

Exploring the Interplay of Lifewide Learning, Migration, and Social Network Sites in the Postdigital Field of Action

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Abstract *Lifewide learning encompasses all forms of learning and personal development in formal, non-formal and informal modalities. This article discusses the relationship between Lifewide Learning, Social Network Sites (SNSs) and migration by reflecting on the role of SNSs as a resource for informal learning in the context of migration and its impact on the postdigital field of action. This article argues that SNSs are fields of action that are ubiquitously used and are deeply interwoven in everyday life, especially for people who wish to/or have already relocated. In these fields of action, interaction, emotional support and constant learning take place, impacting the lives and experiences of people undergoing migration. Therefore, this article considers that SNSs are highly relevant resources for learning ‘informally’, where sharing personal experiences not only provides concrete information regarding a situation but perhaps, more importantly, people who share or seek information find companionship in the realization that they are not alone with their doubts or situations in their new location.*

Keywords *Lifewide Learning; Informal Learning; Migration; Postdigital; Social Network Sites*

1. Introduction

How can I migrate to Germany? How can I migrate if I do not speak the language? What documents do I need to acquire a driver's licence? What are the consequences for changing my name when I get married? Am I eligible for citizenship if...? What are the school differences in Germany? I'll have a job interview, so how do I best prepare?

These are some of the questions one often finds on Social Network Sites¹ (SNSs), such as Facebook (FB), Instagram (IG), and TikTok. From stories and tutorials on mundane to more specialized topics, SNSs present a variety of themes which are relevant within the context of migration as they are produced and consumed in part by migrants and/or people preparing and/or aiming to relocate. The topics range from how to migrate to a certain destination to other issues that help in the understanding of new ways and routines in the new place of relocation. This is to be seen either in the form of FB pages – open, closed or private groups that usually contain a title stating a nationality and the country or city of destination – or in the form of TikTok videos, where for instance typing “how to emigrate to Germany” brings up more than seventy videos offering different answers and tips, mostly based on personal experience. On IG the hashtag #emigraraalemania has generated over 645 posts, ranging from official organizations advertising job vacancies to advertisements for coaching sessions offering help in relation to job searches and the ‘integration’ process. This indeed is in addition to the large number of contents regarding personal experiences, portrayed in a variety of manner, from humorous to more serious forms.

While human mobility has existed for as long as homo sapiens have existed and may be seen as an intrinsic human condition, being ‘connected’ to the Internet represents of course a more recent practice and is not yet a widespread global reality due to the digital divide.² Yet, it can still be argued that life is currently taking place in a “deep mediatization” (Hepp, 2020). Everyday life is deeply intertwined with information and communication technologies (ICTs),

1 There are several definitions and categories concerning Social Network Sites. See Kneidinger-Müller (2020) and Rains and Brunner (2015) for an overview. For this paper, SNSs are defined as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site” (boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211). (The name of the author boyd is originally written in lowercase). SNSs “include – but are not limited to – capabilities (e.g. broadcasting messages, photo sharing, social gaming, etc.) that distinguish more focused genres of technologies privileging user-generated content (e.g. microblogs, photo sharing websites, etc.) (Rains & Brunner, 2015, p. 116).

2 See van Dijk (2020).

configuring “vital technologies” (Gómez-Cruz, 2022) usage of which has increased globally, affecting – directly or indirectly – every aspect of social life. Agents navigate, co-create, and experience the social world in deep entanglement with “digital media and their structures” (Hepp, 2020 p. 5), where a “digitalization of social relationships” (Kneidinger-Müller, 2020, p. 68) may be seen as undoubtedly increasing.

In this context, the dynamics of migration have been altered and are transformed in at least two ways, as Leurs and Prabhakar (2018, p. 247) point out. On the one hand, state authorities implement ICTs for top-down governmental border control, surveillance and migration management. On the other hand, electronic devices such as “smart phones, social media platforms and apps are used by migrants as new channels to access information, resources and news; for purposes including communication, emotion-management, [and] intercultural relations” (Leurs & Prabhakar, 2018, p. 247).

This paper focuses on the second aspect mentioned above. I argue that SNSs are a crucial source of information and guidance for migrants, which impact directly on the lifewide learning process in a highly informal context. This may, indeed, appear obvious. However, it is necessary to reflect on the learning process in the framework of lifewide learning and informal learning. Furthermore, this paper ponders on the interrelationship between lifewide learning in an informal context, SNSs and migration by addressing the following questions: What is the role of SNSs as a resource for informal learning in the context of migration? What themes can be found by analyzing the content of specific SNSs? How may informal learning on SNSs influence the postdigital world?

