upf. **Universitat Pompeu Fabra** *Barcelona*

Diaspora, identity, and connectivity in the digital era
A case study of the Malagasy migrants

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This life – like this PhD – is a concerto:
with its Preludes and its Movements,
with its Cadenzas and its Tempos,
with its Allegros and its Moderatos,
with its Fortissimos and its Andantes,
with its Vivaces and its Adagios,
with a lot of pieces and instruments
working together thanks to a director
who orchestrates them to build a
harmonious and melodious concerto. But
this life – like this PhD– are the unique
concertos that will have no *Bis Repetita*.
As enjoyable as it could be! As great as it
could be! Because a great concert is not
repeatable!

A toi Papa qui m'as appris le goût du travail, de la résilience et de la détermination, même quand tu voyais tes rêves s'écrouler. Tu me les as appris non pas avec les mots mais avec l'exemple ! Je te dédie ce travail !

ABSTRACT

In recent years, countries call for their diasporas to return and to invest at home. Diasporas are no longer gone-for-good 'brain drain' but rather 'human capital'. Now specific national policies are created for diasporas in this sense. In the case of Madagascar, the national policy is now in place. Yet, the members of the Malagasy diaspora remain unknown citizens for both the Madagascan state and for scholars. Informed by their digital practices, this thesis seeks to contribute to the enlargement of the knowledge of this community. This thesis is composed of three academic papers that focus on three aspects of their digital practices: their websites (paper 1), their blogs (paper 2), and their Facebook groups and pages (paper 3). This thesis sketches the contours of an understudied community for which the impressions demonstrate a need for further analysis.

KEYWORDS

RESUME

Ces dernières années, plusieurs pays appellent leur diaspora à revenir et à investir au pays. Les diasporas ne sont plus une 'fuite des cerveaux' partie sans revenir mais plutôt un 'capital humain' pour le pays. Maintenant, des politiques nationales spécifiques sont créées pour les diasporas dans ce sens. Dans le cas de Madagascar, cette politique nationale est désormais en place. Pourtant, les membres de la diaspora malgache restent des citoyens inconnus tant pour l'Etat malgache que pour les chercheurs. Basée sur leurs pratiques numériques, cette thèse cherche à contribuer à l'élargissement des connaissances sur cette communauté. Cette thèse est composée de trois articles académiques qui se concentrent sur trois aspects de leurs pratiques numériques : leurs sites Web (article 1), leurs blogs (article 2) et leurs groupes et pages Facebook (article 3). Cette thèse esquisse les contours d'une communauté peu étudiée sur laquelle les impressions démontrent l'urgence d'une analyse plus approfondie.

MOTS CLES

Diaspora malgache, diaspora, e-diaspora, Facebook, blogs, identité transnationale

PREFACE

In 2017, the word 'diaspora' was unknown to me.

But I knew what it was like to live outside of one's country. Far from 'his people'. Far from 'his land'. At the time, I was starting to wonder where 'home' now was for me. On the official documents and forms that I had to fill out, I had an address: Barcelona. Because that is where I worked. That is where I was studying. That is where I paid my taxes. That is where official letters and personal cards would get to me.

Yet I knew Barcelona was not 'my home'. As welcoming as she is! As open as it is! As pretty as she is! As dynamic as she is! As lively as she is! Even though I admired her alleys, her beaches, her colours, her people... and even if I spoke her two languages. Even if started showing her to my friends and relatives passing through the city. Even if I loved her!

For her to become 'my land' she would need more rhythm, more rice in her diet, more people shouting in the streets. With more noise and chaos, as incomprehensible as this may sound! She should also smell of the scent of red earth that emanates from the ground when it rains. Ah yes ... It should rain a little more! Because I did not see the thunderstorms and torrential rains of the summer of my land of Madagascar. But above all, for her to become 'my land', my people should be there. Within walking distance (or of the metro, because here it is the means of transport, not like in 'my land'!).

I was living between two cultures: the one I have in my veins, under my skin; and the one I performed when I was in the presence of others. In the streets. In the subway. At work. At university. In the bars. And so on. I also had two 'homes': the home where I would blend easily with people and go more unnoticed, and the home where I am very welcome and where I make a living. To silence my

thoughts, I finally told myself that I had my feet in one home and my heart the other.

In 2017, I wanted to deepen this experienced duality of cultures.

I wanted to have an answer to all these questions about this cultural multiplicity. But not in my head. Rather in something written. And that's how I landed on the adventure of a doctoral thesis. Another adventure that offered me a third 'home': the library. Or better said, any place with internet and where I could charge my laptop.

In 2021, what you the reader see before you are some elaborations on my understanding of this cultural duality in the form of a doctoral dissertation. But from this point it shifts from my personal experience to that of people in the same situation as me: the Malagasy migrants.

This thesis has been prepared following the normative that regulates the Thesis per Compendium of the Doctoral Program of the Department of Communication of Pompeu Fabra University. This normative, as a fruit of the Agreement of the Doctoral Academic Committee of the aforementioned University on March 9, 2021, stipulates that the procedures regarding the submission of a thesis using a compendium of publications is formulated in the Article 10, Paragraph 7.1:

> *"The doctoral thesis should consist of original research following one of the lines of research of the Doctoral Program. With the permission of the thesis director, the thesis may also consist of a series of articles that have recently been published or are in press. In the latter case, the doctoral thesis must include a report presenting the thesis defended, with an introductory chapter and final conclusions. Articles that are included in a thesis cannot be included as part of another thesis."*

This thesis follows Modality A of the aforementioned normative. This modality requires a set of **three articles published (or accepted for publication)** in academic peer-reviewed journals. Those journals must be a part of repertoires accepted by evaluation agencies, especially in one of CARHUS Plus+, ERIH PLUS, Journals accredited with FECYT quality seal, MIAR, Web of Science, or Scopus. Moreover, as part of the requirements for this modality:

> • *At least two of the articles must have been published (or have been accepted for publication) in an indexed journal or in Scopus or in the main collection of Web of Science,*
> • *The PhD candidate must be the first author in all articles,*
> • *At least one of the articles must have been published in English.*

Given the presented normative, this PhD thesis meets the requirements of the modality A and includes three academic papers already published, written in English, and where the PhD candidate is the first author in all three papers.

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PART 1: RESEARCH RESULTS

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTS

'Migration' is not a new word to the Malagasy people. Nor is it a new phenomenon to them. Despite living on an island, Malagasy people have an intimate relationship with the migration phenomenon. History says that their country itself hosted various ethnics groups, including Arabs, Bantus, and Austronesians (Adelaar, 2006; Allibert, 2008; Beaujard, 2011; Capredon et al., 2012; Poulain & Razanakoto, 2014; Serva et al., 2012). These waves of external migration to the island of Madagascar formed the current mosaic of eighteen ethnic groups in the country. The melting pot of these distinct origins and cultures is the currently known as the 'Malagasy people' and also what is summarily understood as the 'Malagasy diaspora'.

This first section provides a brief overview of the internal and external migratory movements in Madagascar. These migratory movements lay the foundations for the characteristics of the migrant communities of Madagascar, which themselves are mainly the result of a melting pot of former migrants.

1.1. An overview of the Malagasy internal migration

History says that Malagasy people have known internal or national migration movements. Those internal migration waves were first and foremost fostered by the rivalries and conquests between the Kingdoms of Madagascar prior to the arrival of European settlers. The powerful *Merina* kingdom (1730–1810) was one of the most feared conquerors who contributed the most to these internal migrations. The *Merina* kingdom, which was centred at the current capital of Antananarivo, conquered the *Sakalava* kingdom, in the northwestern part of the island, and the *Antanosy* kingdom, in the southeastern part. These conquests fostered the exchange of dignitaries, ambassadors, military officers, and, unfortunately, of slaves in the conquered kingdoms. These 'forced' migrations

are considered to be the beginning of the internal migration of the Malagasy people (Giguère, 1999; Goedefroit & Razarasoa, 2002; Rakotonarivo et al., 2010).

The following waves of internal migrations were triggered by the European colonists from the annexation of Madagascar by France in 1896 until its independence in 1960. The French authorities forced migrations by placing the necessary workforce in charge of building the railway networks, road networks, and the industries from one city or region to another. These two waves of forced migration paved the way for the ongoing voluntary and commercially-driven migration waves. As a consequence of the improvement of the transportation infrastructures in the country, Madagascar nowadays has intense internal migration.

Beyond this commercially-driven migration, a new pattern of internal migration is currently emerging in Madagascar: the 'climate migration'. Since a remarkable drought regularly afflicts the southern part of Madagascar, a large number of its inhabitants are forced to flee to neighbouring regions to seek shelter. Climate scientists, scientific journalists, and the government of Madagascar are debating whether this is driven by global warming or a wave of a sporadic and habitual phenomenon that has already hit the same region several times in the past (Canavesio, 2015; Harioly Nirina, 2018). However, the fact is that this phenomenon is expected to foster waves of forced and long-standing migration in coming years (Burnod et al., 2019; Poulain & Razanakoto, 2014; Ranaivoson et al., 2018). The reverse effect of this phenomenon is that rural populations are seeking cultivable and fertile lands.

Another feature of the national migration is the rural exodus to the biggest cities of the country. Antananarivo is the first destination of this rural exodus. In fact, the population of Antananarivo tripled from 1993 (n = 1,134,039) to 2015 (n =

3,093,439).[1] Currently, with some 28,177,762 inhabitants scattered over 587,000 km² (and abroad), its population is growing at a rate of 4,67%.[2] This exodus to Antananarivo is motivated by the fact that, in addition to being the capital, it is the most industrialised city of the whole country (Burnod et al., 2019; Rakotonarivo, 2012). It is also the administrative centre of the country and so hosts the largest number of universities, ministries, and so on. To some degree, Antananarivo seems an unavoidable destination for those coming from rural areas while the biggest cities of the country also host large number of national migrants. However, the internal migration of the Malagasy people is relatively less intense when compared to national migration of other neighbouring African countries.

There is, however, another important aspect of the migration of the Malagasy people: their transnational migration journey. As a matter of fact, the number of existing studies and research on Malagasy transnational migration is scarce. That is why through this thesis, I seek to contribute to the understanding of the international migration journey of the Malagasy living abroad on the one hand, and to give an overview of their communities living scattered worldwide, on the other. By doing this, I aim to explore in-depth the international migration of the Malagasy people.

1.2.   An overview of Malagasy transnational migration

Unlike the aforementioned national migration flows, the international migration of the Malagasy started relatively recently. The very few existing studies on this subject to date point to an approximate starting point of the transnational migration of the Malagasy in the late 1800s. Malagasy transnational migration was

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[1] Demographic data from the Commune Urbaine d'Antananarivo (CUA)
https://www.cua.mg/monographie-dantananarivo-renivohitra/
[2] Demographic data from the Institut National des STATistiques (INSTAT) de Madagascar
https://www.instat.mg/thematique/population

first and foremost related to the intensification of international exchanges of Madagascar with foreign countries, and particularly with France.

The final years of the 1800s and the early 1900s were marked by substantial historical events for Madagascar and the world. At the national level, the Kingdom of Madagascar came to an end, on the one hand, and the annexation of Madagascar by France began on the other. In 1896, Madagascar was declared an overseas territory of France. This event was the starting point of a mass migration of Malagasy people to continental France. As a matter of fact, more than 40,000 Malagasy soldiers were sent to France in order to strengthen the French army during the First World War (1917–1924). Being a French overseas territory – like almost all the former French colonies – came with the military duty of protecting France from occupation during this war.

At the same time, substantial numbers of highly skilled Malagasy workers, as well as Malagasy scholars, started moving to France en masse in order to continue their careers, research, or studies. France was for them a welcoming country, with the appropriate and adequate infrastructure in terms of research and development compared to their country of origin. Also, Madagascar – as an overseas territory of France – had some rate of representation within France's parliament. Both the highly skilled workers as well as the Malagasy political representatives to France are here understood as those coming from the upper society of Madagascar that maintained a close relationship with France. Their migration procedures were facilitated by the French administration.

Together, these groups of migrants with different purposes and motivations formed the first wave of transnational migration of the Malagasy people abroad. Few people moved to countries other than France. This first generation of the Malagasy migrants are considered a 'gone-to-come-back-home' generation. This means that they were expected to return home once their military, professional

and/or scholarly duties were accomplished. Those who stayed in France once their duties were accomplished therefore constituted the first generation and the very first communities of Malagasy migrants in France.

Studies point out that this dynamic of 'highly-skilled' or 'bourgeois' Malagasy migration to France continued until the 1970s (a decade after the independence of Madagascar in 1960). This could be explained by the fact that until the independence of Madagascar, migration from Madagascar to France was facilitated. Yet, the early years of 1970s saw the beginning of a political turmoil in Madagascar. This was due to a social reform led by the President Didier, Ratsiraka who started the '*malgachisation*' of some key sectors such as education. It culminated with the student-led political turmoil in 1972 that declared the failure of this reform and called for a return to the normal system. This led a large number of Malagasy scholars to flee abroad in search of a brighter future or, in some cases, political exile. This affected the migration flows and marked the beginning of another wave of migration which occurred until 1990.

