Embodied technology use
Unaccompanied refugee youth and the migrant platformed body

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Abstract

For unaccompanied refugee youth, technology occupies a central role in their lives. It helps them when crossing countries, finding a shelter, and accessing education, or even in negotiating family relations online (e.g., Çelikaksoy & Wadensjö, 2017; Marlowe & Bruns, 2020; Morrice et al., 2020). Research with young refugees shows that social media and smart devices have become essential means to resolve many challenges (Kutscher & Kreß, 2018). The aim of our article is to go beyond a utilitarian view of digital technologies and social media in the lives of migrant youth and show how digital actions can be extensions of bodily communications in relation to, for instance, locating the self within new cities, food, music, and religion. We introduce the concept of the migrant platformed body as a site of struggle for unity that brings past and present into continuous discussion in and through the uses of social media technologies.

Keywords
unaccompanied refugee youth, social media, migrant platformed body, embodied technology

1. Introduction

The *himbasha*, a popular flatbread in Ethiopia and Eritrea, had a mildly sweet taste as it was flavored with ground cardamom. The Eritrean refugee girls, living in a northeastern city in the Netherlands, made the flatbread by following instructions from an online recipe. Beyond using the Internet for (re)making traditional foods, the girls would learn to use apps to top up bus cards, apply for jobs, or join faith-based groups. ICTs (information and communication technologies) became catalysts for social activities, learning and creating a place of their own – as the first author, Neag, would discover while tasting the *himbasha*. In itself, this is not surprising. We know that smartphones and other technologies are ubiquitous, and they are necessary tools in the process of migration (see, e.g., Çelikaksoy & Wadensjö, 2017; Marlowe & Bruns, 2020; Morrice et al, 2020). However, we know less about the experience of platformed bodies in migration.

The aim of this article is to understand better the interconnection of three themes: migration; technology (mainly mobile phones and social media platforms); and the body. On the one hand, it could be argued that it is somewhat banal to talk about the body in migration: migration essentially entails the movement of the body. But on the other hand, it is not clear what the meeting points are between the process of migration, the body, and technology. There have been different studies that investigated one or two aspects of this question; for instance, the role of technology in migration has been studied thoroughly in recent years. We now talk about the "connected migrant" (Diminescu, 2008, 2020), a person who maintains remote family relations on a daily basis. Similarly, the "migrant body" has also been analyzed and shown as being often stigmatized and categorized (Jackson, 2015). However, our goal is to understand the platformed body – that is, how people appear to live on and through platforms – in the case of migration.

It is commonplace today to claim that technologies, such as virtual reality or social media, seemingly replace physical bodies with virtual ones (Riva et al, 2016). However, we argue that migrants use representations of their physical selves in a particular set of relationships between the displaced somatic self in *onlife* (Floridi, 2014,2015), the changing spaces for living where online and "real physical" experiences blur, intermingle, and become a new kind of hybrid existence. What we call the *migrant platformed body* (MBP) becomes a site for a distinct kind of identity work where the struggle for unity brings past and present into constant discussion in and through the uses of social media technologies. So, rather than making claims about "the body" or "digital technology" or, indeed, "migration", we suggest that the activities of performing the self on these platforms initiates a process of making a new kind of body, the MPB, that is as much the subject of representation as it is one of embodied experience – and where the acts of self-representation change and are changed by experience through the processes of forging a new post-migrant life.

In doing so, we build on a two-year research project, "Media literacy for unaccompanied refugee youth", funded by the EU and carried out in Sweden, Italy, the Netherlands,

and the UK by one of us (Neag). The research data includes interviews, digital ethnography, and evidence from participant action research with 56 young refugees, aged 14–20 from Middle Eastern and African countries (see more on methodology in section 3 below).

In the next section, we present an overview of the interdisciplinary research addressing questions of corporeality, identity, migration, and platforms. We also focus on scholarly writing that discusses the concept of the "migrant body". In our analysis, we focus on unaccompanied refuge minors' technology and (social) media use, in order to understand how questions of identity, sociality, and power play out through the platformed body. The article concludes with a discussion about the role of platforms in cases of geographical displacement, with a focus on the different aspects that the body can adopt in these situations. Following Floridi (2014), we argue that ICTs and social media – in the case of migration, but not only – have a deep influence on the body through their role in affecting people's conception of, and interactions with, reality.