To answer these questions, the theoretical perspectives of lifelong learning (LLL) and lifewide learning (LWL) are addressed. Furthermore, these perspectives are related to SNSs, migration and the postdigital field of action. In addition, the methodological approach and a selection of examples of the role of the SNSs in the lives of migrants will be illustrated.

This article contributes to the flourishing fields of digital migration studies (Leurs & Prabhakar, 2018) and (inter)cultural (post)digitality³ and is part of an ongoing research project that aims to investigate the everyday life of migrants in the postdigital field of action.

3 A field which is also flourishing within intercultural studies with projects such as ReD-ICo (<https://redico.eu>) and is the *foci* of the “Research Laboratory on Postdigital (Inter)Culturality” at the Chemnitz University of Technology.

2. Theoretical Perspectives

Lifelong Learning and Lifewide Learning

The concept of lifelong learning (LLL) has become a global educational paradigm (Elfert, 2017, p. 3), has become central to the United Nations' development agenda (United Nations, 2022) and to the work of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). According to UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) (2022), the definition of LLL encompasses five essential elements: It is for all age groups; at all levels of education; encompasses all learning modalities; may take place in all learning spheres and spaces; and for a variety of purposes. As is stated in the UNESCO document:

LLL is rooted in the integration of learning and living, covering learning activities for people of all ages (children, young people, adults and the elderly, girls and boys, women and men), in all life-wide contexts (family, school, the community, the workplace, and so on) and through a variety of modalities (formal, non-formal and informal), which, together, meet a wide range of learning needs and demands. (UNESCO UIL, 2022)

LLL recognizes learning from a number of different environments and approaches it from a holistic perspective, where two dimensions are acknowledged: The lifelong dimension and the lifewide dimension. The first dimension indicates that a person learns during a complete life-span, while the latter recognizes formal, non-formal and informal learning (Skolwerket, The National Board of Education, 2000, p. 7).

Learning is understood as a lifelong and lifewide process that occurs continually at all moments and can be conceived as "experiencing, acting, recognising and making connections" (Aßmann, 2016, p. 518). These aspects are part of life's path of affronting challenges and opportunities. Thus, learning is deeply related to change (Dron & Anderson, 2014, p. 10). While the understandings of learning and education overlap, they may be differentiated according to specific characteristics (Norqvist & Leffler, 2017, p. 238). Education can be approached as a context or setting. However, learning is a lifelong process (Smith 2008, p. 8; Smith 2016, as cited in Norqvist & Leffler, 2017, p. 238) and as argued here, also a lifewide process.

Formal, non-formal and informal learning remain difficult to divide as learning occurs continually. From a strict learning perspective “there is no ‘either/or’ with regard to formal, non-formal and even informal approaches” (Norqvist & Leffler, 2017, p. 239), as their boundaries retain a certain fuzziness (Alßmann, 2016, p. 524).

Lifelong learning and lifewide learning are usually issues related to education policy, labour market and workplace policy but also concern civil society (Skolverket, The National Board of Education, 2000, p. 7). Yet, learning tends to be connected to a ‘place’. For instance, formal learning and non-formal learning are related to an institution. While the former remains associated with a formal education system, the latter is usually seen as connected to an association or organization related to the non-formal educational system concerning a specific interest, for instance sport. Informal learning is usually not connected to formalized organizations (Norqvist & Leffler, 2017, p. 238).

In this regard, it is important to emphasize the correlation between learning and ‘places’ that offer official recognition. These places may provide certificates and/or acknowledge of acquired skills or competencies following the completion of specific educational or training programs. This is at least one of the challenges that LLL faces, requiring the commitment of various actors from different political, economic, cultural, and social sectors. The aim is to achieve multi-level policies that recognize, validate, and acknowledge skills acquired in non-formal and/or informal settings. However, within this economic, political, and social framework the fact remains that LLL has become “too narrow” and often becomes associated with “lifelong schooling” (Reischmann, 2014, p. 289–290) missing the *wide* and perhaps more ambivalent learning aspect.

Context plays a key role in understanding learning. Although learning processes are often categorized as “informal learning” and “formal learning” (Alßmann, 2016, p. 516), as mentioned already, it is not the quality of learning that distinguishes them. Rather, the context becomes the decisive factor influencing the design of these learning processes within formal and informal settings.

