasingly it seems to be the single issue that determines how we are governed, certainly in those cases where a party focused upon immigration (although relatively small) holds the balance of power, as is the case in several countries. But let us be clear. It is not immigration itself that is responsible for this state of affairs, it is the *media's* portrayal of immigration. It is the exploitation of this issue by the media. If there was no media interest then generally migration would certainly be significant but not so central to the determination of political outcomes. The consequences of this are by no means limited to politics. Being a migrant, the way people look at you, respond to you and whether or not they accept you seems to be beholden to this vastly powerful force—the media. So the first topic of this volume, the way the media represents migrants and the consequences of this representation, is hugely important not just to migrants but to the whole governance of the world.

But that is only the tip of an iceberg; this initial discussion then raises the question of what we mean when we use the term media. What has been implied so far is actually a rather old fashioned concept of what we might now call "old media"—the way the newspapers and television report to a passive audience news about migration. But most of the papers in this book are trying to encompass the state of the art in media, the new and very new media. Today we live in an unprecedented situation, described by Madianou and myself (2011) as Polymedia. Within the last two years very

ordinary people around the world, living not just in cities but in villages and small towns too, find that their relationship to media is entirely transformed once they have the money for computer access and phone services. Firstly they have a plethora of different media available to them from social networking sites, with YouTube, with blogging, Web cam, text messaging and with those infrastructures we so easily and so quickly take for granted, such as search engines. Secondly the issue of price moves from foreground to background because once the cost of the computer is dealt with there may be no actual cost to any message. This means that very ordinary low income people (the kind of people who migrate as workers) are developing an entirely new relationship to the media. Not as passive objects reported on by the media, but as the creators of media themselves, through blogs, YouTube and so on, and in their own communication to their Facebook friends. This is the second subject of this book, which complements the first: migrants as the makers of news, not just the objects of news.

Yet both of these considerations which seem hugely important at one level almost pale into insignificance when we start to pay attention to a third implication of this relationship between migration and media. What aspect of the media matters most to the migrants themselves? What happens when we stop thinking of media in terms of any kind of news and turn instead to the social relationships of ordinary people? When Mirca Madianou and myself decided to start research on a project investigating long distance communication between migrants and their left-behind families, we applied for grants under the following argument: There are of course many ways you can study migrants and many valuable topics that help us understand this situation. But what if instead of deciding for yourself what matters in migration you turn to the migrants themselves? What would they say was the single most important thing in the determination of their welfare, as to whether they would feel miserable or relatively comfortable with their situation? We suggested that what matters most to these migrants is exactly the same as what matters most to non-migrants. That is, their relation to a few core people whom they love: their children, parents, lovers, siblings and best friends. If we read a novel or see a film about migration that touches us it is very likely because these relationships of love will be central to the portrayal of those lives.

Once again it is when we start to use our imagination to think of what is at stake that media moves from background to foreground. The reason we are working on the way Filipina mothers use media to contact their left-behind children is because we realized that today the very degree to which a mother can consider herself to actually be a mother in practice depends almost entirely on those media. They have moved from a situation of being barely in contact at all to being able to check on every detail of homework and their daughter's boyfriends through being in touch many times a day. So it seemed reasonable to spend at least some time on that which makes

the most difference—that which matters most to migrants themselves—and once again this is now dependent upon media.

These are not three separate categories of academic enquiry. In the contemporary world of Polymedia it is not just that we can now blog, Facebook, text, Web cam or simply phone, for these things have not replaced newspapers and television but live alongside them. So as is clear in several of the chapters of this book we also need to pay attention to the points of intersection between these macro forces of news and the intimate lives mediated via new media communication, which come into play once we start to consider issues such as education and knowledge and privacy.