2. Literature review: Corporeality, technology, and the "migrant body"

With the rapid development of the field of body studies, more and more scholars have started paying attention to how the body can become a "vehicle of investigation" (Shilling, 2016, p. 2) to highlight power struggles, as well as social and economic relationships. In his overview of dominant theories of the body, Shilling (2016, p. 16) argues that earlier scholarship does not fully consider the body a "multi-dimensional medium for the constitution of society". Shilling (2016) proposes instead a corporeal realist approach in which the body is seen as a socio-natural entity that influences society, but is also affected by it. In this article, we discuss this mutual determination by deciphering the rarely investigated meeting points between migration, technology, and the body. There is a considerable scholarship devoted to the study of the body and technology. In contrast, less has been written on the "migrant body". In the following sections, we present the current understanding of the body's complex relationship with technology. This article focuses on technology in respect to mobile phones and free-to-use platforms (Google/Facebook) as used by (usually economically deprived) migrants and refugees and does not consider other dimensions of technology surveillance or datafication (see Molnar, 2020). Finally, we turn to the analysis of academic writing on bodies that migrate. Our goal here is to see how previous findings can aid us in understanding the complexities of body-platformization in the case of migration.

2.1. Onlife embodied technology
In recent decades, with fast advances in technology, scholars have started paying closer attention to the body's relation to technology. Shilling (2005) shows that two connected developments have largely influenced sociological thinking on technologized bodies. First,

the spread of cyberspace made virtual connections possible without being physically present, and second, technologies were incorporated into the body. Developments in nano- and biotechnology have led academics to consider where humans end and technologies begin. Donna Haraway (1994/1985) is well-known for her writing on the *cyborg*, a hybrid made of a machine and organism, but others go so far as to say that these technologies have turned us all into a kind of cyborg (e.g., Jordan, 1999). Jordan (1999) argues that, by accessing the Internet, people turn into their "virtual selves" "through keyboards, screens, wires and computers" (Jordan, 1999, p. 180). Similarly, Black (2014) argues that it is not possible to draw a clear boundary between the body and the artefacts we use. Moreover, he advocates for future technologies that will provide new relationships and new types of sensory experiences (Black, 2014). Although people might not truly be cyborgs, smart technologies do have a strong impact on our everyday lives. Research also shows that mobile and wearable technologies have become so omnipresent that people report feelings of deep attachment to them, similar to what patients feel towards limb protheses (Nelson et al., 2020).

Irma van der Ploeg describes this state of being as a new body ontology (2003, p. 16): "this new body was subsequently performed through and in the fast-proliferating practices, discourses, technologies, and architectures of medicine, law, education, public policy, etc., thus gradually and fundamentally altering the experience of being embodied". She further argues that now "the underlying ontology is gradually changing through processes of informatization, digitization, and the various new forms of constructing, performing, and manipulating the body [that] these transformations allow" (van der Ploeg, 2003, p. 20). These modes of remaking and reforming meld together a very different kind of bodily self:

> If the bits and pieces of stored information about my life and behavior as citizen, consumer, worker, my "digital persona" (Clarke 1994), are in a sense constitutive of, and inseparable from, me as a person, then the inclusion of body data to this digital biography is similarly inseparable from my embodied identity. (van der Ploeg, 2003, p. 26).

She concludes by speculating that we may not consider this bodily integrity in the traditional sense (taking into consideration our physical boundaries), but as a form of integrity that is yet to be defined (van der Ploeg, 2003). This kind of thinking around a new kind of hybrid body has inspired our conceptualization of a "migrant platformed body".

In a further development of the relationship between hybridity and technology, Floridi (2014) focuses on the interconnections between external technologies and internal subjective perceptions of the self. For example, he writes in respect of social media, "the micro narratives we are producing, and consuming are also changing our social selves and hence how we see ourselves" (Floridi, 2014, p.103). A persistent theme in social science research regarding the impact of social media platforms has been the role they play in constructing, maintaining, and circulating identities and social selves contributing to the

"complex game of the construction of personal identities especially when the opportunities to socialize are multiplied and modified by the new ICT's" (Floridi, 2014, p. 112). This philosophical interest in the construction of subjectivity is inseparable from analyses of the platformization of the Internet (Helmond, 2015). Scholarship has focused on the interrelationship between the economics of global multinational technology companies and the affordances of platforms – what they provide for and how they are used by individuals. Tania Bucher's (2018) study of Facebook, for example, examines how platforms "put friendships at the centre of a business model" (p. 8), showing how users construct an understanding of the way that the platform mediates the senses of themselves, their relationships with others, and the role that they can now act in the world through the construction of relationships and the maintenance of identity in these spaces.