Moreover, learning is an ongoing process throughout an individual’s life, occurring intentionally and unintentionally in a variety of activities in formal and informal settings. Lifewide Learning (LWL) offers an approach that recognizes learning as a wide-ranging, continuous and ubiquitous aspect of everyday life. It recognizes that learning is not exclusively formal and self-directed but may occur organically in various aspects of daily experience. These ongoing

learning experiences have a significant impact on the formation and evolution of one's identity and personal development (Reischmann, 2014, p. 286).

Lifewide Learning and Social Network Sites as Informal Learning

The understanding of LWL as ongoing, wide and ubiquitous learning is directly linked to 'Information and Communication Technologies' (ICTs) (Norqvist & Leffler, 2017, p. 237). The connection to the Internet enables various ways of engagement in communication and access to information.

Learning within Internet-mediated-technologies can be further distinguished by settings that are linked to formal contexts and 'places' and therefore are more organized than others, for instance collaborative encyclopedia projects, such as Wikis, production of Educasts for YouTube, educational blogs, podcasts, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), to name but a few examples (Kumar & Gruzd, 2019, p. 2527).

Aßmann (2016) distinguishes characteristics of formal and informal contexts (see Table 1), which are interesting to rethink in relation to SNSs. Haythornthwaite (2022) suggests that social media are consistent with informal learning. She describes informal learning as "spontaneous, unplanned, conversation-based interaction and unpredictable" (164) and notes that participation and motivation to learn are central. However, participation is diverse and can range from lurking to active posting and engagement in direct interaction in the form of messaging, friending and following, as well as using platforms in which the user's activity traces are experienced by others, in the form of publishing, searching, tagging or rating (Haythornthwaite, 2022, p. 164). Furthermore, Haythornthwaite suggests that the level of participation on each SNS is influenced by the specific environment in which it is framed and developed. When individuals perceive a particular SNS as a safe space, it tends to encourage active participation. Conversely, if the environment lacks a sense of safety and security, participation may be discouraged (Haythornthwaite, 2022, pp. 163–164).

Motivation and purpose play significant roles in understanding participation on SNSs. While learning on SNSs can be considered a form of informal learning, it is relevant to examine whether the content on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok aligns with the characteristics described by Aßmann (2016) and Haythornthwaite (2022) and is not directly associated with a formal or informal educational context.

However, it is also possible that the content on SNSs may be more specifically arranged and with specific purposes. For example, the Twitter-based #Twitterstorians community⁴ has specific practices but is still considered an informal learning community on social media (Kumar & Gruzd, 2019, p. 2532).⁵

Table 1: *Learning in Formal and in Informal Contexts – Characteristics*

Learning in	
Formal Contexts	Informal Contexts
Arranged	Not arranged
Intended	Intended and not intended
School, institutions	Family, peer group, leisure
Degree/certificate oriented	Without formal qualifications
Curricular controlled	Open to context
Mainly explicit	Implicit and explicit
Knowledge acquisition	Knowledge acquisition
Artificial problems	Situated, authentic problems

Source: Aßmann (2016, p. 518) (Trans. Yolanda López García (YLG)).

Lifewide Learning and Migration

The concept of Lifelong learning (LLL) appears to be, at present, more clearly linked to the context of migration than lifewide learning (LWL). In this light, LLL can be seen as a “beautifully simple idea” (Field, 2000, as cited in Maitra & Guo, 2019, p. 6) because it purports to represent a holistic and humanistic approach to education, that understands learning throughout different phases and settings of life, of both individuals and societies (Elfert, 2017). However, the

4 #Twitterstorians is an online community on Twitter composed primarily of historians and history enthusiasts. See Kumar, P., & Gruzd, A. (2019) and #Twitterstorians on Twitter.

5 For other research on informal learning on professional communities on Twitter see Lina Gomez-Vasquez et al. (2021) and Lee and Sing (2013) on their study on social media as an informal learning platform.

concept needs also to be more critically reflected upon as scholars such as Elfert (2017) and Maitra and Guo (2019) point out by arguing that LLL has evolved in time and context “from being ‘an element of freedom’ to ‘the educational response to the new market order’” (Elfert, 2017, p. 3). They sustain this argument highlighting that the ‘skills agenda’ is based on the utilitarian discourse of the 1990s transformation of economic globalization and neoliberalism, abandoning humanist and democratic principles at the outset of LLL’s conceptualization (Elfert, 2018, p. 28 in Maitra & Guo, 2019).⁶ In this sense, there is a certain scepticism concerning the achievement of the UN goals that are directly related to the lives of migrants such as “quality education” (SDG 4) and “decent work” (SDG 8) “due to the inability [of LLL] to effectively address migration” (English & Mayo, 2019, p. 215).