All of this is what explodes in front of us when we examine one half of the equation that links media to migration. When we turn to the other half, that of migration itself, the world seems even larger and even more restless. I recall my first ethnographic work in Trinidad over twenty years ago. I was astonished then that the majority of families I was studying, and therefore by implication the majority of families in the country as a whole, included a family member living abroad. Not a distant family member but a nuclear family member—that is, a parent, child or sibling. The normal, indeed the typical family was a migrant family. Gradually I came to realize that this was not something special to Trinidad but true in country after country, some of which now have their whole national economy more or less dependent upon these external relationships. It means that we have to stop thinking of migration as a special case, an aberration from the norm, and once again move the background to the foreground, so that our imagination of the ordinary and the typical starts from the situation of migration. This is not a book about a special case; it is a book about ordinary life. Still, we are only partway towards the reorientation of our vision that is required, not least because the headline migration that we tend to think about is that of international movement. However, migration has always been and continues to be also a central aspect of that which happens inside countries. When it comes to the centrality of media it really does not matter whether the family member is in another country or another part of one's own country, what matters is that one's relationship has now become a media and mediated relationship, not a face-to-face relationship. This point emerges with particular clarity in the series of papers on China that form the final section of this book.

Finally there is a need to confront populations of this world as they actually are. So much of the literature on migration and so much of the literature on media tends to focus upon those concerns that dominate the wealthiest, most metropolitan regions, in which academia is differentially situated, especially Western Europe and North America. It is their media and their immigrants that dominate so far. But most people in the world live in China and South Asia. It is the latest media statistics that really bring this home to us. When we realize that there are four billion mobile phones in the world but that three billion of these are found in what have been

called the developing countries, we realize where most of the world actually is. It is not just movements from backgrounds to foregrounds then that we are in need of but also a different vision laterally across the world.

All of this represents a considerable challenge to the very idea of a book on media and migration. How would we even start to envisage a volume that can encompass this huge restless planet, the proliferation of media and the actual nature and consequence of migration in all its vastness? Clearly we would need an edited collection rather than a simple monograph because to address the whole range from infrastructure to the intimate means different styles and different points of focus. Similarly there are differences as we try to express the range, from how migration is represented in media to how people use the media, to include internal migration within countries as well as transnational diasporas. Furthermore in a situation where we cannot hope to include all migration we need a judicious choice of example, preferably a selection in which the major populations such as those of China become the key case studies and not simply an addition to the rest.

The implications of this preface are that the book which follows is not simply a collection but in some ways a reflection of the only kind of academic response that actually contends with the true implications of that simple phrase—media and migration. It does indeed use China as its primary case study; it does include papers that range from the representation of migrants in its first theme to the ways which migrants do, and interestingly sometimes do not, actually use media to maintain their contacts to their primary relationships and the people they love. It includes papers that make us appreciate the centrality of states and markets and how we need to bridge between these macro forces and the personal and human worlds of particular migrants. It includes papers on the subtleties of the media itself, including language. It represents a wider range of academic methods in investigating these phenomena, from the patient immersion in Jamaican life represented by high quality ethnography to the comparative study of European data sets. Finally it recognizes that these themes touch on almost any wider social parameter with which social sciences need to engage: from gender to generation to ethnicity to kinship, from the economic to the political to the religious. There is a limit to what any one volume can hope to accomplish, but at the very least this particular volume has the ambition to demonstrate what it is we need to encompass.

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Acknowledgments

COST—the acronym for European Cooperation in Science and Technology—is the oldest and widest European intergovernmental network for cooperation in research. Established by the Ministerial Conference in November 1971, COST is presently used by the scientific communities of 36 European countries to cooperate in common research projects supported by national funds. The funds provided by COST—less than 1% of the total value of the projects—support the COST cooperation networks (COST Actions) through which, with EUR 30 million per year, more than thirty thousand European scientists are involved in research having a total value which exceeds EUR 2 billion per year. This is the financial worth of the European added value that COST achieves. A "bottom up approach"

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Introduction
Migrations and Diasporas— Making Their World Elsewhere

Leopoldina Fortunati, Raul Pertierra and Jane Vincent

The appropriation of the new media by migrants has changed the way in which today people migrate, move, negotiate their personal and national identity and make strategies to deal with new cultures. Central among the main causes of the diffusion, adoption and domestication of ICTs by migrants are the globalization and the development of the broadband society. Their mutual ontology is proving to become one of the leading forces for political, cultural and economic transformation in the contemporary world, and in this chapter the topics that expand upon and explore this debate are set out in a series of themed discussions concluding with an overview of the contents of the five sections of the book.