Isin and Ruppert (2015) make the case that digital actions (they are particularly interested in the way that rights are asserted and claimed and thus forms of citizenship performed) can be conceptualized as a new kind of speech act. They situate all the kinds of interactions that people make and do online in the tradition of Speech Act theory, thus making digital activity a kind of utterance – to give it an embodied form. This approach in some ways supports the philosophy of onlife in that it offers digital activities a theory of action and of agency, however limited or circumscribed the possibilities for such actions are by the nature of the platforms themselves. Similarly, by paying attention to the active nature of the digital interaction, the discussion moves beyond the purely semiotic fields of meaning-making and interpretation into the physical realm.

These studies are all relevant to understanding how deep the relationship is between the body and the smart devices we rely on. Digital technologies immerse their users in different worlds; however, this immersion is a bodily immersion par excellence (du Toit & Verhoef, 2018). In this sense, the process of migration is especially interesting.

2.2. *Bodies that migrate*

In a seminal article, Sara Ahmed (1999) talks about migration narratives as "spatial reconfiguration[s] of an embodied self: a transformation in the very skin through which the body is embodied" (p. 342). While it is obvious that there is no actual migration without the body, its specific role has been discussed to a somewhat lesser extent in academic work. A general thread examines how migrants are presented as the "other", not just culturally, but in terms of physicality. Inda (2002, p. 105) shows, for instance, that undocumented immigrants have been presented as "hostile foreign bodies, as dangerous beings who only bring malaise to the nation". Similarly, Sargent and Larchanche (2007, p. 80) argue that biomedical ideology has created the idea of a biologically universal body, "which in practice constantly enters in contradiction with essentialized perceptions of immigrants as cultural others". Jackson (2015) then argues that foreign domestic workers' bodies are often stigmatized and categorized. Because migrant women are often excluded both emotionally and physically from the host society, they perform what

Jackson (2015, p. 297) calls a "border maintenance" of the body (e.g., by clothing the body differently than expected by the host society). Another topic related to the "migrant body" is that of biometric surveillance. Irma van der Ploeg (2003, 2006; van der Ploeg & Sprenkels, 2011) has written extensively on how the body became information, more so in the case of migration. She argues that technological practices that lead to the integration of bodily existence into IT systems show an emergence of a new body ontology (van der Ploeg, 2003). Similarly, Madianou (2019) shows that refugee camps have become testing sites for new technologies, where biometric registrations are used to control the process of migration. Similarly, Molnar (2020) highlights the dangers of biosurveillance (such as facial recognition software, AI-based thermal cameras, or phone-tracking) as having a deep and irreversible impact on those crossing borders. A recent volume devoted to the study of data from the perspective of the Global South (Milan et al., 2021) focuses especially on the relationship between platforms and social marginalization, looking at how refugees and other migrant "others" are excluded through a series of algorithmic proscriptions. Galis et al. (2016) bring another perspective with their analysis of technology and migration, by focusing on the material culture of border-crossing. They argue that trucks become crypts for those trying to cross into Europe, and that these crypts show how "border-crossing artifacts are involved in co-shaping the sociotechnical agency (or the deprivation of agency) that produces dis/abled and displaced subjectivities" (Galis et al., 2016, p. 7).

This literature highlights the deep connections between the body and technology, on the one hand, and between migrants and technology, on the other. As van der Ploeg notes, biometrics and similar technologies constitute digital representations of our body features, and because of this, "they all are functional in the construction and performance of our identities" (van der Ploeg, 2003, p. 13). Following this line of thought – and focusing particularly on the experience of migration – we propose the concept of the *migrant platformed body* at the intersection of hybridity, onlife, and the body.

2.3 *The migrant platformed body*

Migration always involves leaving something behind and creating a new home elsewhere. While in previous decades this meant a stronger rupture from the past, today we speak about the "connected migrant" (Diminescu, 2008, 2020) who, via digital technologies, has almost constant access to places, friends, and family left behind. Research shows that these technologies are relevant for maintaining family ties (Cabalquinto, 2018), finding jobs, accessing healthcare (Alencar et al., 2019), or even having hope and optimism during prolonged displacement (Twigt, 2018). At the same time, as Leurs (2019) tells us, maintaining bonds and saving face can be emotionally draining for refugees. In this complex process, we suggest a novel understanding of the role of digital technologies within the experience of migration. The interplay of embodied technology use with (self)representation creates a different persona – a new kind of virtual body, which we call the migrant

platformed body (MPB). The MPB is the result of an embodied struggle to unify disparate elements in Floridi's identity "game" between the past, the present, and to some extent, the future. It builds on van der Ploeg's prompting about the new kind of bodily integrity brought about by the effects of datafication on identity.