Since 1990, the transnational migration of the Malagasy people is more heterogenous and multifaceted. This third wave of migration is composed of Malagasy students, mixed couples, and Malagasy transnational professionals, among others.

In total, there are approximately 180,000 Malagasy migrants scattered around the world, with the vast majority concentrated in Europe. Around 150,000 (more than 85%) of them reside in France, which is the country that hosts the largest Malagasy community in the world. The Malagasy community in France is the largest sub-Saharan community in France. The same study points out that despite this, the Malagasy community is particularly quiet and invisible. The same community is seen as mostly organised around cultural and religious associations and other social organisations that act towards Madagascar. Nonetheless, the

existing studies find that the Malagasy migrant community is highly integrated into the society of the country of arrival. The Malagasy in France – whom I assume as representative of Malagasy communities worldwide – are described as mostly a highly skilled community that comes from the Malagasy bourgeoisie but who struggle with stability while seeking to maintain this status once settled in their country of origin.

It is clear that the internal and external migration movements of the Malagasy migrants are in perfect contrast with the strong attachment of the Malagasy people to their *tanindrazana* (literally, the 'land of the ancestors'). As a matter of culture, the *tanindrazana* is the land where the ancestors lived. The *tanindrazana* is where the ancestors are buried. The *tanindrazana* is the land where their parents are supposed to live and to die. And the *tanindrazana* is the same land where every single Malagasy is expected to live and die. The bond that ties a Malagasy with his or her *tanindrazana* is so potent that he or she will return to it once he or she passes away. It is so potent that the greatest word or act of social exclusion is to forbid a Malagasy to enter his or her *fasandrazana,* or the tomb of the ancestors, and therefore the *tanindrazana,* at death.

It is important to note that this overview of Malagasy international migration as well as the profiling of Malagasy migrants abroad is based on a handful of research studies. Two of these were sponsored by non-profit organisations, namely the International Organization for Migration and FORIM (Kotlok, 2016) and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (Rabary-Rakotondravony, 2015). Also, a research study published in 2017, the result of work by Malagasy researchers from the Research and Development Institute (IRD), contributed to the profiling of the Malagasy migrants (Razafindrakoto et al. 2017). The other research pieces are independent studies which provided qualitative information on Malagasy migrants (Claverie, 2011; Claverie & Combeau-Mari, 2011; Crenn, 1994; Crenn & Téchoueyres, 2010; Rabeherifara, 2009; Rasoloniaina, 2013). From 2017,

several studies of the digital practices and activities of the Malagasy diaspora were available (Rakotoary, 2017, 2018, 2019). This research builds on and expands these pioneering studies and seeks to contribute to further development of scholarly knowledge and research on Malagasy international migration.

1.3. Homeland engagement policy towards the Malagasy diaspora

Like many diasporas worldwide, and in particular those of the Global South, the Malagasy diaspora is currently (over)solicited by its country of origin (Délano, 2014; Ding, 2015; Fransen & Siegel, 2011; Kleist, 2008; Kulakevich, 2021; Palop-García & Pedroza, 2020; Welde et al., 2020). The Malagasy diaspora is the target of a specific national policy: the National Diaspora Engagement Policy (hereinafter NDEP). This policy "intends to establish a mutually beneficial relationship between the Madagascan state and the Malagasy diaspora" by taking into account the needs and aspirations of Malagasy citizens abroad in order to "promote their involvement in the sustainable development of the country", as is indicated on the site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Madagascar (MFAM)[3].

The NDEP is built around five strategic axes: (i) the protection and support of Malagasy citizens residing abroad; (ii) the enhancement of their social, cultural, technical, economic, and financial capital; (iii) the knowledge of these citizens; (iv) the promotion of their civic and political participation within their country of origin; and (v) strengthening strategic partnership and cooperation on the issue of mobilising the diaspora on national, bilateral, and multilateral levels. This

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[3] Summary - National policy of engagement of the Malagasy diaspora from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Madagascar https://www.diplomatie.gov.mg/index.php/politique-etrangere/diaspora-malagasy/19-resume-politique-nationale-d-engagement-de-la-diaspora-malagasy

policy is based on the question of serving the economic interest of the Madagascan state, on the one hand, and the question of the civic duties of members of the Malagasy diaspora, on the other hand.

It is within the framework of the implementation of this policy that a profiling study of the Malagasy diaspora was carried out by the MFAM, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 2016. It is also in this sense that a national forum of the diaspora aiming to bring together the actors of the Malagasy diaspora was organised by the MFAM in 2017. It is always in this perspective that the state privileged the application of the members of the diaspora in 2019 during a massive recruitment of senior state officials in 2019. In February 2021, the council of ministers adopted the letter for the engagement of the Malagasy diaspora which includes the establishment of a system for the electoral participation of members of the diaspora.[4]

Through these steps, the state manifests to the members of the Malagasy diaspora its will to include them within the political and civic life of Madagascar in a direct way. In the case of Madagascar, the establishment of the NDEP is led by a dedicated sub-directorate recently established within the MFAM in 2015. The establishment of the diaspora sub-directorate within this ministry demonstrates, in a certain way, the dimension given to this policy at a national level and the commitment of the state towards its diaspora.

It is with the knowledge of this context that the Madagascan state wants to capitalise on (i) the field knowledge of the Malagasy diaspora of their country of origin, (ii) the emotional bonds of the diaspora with the country and their personal relatives who remained there, and (iii) the civic duties which link the

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[4] Report of the Council of Ministers of 02/17/2021 from the website of the Presidency of the Republic http://www.presidence.gov.mg/actualites/conseil-des-ministres/1161-tatitry-ny-filankevitry-ny-minisitra-natao-tao-amin-ny-lapam-panjakana-iavoloha-alarobia-17-febroary-2021.html

diasporas with their country of origin to implement the NDEP and thus collectively contribute to the sustainable development of Madagascar.

However, if the creation of this policy is launched by the Madagascan state and is supported by its international partners, in particular the European Union through its MIgration EU eXpertise (MIEUX) project,[5] its implementation and execution have been slow and have struggled to convince the Malagasy diaspora. This is particularly evident in the very weak response of the Malagasy diaspora in France to the call from embassies and consulates for consular registration, the objective of which, among others, is to facilitate the management of the voting of the diaspora in the presidential elections in 2023. The state has made efforts on many fronts, all with little success. Many factors are contributing to this.

First, the relationship between diasporas and countries of origin is subject to nuance, as it is in constant (re)negotiation and (re)mutation. The relationship between the state and members of the diaspora is conceived of in different ways by the two entities. For its part, the state sees members of the diaspora as a homogeneous, united, and collaborative community that would immediately adhere to the policies of the state. On the other hand, most members of the diaspora focus above all on the 'old ties' – i.e., family and friends – that they left within their country of origin rather than with the state (Hiller & Franz, 2004). The consistent and regular diasporic economic remittances which in the case of Madagascar amounted to $373 million annually on average over the past five years[6] attests to this. This money represents nearly three percent of the country's GDP. Also, some members of the diaspora nurture types of relationship such as political participation (Andrianimanana & Roca-Cuberes, 2021) or social

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[5] https://www.mieux-initiative.eu/en/
[6] Migration and remittances data from the World Bank
https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data

participation through associations or NGOs, among others. The Malagasy diaspora appear to be particularly active in charitable organisations and NGOs (Kotlok 2016; Razafindrakoto et al. 2017).

In this way, through the NDEP, the state seeks to engage its diaspora in a new type of relationship: an economic partnership. Henceforth, the state invites members of the diaspora to continue investing in the country, but through collective investment with great impact.

Another possible impediment fits the conception of the relationship. Carrying out a change in the national outlook vis-à-vis the diaspora, which is often understood as 'brain drain' or the fleeing from the country for a better personal future elsewhere and therefore a kind of selfishness, is laborious work. It implies a social paradigm shift from one of accusation to a more neutral and unifying paradigm. The NDEP aims at participating in this shift of paradigm and enhancing the human capital and resources of members of the diaspora.

A third possible hindering aspect of the NDEP lies in extrinsic contexts to the relationship between the state and the diaspora: the business climate and investment opportunities within the country. The incentive for a large, collective, and impactful diasporic investment in its country of origin is similar to any type of foreign investment in the country. It goes beyond the (simple) sense of belonging to the country and the emotional bonds that the tie diasporas with their country and it is understandable that their investment is based above all on a stable political, social, and economic context. These investment conditions are unfortunately hardly assured in the case of Madagascar. Moreover, the search for economic, financial, social, and political stability is one of the reasons many Malagasy people choose to leave their country.

Finally, the lack of confidence of the Malagasy diaspora in Malagasy institutions is a real impediment to the establishment of the NDEP. It goes without saying that the appalling rate of extreme corruption in the country[7] and in particular within the institutions does not go unnoticed by the diaspora.

The context of engagement of diasporas by their country of origin is a widespread and trending global practice. In the African context, a study conducted by the European Union Global Diaspora Facility (EUDIF) in 2021[8] found that out of 41 countries mapped, 21 have a specific diaspora engagement policy, or at least a draft of a policy, and 30 of them rely on a dedicated institution. If countries such as Benin, Senegal, and Rwanda were the pioneers of this type of policy in early 2000s, countries such as the Ivory Coast, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Mali, and Morocco are those that currently rely on a ministry dedicated to its diaspora.

This overview of the Madagascar NDEP suggests that, in line with the NDEP of other countries of the same continent and the world, it focuses mainly on the aspect of utilitarian capitalisation of members of the diaspora. It also shows the importance and the novelty of the question of 'diasporas' at the social level.

Aligning with this context, this thesis is an attempt to put the voices of members of the Malagasy diaspora at the centre and focus on the human and qualitative aspect of the lives of the Malagasy diaspora. Therefore, it comprehends aspects of their way of life in the host country, their relationship with their country of origin and the host country, and their approach to the duality of culture in which they live. Through this study, I seek to contribute to the understanding of this very understudied community and to explore their social dynamics and

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[7] Corruption Perception Index 2020 – Transparency International
https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/mdg
[8] Diaspora Engagement (Africa Series) – European Global Diaspora Facility
https://diasporafordevelopment.eu/library/regional-series-africa/

transnational experience that go far beyond the top-down and reductionist view of 'brain drain migrations', 'economic migrations', and so on.

This is for us an appropriate context to contribute to the enlargement of the knowledge about the Malagasy migrant communities. Finally, it is my aspiration that the members of the communities of Malagasy migrants will see this thesis as a mirror that accurately reflects their lives and stories. This is an in-depth analysis of them and their migration journeys and it is my fervent wish that it accurately depicts their stories.

The foundation for my argument is set out in two different chapters.

The first chapter includes some sections that start with a general introduction (page 01-13) followed by the theoretical framework and literature review in pages 13-30. Within this section, I bring together and dissect the key concepts related to migration. This includes a revision of some concepts such as 'diaspora', 'diasporic community', 'e-diaspora', 'migrants', 'transnational community', 'connected migrants', 'refugees', 'asylum seekers', and so on. This will help us understand *who* is at the core of this thesis. In the same section, I also present several concepts such as 'mobility', 'connectivity', 'belongings', 'nostalgia', 'boundaries', and so on. The explanation of those concepts is intended to clarify *what* the migration journey of the Malagasy diasporic community looks like. Then, I dedicate a large part of this section to the explanation of *what* scholars have said about the concept of 'diaspora' and in particular with respect to the Malagasy migrants scattered around the world.

In the following section (page 33-41), I present in detail the data and methods used in each of the three papers that constitute the dissertation. These include Participant Observation, Online Surveys, Network Analysis, and Thematic Content Analysis. Data is presented according to each paper and the method

used in them. In a few words, the data varies from blog posts to Facebook groups.

In the second chapter, I present the three papers that constitute the whole thesis and which are understood as the findings of the thesis. These three papers are distinct but complementary aspects of the core of this thesis: the uses and practices of the internet by the Malagasy diaspora to connect with their peers, with their country of origin, and their country of settlement. The papers are presented in the order they were accepted for publication by the journals. The first paper, entitled *Online weak ties, a sign of a diaspora in-the-making? The case of the Malagasy abroad*, presents a wide overview of the websites and blogs created and/run by the Malagasy diaspora. The second, *Blogging as digital citizen participation: The case of the Malagasy diaspora* analyses the political blogs of the Malagasy diaspora. The third paper, *The Facebook Groups and Pages of Malagasy Migrants in France: Hubs of Peer-to-Peer and Spontaneous Solidarity* is about the Facebook groups and pages of the Malagasy diaspora.