In this book the various chapters investigate how, and with which social effects, information and communication technologies are used by specific social groups who are migrants and for this reason are considered to be strangers in a host society. We use the term migrants in a general meaning, although the politics of migrations distinguishes between emigrants who are generally pushed by war or starvation, immigrants who are instead pulled by the will to find a job or by freedom, and émigrés who are those that were obliged to emigrate because their land was occupied (McLean 1996, 321). This volume looks in particular at how the practices and the trajectories of use of the technology influence the important phenomenon of migrations and diasporas, which could be seen as the emblem of the late modernity. The multifaceted role that these technologies perform in the dislocation of consistent groups of people is explored here. We question how the technologies allow migrants to remain in contact with their communities of origin, to construct or enhance the relational sphere with local communities, to discuss their national identity, the identity of native communities and of the global diaspora they encounter. We further explore how these technologies might be used to meet in the "virtual common world" migrants of other ethnic groups and/or nationalities with whom migrants share the identity of "strangers" and from whom it is often possible to have information about job possibilities and more. Paradoxically, these new technologies of communication exacerbate but also attenuate the experiences of solitude and social exclusion or deprivation both among migrants and those who remain behind.

FROM INTEGRATION TO CO-CONSTRUCTION

The book analyzes the different ways in which migrants, together with natives, contribute to co-construct contemporary societies and cultures by drawing on diverse traditions. In turn, it explores the different ways in which contemporary societies contribute to co-construct migrations and to being native in their own country of residence. These dynamics between natives and migrants and their mutual coming together are still poorly understood, partly because the social sciences have failed to develop adequate theoretical models for understanding migration and producing communitarian policies capable of overcoming different national paradigms (Heckmann and Schnapper 2003). For this reason, we prefer to under-use the term "integration" because of its heavy and often assumed description of the cultural adaptation process of migrants in a taken-for-granted community of practices of the host society. The host society, as well as migrants, is considered as a kind of fixed cultural reality which is not subject to any internal or external process of change and with which "the other" has to come to terms. Although widespread, the term integration does not reach a large consensus: sometimes it is connected to desegregation, other times to the attempt of bringing minorities' cultures into the mainstream of cultures and their social structures, including rights and services.

Our stance in this book is that one should talk of co-construction, which starts from the presupposition that each society is a dynamic system which meets and maybe clashes with other cultures, but in so doing enriches itself and consequently changes. The co-construction is a process in which locals and migrants give life to a different society in which both cultures are considered in their interaction and where both cultures have the concrete possibility to learn, reflect on and modify particular aspects of their everyday life. This concept develops the term "cultural co-traditions" advanced by Ferrarotti (1999, 158), in which the acceptance and coexistence of different cultures in a society is seen as the only way out of the problems posed by migrations. In particular, our glimpse is on the socio-technical systems that migrants and natives co-construct inside contemporary societies.

According to Scott and Marshall (2005, 155–156), traditional social studies on migrations and diasporas considered issues such as unidirectional flows, uprooting of migrants from their societies and cultures of origin and assimilation via the melting pot into the new host culture. These two scholars assert that contrary to this view, post-modern social studies usually focus on the improvements in transport and communications which have made it possible for migrants to implement their own distinctive identities, lifestyles and economic ties. This second wave of studies, of course, also reconsiders the question of modern nation-states by replacing the rigid territorial nationalism with the notion of shifting and contested boundaries, creating new terms such as "imagined communities" (Anderson 1983) and "global ethnospaces" (Appadurai 1996)