The MPB is, as van der Ploeg implies, a kind of assemblage. In section 2.1 above, we note comments about hybridity and the limits of bodily integrity as it is re-conceptualized through digital surveillance and control. The MPB is thus a kind of construct familiar from science and technology studies (Mol, 2003; Latour, 2007), created through a process of human and nonhuman actors, technologies, and social contexts, made possible by and apprehended through the affordances of mediated perceptions, recorded and inscribed across transnational data regimes, and yet modulated through the everyday practices of identity work.

3. Researching the embodied struggle for identity

These forms of identity work were enacted and surfaced through discussions about the use of technology during an EU-funded "MedLitRefYouth" project. Data were collected in Sweden, Italy, the Netherlands, and the UK in 2018 from total of 56 unaccompanied refugees and asylum-seekers, aged 14 to 20, through a combination of participant observation, semi-structured interviews involving board games, digital ethnography, and participant action research (Neag, 2019). These four countries were selected for fieldwork because, at the time of writing the grant proposal, these were the countries with the largest share of unaccompanied asylum-seekers (Eurostat, 2016). Most participants came from Middle Eastern (Afghanistan, Iran, Syria) and African (Eritrea, Somalia, Morocco) countries. As most of these children and young people were unaccompanied, their mentors, guardians, and educators were also interviewed in order to have a more multilayered insight into these young people's relationship with digital (especially social) media. In the case of the first three countries, the fieldwork started with participant observation at community and accommodation centers, apartments, and schools. This was followed by interviews and, later, by a month-long digital ethnography. The digital ethnography phase took place on Facebook, and the researcher became "friends" on the platform with those young people who agreed to participate. At the end of the one-month period, in order to protect their anonymity, the researcher "unfriended" the young people. In the case of the UK, Neag collaborated with the NGO Young Roots in order to carry out the participatory action research phase of the project. Data were collected through participant observation, WhatsApp discussions, and the interviews young people carried out with their peers around the topic of media use. Informed consent was sought in all instances. In line with ethical guidelines, we use initials instead of names, and in order to protect individual identities, all faces are blurred in photos.

Data analysis started with a general reading and then careful re-reading of interview texts, fieldnotes, Facebooks posts (photos and status updates), and WhatsApp and Messenger text messages with a focus on the "body". As a result of this procedure, certain themes emerged on the basis of this framework (see section 4 below). In the next steps, we categorized and conceptualized the data. In doing so, we relied on previous theories from the relevant extant literature. These theories, as exemplified in the analysis below, acted as conceptual components that linked empirically grounded thematic categories (Bendassolli, 2013). This process eventually led us to propose the concept of the migrant platformed body, as an attempt to further refine existing theoretical understanding of the role of digital platforms in the case of migration.

4. Findings: The ontological existence of the migrant platformed body

The life of the platformed body is different to that of the physical body, yet nonetheless, strongly bound to it. In today's hyperconnected world, the migrant is always in touch with friends and families through digital technologies, but beyond their roles in communication or entertainment, these digital technologies (platforms and devices) offer a space for lived experiences, both from the past and in the present. Unaccompanied refugee children do not have to leave everything behind (in fact, they cannot do that, see Kutscher & Kreß, 2018), because smartphones and digital platforms form a channel of connectivity where the migrant platformed body can choose to explore traditions and customs and to share current lived experiences. We have already noted that digital technologies have a major role today in how social life is lived. Here, we describe how platforms offer themselves as a space where social life can be lived. For those on the move, smartphones and other devices are lifelines that help them navigate through countries, bureaucratic mazes, and other unknowns (for an in-depth discussion on the specific case of unaccompanied youth, see Mendoza Pérez & Morgade Salgado, 2019; Neag & Supa, 2020; Sapam & Jijina, 2020). At the same time, as we have found, these platforms are actual living spaces. These are where the migrant platformed body (re)experiments with traditions and customs, mourns lost loved ones, and explores new ways of being. Of course, this is not to deny that these experiences are strongly connected to the physical body. Yet, we suggest that the experiences of the migrant platformed body are more than mere representations of physical life online, as they imply a process of creation, curation, and then dialogue with those who interact with such content. The following section presents aspects in the life of the platformed body arranged around the themes that dominated the analysis of posts, images, and videos made and shared by the unaccompanied refugee youth. These four themes are 1) (re)settlement – a place of their own; 2) food – you are what you eat; 3) (re) play that song – refugees and their music; and 4) nurturing faith online – the religious practices of the MPB.