The third and final chapter is dedicated to the conclusion and discussion (page 79-85). This chapter brings together my findings through the whole study and suggests directions for further studies related to the same topic.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The concept of 'diaspora'

'Diaspora' is a comprehensively studied concept. A query on the Google Scholar database with the keyword 'diaspora' reveals 1,220,000 results in 0.05 seconds. At least three cross-sectional and authoritative handbooks have been dedicated to diasporas:

- *The Handbook of Diasporas, Media and Culture (2019).* Edited by Jessica Retis and Roza Tsagarousianou.

- *The SAGE Handbook of Media and Migration (2020).* Edited by Kevin Smets, Koen Leurs, Myria Georgiou, Saskia Witteborn, and Radhika Gajjala.

- *The Routledge Handbook of Diaspora Studies (2020).* Edited by Robin Cohen and Carolin Fischer.

Moreover, other handbooks on specific diasporas have been edited:

- *The Routledge Handbook of the Chinese Diaspora* (2013). Edited by Chee-Beng Tan.

- *The Routledge Handbook of the South Asian Diaspora* (2013). Edited by Joya Chatterji and David Washbrook.

- *The Routledge Handbook of the Indian Diaspora* (2018). Edited by Radha Hegde and Ajaya Sahoo.

- *The Routledge Handbook of Asian Diaspora and Development* (2021). Edited by Ajaya K. Sahoo.

- *The Oxford Handbook of the Jewish Diaspora* (2021). Edited by Hasia R. Diner.

The myriad of results on Google Scholar and the number of handbooks attest to scholarly interest vis-à-vis the concept 'diaspora' and the various diasporas. They also attest to the malleability, complexity, and fluidity of the concept itself. An attempt to define the concept is therefore a laborious exercise. Yet below I share my understanding of it through the takeaways from the existing literature, since my understanding of this concept is the driving force of this thesis.

2.1.1. The evolving of the 'diaspora' concept

Etymologically, 'diaspora' is a Greek word which means 'scattering' or 'dispersion'. It is composed of the preposition *dia* (over) and the word *speiro* (to sow).

Shuval (2000: 42) informs us that "this word is extracted from the phrase 'Thou shalt be a diaspora in all kingdoms of the earth', from the *Septuagint*, the earliest extant Greek translation of the Old Testament from the original Hebrew which was produced near the middle of the third century BC (*tirgum ha'shiv'im*), translated to Deuteronomy, 28:25 (Oxford English Dictionary). The Greeks understood the term as meaning migration and colonisation."

In Hebrew, 'diaspora' has to do with the word *galut*, which has an historical component as its meaning refers to the exile of the Jews from ancient Palestine. In this sense, the term has the connotation of a forced scattering or dispersion from one's ancestral homeland to unknown lands (Safran, 1991: 83; Shuval, 2000: 42).

Nowadays, the common and widespread understanding of the concept of diaspora finds its roots in its etymology and its historical reference to the exile and the mobility of a group from its homeland to another land(s). It appears that, when asked about the definition of their understanding of the 'diaspora' word, most people's commonsensical understandings refer to the Jews with no more explanations.

Yet, such a simplistic definition could easily be mistaken for a more commonly used word: 'migration'. It is in this sense that a lot of questions arise. In fact, what makes the word 'diaspora' different from 'migration'? From what moment does a migrant becomes a member of a diaspora? Is every migrant part of a diaspora? Who is eligible for becoming part of adiaspora? And so on. A great deal of academic research, as mentioned above, has been devoted to a collective attempt

to finding the most accurate descriptive and comprehensive understanding of this concept.

Beyond the basic yet simplistic description provided by the etymology, which reduces the understanding of the concept to the movement of dispersion with allusions to the 'home (old) land' and the 'host (new) land', some criteria were gradually set by scholars to properly delimit it. Alongside the aforementioned criteria, (Safran, 1991: 83-84) proposed that the expatriate minority communities ought to have the following characteristics to be called a diaspora:

- they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original 'centre' to 'peripheral' or foreign regions;
- they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland with its physical location, history, and achievements;
- they believe that they are not—and perhaps cannot be—fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it;
- they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return—when conditions are appropriate;
- they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and
- they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship.

With such conditions, Safran makes a clear emphasis on the returning aspect of the dispersion journey of the diaspora that is emboldened by (i) a collective memory of an (idealised or mythicised) homeland, (ii) a bettering of the personal and homeland's conditions, and (iii) struggles with integration in the host land.

In comparison to the etymological understanding of the 'diaspora' concept, Safran makes a bold step forward by putting the accent on the relationship of diasporas to their homelands.

Three years after Safran's contribution, postcolonial theorist Gilroy focused more on the purposes of the displacement, which he suggests as being mainly motivated by any kind of unproper conditions in the homeland. He subtly refers to the concept of diaspora as being a kind of exile that is made more bearable for those who live in this situation with a collective memory of the homeland similar to that outlined by Safran.

Gilroy suggests that "diaspora identifies a relational network, characteristically produced by forced dispersal and reluctant scattering. It is not just a word of movement, though purposive, urgent movement is integral to it. Under this sign, push factors are a dominant influence. They make diaspora more than a vogueish synonym for peregrination or nomadism. Life itself is at stake in the way the word suggests flight or coerced rather than freely chosen experiences of displacement. Slavery, pogroms, indenture, genocide and other unnameable terrors have all figured in the constitution of diasporas and the reproduction of diaspora-consciousness, in which identity is focused less on common territory and more on memory or more accurately on the social dynamics of remembrance and commemoration." (1994: 207)

Definitely, the assumptions of Safran and Gilroy highlight a linear and temporal discontinuity in the life of diaspora in the home and the host lands. They seem to suggest that the displacement from the homeland – mostly motivated by traumatic purposes – is marked by a break in terms of their connection with it.

Cohen (1997) suggests additional criteria in the construction of the concept of diaspora, as reported by Tsagarousianou (2004:55; and 2019:79). The definition of diaspora must:

- be able to include those groups that scatter voluntarily or as a result of fleeing aggression, persecution, or extreme hardship;
- take into account the necessity for a sufficient time period before any community can be described as a diaspora. According to Cohen, there should be indications of a transnational community's strong links to the past that thwart assimilation in the present as well as the future;
- recognise more positive aspects of diasporic communities. For instance, the tensions between ethnic, national, and transnational identities can lead to creative formulations;
- acknowledge that diasporic communities not only form a collective identity in the place of settlement or with their homeland, but also share a common identity with members of the same ethnic communities in other countries.

James Clifford, an American anthropologist widely acknowledged as one of the trailblazers of diasporic studies, cuts with the standpoints of Safran and Gilroy and introduces a non-binary viewpoint of society as a melting pot or ethnic mosaic as opposed to a binary including minority vs majority members of a society. He proposes that "diasporic language seems to be replacing, or at least supplementing, minority discourse. Transnational connections break the binary relation of 'minority' communities with 'majority' societies." (Clifford, 1997: 255) He also introduces a non-sequential life of a diaspora that is continuously 'engaged' in the politics and other aspects of the homeland of the diaspora while being in dispersion.

To us, Clifford and Cohen start pointing out a visionary element of understanding of the concept of diaspora. They both recall that the life of diaspora needs to be apprehended from its initial dispersion onwards. They view the life of diasporas as a complex intertwining of positive memories/remembrances/nostalgia of the homeland and an optimistic way of life that relies on social and political engagement and transnationalism.

This leads to my personal plea and understanding of the life of diasporas that is intertwined with these elements:

- *Optimism*: The life of a diaspora can not (or should not) be focused or reduced to only a forced, hard, or traumatic escape. It is more about hope and the hard work that this requires of migrant or non-migrant people once settled in the country of residence.
- *Future-focused*: The life of a diaspora is more about the future than the past in all its aspects (nostalgia). It is not about what is left behind within the home country. It is more about a better time to come in the future.
- *Engaged*. The life of a diaspora gets fully lived in its beauty and duty in the home and host countries and in all its aspects: political, social, economic, and so on. Moreover, they work to better the environment.
- *Non-discontinuous/non-sequential*. Within the life of a diaspora, there is no longer a break between the home left behind and the new home, as Diminescu has so well described it in her plea: "Yesterday the motto was: immigrate and cut your roots; today it would be: circulate and keep in touch." (2008: 568)

The quintessence of the diaspora relies in the blurred lines between dispersion and the return, the absence and the presence, the home and the host, the lost and the desired, the being and not being, the new and old ties that are proper to communities of migrants who are at the same time:

- *connected* (Diminescu, 2008, 2014),
- *cosmopolitan* – "of local specificity and universal enlightenment", as presented by Werbner (2006: 496), and as "groups that allow difference from sameness" and at the same time "bottom up" driven groups, as presented by Koen Leurs and Sandra Ponzanesi (2018: 16).
- *transnational* (Faist et al., 2010), and
- *imagined* (Fazal & Tsagarousianou, 2002; Tsagarousianou, 2004).

In its essence of being physically in one place and having strong connections with several places or countries, the life of a diaspora is undoubtedly intertwined with digital technologies as a means of connection with their countries of origin. The next section attempts to briefly map the uses of new technologies by diasporas.

2.2.   Diasporic communities and their use of websites and blogs

Nowadays, 'connectivity' has precisely become the core of the scholarly debate on migration. Since the emergence and increase of public use of digital technologies, scholars became interested in migrants' uses and practices of these digital technologies. They also wanted to focus on the implications of their use and practices on the social dynamics of the migrant communities. The *e-Diasporas Atlas*[9] research project, led by Dana Diminescu, is one of the most prominent research projects focused on the uses and practices of digital technologies by diasporic communities. This ongoing project that started in 2008 gathers around 29 researchers distributed in around 18 diasporic communities, including Chinese, Egyptian, French, Indian, Italian, Lebanese, Macedonian, Mexican, Moroccan, Tunisian, Turkish, and Uyghur communities. Diminescu's group primarily focused on less interactive digital platforms such as blogs and websites, as those were the most popular digital technologies at the beginning of the

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[9] The concept of 'e-diaspora' - Maison des Sciences de l'Homme fondation ICT Migrations program led by Dana Diminescu : http://www.e-diasporas.fr/

project. They aimed "at mapping and analysing the occupation of the Web by diasporas" (Diminescu, 2012: 453).

The *e-Diasporas Atlas* project paved the way for the empirical and theoretical research to date on the use of these platforms by diasporic communities. Most importantly, it raised the problems that every researcher attempts to answer on whether the online presence of diasporic communities is an extension of physical diasporas or merely their mirror image, and whether they are the source of new diaspora communities (Diminescu, 2012: 452). Be that as it may, it appears to be strongly relevant to us to differentiate between the use of non-interactive online platforms, such as websites or media, and interactive ones, such as Facebook, blogs, or Twitter.

Empirical studies on the use of non-interactive platforms, such as Westbrook and Saad's of the religious Coptic diaspora (2016), reveal that their websites are an extension of the community; in other words, they are a digitisation of the offline practices of the community. The websites are used to maintain and nurture a common identity among the members of the same community. The same phenomenon occurs among the Sikh diasporic community, which uses its websites as spaces for dialogue upon issues of identity, culture, and religion (Kumar, 2012). In the context of other diasporic communities mostly based on economic migrations, such as the Malagasy diaspora (Andrianimanana & Cuberes, 2019), the Nepalese diaspora (Bruslé, 2012), or the Uyghur diaspora (Reyhan, 2012), their uses of these platforms is quite different. The websites and online platforms contribute to the making of a diasporic community and a sense of community, and therefore a common identity. These studies concluded that internet-based platforms contribute widely or entirely to these in-the-making or incipient diasporic community. The use of websites and blogs varies in the contexts of other diasporic communities from countries or territories under a democratic regime in-the-making or an unstable political regime, such as is the

case for the Palestinian diaspora (Ben-David, 2012; Kumar, 2018), the Egyptian diaspora (Severo & Zuolo, 2012), or the Tunisian diaspora (Graziano, 2012b). Although they were carried out in countries that are quite different, these studies point out that the diasporic websites were used by the diasporas as public channels for social and large-scale mobilisations concerning the voting process or for democratisation strikes. In contrast to the aforementioned use of websites, highly-skilled diasporic communities such as the Italian one scattered around the world first use their websites to gather around economic interests and exchanges, and then to reunite around a cultural and common identity (Graziano, 2012a).

This overview of the use of diasporic websites by diasporic communities shows different patterns, motivations, and consequences of the same phenomenon. If it has been made clear that the diasporic websites serve as a channel for nurturing a shared identity among the members of the diasporas and that the websites are used to maintain a permanent link to the homeland, their uses and patterns are not unique. For some diasporas, the websites appear to be the representation and extension of the offline diasporic communities or those who remain in the homeland. In contrast, other diasporic communities use them as spaces for gathering and for the growing of a community.