to describe transnational influences. It is evident that there is a tension and even a counter-position between these two approaches: traditional sociologists of migrations—continue Scott and Marshall—criticize post-modern scholars for the creation of abstruse theoretical terminology, their "apparent disregard for numbers and generalizations, and a tendency to ignore earlier sociological studies of migration (especially where these document complex structures of opportunity and migrants networks in ways which prefigure the new diaspora studies themselves)" (Scott and Marshall 2005, 155). Scott and Marshall are instead convinced that the new wave of studies on migration and diaspora is able to detail "the complexity, diversity, and fluidity of migrant identities and experiences in a more realistic way than did the older mechanistic theories and models of international migration" (2005, 155).

In our case, the expression "migrants in late modernity" aims to underline the perspective that sees migrants playing a more or less powerful role in the co-construction of contemporary societies. However, our approach is not focused on structural economic and political influences upon or on the part of migrants. Instead, we aim to contribute to the understanding of some of the relevant social problems that current societies are faced with, such as identity, social cohesion and structure of social stratification, by examining these topics from the perspective of ICT use by migrants. The migrants in fact do so by experiencing and developing the information and communication technologies, that is, by domesticating them in a way that is peculiar to their needs, both the means of information and communication they use and the communicative act (Miller and Horst 2006; Donner 2008). This emphasis is both methodological as well as substantive. The contributions of migrants as well as the growing significance of media are recognized. Thus in this book we focus on the communicative, linguistic, emotional and technological dimensions experienced by migrants in their relationship with the new (and the old) media. However, this approach is not completely new but has an old lineage.

A century ago, Sombart argued (1902/1927) that migrants historically gave a great impulse to technological innovations. Some leading examples are Einstein, Fermi, Marconi, Von Neumann, Wittgenstein and Gödel, who were all migrants. Far from hostile circumstances in their country of origin, they developed their creativity and imagination in a new host country. Migrants' contribution applies as much to the Arts as to the Sciences. African musicians, Jewish refugees, Soviet dissidents and Asian intellectuals have not limited themselves to "integrating" in the host culture and society but they have enriched and reoriented many contemporary societies and cultures. An example of the reorientation of the cultural identity of a country is that provided by Gerard Goggin (2008): Australia. This country, because of the growing migration from Japan and China, has reoriented its identity towards the Asia Pacific instead of towards the old Europe and in particular towards the U.K.

GLOBAL TRENDS OF MIGRATIONS

There are four elements which in a certain sense characterize contemporary migrations:

1. Their dimensions
2. A new gender balance among migrants
3. The fact that today migrants can count on the availability of ICTs as powerful tools to mediate their trajectory of life
4. The parallel development of other figures of contemporary mobility such as tourists, travelers, commuters and so on

In regard to the first element, the world has never registered so high a number of migrants. It is as if humankind decided to put itself on the move. As Simmel (1998, 568) had already noticed, the extraordinary increase of the need for the differences in the modern individual brings both the differentiation of the personal and social existences and the need for mobility. According to William Lacy Swing (responsible for the International Organization for Migration),[1] almost a billion of the people in the world are migrants: 214 million have migrated abroad and 700 million inside their country.[2] The account of migrations today is changing the profile of humankind and popularizes an experience which in the past has involved only some sections of worldwide population. As Daniel Miller writes in the Preface (this volume), "This is not a book about a special case, it is a book about ordinary life." Of course the motivations that are behind these impressive migrations are numerous: wars, starvation, political persecutions, lack of a job, poverty and so on.