4.1 (Re)settlement – making a place of their own

The unaccompanied minor refugees Neag met lived in various forms of accommodation in major European cities, because of differing national and local policies, time of arrival and, on many occasions, sheer luck. While some lived in relative comfort in Northern European countries, others had to share rooms with many others, and some had to share apartments with much older asylum seekers who often had troubled existences. Resettlement always implies difficulties, and previous research has shown that digital technologies can ease the "where to live?" problem posed by cities (e.g., Sanz & Alencar, 2020). Yet, beyond this instrumental role, we observed the MPB in the living space provided by digital technologies is re-creating past places and sharing current lived experiences. Figuratively speaking, on these platforms, refugee youth can build a place with "bricks" both from the past and from the present. More importantly, those who are in close contact with refugee youth can also partake in the construction of platformed lived experiences. This process is best exemplified by the observations of an educator in an Italian NGO working with refugee kids:

> Mainly I see that they use internet for the home sickness. […] like they are using Google Maps to see the place they left. Starting from that, we created with some guys, […] a kind of postcard which is called *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* which is the name of the famous movie by Vittorio De Sica. And I used the image of Google Maps to create some postcard of the past, of their present moment and the future with the photo modification program like Photoshop. I just take a picture they took in Milan and cut all the rest, leave only the person, the people and then put it in the past in a place where it belonged to their home country and put the same image in Milan and in another town which they will go, they are planning to go. (research participant interview)

The technologies employed in this workshop offered the migrant the chance to use their identities through representing their bodies. Through the affordances of Google, digital apps, and smartphones, the MPB was placed in a virtual continuum of places. Through these technologies, the educator was able to "cut out" the representation of their bodies and place it in the past, the present, and even in the future. By way of this activity, the educator reflected on how important it is to remember the past in negotiating a new place for those on the move. This constant discussion that shapes the embodied experience of young refugees is also exemplified by the cover photo (see Figure 1), shared by M, an 18-year-old teenager from Afghanistan, in response to Taliban bombings in Kabul.

Users' content curation is an important feature of social media platforms, and one that directs viewers to how users construct their online worlds. In these worlds, MPBs have an opportunity to make their voices heard and talk about issues that are relevant to them possibly addressing a larger audience than in "real" life. Albeit M was not physically in Kabul anymore, through Facebook, he was able to create a personal space for solidarity by "being there" online and drawing attention to events happening in Afghanistan. Just like in the activity organized by the Milanese NGO, the cover photo chosen by M can be
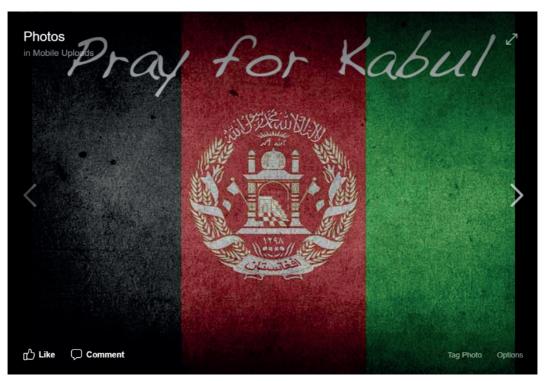
Figure 1. Cover photo on Facebook: Pray for Kabul

seen as a bridge between the past and the present. By showing solidarity, it is intended to reach people from the past, but by raising the alarm about the bombings, it is also aimed to those he has befriended in his new country.

Shilling (2016, p. 5) argues that learning occurs through "constant culturally mediated transactions with our environment, taking our surroundings into our bodies through breath, sight, hearing, etc." Social media interactions also offer possibilities to learn how to become a new inhabitant of a city and to showcase this to others, most often to people back home. Previous research on expatriates has also shown that online interfaces can be understood as "platforms for mobile place-making" (Polson, 2015, p. 642). This is true in the case of refugee youth, too. From posting selfies in front of famous landscapes to joining urban events groups on Facebook, the young people Neag met brought their embodied experiences to these platforms. An example of this and of the importance of place-attachment is the cover photo (see Figure 2) of N, a 17-year-old boy originally from Afghanistan. The photo shows the name of the Swedish city he was living in at the time, the year, and the symbol of the heart. The heart, as an important symbol in many religions, has been used throughout the centuries to exemplify the seat of life and the source of affections (Tressider, 2012).

Forging a new life means not only finding a place to stay but, today, also making a presence visible across the migrant's different platforms. The choice of selecting this

Figure 2. Cover photo on Facebook: Malmö 2018

specific cover photo shows a conscious place-making technique by using the symbol of the heart – as a show of affection. The cover photo thus constructs a new home as a digitally mediated experience. In contrast with previous research that shows the homeland as being a mediated experience that "takes shape through people's everyday social media practices" (Costa & Alinejad, 2020, p. 3), we suggest that, beyond this, the platformed body creates a new home online through contemporary digital media practices that take cues both from the past as well as the present. Among the online practices observed during the digital ethnography phase, we noted the popularity of signing up for local Facebook events groups and local buying and selling groups (e.g., Selling and Buying in Malmö), and also "checking in" and sharing photos of local organizations or (multi) cultural events. Digital technologies not only facilitate this resettlement through constant discussion between familiarity and difference, but also provide a possibility for this new space to become shareable and visible to others.