2.3. Diasporic communities and their use of Facebook groups and pages

Compared to diasporic communities' use of non-interactive online platforms such as websites, the use of more interactive ones such as Facebook differs in terms of purposes and practices. The extra function of interactivity provided by Facebook or Twitter, to name but a few, enables further and specific social dynamics and social interactions. In addition, beyond appearing to be the most-used social media platform in the world, Facebook also allows interactions that would not take place offline. One of the characteristics of Facebook is that it

allows interactions and exchanges among "men of a certain standing" with "women and (young) men" on crucial issues of the society (Dalsgaard, 2016: 101). This feature is even more interesting when considering the interactions and exchanges between diasporic communities.

One of the most relevant characteristics of Facebook is that it allows its users to create and manage 'groups' and 'pages'. Facebook groups are spaces created and managed by one or several moderators (called 'roles' by the Facebook algorithm) who are in charge of organising the membership of those groups. Therefore, the moderators are the members of a group who allow people to enter or force others to leave according to the rules and regulations of the group. They also are in charge of the fluidity of the 'discussions' between the members of the group, which can be set as 'public' or 'private'. In contrast to groups, Facebook pages are unidirectional spaces that allow the administrator(s) of the page to directly post information and to let the users (called 'followers' by the Facebook algorithm) to react to and interact with a given post.

Digital technologies, including Facebook, also allow freer and more horizontal exchanges between their users. They are the ground of conversations that are not limited by surveillance. "Facebook has been noted to collaborate with the Danish government to support their deterrence campaign" (Leurs & Patterson, 2020: 587) while researching on displaced migrants in Europe, for example. Understood in this sense, generic groups and pages on Facebook, like the other digital technologies, are in a certain way tools that could be free from digital and social divides and oppressions, such as gendered logics or migration restrictions. In other words, drawing directly on the concept of 'digital affordances', digital technologies are definitely 'affordable' tools of communication for everyone and especially for the most vulnerable communities such as migrants (Duffy et al., 2017; Gillespie et al., 2018; Hurley, 2019; Udwan et al., 2020; Witteborn, 2018).

Diasporic communities, as is the case of the Malagasy diaspora, use these features that Facebook offers for a wide range of purposes, but most certainly "for survival and transnational communication", as Koen Leurs and Jeffrey Patterson observe when speaking of digital technologies such as smartphones (2020: 584). Currently, the existing research on the use of Facebook by diasporic communities is mainly focused on the use of groups. We assume that this is due to the fact that in studying a group, one is studying a 'community'. In fact, Facebook groups can be seen as virtual communities that are regulated by an informal structure composed of "moderators" vs "ordinary" members and that are important for ethnographic studies. In some cases, the moderators of diasporic groups on Facebook screen those who want to join the groups. This top-down-structured organisation on Facebook was observed by Ajder (2020) in the Facebook groups of Romanians. In the last decade, the use of Facebook has prevailed in scholarly studies on migration and the research on this topic abounds. The 112,000 results of a search of Google's scholarly database (scholar.google.com) with the keywords "Diaspora" AND "Facebook" attests to this fact.

Existing research on the use of Facebook by diasporic communities reveals that Facebook and other interactive and messenger-equipped digital platforms are used for a wide range of purposes beyond merely allowing the members of a diaspora to stay in touch with their homeland and to create new bonds with the host country (Hiller & Franz, 2004; Ellison et al., 2011). As Leurs observes, diasporic communities' motives and purposes for using Facebook are complex.

> "On a theoretical level, combining orientations toward elsewheres as well as local contexts implies migrants have to balance two modes of cultural identification." (Leurs, 2015: 43)

The relationship with homeland is one of the most commonly found motives for diasporas' use of Facebook. Indeed, Facebook is used by some members of

diasporic communities as a tool for getting information from homeland (Yoon, 2016). This staying-in-touch habit is further accentuated when a major political or social event is happening in the homeland, as was the case of the Burundian diaspora during the political crisis in Burundi (Turner & Berckmoes, 2020) or the Iranian diaspora during the presidential election in Iran in 2009 (Ghorashi & Boersma, 2009). Moreover, Facebook has been shown as an effective tool diasporas use to address "delicate" political issues in their homeland, especially when their voices would have been muted at home (Mutsvairo, 2013: 114).

Although different diasporic communities' use of Facebook all follows the same patterns the Facebook algorithm allows, the purposes vary from one community to another. Existing research on the use of Facebook by diasporic communities shows that Facebook is firstly used by most diasporic communities as a space for togetherness around a shared religion or culture within the country of settlement, irrespective of the purpose for which it was originally created. This shows how important it is for diasporic communities to "perform" their homeland's habits while living abroad. As a consequence, Facebook is a space for co-creating a common cultural identity (Oiarzabal, 2012; Díaz Bizkarguenaga & Tsavkko García, 2015; NurMuhammad et al., 2016; Rakotoary, 2019) and for nurturing and maintaining a religious identity, as is the case for the Coptic (Westbrook & Saad, 2016) or the Hindu diaspora (Therwath, 2012). Although I agree with Christensen (2012) on the importance of taking a cautious standpoint regarding a "common identity", since this is a fluid and ever-changing feeling through the years, the existing studies show that (virtual) gathering spaces such as Facebook can fuel the negotiation of a shared identity among the members of a diaspora. Christensen (2012: 897) states that "there might a general, encompassing element of commonality of identity and identification with a shared historicity, language and everyday culture" among the members of a diaspora, but also "a great deal of diversity, and pronounced elements of generational, gender and class

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differences, and antagonisms arising from both territorial and class origins of certain sub-groups". This is confirmed by the research of Cohen and Yefet (2021), who found that the Iranian diaspora is not only challenged by the ethnic and religious diversities in its homeland before migrating, but also face more elements of disparity once in their country of settlement. The case of the potential elite group of the Filipino diaspora in London, who are "engaged but immersed [towards the other members of the Filipino diaspora in the same country]" (Ong & Cabañes, 2011), is similar. However, since I find that it is inappropriate to minimalise the value of a "national identity", it is more correct to say that Facebook helps diasporic communities to gather, and to put on the table those most commonly shared elements that might constitute a shared identity. This claim is in line with how Stuart Hall defined identity as "a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being' since it belongs to the future as much as the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture." (1997: 225). Diasporic communities also use Facebook as a space for performing their homeland's culture within the host country (Babis, 2020) or even for fiercely protecting their culture or religion (Therwath, 2012).

In other contexts, Facebook is used by diasporic communities as a tool for political and mass mobilisations. This was the case for the Egyptian diaspora during the Arab Spring movement that took place around 2012. Tackling the issue of voting rights in Egypt, Severo and Zuolo (2012: 09) state in their paper related to the Egyptian diasporic communities that "the mobilisation for the right to vote required coordination at the international level […] Egyptians abroad met and organized through Twitter and Facebook". Khamis and Vaughn (2012) found the same in their research on the cyberactivism of the Egyptian diaspora in the same revolution. In the same context of the Arab Spring, Breuer et al.(2015), Graziano (2012), and Rousselin (2014) show that Facebook was used by the Tunisian diaspora to transfer key information that would not have been

accessible through national media during the democratisation process of Tunisia from 2010 to 2011. Moreover, Müller-Funk (2016) describes the transnational use of Facebook by the Egyptian diaspora in order to take part in the mass mobilisation during the democratisation of Egypt. Kumar (2018) found that the same happened in the context of the Palestinian diaspora, who gathered in their countries of settlement in protest against the Israeli offensives through invitations on Facebook. In line with political mobilisation in their homeland, the Lebanese diasporas in France and Canada gathered through their Facebook pages and groups to support their political parties from abroad (Asal, 2012: 13). In their case, the Turkish diaspora used Facebook and Twitter to massively support the Gezi Park demonstration in Turkey and to disseminate awareness of this demonstration among the members of the diaspora in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany (Imani Giglou et al., 2017). Regarding the topic of political mobilisation of the diaspora through Facebook, scholars such as Conversi (2012) speaks of a much more intense and "radicalised" acts, especially when fuelled by "receptive" country fellows at home (Mutsvairo, 2013).

Beyond the aforementioned purposes, diasporas use also Facebook for a material/practical purpose: as a hub for the exchange of goods, services, advice, solidarity, or care chains, to name but a few. This is the case of the Nigerian, Ethiopian, and Egyptian diasporas in the United States, who organise themselves on Facebook to "exchange services, advice and information on day-to-day living" (Mesbah & Cooper, 2019: 131). This is also the case of Bulgarians in the United Kingdom, who use Facebook groups as hubs for "informal" exchanges of "low status" occupations and for those little entrepreneurs who offer their services towards their fellow countrymen within the groups (Nancheva, 2021). Plaza and Plaza (2019) report in their research that the Trinidadian diaspora, and particularly those living in Canada, also use Facebook as care-giving hubs among the members of the diasporas or towards homeland-based Trinidadians.

Although these three studies were carried out in different geographical spaces and in different contexts, they point out that times of crisis and connectivity amidst immobility, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, accelerated the material exchanges within these groups. I also noticed that this type of 'solidarity-driven' exchange was more present in the groups of the diaspora coming from low-income countries and living in high-income countries.

This overview of the use of Facebook by diasporic communities shows us that Facebook is a very much used tool that diasporas use to maintain their "lost" or "old ties" in the homeland and their "new ties" in the host country, as Hiller and Franz (2004) describe it. These interactive and connective characteristics of Facebook as well as the other digital technologies are in a certain way the fuel diasporas use for "diasporing" by allowing them to be physically in the country of settlement and at the same time to live and exist in their country of origin.

2.4.   Objectives

As was seen in the previous sections, the Malagasy diaspora is very under-studied and at the same time strongly solicited by the Malagasy institutions. Long associated with the 'brain drain flux phenomenon', the Malagasy living abroad are nowadays considered as 'actors of homeland development' or 'economic ambassadors'. At the same time, this change of the paradigm is accompanied by the emergence of the internet. The starting point of this thesis is my desire to understand this switch.

Also, since digital technologies are crucial components of the life of human beings nowadays, this thesis is a contribution to the scientific exploration and understanding of the use of internet by the Malagasy diaspora scattered around the world. It seeks to expand the little existing knowledge on this topic for this

community with a particular focus on their connectivity, their digital presence and activities, and their digital practices.

Digital technologies have been proven not only as an object of study but also as methodological tools. The digital activities and traces of diasporic communities have been proven as an effective means for understanding the social dynamics of a transnational community (Diminescu, 2012; Leurs, 2015; Leurs & Smets, 2018; Retis & Tsagarousianou, 2019).

The literature review on diasporas shows that most, if not all, diasporic communities create and manage their own website(s), their blogs, and their Facebook groups and pages, to name but few platforms. These digital activities are mainly aimed at:

> (a) seeking other members of one's country within the country of settlement to be able to 'perform' one's culture while being outside the country of origin,

> (b) nurturing one's belonging in personal relationships left behind at country of origin

> (c) maintaining the political, economic, and social connections with the country of origin or belonging to the country of origin.

I assume that the Malagasy diaspora does not escape from the aforementioned widespread patterns that seem to be logical and proper to the description of a diaspora itself as living with dual cultures (and territories). Thus the premises of the main objectives of this thesis are:

> **Objective 1.** To explore what the websites of the Malagasy diaspora look like, and how and why they use them (addressed in Paper 1).

Objective 2. To explore to what extent the Malagasy diaspora uses blogs, and how and why they use them (addressed in Paper 2).

Objective 3. To explore why the Malagasy diaspora uses Facebook groups and pages and what they look like (addressed in Paper 3).

Beyond these main and specific objectives, by focusing on the Malagasy diaspora this thesis contributes to the ongoing scholarly debate over whether the digital activities and practices of diasporic communities reflect or diverge from the offline communities and/or activities. The main objectives of this thesis are in line with those of the ever more numerous and ongoing empirical studies on the digital activities and traces of diasporic communities. It contributes more broadly to the interdisciplinary research area of digital migration studies that is a rapidly evolving field of research (Leurs & Smets, 2018). These studies are deeply relevant for academia as well as for institutions and organisations that deal with migrants, since their lives are nowadays inevitably intertwined with the use of the digital technologies.

2.5. Object of study

This thesis deals with the use and practices of online platforms by the Malagasy migrants scattered around the world in order to create a community and a common identity, to stay connected with their country fellows and relatives remaining in Madagascar, or to perform the "Malagasiness" within their country of settlement. Therefore, it covers their use of interactive platforms, such as Facebook or blogs, and some other non-interactive platforms such as webpages. These are the platforms that I consider as online and real-time gathering 'spaces' for geographically dispersed community such the Malagasy migrants. This aspect of the non-stop and intense connectivity that the online platforms afford to the migrant communities is a crucial aspect of the current lives of 'connected

migrants'. Their uses of and practices surrounding the internet are here understood as tools for analysing the crucial aspects of the Malagasy migrant community: their belonging, their connectivity, and their mobility. These three aspects are those that constitute the everyday life of a diasporic community.