As to the second element, differently from the past women today account for half of the global migrants. This important change in migrants' gender resonates with the increase of feminine power at an international level and has of course transformed both women's conditions of life and the social morphology of the territories from which these women migrated (see Heather Horst's chapter in this volume and Dustmann 2005a, 2005b, 2008). Traditionally women have always been more sedentary than men because of their family roles, although a certain number of women have experienced various types of travel and a high number at least a honeymoon (Corsi 1999). There have always been those who remained at home or who left to follow after the men of the family after they were well established in the new country and could call their wives and children to join them. Now, in many cases, it is the women who constitute the first wave of migrants (Pingol 2001) because the labor market specifically requires their labor force, as in the case of caregivers, or they migrate together with the men: this is in tune also with the increasing numbers of women who travel or do tourism alone (Silvestre and Valerio 1999). Among other things the demands of housework in families of industrialized countries whose

women are in the workforce, coupled with the reduction of social services, have created the unprecedented need for a feminine migration (Hochschild and Ehrenreich 2003). Newly emerging economies such as Hong Kong, Singapore and the Middle East have added significantly to this need for female migration. What are the consequences for families in both receiving and offering feminine migrant labor? What specific empowering processes for women occur, what redesignation of their gender identity and narratives and what new communicational practices does it generate? Does this strong presence of women among migrants have specific effects on the use of ICTs? If so, what are they? The Philippines, for example, has one of the highest rates of worker-migrants (Pertierra 2006), the majority being women, and it is worthy of note that recently an online counseling service has become available for the families of migrants in order to alleviate the problems of distant parenting. This change is contradictory because it has created many problems in the life of these women and in the families left behind, but at the same time migration has been an empowering experience for women, including the transfer of information and know-how and the promotion of entrepreneurship they might apply when and if they go back at home. Women's migration is important also for the families they leave behind, which may increase their income through "social remittances" and the possibility to access education and health services.

In respect to the third element, the broad availability of ICTs is also a distinctive characteristic of the current migrations. In fact migrants demonstrate a use of ICTs, such as Web 2.0, mobile phone and satellite television, which is often stronger than that of natives. Migrants can use the new media for mitigating the trauma of separation, being more able to keep in touch among themselves and with those left in their country of origin, but also for handling their life more easily in the new communities. Migrations are a condition for understanding the space and for making sense of it, but the availability of ICTs transforms the perception of physical distance and social isolation as well as the elaboration of the sense of belonging. Migrants are at the intersection of a "bonding" and a "bridging" use of ICTs, to borrow Putnam's expression (2000). However, they can also use the new media to restrict themselves within their own culture, thus paying less attention to learning a new language and culture.

Finally, as to the fourth point, migrants are different today because their condition of life is in tune with the high level of mobility that host societies have developed. A large number of their citizens are tourists, travelers and commuters. They directly know how one feels when he/she is a "stranger". Nowadays locals and migrants are individuals who both have experienced different degrees of mobility. Modern migration and other contemporary displacements such as refugees and human trafficking, but also commuting, tourism and traveling, despite their significant differences, can be seen as variations of an old human predisposition and practice (Urry 1990). At the same time, each of these social phenomena resonates with the others and

intertwines reciprocally. The world is no longer unknown as before: tourists, travelers and commuters—in addition to the media—create collective knowledge, information and experience at the social level, on which also migrants can, in some ways, build upon. The sense of a global world that these new possibilities of communication and mobility generate serves to mitigate and transform the impact of migration on existing social structures. Also, the classical "chain" of migrants now acquires a more sophisticated dimension of virtual and real networks with a variety of forms. These considerations also show the necessity to historicize the migration phenomenon. Today migrations are different from the past and if we want to explore them we should contextualize them in the late modernity that is in a world shaped by a new level of agency and power by multitudes and a new level of command and domination by power elites on societies. Our aim in this collection is to precisely examine this human practice in the context of contemporary societies and post-modern media.