4.2 You are what you eat

Cooking, eating, and sharing meals has always reflected social and cultural values (Neely et al., 2014). With the spread of social media, communication around food has become a widespread phenomenon, and this is also true for teenagers (Holmberg et al., 2016). For the platformed body, sharing photos of food and/or drinks and engaging with such content is at the crossroads of embodied experience and self-representation. For unaccompanied refugee youth, being in a new country without parental support means not

only more formal challenges, such as navigating the difficulties of learning a new language or understanding how a mobile app for banking works, but also mundane tasks, such as cooking for themselves. In many of the accommodation centers Neag visited, the young people were encouraged by their mentors and guardians to learn to cook as a first step towards becoming independent. Food is, of course, an essential "fuel" for the body; but what we eat is always dependent on our culture, upbringing, and economic status. To add to this, there is also a "fast-normalizing trend of relying on social media in the food world" (Rousseau, 2012, p. xiii). This means that sharing, liking, commenting on food photos, searching YouTube for recipes, and reviewing restaurants online has become an everyday practice. This was also observable in the case of the refugee children. However, when it came to social media, the migrant platformed body was in dialogue between the past and the present. In the platformed living space, traditional meals met globalized food culture.

Figure 3. Food photos shared on Facebook

Figure 3 shows two different photos shared by a young boy originally from Morocco: the first one was shared during Ramadan, while the second was a selfie taken at a local restaurant in the Italian city he was living in at the time. Iftar meals (taken at sunset) are usually done in community, when people get together to break the daily Ramadan fast. Shilling

(2016, p. 6) argues that the body can be a "key for maintaining inequalities, but also for forging social solidarities. What we consume or keep from our bodies is also significant. The fasting that takes place during Ramadan, for instance, can promote visceral experiences of commonality among Muslims". For the MPB, in this context, Facebook offers a space to experience this commonality and a sense of community, far away from past traditions, family, and friends. The second photo shared on the platform offers a glimpse into the present of this young boy. Sharing friend selfies is a strongly normalized part of showcasing lifestyle practices. In this case, having a well-known carbonated soft drink can be considered both a marker of teenager lifestyle and consumer identity. Here, the food content shared by these young people is not only a telling sign of habits or upbringing, but also of their journey. In the virtual living space inhabited by the MPB, traditional foods of the past meet with the present (with its focus on documenting experiences with friends in a new environment). A similar pattern of combining previous eating and cooking habits to present interests and encounters was also demonstrated in a (translated) interview with a 17-year-old girl from Afghanistan:

> If she wants to make a Persian dish, she looks of course in Persian language, and if she wants to make something Swedish, she will use Swedish, but if she wants something like cupcakes, she will search in English. Depending on what she is looking for. (research participant interview; third person used by translator)

The platform (in this case YouTube) opened up a world of possibilities to look for connections to the past and for new experiences. Eating and cooking have always been a "deeply symbolic, identity-related issue" (Forchtner & Tominc, 2017, p. 415). Much of the research done in connection with food, teenagers, and social media focuses on issues such as eating disorders or body image (e.g., Rodgers et al., 2020). In the case of the MPB, we must look beyond this utilitarian view of digital media in relation to diet as a contributor to eating disorders, for instance. For the MPB, these technologies offer a space for lived experiences, both past and present. In earlier times, younger family members would learn to cook traditional recipes from their elders. With this chain broken in the case of unaccompanied refugee youth, platforms offer a space for this knowledge to be (re)gained, discussed, and shared. The MPB's online culinary journey thus complements the real journey taken by those on the move.

4.3 (Re)play that song – refugees and their music

As soon as she entered a youth accommodation centre in the Netherlands, Neag was struck by the dissonance she could hear all around her. Just like a world music festival, the teenagers were listening to all kinds of music in a variety of languages. This observation was later strengthened by the mentors and guardians of these unaccompanied youth. After asking what the young people do for relaxation, a mentor working with young women replied:

> Sometimes, if I'm there, they'll put Dutch movies or so, and sometimes they understand where the movie is going, not understand every word, but if you ask them, she can explain to you. Most of them prefer to listen to their own music because the problem is, they meet together, they have more things to tell each other: "Oh you remember that musician?" And then they sit there, every girl has her own telephone, and everybody puts music they find so interesting. They really like it, the moment they have to enjoy, to relax. (research participant interview)