While there is a diverse and vast literature concerning lifelong learning and migration (Alfred, 2010; Cavaco et al., 2014; Cuban, 2014; Maitra & Guo, 2019; Majhanovich & Deyrich, 2017; Mcnair, 2009) less has been found linking these aspects with SNSs and, moreover, with LWL. This blind spot in relation to transnational migration has been pointed out by Maitra and Guo (2019). They argue that little research has been undertaken on the ways in which the skills and knowledge offered in the LLL field are frequently rooted in colonial forms of knowledge formation and racist practices. In the context of transnational migrants living and working in Western countries, it is particularly important to explore such practices. Nevertheless, LLL policies and practices are central in the global effort to respond to increased migration (English & Mayo, 2019, p. 215). In this light, it can thus be said that the interrelationship between migration and lifewide learning undoubtedly needs to be explored further:

Despite the differences among migrants, refugees and temporary workers [...] in terms of the reasons for the precarious situation they are in, we see great similarity in their issues – the quest for decent work and lifelong learning [...] opportunities – and address them collectively with a particular focus on the integrated efforts necessary to facilitate improvement in their living condition. (English & Mayo, 2019, p. 214)

6 For more on the historical evolution of LLL see: Elfert (2017). For the discussion regarding anti-colonial and anti-racist perspectives on lifelong learning and transnational migration see: Maitra and Guo (2019).

People who relocate to another country might often experience difficulties in the process of entering formal or non-formal education, e.g. because of difficulties in getting their previous studies recognized, or because they do not speak the official language of the country to which they have migrated (Stanistreet, 2022).⁷

The level of language proficiency, or even the insecurity one may feel when speaking another language, plays a crucial role when it comes to obtaining information from organizations or institutions. Mistrust and fear of approaching these institutions often leads to avoiding contact altogether. In such a scenario, the importance of acquiring informal learning through SNSs becomes even more pronounced, especially in the context of migration.

Digital media has been described as an essential component of the journey of 21st century migrants (Moran, 2022, p. 3), who live in one place, but use mobile devices and SNSs to carry out their lives around the world (Leurs & Prabhakar, 2018, p. 248). Migrants interact with and integrate the use of mobile devices connected to the Internet and ‘produce’⁸ content for SNSs, which becomes embedded with their migratory experience.

In some cases, SNSs are used for ‘exchanging’ and ‘obtaining’ information in the sense of a “networked individualism” (Wellman, 2002). But in other cases, SNSs serve as digital spaces where communities are created by “mobile actors in multiple locations [enabling] new forms of intergenerational solidarities” (Nedelcu, 2020, p. 343); also enabling the maintenance of social ties across spatial distance through everyday digital practices (Friese, 2020, p. 29) related to a common topic of interest (Busso, 2016, p. 231).

The Postdigital Field of Action in a Migratory Context

In human mobility, an ongoing dynamic of multiple and intertwined imaginaries plays an important role in influencing the reasons for migration. For

7 Stanistreet (2022) argues that LLL is at a crossroads since it has failed to improve their working and living conditions instead of facilitating adaptation and integration. The concept of integration has been heavily criticized as it has been applied in terms of assimilation into the ‘mainstream culture’. According to Foroutan (2015, p. 209): “Paradoxically, the concept of integration has itself become an obstacle to integration and a concept of exclusion.” (Translation YLG).

8 The term producer is used to emphasize the dual role of agents as users and producers of content, information and learning, interacting, learning and sharing. See: Bruns and Schmidt (2011).

example, the macro-political, social and economic conditions, the goals and plans of individuals, the visions of another way of life remain part of the ongoing dynamic of imaginaries that are constantly reconfigured through resources such as the media and the experiences of migrants, among others (López García, 2021). With the inclusion of SNSs in everyday life, imaginaries are further reconfigured, for example, with content from people displaying their lifestyle in another location.

In a scenario that combines informal learning, LLL and LWL, SNSs and migration allow one to reflect on the possibilities not only for receiving information from elsewhere and, thus, contributing to the continuous reconfiguration of the stock of knowledge reconfiguring ‘*E*-maginaries’. I propose to reframe social imaginaries as social *E*-maginaries: Social imaginaries are understood as socially constructed schemes of meaning that influence the thinking and doing of actors within specific fields of action in which they interact.⁹ I propose social *E*-maginaries as a concept that seeks to provide a theoretical and methodological lens with which to rethink imaginaries within the postdigital field of action.¹⁰

Social *E*-maginaries acknowledge on the one hand the digital embeddedness of everyday life in a context of deep mediatization (Hepp, 2020), and on the other hand the role that *e*magination (Romele, 2019) and algorithmicity play in (re)shaping realities (Cabrera Altieri, 2021; Stalder, 2018). Furthermore, social *E*-maginaries impact the thinking and doing of human and non-human actors (Latour, 2008) in the postdigital field of action.