In a global age, all of us, including migrants, participate in multiple socio-cultural worlds and contexts. Enjoying different cultures and lifestyles has become emblematic of the post-modern condition. For migrants, their adapted and original homes constitute part of a globalized homeland. They watch local television as well as overseas channels featuring their places of origin and share national concerns while maintaining their ethnic interests. These antinomies that characterize migrants' lives are often not lived in a dramatic way, but rather they are the acquired new threads with which they weave a richer life. Also natives in the new global urban environments deal with different cultures in various ways, which go from enthusiastic appreciation to indifference and to hostility. However, migrations are not a monolithic phenomenon: there are migrants who, as we said, enthusiastically adhere to the lifestyle, social values, daily routines and identity of the host country because they are attracted and fascinated by it; there are others who do not like the host culture but who are obliged to accept and adopt it because this country gives to them the opportunity to work, to have an income, to have more civil rights and so on; others try to negotiate their own culture with that of the host country, producing a sort of cultural hybridization; and finally others who devaluate the culture of the hosting country and pass their life criticizing and stressing the limits of the new way of life they are trying out.

A Reflection on Diasporas

A large part of studies on diasporas, and also some included in this volume, focuses on the social networks built by the migrants belonging to the same culture. In this concern, a supplementary sociological reflection is useful in order to understand diasporas as social groups and the reasons of their peculiar logic. We turn again now to Simmel (1998, 568–570) to help us in understanding this point. Although, as reported above, contemporary societies generally satisfy their increasing need for differences through the

development both of social and personal differentiation and of mobility, in some cases differentiation and mobility diverge. This happens when (following Simmel) stable societies differentiate internally, while migrant groups become uniform. Those who migrate depend mostly upon their fellow migrants and have more common interests with them in comparison with sedentary groups in the host society. These basic interests become stronger than the individual multiplicities and possible contrasts. For Simmel, migrating implies individualization and isolation as it removes from individuals the support of their hometown. Instead, it obliges individuals to rely exclusively on themselves, and in so doing it pushes them into a tight grouping which makes the "normal" societal differences less important.

Myths, Metaphors, Symbols and Emotions Connected to Migrations

In the social representations of migrations, myths and metaphors play an important role. Central to this are the myths of Eden or of ancestral origins as well as that of the holy land. The classical world has elaborated the myth of traveling from the reign of the living to that of the dead such as in the epopee of Gilgamesh, the myth of Orpheus who goes down into Hades and snatches Eurydice out of death's hands, the wonders of travel lived by Odysseus and Enea and Dante's travel into hell, purgatory and heaven in the Divine Comedy (Gasparini 2000, 38). Asia too has similar stories of heroes overcoming great odds such as the Monkey God transmitting Buddhist culture across the Himalayas to China, Korea and Japan. These myths serve to weave the imagination needed to leave behind one's birthplace with its particular protective energy (the genius loci) and often resulting in a harmonious (integrated) life-mode. Memories of one's homeland generate the symbolic patrimony that nourishes nostalgia, which is probably one of the most important moods migrants experience in their new country. These sojourns in foreign lands often combine great sacrifices as well as delivering unexpected rewards. This theme of transhumance vs. permanent settlements has found different expressions throughout human history from the wanderings of pastoralists to the great cities of the old world. A powerful metaphor in this regard is one that relates migration to the displacement in space with the progression of time for human beings. Each journey, in fact, is considered a paradigm of life or a metaphor of the human condition (Widman 1999). The departure is equalized to birth, the travel through life and the arrival at death. Taken together these mythological and metaphorical aspects of migrations are not only coupled with emotions like nostalgia but also with hope and curiosity, which are powerful forces that motivate people to travel around the world.

The Metamorphoses of Migrants' Identity

Migration is a basic phenomenon of the whole human history, but it is also a social process, which involves spatial dynamics and is characterized by a temporal structure. In the new country migrants sometimes become

sedentary while at other times they continue to be mobile in their new territory. Migrants generally do not remain migrants all their life, and may well acquire a new citizenship from the host country. Furthermore, they may become fathers and mothers of children who are considered native, being born in the host country. So being a migrant is not a dimension which is automatically inherited as such by migrants' children, who are often at the intersection of two different cultures and have to mediate not only for themselves but also for their parents. It is a tension *en plus* that migrant children and adolescents have to cope with in addition to the tensions typical of their age group (see Lelia Green and Nahid Kabir's chapter in this volume). The multifarious dimension of migration becomes still more complex in the light of racial and ethnic group intermarriages. In several countries the marriage with a native citizen closes down a story of migration, because it is the means to obtain citizenship of the host country. Being a migrant is a transitory status and thus it creates problems of conceptualization and definition of the migrant by the various Censuses that attempt to record their presence (see Alice Robbin's chapter in this volume). Both old and new media are the main places where these tensions, these uncertainties of conceptualization and the related debates are expressed.