3. DATA AND METHODS

This thesis relies on qualitative and quantitative methods used separately in each of the three papers. By making use of these different quantitative and qualitative methods on the one hand I intend to cover a broad range of aspects of the object of study, and on the other, to respond to each of the objectives that requires a corresponding and specific method. Also, the timespan of 12 years (between 2009 and 2021) provides sufficient grounds for comprehending the social changes and dynamics of Malagasy migrant community over time. In this period, a wide range of events and changes took place in the political and social life of Madagascar, including but not limited to the coup d'état in 2009, the presidential elections in 2013, and the presidential elections in 2018. It is reasonable to expect that these events may have affected Malagasy transnational migration.

In the following lines, each of the methods used are presented separately according to the paper they were applied in. However, the processes of data collection for each can be resumed in this scheme:

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┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐
│ Step 1: Definition of │ ──▶ │ Step 2: Detection of │ ──▶ │ Step 3: Selection of │
│ the platform(s) to be │     │   the Malagasy    │     │   the Malagasy    │
│     analysed      │     │ account(s) on the │     │ account(s) to be  │
│                 │     │ selected platform(s) │     │     analysed      │
└─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘

┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐
│  Step 4: Data   │ ──▶ │ Step 5: Sample  │
│ gathering from the │     │    analysis     │
│ selected account(s) │     │                 │
└─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘
```
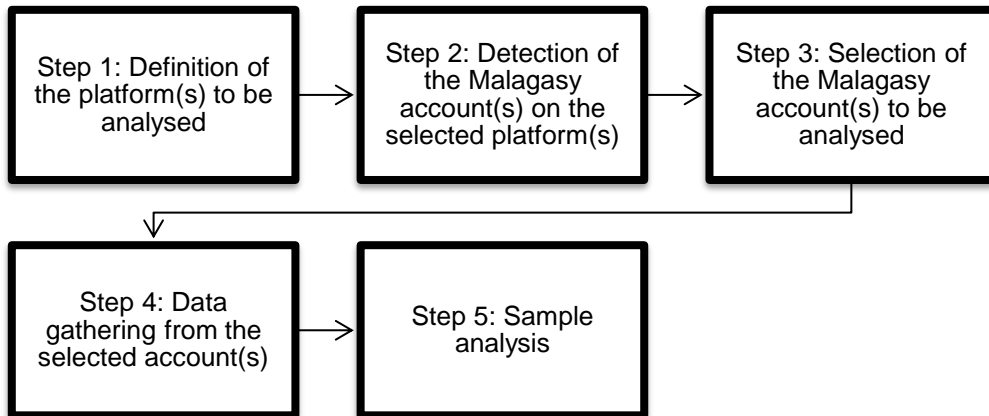
Step 1: Firstly, the digital platforms to be analysed were thoroughly described and delimited. In the three selected platforms for each of the three papers (websites, blogs, and Facebook groups and pages) the driving criteria were that (i) the platform was still active and (ii) it was likely to be (massively) used by the Malagasy diaspora.

Step 2: The following step sought to detect the account(s) of the Malagasy diaspora on each of the platforms. The two driving criteria for the selection were that they had to be active in the moment of the query (at least) and that they had to be managed and/or created by Malagasy migrants. Their websites (paper 1) and blogs (paper 2) were first queried using the Google search engine with keywords related to the Malagasy diaspora in the Malagasy, French, and English languages. The obtained list of websites and blogs was then enriched by the use of the open access *navicrawler* tool used by the e-Diasporas Atlas research project. In the case of the Facebook groups and pages (paper 3), they were manually explored using some keywords such as "Malagasy eto" (literally, "Malagasy in") or "Gasy eto" (an abbreviated form of the former keyword). Some of them were discovered through the personal knowledge of the author of the groups and pages.

Step 3. The third step was to select the account(s) to be analysed among those Malagasy-run accounts shortlisted from the previous step. Those accounts run and/or managed by ordinary Malagasy citizens from abroad and are Madagascar or Malagasy-related were selected. As a consequence, those accounts run and/or managed by Malagasy institutions abroad such as embassies or consulates were excluded.

Steps 4 and 5. Once I had selected the accounts to be analysed, I proceeded to gather the data and perform a sample analysis according to the objectives of each of the papers.

In the following lines, I present in detail the method(s) used in each one of the papers, as well as the steps followed in doing so.

3.1.   Network Analysis (Paper 1)

Addressing different needs and responding to different purposes, the diasporic websites and blogs are organised in different ways regarding the networks that they create. The networks of the websites are the density and the frequency of incoming and outgoing hyperlinks among the websites. The picture of these networks speaks to the structure and the relationship that connect the websites and shows the picture of the offline organisation of the diasporic organisations and communities.

The Network Analysis aims at understanding and mapping the online presence, practices, dynamics, and activities of the Malagasy migrant community on the internet. The internet is undoubtedly a space in which Malagasy living abroad gather and demonstrate their personal and social dynamics, and their online activities and practices can be understood as a metric of their relationship with their "homeland". I seek to analyse the online activities of Malagasy migrants by

carefully examining Malagasy diasporic websites and Malagasy diasporic public pages or groups on Facebook.

The websites of the Malagasy diaspora are here understood as those websites created and/or managed by non-official individuals or collective members of the Malagasy migrant community that deal with them (Diminescu, 2012). The profiles of the webmasters and the contents of their websites are the main criteria used in selecting the websites. While the profile of the webmasters allows us to see who the connected Malagasy are behind each website, their content shows what they (the webmasters) are saying about Malagasy migrants. The end-users of the websites are not an essential element, as the websites are open access and not limited to Malagasy migrants. I excluded websites that were: (i) created and/or managed by Malagasy nationals abroad representing any Malagasy institution or state (e.g. embassies and consulates); (ii) dealing with the Malagasy migrants but created/or managed by non-Malagasy nationals; and (iii) produced by a political party.

The methods used in this paper are those used in the successful e-Diasporas Atlas project, a research project focused on the analysis of diaspora communities and their online presence (Diminescu, 2012). These are defined in the following steps:

- Step 1: Web exploration and corpus building. Malagasy migrants websites were queried on Google using several keywords related to the Malagasy migrant community in the Malagasy, French and English languages. I analysed the most salient websites depending on their content and according to our personal knowledge of the websites whose contents are related to Malagasy migrants.
- Step 2: Data enrichment. The second step is a manual sequence of selecting/filtering the most salient websites retained for the analysis in Step 1. The 121 websites retained were classified according to their

geographical location, category, and language. Scrutiny of their geographical location was made possible by analysis of their WHOIS addresses and the three other categories were determined by their contents.

- Step 3: Network analysis. This last step was aimed at discovering and manipulating the existing networks between the selected websites. In this step, those MGWEB that maintain any relationships between themselves were detected using the Gephi websites network analysis program developed by the e-Diaspora Atlas project. The network visualisation consists of the intensity and the frequency of the external links that the MGWEB share.

3.2. Thematic Content Analysis (Paper 2)

A thematic content analysis (TCA) was conducted in order to analyse the political blogs of the Malagasy diaspora. The TCA focused on four of the most active political blogs used by members of the Malagasy diaspora: madagoravox.wordpress.com (based in France), alainrajaonarivony.over-blog.net (based in France), rakotoarison.over-blog.com (based in France), and gtt-international.blogspot.com (based in Switzerland). Previous research established that Malagasy diasporic blogs are "those blogs and websites created and/or run by a Malagasy diaspora from outside Madagascar" (Andrianimanana & Roca-Cuberes, 2019), and defined the list of the blogs run by the Malagasy diaspora; the four blogs in this study were selected from this list. In addition to these criteria, the four blogs were selected due to their focus on political issues in Madagascar and their influence. By 'influence' or impact/reach, I refer to the intensity and frequency of the mention or linkage of the blogs on other blogs and/or websites of the Malagasy diaspora as found in our previous research (Andrianimanana & Cuberes, 2019).

The analysis relied on blog posts as the units of analysis. In total, 1,063 blog posts—113 from Madagoravox, 190 from Alainrajaonarivony, 179 from Rakotoarison, and 581 from Gtt-international—were selected for the content analysis. The selected posts were related to the Madagascan political sphere (institutions, political actors, political circumstances, public policies, geopolitics). Posts about international politics and the political sphere of the country of settlement of the bloggers were excluded. Each post was manually retrieved from the blogs for the analysis on September 1, 2020. All of the retrieved posts were published between July 15, 2008 and July 7, 2020. A 12-year time period was selected in order to understand how the political blogs and bloggers reacted to and tackled a wide range of political circumstances and events in Madagascar, such as the ones mentioned above. This methodology shed light on the variations in the activity of political blogs throughout their lifetimes: from their infancy and flourishing moments to their decline in the microblogging era with the advent of Twitter.

The thematic content analysis involved three main steps. First, the primary and secondary topics of the blog posts were identified by analysing a random sample of 60 blog posts (15 from each blog). Second, these primary topics were double-checked by reading 60 additional blog posts. This procedure allowed us to enrich the list of primary and secondary topics and to produce the final coding sheet. Finally, all 1,063 blog posts were analysed. In this final step, each blog post was coded and classified according to how it fit into these four categories: "link filters/transmission belts", "soapboxes", "mobilisers", and "conversation starters." These categories, coined by Wallsten (2008) and used by Tam (2018), are a replicable coding scheme that can be applied to analyse political blogs across specific contexts. Wallsten used this coding scheme to analyse the use of political blogs during the 2004 American presidential election campaign and Waekung

applied the scheme to examine political blogging during the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong in 2014.

A blog post was coded as a "link filter" or "transmission belt" when its content originated from another source and was solely copied and/or linked on the blog with no modification. Since the primary purpose of a link filter post is to inform the reader, it was associated with the function of "informing only". A blog post was coded as "soapbox" when it provided the readers with the opinion, standpoint, thoughts, observations and/or experiences of the author on a given political topic or circumstances. Soapbox posts are associated with the function of "commenting only". A blog post was coded as a "mobiliser" when its contents and form were intended to mobilise the reader to take direct political action or to join an ongoing direct political action undertaken by others. Mobiliser posts were associated with the function of "mobilising". In previous studies using the same analysis (Tam, 2018; Wallsten, 2008), a blog post was coded as a "conversation starter" when the blogger asked for a given answer from the reader through a simple question within the blog post or by enabling a channel of communication, such as a comments section or by providing an email address. However, this study found that through posts, the bloggers entered into dialogue with readers without explicitly asking a question about the topic addressed in the post. Moreover, the blogs studied here all provided email addresses publicly and featured a comments section. Thus, this analysis concluded that every post was a "conversation starter". Therefore, a dimension was added to the "conversation starter" category to include posts that set new political topics to be addressed. A post was also coded as a "conversation starter" when its content directed a question to a specific group, such as political decision-makers or national authorities, for them to consider the question or to make a corresponding decision. In this way, all mobiliser posts are conversation starters, but not all

conversation starters are mobilisers because mobiliser posts call for specific action outside the blog.