The concept of social *E*-maginary is inspired by the work of Alberto Romele (2019, p. 89) and his concept of *e*magination or, as he also frames it, “electronic or digital imagination”. *E*magination “exalts the interpretational emerging capacities of digital machines” (Romele, 2019, p. 87) and, therefore, their “productive imagination” after Paul Ricoeur’s understanding of the “reorganization of meaning”. For Romele (2019, p. 100), digital technologies are “imaginative

9 The thinking and doing of actors refer to shared schemes of meaning influencing what actors perceive and think but also what they do, meaning their practices. This perspective acknowledges that actors belong to multiple fields of action, therefore social imaginaries are also multiple. Through macro and micro factors, social imaginaries are constructed and influenced by historical context, power struggle, political and economic ideas, etc. See: López García, 2021.

10 Although stated in singular, it is referred to in plural, since there are as many fields of action as there are multiple *E*-maginaries.

machines". In this sense, algorithms can be approached as imaginaries (Cabrera Altieri, 2021) due to their signifying function. Algorithms influence the reconfiguration of social meaning since they articulate, on the one hand, the networked presence of computer technologies and, on the other hand, the human-shared-experience of socio-cultural activities (Cabrera Altieri, 2021, p. 128). Stalder's (2018, p. 6) concept of "algorithmicity" explains the function of algorithms that shape and structure experiences, interactions and decision-making processes, while also reducing complexity – a function that is similar to a phenomenological and praxis-oriented approach to culture defined as that which is known, routine and taken-for-granted i.e. the reduction of complexity.¹¹

The postdigital¹² is used to emphasize the ubiquitous presence of digital technologies (and SNSs) in everyday life. The term postdigital highlights the continuity and fuzziness between the 'online' field of action and the 'offline' field of action.¹³ The allusion to the 'post' signifies the continuity and deep overlapping and entanglement (Knox, 2019, p. 358) of the digital in multiple spheres of everyday life practice.

Agents are not merely passive consumers of information in media, but also produce it as produsers while it is deeply embedded in the daily reality of postdigital life. It is within the interaction of agents in the postdigital field of action that meaning is reconfigured and impacts on postdigital practices. 'Fields of action' designate here the situated and specific context of interactions between human and non-human agents within a context mediated by digital technology. The everyday life¹⁴ is understood as a network in which an unlimited number of fields of action are connected, in which human and non-human agents interact at different levels and at different times. The agents interacting in these fields of action may build up a familiarity that allows them

11 See here Bolten, 2020.

12 For the understanding and discussion on postdigitality, see Andersen et al. (2014); Cramer (2014); Knox (2019); and Lenehan (2022).

13 While the dichotomies between these fields of action remain obsolete (Friese, 2020), I frame these as two fields solely for the purpose of clarity and operability. I am not claiming that they are isolated from each other, on the contrary, I argue that these fields are deeply entangled and embedded. For more regarding the understanding and discussion of postdigitality see: Andersen et al. (2014); Cramer (2014); Knox (2019); and Lenehan (2022).

14 See here: Berger and Luckmann (1966/1991, p. 37).

to act in a familiar and routine form depending on each specific interaction, configuring thus postdigital cultures.

3. Methodology

This chapter focuses on active engagement by posting, sharing information and/or asking questions and participating in conversations. It is not only active participation that involves learning: Forms of lurking and passive reading in SNSs (Haythornthwaite, 2022, p. 164) are interesting aspects to consider and analyze but are not included in this chapter.

Study Procedures and Ethics

This is an extract from an ongoing and multifaceted research project relating to the postdigital everyday life of migrants. For the specific purpose of this paper, part of the Facebook corpus is presented. The methodology has its inspiration in the bricolage approach. The bricoleur navigates between different concepts and techniques, using them as ad hoc tools (Kincheloe et al., 2018). The tools used in this research comprise aspects of netnography (Kozinets, 2015; Kozinets & Gambetti, 2021), thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and a thick data approach (Latzko-Toth, et al., 2017).

The netnographic research includes online participation and passive observation in different groups of FB concerning Latin American and Spanish people in Germany, in Europe and in the world. This article is based on two specific groups, one private and one public.