The Present-Absent Migrant

If we look now at what happens in the host society, we find a new general trend on the part of migrants to strengthen their self-identification. Picking up on some points from the general debate on migrations which form the background of our discourse, and which might show how much the contemporary communities of migrants are different from the past, it is sufficient to say that the typical condition of presence-absence which is experienced by people in using ICTs specifically involves migrants. Through their use of ICTs migrants are in fact absent, but somehow also present in many communities of origin—communities which started by considering migrants as part of their everyday life. This is made possible particularly because migrants are able to be in contact with their home village via the mobile phone (Nyaga Mbatia et al., n.d.). For the community of a village in Africa or in Asia, migrants are no longer people completely lost in the course of the daily routine but, for example, they are counted as if they were somehow present in the village. This "counting" as being part of the everyday life of the migrant's home village also means that new political attention is put on migrants by the country of origin; they are not seen anymore as a loss, but as an economic and political richness (as explored by Polina Stoyanova and Lilia Raycheva in their chapter in this volume).

We Are All Migrants in the Virtual Space

The negotiation between natives and immigrants regarding space is happening not only in the physical space of towns and villages but also in the

virtual space designed by online communities. Online, migrants' communities share with any other communities the space at the same level of power: this is in the sense that all of us—native and migrants—migrated in the virtual space, as Castronova states in his last volume (2008). The Internet equalizes natives and migrants in offering to both the same experience of virtual migration. Thus the Internet too has contributed to make the slogan "we are all migrants" realistic, because all of us in the last twenty years— natives and migrants (in a literal sense, different from that used by Prensky 2001)—have experienced at least the kind of migration that embodies the experience of our virtual displacement in the Web. For migrants, the migration in the virtual space assumes the dimension of a strengthening of a dimension already experienced in the real world and repeated also in the virtual one. This role of the Internet as a powerful tool of diffusion of the migration experience makes it increasingly necessary to conceptualize further the new and the old media used by migrants and natives as socio-technical systems and socio-cultural environments—which both use in their daily life.

Migrants Face Communication Issues

How and when do migrants feel the need, the desire or the obligation to communicate with the purpose of managing their relational sphere? What situations create these needs, desires or obligations for communication and information? Which difficulties do migrants experience in communicating with their dearly loved ones at home, while maybe they are forgetting their mother tongue or experiencing the impossibility to explain their new life, not knowing where to start from? Migrants in fact often experience anomie in their communicative relationships with those at home as well as with the host community and groups, because they no longer share the flow and ritual of daily life with their interlocutors. What difficulties do migrants experience when they have to contract their rights in situations in which they are not able to master even the technology of language—neither orally nor, especially, written? Which sense of impotence do they feel for this communicative barrier, given that communication is the first field in which we negotiate our identity and the elaboration of reality? However, to express themselves and to keep alive the relationship with their homeland, migrants today can more often rely on a higher level of education and on more easily accessible and sophisticated means of information and communication than in the past.

Migrants, ICTs and Volatile Memory

An example of this topic is the use of online newspapers, which give the opportunity for migrants to be informed about events in their villages and towns of origin. Their forums, blogs, Web sites and social networks