Finally, it was determined that a blog post could be coded to have more than one function ("comments only", "informs only", "starts a conversation only", and "mobilises only"). There are 16 possible combinations of the four initial functions. In the analysis of 1,063 blog posts, examples were found of posts that fit into 13 of the 16 possible combinations: (1) informs only, (2) comments only, (3) mobilises only, (4) starts a conversation only, (5) informs and comments, (6) informs and mobilises, (7) informs and starts a conversation, (8) comments and mobilises, (9) comments and starts a conversation, (10) mobilises and starts a conversation, (11) informs, comments and mobilises, (12) informs, comments and starts a conversation, and (13) informs, mobilises and starts a conversation.

3.3.   Online Survey and Content Analysis (Paper 3)

For this study, I rely on a complementary descriptive online survey of Malagasy migrants in France (2021, n=340) and participant observation of in-group and public interactions of 28 Facebook groups and pages of these Malagasy migrants by setting a time frame from March 2020 to July 2021. While I intended to explore the self-perception of the question of 'solidarity' among the Malagasy migrants in France with the online survey, I used participant observation to explore the scope of ongoing self-organised solidarity actions. The concept of 'solidarity' can be described using the common understanding of it as those mutual actions within a group whose members share common interests. In the case of migrant communities, scholars have studied their solidarity actions vis-à-vis the final designation of the actions: the country of settlement, the country of origin (Ben-David, 2012; Plaza & Plaza, 2019), and the group(s) of migrants (Mesbah & Cooper, 2019; Nancheva, 2021). In this study, I focus on these three aspects with a greater focus on group-targeted solidarity actions.

First, the online survey included various aspects of the personal data and experience of the Malagasy migrants in France. The survey also included questions about their personal migration journey from Madagascar to France. Finally, it covered aspects related to their settlement in their host country with a clear focus on the "adversities" they had to face all along the process of settlement. Moreover, the survey enclosed questions related to their relationship with the Malagasy institutions' representation in France. Finally, the survey asked about their membership in any group of Malagasy migrants in France as well as their solidarity actions and engagement towards their peers in France and towards their fellow citizens in Madagascar during times of particularly difficult adversity, such as the Covid-19 pandemic. For clarification, I use the term 'group' to refer to any organisation that formally or informally brings together Malagasy migrants in France. I detected three different types of groups: associations (e.g., cultural or religious), entrepreneurial groups, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The results of our online survey showed that 63% of the informants for age, gender, qualifications, and length of residence in France report being members of an association run and/or managed by the Malagasy migrants.

Our first striking finding is that 92% of the informants for all variables declared being members of at least one Facebook group and/or page run and/or managed by Malagasy migrants. This led us to conduct additional research on Facebook groups and pages of the Malagasy migrants to complement and contrast the results of the online survey. Therefore, I conducted a 16 month-framed participant observation of 28 groups and pages of Malagasy migrants in France from March 2020 to July 2021. As I focused on their informal, spontaneous, and unofficial interactions, I only selected for this analysis those active and influential groups and pages with 100 or more members or followers that were run and/or managed by ordinary citizens of the Malagasy in France. The manager(s) of these groups were shown directly by the algorithm of Facebook. I excluded those active

and influential and pages with 100 or more members that were run and/or managed by Malagasy institutions abroad such as those groups and pages run by the foreign representation of the country in France (e.g. the embassy, consulates, etc).

The groups and pages on Facebook were manually explored using keywords such as "Malagasy eto" (literally, "Malagasy in") or "Gasy eto" (an abbreviated form of the former keyword). Some of them were discovered through the personal knowledge of the author of the groups and pages. I ran the analysis only within those groups and pages which I had access to, whether private or public. In the case of private groups, I had to give my personal credentials in order to be able to access them. As an exploratory study, this study is centred on the general aspects of the public interactions and tries to give an overview of them. Therefore, I have not worked with the individual members, except those who run the groups and pages; instead I relied on the algorithm of Facebook to do so. The analysis of their engagement rate (likes, shares, and comments) allowed me to understand the patterns, intensity, and frequency of public communications.

Existing literature shows that Facebook, as well as other social media platforms, are nowadays a vital aspect of migrants' lives, as Diminescu (2008) demonstrated in her "connected migrant manifesto". In fact, the life of a migrant is nowadays more than ever connected and goes beyond the cell phone call that was so characteristic of previous decades to stay connected with their relatives or friends at "home". Migrants are now out of the country of origin and within it as they remain connected in real time. Still, this literature shows an ongoing and long-lasting debate among scholars over the difference between "e-diaspora" or "connected migrants". Scholars on migration studies show that social networking platforms such as Facebook are opportune spaces for understanding the social dynamics of migrant communities and have been driving their research on Facebook since its creation in 2004 (Ajder, 2020; Babis, 2020; Mesbah & Cooper,

2019; NurMuhammad et al., 2016; Oiarzabal, 2012). Moreover, ethnographers have confirmed the relevance of Facebook as a field of observation of those social dynamics (Caliandro, 2018; Murthy, 2013; Willis, 2019). This is why I followed their path, as I found Dalsgaard's assumption on online ethnography on Facebook appropriate: it "does accentuate the merging of home and away as it does not require the physical proximity or face-to-face contact previously regarded as the cornerstone [and limitation] of ethnographic methodology" (2016: 110).

3.4. Ethical considerations

Several precautions have been taken in order to protect the identity of individual subjects mentioned or quoted within this thesis.

In the case of non-participant observation, no personal identifiable data – including names, surnames, pictures, ages, locations, email addresses, phone numbers – were collected, stored, or presented in the outcome. In the case of screenshots, any personal data was blurred. In case of the quotes, the exact dates of their posting within the groups were voluntarily changed.

In the case of online surveys, no personal identifiable data – including names, surnames, pictures, ages, locations, email addresses, phone numbers – were collected, stored, or presented in the outcome. Informed consent was obtained for the survey.

In order to avoid harm to the subjects and the researcher, no sensitive information was collected, stored, or presented in the outcome.

4. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

This section summarises all the results of the papers that compose this thesis. First, the results are presented in detail in order to give the most precise overview of the use of the internet by the Malagasy diaspora. Then the three papers that compose this work are presented.

4.1. The websites of the Malagasy diaspora

4.1.1. Religious websites and blogs as the dominant category

The network analysis revealed 120 websites and blogs created and/or run by the Malagasy diaspora. These interconnected websites and blogs, whose distribution by country is displayed in Figure 1, are the starting points of this thesis.
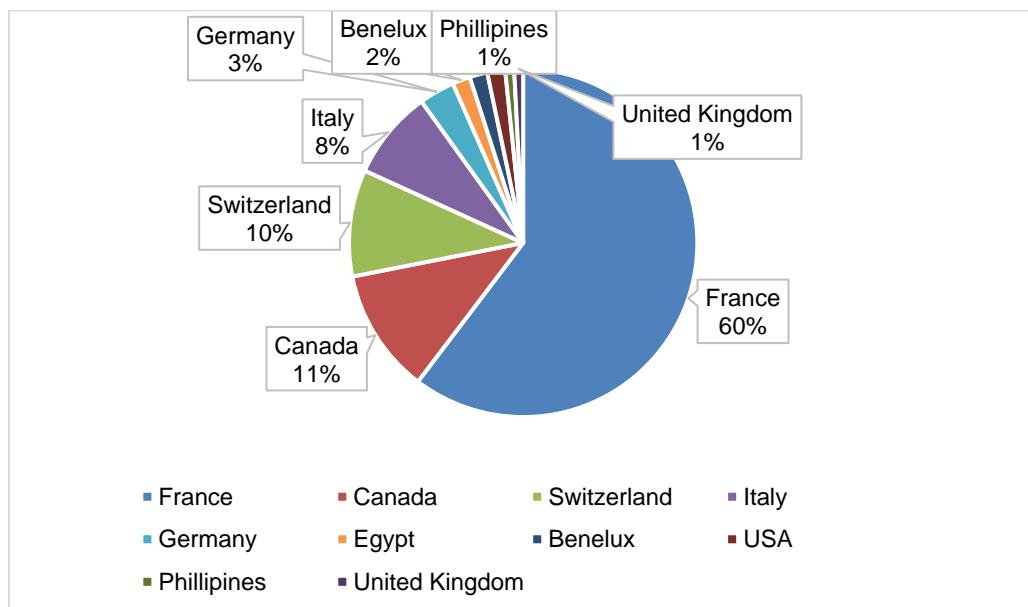

Figure 1. Distribution of the websites by country

The data in Figure 1 shows that France is the country that hosts the majority of the websites and blogs of the Malagasy diaspora (n=73, 60% of the total number of websites and blogs). Then comes Canada, with 14 websites and blogs (11%),

and then Switzerland with 12 websites and blogs (10%). Italy comes right after Switzerland, with 10 websites and blogs (8%). Italy is followed by Germany, with 4 websites and blogs (3%), and then Benelux (n=2, 2%) and the USA (n=2, 2%). The rest are distributed in Egypt (n=2, 2%), the Philippines (n=1,1%), and the United Kingdom (n=1,1%). This data leads us to say that the websites and blogs of the Malagasy diaspora are mostly located in European and North American countries.

This distribution by country of the websites and blogs gives us an image of the patterns of migration of the Malagasy diaspora, and in particular its geographical distribution throughout the world. The Malagasy diaspora is located in economically wealthy countries that uphold historical or economic bonds with Madagascar (France, the United States, and Germany being among the most long-lasting and main financial partners of Madagascar, among others). This fact is more obvious in the case of France, which has a historical link with Madagascar, and which hosts most of the Malagasy diaspora (represented by more than 60% of the websites of the Malagasy diaspora).

Once distributed by the activities, entities, or organisations that they are related to, the websites give us an interesting insight into another aspect of the migration pattern of the Malagasy diaspora. I first found out that the websites are related to or represent (i) an association, Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), or charitable organisation; (ii) a political-related organisation; (iii) an education-purposed organisation; (iv) a religion-related organisation; (v) a corporate or entrepreneurship-related organisation; and (vi) a leisure or entertainment-purposed organisation. But some websites are also designed and/or are used as (vii) a portal/forum, (viii) (personal or group) blogs, or (ix) media. There are a very few websites that are related to other organisations or entities.

Figure 2. Distribution of the websites by activity

Figure 2 gives us an overview of the distribution of the websites by activity and by country. In those countries where I found most of the websites, such as France (n=73), Canada (n=14), Switzerland (n=12), or Italy (n=10), there is a great deal of variation in the categories of the websites. This means that the more websites there are, the more varied they are. Figure 2 shows that, firstly, websites representing or related to religion are the most dominant websites. They are present in six of the ten countries where Malagasy diasporic websites are present (France, Canada, Switzerland, Italy, Benelux, and United States). Also, they are more dominant in terms of numbers in those countries where they are present, as they represent 34% of all the websites (n=73) in France, 21% of all the websites (n=14) in Canada, and 42% of all the websites (n=12) in Switzerland.

The discovery of a large number of Malagasy diaspora websites related to religion was both unexpected – since it was not mentioned in other studies of other diasporas I have reviewed – but also understandable –because existing studies on the Malagasy diaspora have highlighted the weight of religion in the social life of this community in their discoveries. In France, the websites related to the *Fiangonana Protestanta Malagasy aty Andafy* (Malagasy Protestant Church in France)

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make up the majority of this category. These websites describe the cities in which they are located. This is the case, for example of the websites www.fpma-nantes.org (of the FPMA church in Nantes, France), www.fpma-toulouse.fr (of the FPMA church of Toulouse, France), or www.fpma-paris.org (of the FPMA church of Paris, France). These websites are linked to the parent website www.fpma.church (see Figure 3), which represents the mother house of this Malagasy church in France.

Figure 3. The website of the FPMA church