Music and migration have been deeply interconnected throughout the centuries. Those on the move tend to take their music with them, and this social phenomenon can shed light on issues of integration and cultural traits, but also on the complex and often difficult process of migration. Sorce Keller and Barwick (2012, p. 226) explain, "as we travel or migrate, we all carry along a virtual handbag with our personal connection of music: a fundamental layer of our memory, and a valuable element of our sense of identity". Similarly, Kovačič and Hofman (2019, p. 11) comment that folkloric music and dance are "identity markers by which individuals create an emotional connection with the 'homeland'". If, in earlier periods, migrants had to rely on audiocassettes or diaspora radio, now, digital media and social media platforms offer endless possibilities for those on the move to explore the musical worlds left behind. Our data showed that music is one of the main tools for young people to re-connect with their past lives. As with place-making and cooking, the platform offered a space of relaxation: here is where the MPB finds solace and can withdraw when reality gets too difficult. As one of the interviewees pointed out that in the evening, the last thing that he checks on the phone is "only music. Somalian music on YouTube" (research participant interview). In another interview, a young refugee also talked about using the same platform for unwinding: "cos… I don't have my own country's songs in Spotify, so I have to use YouTube" (research participant interview).

The living spaces created by these platforms offer the MPB many opportunities for making themselves through their agency, for self-expression, and re-enacting past experiences as if visiting places left behind. Q, a 17-year-old young Afghan boy living in Sweden, offered an interesting example of this ongoing dialogue. An avid computer user, he started downloading Persian music from local websites and then uploading these to YouTube as a hobby. This is how he explained his online fan activity:

> Q: you have to know that I'm a YouTuber, not a kind of having camera in front of me and so, I just uploading Persian music. Because in Iran they don't have too much copyright laws so I'm just doing that.
> I: You upload the music? But how do you get it?
> Q: There are websites so that I can download them.
> I: So you take that and upload to your channel?
> Q: Yeah.
> I: What kind of music do you upload?
> Q: Pop, hip-hop and rap.

I: In what language?
Q: Persian.
(research participant interview)

With almost 3,000 subscribers, Q spent his afternoons on this platform creating a bridge to his past through the affordances (e.g., access to tools and free Internet) of his present situation. In this platformed living space, the MPB could not only connect to his musical legacy, but he could also actively engage in (re)creating and distributing content online. On the YouTube channel he curates, he has the freedom to draw inspiration from the culture where he grew up, share the music he likes with other online users, and then interact with them across space and time.

4.4 Nurturing faith online – the religious practices of the MPB

During the fieldwork carried out in the Netherlands, Neag noticed that in the homes of young people originally from Eritrea, votive images were hung on the walls, and in some of the apartments, the girls were listening to religious music online. The topic of religion resurfaced then in the other countries too, when discussing popular apps with the refugee kids and during the digital ethnography phases. From using apps to determine the sacred direction of Mecca to sharing religious quotes on social media or being part of Muslim Facebook groups, the young people frequently engaged with religious content. Similar to the process of virtual place-making, sharing food photos, and engaging with music, these platforms offered the young refugees a space for nurturing the traditions of their faith. The role of new media in religion has gained widespread interest lately, and it even led to the creation of a new field of study called Digital Religion. One of the main perspectives of this new discipline is that digital devices are not only tools, but "technologies which create unique mediated contexts, spaces, and discourses where religion is performed and engaged" (Campbell, 2017, p. 16). Physical submission, discipline, and behaviors are often central to these practices. As above, we employ a similar approach to understand the MPB's complex relationship with faith and online religious practices. Previous research has shown that religion allows people living in diaspora to "produce sacred and profane spaces through rituals and foundational myths, mapping, constructing, and inhabiting spaces including the body, the home, the homeland, and the cosmos itself" (Vásquez, 2016, p. 438). This is as true for practices in virtual and other onlife spaces as it is in terms of orientation and faith. As in the case of place-making or cooking, religious practices are deeply intertwined with the past and prior religious habits. Among the online practices observed with refugee youth, the most common were posting religious quotes, liking pages of religious leaders/teachers, or listening to religious music on YouTube. For instance, for M, a 16-year-old girl from Somalia and an avid Facebook user, it was important to always post selfies wearing a headscarf. She also "liked" several religious pages, such as Pious Muslim Husband and Wife (n.d.) and Adoonti Allah - a religious community page (n.d.). Similarly, M, a 17-year-old boy from Somalia living in Sweden, joined several religious

Figure 4. Video shared on Facebook.

online groups, such as Islamic Generation (n.d.) and Allah is the Most Merciful (n.d.), and frequently shared videos with religious content. One of the videos he shared (see Figure 4) online was originally posted on the Ask a Muslim (n.d.) Facebook page, which entailed a discussion about the question of why people chose Islam as their religion.