The data utilized in this article was collected between 2021 and 2022. For the private group, one post is the initiator of this study regarding learning. In the case of the public group, three hundred comments were collected using the tool 'Instant Data Scraper'. In contrast to the, to an extent, conventionalized belief that "quantity equals quality" (Latzko-Toth, et al., 2017, p. 3), this study takes a different path, adopting the concept of thick data in the era of big data (Wang, 2016, as cited in Latzko-Toth, et al., 2017, p. 4). Recognizing thick data's profound significance in providing deep meaning and narrative despite smaller sample sizes, this approach prioritizes qualitative insights and contextual depth over sheer data volume (Latzko-Toth, et al., 2017, p. 4). The corpus has been analyzed applying thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), lo-

cating principal themes to be analyzed via hermeneutic analysis (Bolten, 1985; Schriewer, 2014), using the MAXQDA programme.

The learning theme emerged from a post I initiated in a private group, originally in Spanish. The question and answers to this post belong to a private FB group. However, I have permission to use the answers for this particular post, albeit anonymously. In order to guarantee the anonymity of the users, their details will not be given, and the posts will be translated from Spanish into English and paraphrased allowing no possibility of tracing them, as suggested by various ethical guidelines (franzke¹⁵ et al., 2020; Leurs & Prabhakar, 2018; Sandberg et al., 2021).

Information from a public group on FB is also addressed. The group does not retain any rules regarding the use of information. In accordance with ethical guidelines (franzke et al., 2020), and although there is no explicit consent to quote the information as this is a public FB group, it is possible to use the data in a way that is protective of the users. However, since I do not have explicit consent to quote the information, I will refer to the information by paraphrasing it so that it cannot be traced and the producers will be anonymized.

It is important to say that on IG, Twitter and TikTok, the accounts I use indicate that I am a researcher. For FB, however, I have been using my own private FB account, which I have had since the year 2007. Nevertheless, I have added as further information that I am a scholar of intercultural relations, social imaginaries and postdigitality. The moderators and members of the private group are informed that I am a researcher. They have also been informed about my intentions to conduct research in this specific group, which remains ongoing.

Description of Facebook Groups

It is currently difficult to state with clarity what, exactly, FB is. As Bucher (2021, p. 9) states “Facebook is Facebook”, yet: FB “is no longer, if it ever was, just a social network site. It’s a global operating system and a serious political, economic and cultural power broker” (Bucher, 2021, p. 10).¹⁶ However, for the purpose of this chapter, FB is still recognized as an SNS focusing on the functions of posting comments, sharing videos, photographs, files, and links to

15 The name of the author aline shanti franzke is originally written in lowercase. See franzke et al. (2020).

16 See here also: Leena Korpijaakko (2015).

other content, creating live streams, and engaging in communication through groups that may be confidential, closed or private and public.

This study focuses on two FB groups: One is private and encompasses almost nine thousand members while the other is public and encompasses approximately sixty thousand members. This article argues that FB continues to be relevant in many people's lives, despite discussions concerning its diminishing appeal and declining membership, especially among younger people (Bucher, 2021, p. 10).

The dynamics within the examined FB groups develop in different ways. There are answers that are friendly and provide information regarding the question asked. There are also opinions concerning the difficulties of emigration when someone has no command of the language, for example, which come across as a warning against the romantic idea of emigrating and living the 'German dream' or the 'European dream'.¹⁷ Other posts, on the other hand, make fun of the intention to emigrate by offering a critical or derisive opinion that does not contribute much to the person asking the question.

Private Group

The group is not only a space for interaction and recreation, but also a space for emotional support and constant learning in relation to various practical topics.¹⁸ These topics include: a day for self-promotion of users' own businesses; guidance on bureaucratic procedures, such as obtaining citizenship, renewing residence permits or learning to drive; parenting philosophies and tips; and various topics related to everyday life in Germany, which are probably important for members planning mobility to Germany and, therefore, use the group strategically.

The private group is also a female-only group. These women are considered in this article as 'producers'; they are users of the group, but also producers and co-creators of information that they have learned and experienced. They interact, share, and exchange information in the FB group in relation to topics that not only remain in the group, but are quite important for their life 'outside' of the group.

17 The author has discussed the German Dream and the European Dream elsewhere. See: López García, 2021.

18 Similar to the findings of other researchers, e.g. see: Castañeda Díaz and Baca Tavira (2019).

The following question was asked: “[...] How do you think that your ‘online’ activity in this group takes part in your daily ‘offline’ life? That is, the impact of your digital activity on your analogue life?” (see Figure 1). Nine comments related to learning were collected. It is important to note that learning was not an explicit part of the question. The link to learning aspects is, however, precisely the reason for this chapter.