The websites serve as channels of communication and information on the functioning of the church for the members of the community of the church to which the website is attached. They also serve as an information channel on biblical readings scheduled for the entire liturgical year. The homilies of the spiritual leaders of each church are also kept on these websites. For some churches, there are homily replay podcasts on platforms such as Spotify or YouTube. This function of the websites remains the same for churches of different denominations as well as for different countries. This is the case of the Catholic Church in the canton of Vaud in Switzerland (www.ames-katolika.org) as shown in Figure 4. This discovery shows us that websites represent a

community that is first and foremost well organized and that was operational offline before going online.
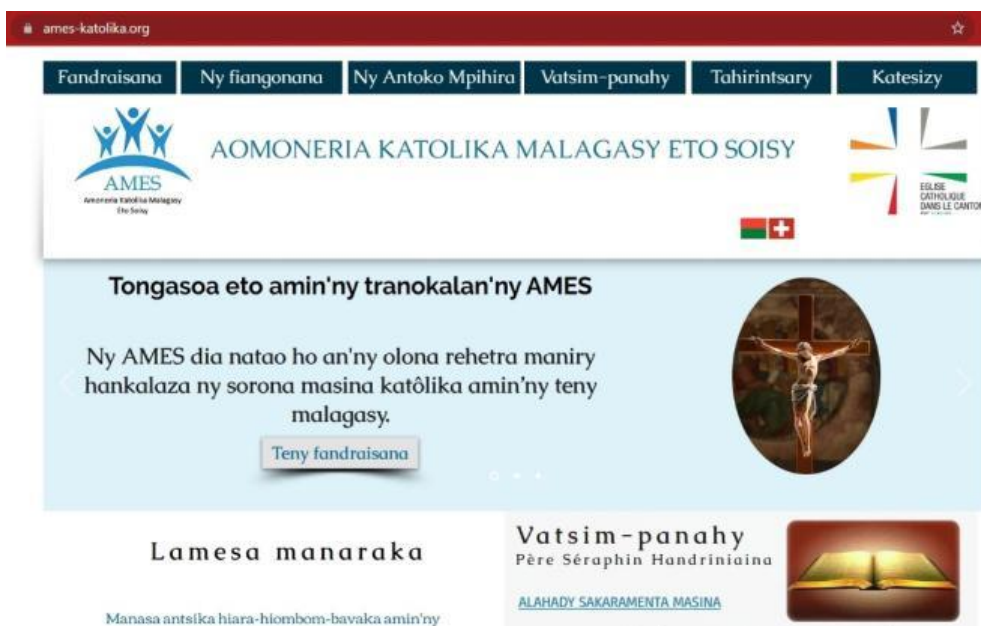
Figure 4. The website of the AMES catholic church in Vaud canton (Switzerland)

According to the contents of the websites, these churches, whether Catholic or Protestant, are extensions of the "mother church" based in Madagascar. In this sense, the community of Malagasy Catholic and Protestant Christians in France or in other countries has its own parish and chaplaincy. These parishes maintain the same liturgical chants, religious rituals, and parish structure as churches of the same denomination in Madagascar.

Next are the websites related to or that represent associations, NGOs, and charitable organisations; they form the second most dominant category. They are present in six of the ten countries (France, Canada, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, and Benelux) where Malagasy diasporic websites are located. In the case of Italy, the percentage of the websites representing or related to NGOs (30%) are even slightly higher than any other category. In the case of Switzerland, there are as many websites related to NGOs as there are blogs (25%).

The analysis of the websites of the diaspora allowed us to discover that there are associations or groups of the Malagasy diaspora which act in favour of the Malagasy diaspora itself, on the one hand, and those which bring together the members of the Malagasy diaspora (and other nationalities) for actions directed to Madagascar, on the other hand.

Websites such as www.tetezanaonlus.org represent personal or family initiatives, mostly small and medium-sized, in favour of Madagascar. Our analysis found that these websites are more numerous than the ones that work towards the Malagasy diaspora itself. They represent associations working in the field of online adoption, the twinning of two cities (usually between the city of origin of its founder in Madagascar and the city of residence of the same founder in his country of residence), education, nutrition, or environmental protection, among others.

Even though the websites of associations or groups of the Malagasy diaspora acting for Madagascar are more numerous in terms of number of the websites, those which bring together members of the diaspora in favour of the diaspora are as important as they are due to the numbers of people that they gather. This is the case of the website www.zama-diaspora.com (Figure 5), which represents the ZAMA association. This association aims to be a place of reference for the Malagasy diaspora where everyone can be inspired, informed, share, come together and act for their well-being or for the development of Madagascar.

Although unremarkable in terms of numbers, the category of portals and forums is the most present in terms of geolocation. Portals and forums are present in seven of the ten countries where I discovered websites of the Malagasy diaspora. They are so ubiquitous that in countries like the United Kingdom, Egypt, and the Philippines, where I only found one website, it was a portal or forum. In Italy, www.malagasy.it is the biggest portal of the Malagasy diaspora. This website's

administrator(s) share the most important information about the meetings of the Malagasy residing in Italy or key information on Italian bureaucratic procedures for foreigners. Websites such as www.malagasy-germany.org (based in Germany) or www.gasymiray.ca (based in Canada), to name but a few, do the same as their Italian peer.

Figure 5. The website of ZAMA Diaspora association

Around 11% of all of the studied websites of the Malagasy diaspora are related to entrepreneurship, leisure, education, or others. Although almost insignificant in terms of numbers, the websites linked to entrepreneurship (www.juniors-pour-madagascar.com) or leisure (www.rns-cen.com) play an important role in the social dynamics of the Malagasy diaspora since they gather a significant number of the Malagasy diaspora.

Figure 6. The website of the RNS Association

Regarding blogs, they are highly significant in terms of numbers, but are only present in France (34% of all websites), Canada (21%), Switzerland (42%), and Italy (20%). They are thus only present in countries where a large number of websites were found. In fact, the number of blogs is the same as the number related to religion in France (34%, n=24). Not only are blogs numerous in terms of number, but according to the network studies of the websites I carried out, they also play a unifying role among all the websites. I discuss this in further detail in the next section.

4.1.2. The websites and blogs of the Malagasy diaspora: weakly connected

As part of this same study, I also carried out a network analysis of the websites of the Malagasy diaspora. This allowed me to discover the existing nodes, the distribution of the clusters, as well as the presence of the web authorities among the network of websites of this community.

The Hyperlink Network Analysis I conducted revealed 2,130 websites being quoted or having quoted the 45 websites of the Malagasy diaspora that I knew prior to the analysis. They were websites of national and international medias, social networks, institutions, and blogs, to name but a few. After analysing each website semi-automatically using the Hyphe program,[10] I discovered 120 websites created and/or run by ordinary Malagasy citizens (excluding those run by official or state-related citizens), as is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Corpus distribution of the Hyperlink Network Analysis (HNA)

Corpus distribution	
Corpus (websites previously known by the author before crawling)	45
Discovered (websites hyperconnected to the corpus discovered after crawling)	2,130
IN (websites meeting the criteria of corpus and selected for the analysis)	120
OUT (websites not matching the criteria of corpus and not selected for the analysis)	2,110
Nodes (websites entity within the corpus for the analysis)	120
Edges (connection between nodes or connections)	46

One of the most striking results of the HNA is that the websites of the Malagasy diaspora are poorly connected, with an average degree levelled at 0,38 and a clustering coefficient of 0,006 (see Table 2). Also, I discovered that for all 120 websites, there are around only 10 clusters with a network diameter of 8. This shows that the websites of the Malagasy diaspora are very poorly connected.

Table 2. Statistics of the curated data resulting from the HNA

Curated data's statistics	
Average degree (number of connections of each node)	0,38
Number of clusters (interconnected groups of nodes)	10
Clustering coefficient (with 0 having no connections and 1 being connected)	0,006
Network diameter (shortest distance between the two most distant nodes in the network)	8

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[10] Hyphe is a web corpus curation tool featuring a research-driven web crawler developed by the Sciences-Po MediaLab. Accessible at https://hyphe.medialab.sciences-po.fr.

Regarding the discovered clusters, they are quite unconnected between them, as is shown in Figure 7. The largest cluster that brings together the most websites is mostly made up of blogs. Although there is no definite and specific authority for the websites of the Malagasy diaspora, blogs such as www.gazetyavylavitra.wordpress.com, www.blaogy.com, www.tsimokagasikara.wordpress.com and www.madagoravox.wordpress.com are the main federators of this cluster .
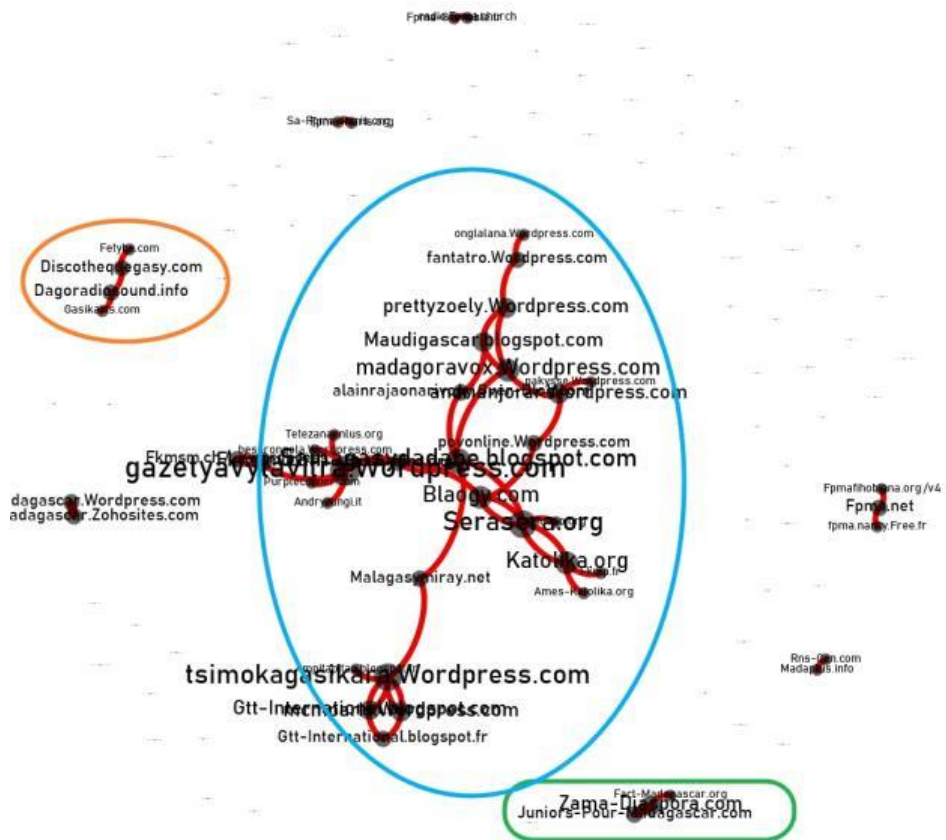

Figure 7. Networks of the Malagasy diasporic websites

This biggest cluster (see the blue circle in Figure 7) is also subdivided into mini-clusters which gather around www.gazetyavylavitra.wordpress.com, the blog with the greatest degree. The most visible of these clusters, for example, is the one

that brings together the blogs www.tsimokagasikara.wordpress.com, www.gtt-international.blogspot.fr, www.mcmparis.wordpress.com, and even www.ampitapitao.blogspot.com. The blogs www.gtt-international.blogspot.com, www.mcmparis.wordpress.com, and www.tsimokagasikara.wordpress.com represent citizen movements with a tendency to be the voice of the political opposition in Madagascar and especially for countering the coup d'état that occurred in Madagascar in 2009. Most of the content of these blogs concerns Malagasy political matters.

Attached to this large cluster, there is also a mini-cluster made up of blogs such as www.fantatro.wordpress.com, www.maudigascar.blogspot.com, www.alainrajaonarivony.over-blog.com, www.madagoravox.wordpress.com, www.prettyzoely.wordpress.com, and www.onglalana.wordpress.com. This mini-cluster represents personal initiatives of their authors to debate political or social issues in Madagascar. In contrast to the websites of the first mini-cluster, which dedicate their contents almost entirely to political issues, this one is relatively moderate.

Still attached to the largest cluster, I discover two other mini-clusters. One of them is made up of sites such as www.tetezanaonlus.org, www.besorongola.wordpress.com, www.purplecorner.com, and www.andryrungi.it, among others. This cluster brings together websites mainly representing NGOs working for Madagascar and which are based in Italy. The other is formed by www.serasera.org, www.blaogy.com, www.katolika.org, www.fkmp.fr, and www.ames-katolika.org. This second cluster brings together websites related to the Catholic Church based in France, Italy, and Switzerland. I understand that this cluster represents the presence of a group of Catholic organisations that are organised around offline structures. This fact confirms our finding in the first section of our results.

Finally, I also discovered mini-clusters made up of less than five websites which are related to leisure and entrepreneurship. This is the case of the "leisure cluster" formed by www.fetybe.com, www.discothequegasy.com, www.dagoradiosound.info, www.gasikarts.com, www.rns-cen.com, and www.madaplus.info (see the orange circle in Figure 7). These websites represent initiatives of the Malagasy diaspora which seek to offer Malagasy dance halls and nightlife channels or broadcasting systems for Malagasy songs while being based in France. There is also an "entrepreneurship cluster", composed of www.juniors-pour-madagascar.com, www.fact-madagascar.com, and www.zama-diaspora.com. These websites represent initiatives that seek to foster or facilitate entrepreneurship among the members of the Malagasy diaspora community and mostly towards Madagascar (see the green circle in Figure 7).

In conclusion, this analysis enabled us to discover that the Malagasy diaspora relies on a large network of active websites. At the same time, it also revealed that these websites cluster around small groups between peers and that they are very weakly connected with each other. These websites represent organisations or entities with diverse objectives but very specific purposes. On the one hand, the predominance of websites that represent actions intended for members of the Malagasy diaspora – such as those related to Malagasy churches or Malagasy nightclubs – serve this diaspora as ways for it to maintain its social and cultural practices within the host country. On the other hand, the presence of websites of NGOs working for Madagascar or blogs analysing the socio-political situation in Madagascar attest to the presence of structures put in place by their members to maintain an active and constant relationship with their country of origin. This juxtaposition of two purposes shows that the Malagasy diaspora juggles two worlds: that of their country of origin and that of their country of residence. This fact allows us to say that the Malagasy migrants form a community of "diaspora".

4.2.   The political blogs of the Malagasy diaspora

According to the findings set out in the first part of the Results, blogs are among the most numerous categories of websites and among the most powerful sites within the network of the websites of the Malagasy diaspora. Thus, I found the phenomenon of blogs interesting and carried out research on these blogs with a particular focus on their content, organisation, and purpose. This second part of the results is dedicated to dissecting the political blogs of the Malagasy diaspora.