contribute to create online communities based on the sharing and rein-venting of a common national identity and culture (see Heike Mónika Greschke's chapter in this volume). Virtual communities in cyberspace allow for old and new identities to merge and coalesce. Cable networks and global entertainment ensure that traditional as well as contemporary narratives of the self and storytelling are readily represented and performed. Landlines, mobile phones and voice over the Internet allow for different types of electronic communication, enabling distinct identities and intimacies (Baldassar 2007). Mediated communication (Fortunati 2005) and electronic emotion (Vincent and Fortunati 2009) are now primary supports of social relationship and contribute to the creation of social structure. Long-distance relationships are now a common feature of life and most people have adopted appropriate strategies for dealing with absent others. Tele-communication, which is also tele-absence as Manovich stresses (2001), is often immediate and oral and does not automatically leave any memories or traces (despite the presence of recording devices). In the past, many migrant families were able to keep track of their history through family letters and other correspondence. In the current broadband societies the preservation of memory becomes more difficult. They are the products of a life on the run, where activities are now recorded as they take place (e.g. Twitter), but are not considered worthy to become part of a lasting personal and social memory. Whether this kind of electronic communication can reconstruct identity narratives and family histories is as yet uncertain. Everything is volatile, as one of our informants said, and nothing remains recorded.[3] Perhaps this is a consequence of post-bourgeois life where, as suggested in the works of Marx and Engels, everything solid melts into air. Ironically, post-modern life has reverted to a form of pre-literate orality or to electronic forms of writings which are constantly deleted (Green 2009). This preference for the ephemeral, momentary and immediate fits into contemporary cultures with their excess of meaning but lack of sense. As a response to this surplus of meaning, the original homeland is often romanticized as providing a more secure anchorage in a former life.

Mediated Migrations, Communicative Environment and Polymedia

The new media, and in particular the Internet, also offer written and desynchronized forms of communication: instant messages, chats, e-mails and social networks. In addition to memory volatility, many of these written communications might resemble oral exchanges rather than literary texts. Initially, people feared the loss of literary skills in these new forms of communication (new spellings, abbreviations, acronyms) but soon realized that they constitute new ways of expression appropriate to the medium of communication (Baron 2008). The new media however are important communicative environments because they have their own particular transformative potential and so they contribute, along with the old media, to

co-construct a different ecosystem of migrations. In 1998 Fortunati introduced the concept of "communicative environment" to designate the place where body-to-body forms of communicative sociability coexist and interplay with the use of a more or less large spectrum of media. In 2011 Madianau and Miller proposed the notion of Polymedia to express the broad range of media which are at the disposal of individuals nowadays. Media preference by migrants and natives is highly informative. What communication technologies do migrants, their families and friends use, prefer or experience: the old, the new or a combination of the two? Does the opportunity provided by broadband technology enhance the communication and information process or does it simply inundate and overwhelm its users?

Material and Immaterial Labor is Moving

The present stage of globalization involves poor people, elites, refugees, traffickers, intellectuals, students, researchers and managers. So now the social stratification of migrations reflects more that of the society of origin. Workers now are accompanied by students, professors, researchers, managers, consultants, functionaries, travelers. It is very likely that the uses of ICTs differ for each category and one needs to know more about these differences. With the alleged weakening of national identity in the context of globalization, to what extent do migrants still form their original communities or are they more willing to adopt new mentalities and forms of living in the host countries? In addition to the diffusion of ICTs, powerful social processes such as individualization with the consequent effect of the weakening of families' relationships and the transformation of family roles generate new imperatives for migrants. Another consequence is the current trend of self-identification by migrants negotiated on the basis of the behaviors of their communities in their countries of origin. The repression of Uyghurs (who are Muslims) in China in July 2009 immediately unleashed many tensions, for example, in Algiers between the local community (which is Muslim) and the Chinese one.[4]

Migrations and Generations

Last but by no means least, generation plays a particular role in recent migrations. A large part of the literature on migrations focuses on first generation migrants (see the chapter of Clifton Evers and Gerard Goggin in this volume). But second generation migrants also deserve the same attention, as shown in the chapter of Green and Kabir in this volume. Some concepts which might frame the theoretical background of the studies on this topic come again from classics. It must be acknowledged that migrations studies generally use one particular notion of generation—the genealogical one—because this has a high information value, particularly when the individual of reference undergoes a traumatic change as it is in the case of