In the online living space then, the MPB can engage, share, and discuss topics connected to faith and religion. In the predominantly secular or Christian societies of Europe, online platforms offer a space for the MPB to connect with any, if not all, world religions. Moreover, much of the content available on the pages and groups the refugee youth liked or joined also have a didactic educational focus, e.g., how to fast, how to pray, or how to have a happy marriage. In the case of unaccompanied refugee youth who live without their families or communities, on these platforms they can (re)learn religious teaching and thus re-connect with their histories It has been documented before that in the case of migration, religion can be both a means for comfort and empowerment and a tool for reinterpreting deep-seated beliefs (Constable, 2010). In the case of the MPB, these effects are intensified through the widespread development and adoption of digital technologies. Based on the groups and pages these young people liked and interacted with, it could be argued that a platformed religious life could be richer than the physical religious practices available to them in their new lives. (e.g., through content available in multiple languages

and from multiple sources). However, it has also been noted that these new forms of onlife can lead to radicalization and extremism (see Mansour, 2019).

Conclusion

This article has suggested that the processes of identity-making derive from and perform physical, bodily acts. Each of the four cases we have explored show digital actions as extensions of bodily communication. Young unaccompanied refugees have a particular set of communication needs and purposes that highlight the physical and embodied nature of digital communications as part of a general move onlife – to use Floridi's (2014) term. The need for embodied forms of place-making, both to orientate new arrivals and to communicate where they are to their wider social networks, as well as the capacity of platforms to extend conventional forms of embodied experience – like sharing food and listening to music, along with the digital platforms' capacity to allow for forms of shared religious participation – all suggest that the migrant platformed body exemplifies new types of lived experience. Rather than see technology as discrete and outside of the body and its experiences, we have argued that the MPB incorporates technology into a new kind of hybridized bodily identity work (van der Ploeg, 2003). The MPB iteratively uses representations of itself – the other created through communication networks – simultaneous with everyday life as part of an assemblage, as part of an intense, continuous, and ongoing process through these diverse range of representations and affordances. The circumstances of migration force a need and an energy to drive new kinds of hybridity and mutation. While a platformed body might well be a more general mode of existence available to all, the particular social circumstances of the young migrants we have investigated show how the extremities of their predicament have accelerated, intensified, and evolved in what might be a more general process of platformization.

While the more general claims to forms of onlife are perhaps not that controversial and build on scholarship around meaning-making, participation, and other dimensions of platform experiences well represented, it is the idea that the migrant body itself is somehow being platformed that might be seen as novel. In general, discussions about platformization draw on debates around surveillance capitalism (Srnicek, 2016; Zuboff, 2019), focusing on forms of data extraction, datafication, and the commodification of the self. All of these aspects around the changing relationship between individuals and the platform are of course present in our cases. The question of embodied action inflects this focus in a slightly different direction.

We have drawn on theories of digital activity, such as that propounded by Isin and Ruppert (2015), who argue that our digital actions, posting, curating, liking, clicking, sharing, etc., can be conceptualized as a new genre of speech act. They situate the kinds of interactions that people make and do online within Speech Act theory, thus making digital activity a kind of utterance – to give it an embodied form. We have similarly

focused on how platforms offer migrants ways of organizing new living spaces and places to connect past and present, home and the here-and-now, and where the constrained point of entry onto a platform point physically disconnected users towards common experiences and ongoing conversations. This version of a platform is different from much recent scholarship returning to the original idea of a base or stage. Both of these perspectives underscore how users' agency shows an ambitious appropriation of ways of living to create new forms of identity onlife.

There is no doubt that research is often drawn to young migrants because of their extraordinary vulnerability in the face of epic physical hardship. As we have noted, the person of the migrant is bound up with their body – their physical displacement and presence beyond the ways that society usually pays attention to other bodies. However, whilst acknowledging vulnerabilities, the research reported in this article has focused more on the ways that living on a platform possesses physical extensible properties, and that the active agency of the young migrant thus points to genuine transformations in the potentialities of new communication forms. These young migrants participate in a not-dissimilar form of identity maintenance practiced by their more comfortable and well-off peers in many nations around the world. Much research has focused on the practices of social media and their meanings for participants (e.g., boyd, 2015). This is not controversial and is an accepted part of vernacular understandings of everyday onlife. The young migrant experiences recorded here help us isolate the embodied, time-based, and active nature of these interactions, enabling us to characterize the full gamut of what it means to live on and through platforms today.

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