For this question, the dichotomy between ‘offline’ and ‘online’ is made intentionally. Asking this question ensures clarity and comprehension among the group members: In order to be able to ask participants about postdigitality, the concept needed firstly to be operationalized and distinguished. In this case, I argue that there was a need to clearly specify the fields of action in which the members of the group interact, which in this case was the online and offline fields of action. However, it needs to be clarified that as discussed in Section 2¹⁹, the online and offline fields of action are not intended to be isolated. Yet the embeddedness and entanglement of these fields of action may not necessarily be obvious for many people – as interpreted and presumed here for the case of the members of the FB group. The responses emphasized the role of learning from others’ experiences, from people going through the same experiences, creating a kind of bond; learning from people with similar backgrounds, which helps to understand ‘everything’; and resolving doubts and helping others by giving practical recommendations and tips.

Other answers stressed that learning may indeed be seen as the word that is the driving force for participants/users: Learning in all aspects of life, especially when one is not in one’s home country and does not have family in Germany. The group, therefore, should be seen as a network of support, where not only doubts, but also problems may be shared, and people understand because of their similar cultural background. Sharing and engaging in this group makes participants/users feel less lonely. They experience support, which is important for their life in Germany. These is clear in the following statements from two of the group participants:

Learning, I would say, is the word. You learn a lot by reading about the experiences of others. It influences a lot, especially when it is not our home country, and we have a lot to learn about it.

19 See also footnote 15.

The most important thing for me is to read the experience of other Latin women in Germany, which is very similar to my own experience. It helps to understand things.

Public Group

In the public group, the most frequently recurring themes are those related to finding a job, advice and information on how to emigrate to Germany, and specific questions regarding the finding of accommodation, how to find a position within vocational training or education, how to get diplomas and certificates recognized, and driving licences, etc. In other words, questions concerning bureaucratic procedures in Germany. The contributions contain information concerning people who either do not yet speak German and do not understand the information, or who speak German but are uncertain whether they really understand the information very well.

Particularly interesting are the posts from people looking for information on how to emigrate to Germany. They write that they do not speak the German language and do not have an emigration visa. In other words, they are looking for information on strategies for life and work in Germany without the necessary documents. In these posts, there is often a comparison with perceptions and experiences of undocumented work in the United States of America.

In this respect, the responses to these posts are varied. While there are answers that try to be precise and well-founded in their information and points of view regarding the difficulties of living in Germany without visa and work permission, other people offer information regarding strategies to achieve forms of living and working in Germany without visa permission, announcing that they are, or were, 'irregular' migrants. This is a very delicate subject to deal with in a public and open group. However, there are other users who condemn such questions and motivations, pointing out that Germany is very different from the United States in this respect.

4. Informal Lifewide Learning on Facebook

What can we learn from LWL in the postdigital field of action? Can such practices of interacting and sharing information, either through hard facts or through other people's experiences on SNSs, be considered learning per se?

According to the understanding of learning in informal contexts discussed in Section 2.2, the comments analyzed in this article are considered to be part of LWL highlighting in an informal learning context. The characteristics described by Aßmann (2016) and Haythornthwaite (2022) for learning in formal and informal contexts align with the results of the netnographic and thematic analysis conducted on Facebook. The analysis focused on everyday situations and issues that producers commented on relating to their life, whether planning to relocate to Germany or, indeed, if the relocation had already taken place. LWL emphasizes that learning occurs continuously, ubiquitously in wide and varied areas within everyday life. In this case, informal contexts of SNSs are considered as crucial fields of action where learning occurs. The posts on the analyzed groups hold specific relevance for the members of the FB groups observed in this study. The problems and contexts are situated, and though complete authenticity cannot be guaranteed, it is inferred that the producers engaging in discussions are genuine. The producers post questions, share their experiences, and participate in discussions, creating an environment that fosters authenticity within the analyzed groups.

Not only do they exchange with each other, but they also openly share what they have experienced in situations that lie outside of their regular routines and seem unfamiliar. These situations can be referred to as experiencing interculturality (Bolten, 2020). Particularly in the private group, members willingly share situations in which they have encountered differences and felt a sense of strangeness and uncertainty. In these instances, they seek feedback and alternative perspectives to better understand the meaning of the experiences they have lived.

Producers also extend their sharing beyond their current context to include experiences and events from their places of origin or other places where they have connections, be it with friends, family or previous residences. These exchanges contribute to a rich network of diverse experiences. It is here interpreted that these exchanges might foster a sense of global connectedness and can be helpful and enrich the horizon of experiences and, therefore, learning in a wide sense.

In the specific case of learning it can be interpreted that there is the 'need' to acquire knowledge about specific topics in order to gain insights and be able to 'solve' some situation as some of the posts show. However, especially in the private group it may be observed that 'connections' are established in a sense of bonding within a community. As the posts show, exchanging information and sharing experiences enable some of the producers observed in the study to not

only feel more confident in an unknown context, but also to feel less lonely in their new location. This is seen clearly and explicitly in posted statements:

It is definitely a very important support network. Any doubt, any problem, knowing that there is this network of women who speak your language and maybe the culture is a bit more similar to yours, gives relief. I don't feel so alone.

I think that social media allows us to maintain links (albeit virtual) with people who are far away. In addition to that, groups or communities like this one become a great support for integration and support among people in similar circumstances, migrants in Germany (in this case).

All of these information flows, co-created, shared, and consumed by producers, play a significant role in reshaping social *E*-maginaries, specifically focusing on life in Germany. These *E*-maginaries are constructed through interactions on SNSs, which, as demonstrated in this study, actively contribute to reshaping the web of knowledge that influences the creation of meaning and practices in the postdigital field of action.

Postdigital practices, such as liking, commenting, sharing, and most importantly, exchanging knowledge, are integral components of lifewide learning across a broad range of topics. In a migratory context, these practices hold particular relevance for the members of the Facebook (FB) groups analyzed in this chapter.

On the issue of migration in relation to LLL, English and Mayo (2019) point out in their critique (see Section 2) that rethinking LLL with appropriate policies in low-income countries would mean “a paradigmatic shift in preventing migrants and refugees from risking their lives in search of better prospects in the Global North” (p. 216). In the public group in particular, people still living in Latin American countries ask how they can emigrate to Germany. They perceive that the quality of life in Germany is much better than in their home countries. While some people respond in a friendly way, offering solutions and strategies or telling them about the difficulties of living in Germany, others respond in a more aggressive way, pointing out the difficulties of migrating to Germany by highlighting that the ‘German dream’ is a myth. In some cases, they make the distinction that in order to move to Germany, certain formalities are required in terms of official education, such as language and official academic and vocational studies. From these interactions it is interpreted that an *E*-maginary is

reconfigured where Germany is a place where documented migration, official documents and formal knowledge are elements that can hardly be overlooked.

While English and Mayo (2019) are right to question LLL and the reasons for migration, human mobility persists, and migrants interact with and integrate the content of SNSs as a tactic to fuel their migratory experience. Therefore, a perspective that acknowledges LWL and learning in informal context needs to be further investigated.

5. Final Reflections

This chapter has reflected on the interrelation between lifewide learning, SNSs and migration by showing that SNSs are a crucial source of information and guidance for migrants. SNSs are considered as an informal context where interactions, sharing experiences and information takes place. Moreover, the analysis of two Facebook groups using tools from netnographic research, thick data and thematic analysis has shown that Facebook remains relevant for the members of both the private and public group. The predominant topics in both groups have to do with everyday life issues such as work, official formalities in Germany, school issues, but also with questions concerning how to emigrate to Germany. The private group contains other, more private and intimate topics that were not discussed in this chapter for ethical reasons. Therefore, it can be said that wide and informal learning takes place here and is considered important for gaining familiarity in the various, practical topics. Furthermore, as the comments used in this article show, for some members of the groups, belonging to those groups enable them to create bonds in the form of a community. This clearly makes them feel less alone in their experience of migration.

This chapter has also approached the perspectives of lifelong learning and lifewide learning. While LLL seems to be more dominant in the literature than LWL, further research and reflection needs to be undertaken investigating learning from the perspective of wider and informal experiences: For instance, empirical research exploring lifewide learning in relation to postdigital practices.

It can be concluded that the role of the SNSs in a migration context is considered to be highly relevant, as SNSs are sources through which questions may be asked that are not answered by other official bodies. It would be necessary to investigate whether this is a matter of deficiencies in the way information is

provided, or whether it is a matter of the mistrust that official bodies generate for people in a migratory context, or indeed both.

Future research is needed to explore the impact of the postdigital field of action and effects on the reconfiguration of social *E*-maginaries in everyday life; indeed the theoretical contours of the concept of the *E*-maginary will be more fully elaborated upon in a forthcoming article. Specifically regarding the topic of informal learning, a need remains to examine more closely the impact of online interactions, while also incorporating their impact on offline life. In other words, there is a need to examine more closely the entanglements of postdigital life.

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