4.2.1. The political blogs of the Malagasy diaspora

Among the list of blogs discovered in the previous results, I focused on political blogs for theoretical and social reaspms. On the theoretical side, I understand that the constant supply of these blogs with content on political events taking place in their country of origin by members of the Malagasy diaspora is part of the will of its members to maintain their relationship with their native country. In this sense, it is the manifestation of theories on the concept of the "diaspora". On the social side, it also seemed interesting to us to focus on the interest aroused by the political questions of a country vis-à-vis a community geographically and physically distant from it.

I focused on the four most influential political blogs of the network; they are the most active, the most visited, and are those which almost entirely devote their content to political issues in Madagascar: www.madagoravox.wordpress.com, www.alainrajaonarivony.over-blog.com, www.rakotoarison.over-blog.com, and www.gtt-international.blogspot.com. In total, 1,063 blog posts (113 from Madagoravox, 190 from Alainrajaonarivony, 179 from Rakotoarison, and 581 from Gtt-international) were analysed. These selected posts were related to Madagascar's political sphere, including institutions, political actors, political events, public policies, geopolitics, to name but a few.

Figure 8. Overview of Madagoravox blog

Figure 9. Overview of AlainRajaonarivony blog

The blogs studied were very active during the first years of their activity (between 2009 and 2013). Throughout these years, the number of annual publications of all the blogs combined was quite above the average annual publication rate during their 12 years of existence (n=125). In fact, the total number of publications from all four blogs combined were 229 in 2009, 172 in 2010, 274 in 2011, 186 in 2012, and 192 in 2013. The total number of publications was at its lowest level in 2019,

when this number barely reached 23. Although the annual publication rate of each blog is not the same – with GTT-International being the most active – all of the blogs displayed the same pattern: being significantly active from 2009 to 2013 and with the rate of publication declining over the years.

I understand here that this strong activity during this specific period may be the result of many facts. First, since the same phenomenon was repeated on all of the four blogs studied, this phenomenon appears to be part of the usual life cycle of all blogs. Another explanation lies in the fact that the years 2012 and 2013 were marked by the rise of social networks such as Facebook and Twitter to the detriment of less interactive platforms such as blogs. This might also be related to the political turmoil that took place in Madagascar during the same period. In fact, the period between 2009 and 2013 corresponds to the years following the 2009 coup d'état in Madagascar. As I will show in the following sections, the studied blogs were particularly vocal in relation to this undemocratic and unconstitutional act which was so detrimental to the economic development of the country.

4.2.2. Most addressed political topic by the blogs

An in-depth TCA carried out on the 1,064 blog posts revealed 13 main political topics addressed by the blogs. These topics range from national or domestic political issues to the foreign policy of Madagascar. These topics are the following:

(1) Presidents and national leadership (the personal life of the current and former presidents, their national leadership models, their roadmaps, and development policies, among others)

(2) Madagascar and its bilateral and multilateral relations (with a strong emphasis on the political and diplomatic relations between France and Madagascar)

(3) The involvement in politics of the religious, traditional, and military authorities (and particularly in the generation and/or resolution of the political crisis)

(4) Coups, political crisis, and political transitions (with a particular focus on the coup d'état, the post-coup political crisis, the post-coup political transition, the post-coup government, the political or civilian actors involved in the coup, the peace-building process after the coup, among others)

(5) Presidential and parliamentary elections and referendums (comments on the electoral board, the electoral results, anomalies during the elections, electoral observation, candidature during the elections, among others)

(6) Government and national policies (development and general policies, structure of the government, members of the government, among others)

(7) Other political institutions and organisations (such as the House of Representatives, among others)

(8) Unconventional political actions and mobilisations (sit-ins, street demonstrations, online petitions and political actions and mobilisations other than elections taking place in Madagascar)

(9) Citizens and the political sphere (the political participation of Malagasy citizens)

(10) Political parties and opposition (political antagonism, the structure and restructuring of the political opposition, involvement of the political opposition into political mobilisation, among others)

(11) Geopolitics that impact Madagascar

(12) Political scoops and "unclean" affairs (of the members of the government or of the political sphere in Madagascar)

(13) Others: all other topics related to the political sphere of Madagascar

However, despite the multitude of topics related to the Malagasy political sphere addressed by the blogs, they most significantly covered – more than any other topic – the issue of the 2009 coup. Indeed, more than 43% of the posts of all the four blogs combined deal with the question of the coup. These posts analyse the different actors who were involved, the causes and consequences, the processes of appeasement and political mediation, the regime that was put in place after the coup, the political transition put in place after the coup, among others. As shown by the distribution of the themes addressed by the blogs in Figure 10, the coup d'état is by far the most extensively addressed topic.

Blogs had started to cover the question of the coup d'état a year before it took place, in 2008. Some posts on www.alainrajaonarivony.over-blog.com had already predicted the possible (and also probable) causes of the coup: the remarkable political antagonism between the President (Marc Ravalomanana) and the mayor of the capital (Andry Rajoelina) who subsequently led the coup. Moreover, the TCA revealed that the political antagonism between these two main political figures was the most recurrent topic addressed by the blogs.
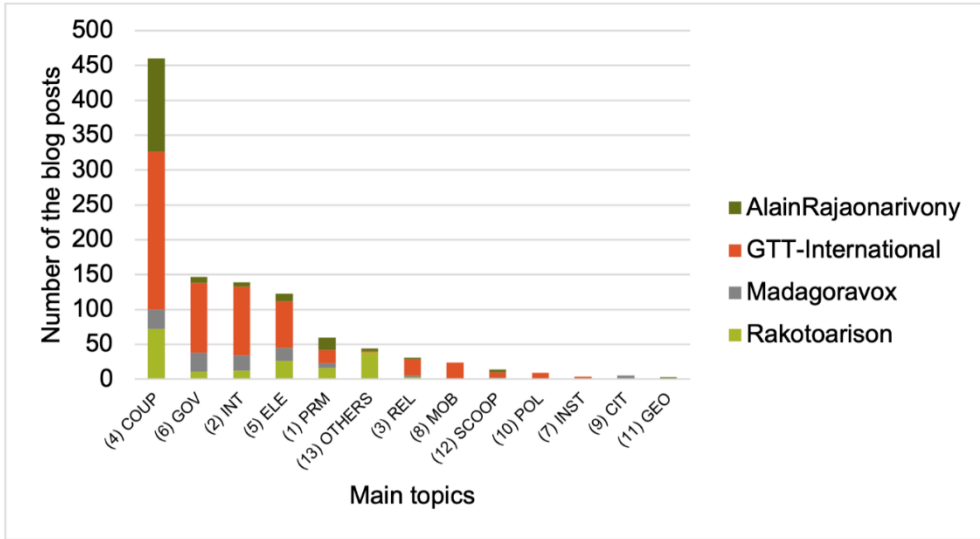
Figure 10. Most addressed topics by the blogs
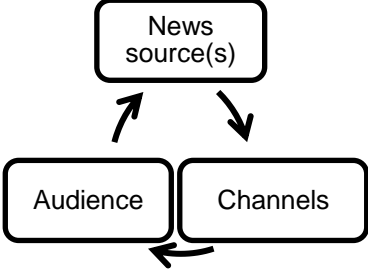
Blogs continued to cover this antagonism in the years following the outbreak of the coup. However, from that moment on, the coverage focused on the figures of the "putschist" and the "exiled", and no longer between the President and the mayor of the capital. Indeed, many posts have been dedicated to the attempts to return the exiled President to the country and the unfavourable responses of Andry Rajoelina, who became the president of the HAT (the political regime set up after the coup d'état), to these attempts. Moreover, the most appreciated posts of the blog www.madagoravox.wordpress.com were related to the exiled President's three attempts to return to the country by focusing on the following aspects: first, the successive NOTAMs sent by Andry Rajoelina to the South African airline company AirLink prohibiting the boarding of the exiled President Marc Ravalomanana on his flight to Madagascar; then, the enthusiastic gathering of the supporters of Marc Ravalomanana to welcome him to his expected arrival at the airport in Antananarivo.

Likewise, the blogs chronologically and accurately covered other events. Posts from the blog www.alainrajaonarivony.over-blog.com narrated the day when the President of the Republic left the presidency because of the weakening of his

executive power due to the dislocation of the army corps in two opposed blocs, one of which supported the coup and the other did not. These posts recount the details of the social, political, military, and religious actors involved in this day as well as the chronological details and the locations of each event.

In summary, I found that the studied blogs covered the coup as extensively as national and international media. However, due to the very nature of blogs, the topics are analysed with more openness and with the format chosen by the author, that is, longer texts with more details.

Table 3. Circulation of the news in media vs blogs

Circulation of the news in media vs blogs		
	Medias	**Blogs**
Sources	Institutions/Official figures/Organisations/Other national and international media outlets/Blogs/Confidential sources	Institutions/Official figures/Organisations/ Organisations/National and international media outlets/Other blogs/Confidential sources/First-hand information of the author
Channel(s)	Printed or digitised accounts of the media outlet on social media platforms	Blog and its digitised accounts on social media platforms
Format	Following the strict formatting of the editorial house/Following the purpose(s) of the editorial house/Impartial coverage	Open format (according to the authors)/Posts published with the standpoint of the author(s)
Audience	Mass	Mass
Scheme of the circulation of the news		

4.2.3. Blogs mostly as tribunes and gateways
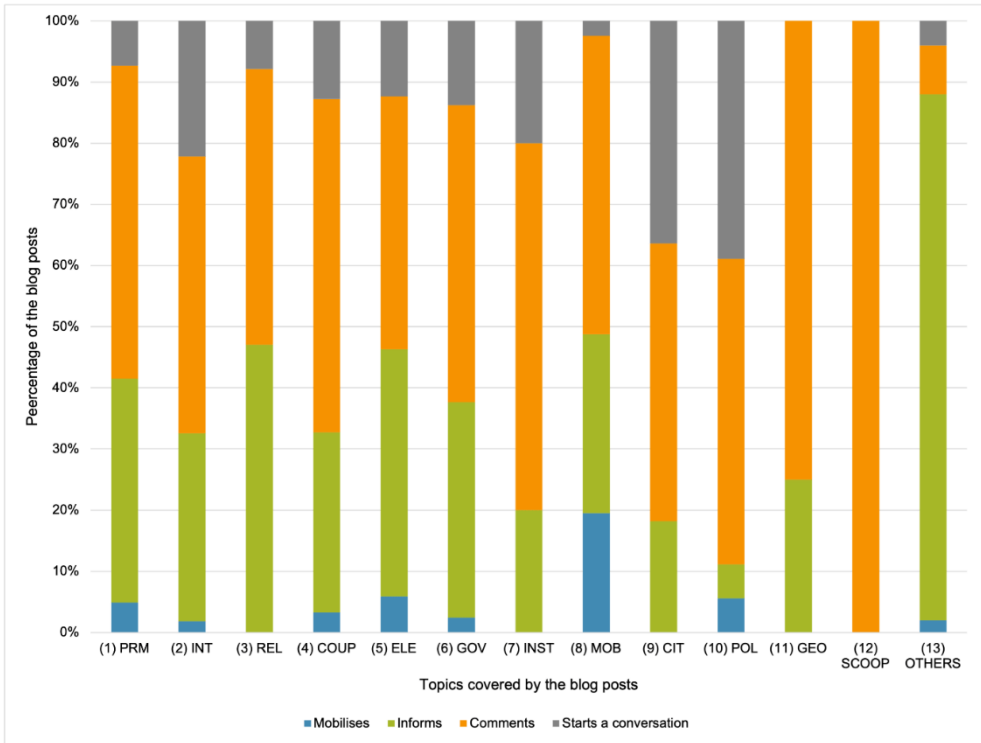
Figure 11 shows in what format – 'comments', 'informs', 'mobilises', and 'starts a conversation' – each of the topics were addressed within the four blogs. At first sight, it is clear that the 'comments' function is the most frequently used. In fact, in terms of distribution of the functions on all the topics (horizontally) as well as their distribution on each of them (vertically), the 'comment' function was the most used and the most dominant. For instance, more than 60% of the blogs posts related to the coup d'état, the most dominant topic, were comments regarding the topic. I observed through the analysis that these posts were garnered with the personal standpoint of the authors, who were remarkably harsh towards the leaders of the putsch. The fusion of their standpoints – which focused on the anti-constitutional and anti-democratic character of the HAT –

with their expression of fatigue vis-à-vis the political instability generated by the successive coups d'état undergone by the country ended up making their blogs spaces that bring together the voices of democracy in the country.

Figure 11 also clearly shows that the second most dominant format was 'informs'. This means that most of the blog posts were aimed at relaying or linking information coming from other sources – mostly national and international media, national and international organisations, institutions, and other blogs about given topic(s). Though it is important to note that most of the time those blog posts linked from other sources are commented on by the author of the blog and, hence, contain their personal standpoint on the topic. There are also cases when the information is merely linked to, without any comment on the part of the authors. However, in both cases, I assume that the linked post or information has been previously and carefully selected by the author from many others and, therefore, can be understood to contain the point of view of the author.

Figure 11 also shows that the blog posts were rarely intended to start a conversation about new topics and cases. However, the posts that start new conversations rely on key political information that an 'ordinary' Malagasy citizen would have no access to. The existing posts intended to mobilise their readers are usually related to (presidential and representatives) elections, the Presidents and their governments, and the coup d'état, to name but a few, as Figure 11 shows. If these mobilisations are basically addressed to the government, and in particular to the President, they can take different forms. Regarding the elections, for example, the blog author urges their readers to remain vigilant during the polls and/or to challenge the results with street demonstrations if anomalies or irregularities are noticed. The authors also called for mobilisations through online signature petitions for pleas against the unclear affairs of the Malagasy government addressed to its external political and financial partners, such as the

European Parliament or the European Union. Street mobilisation of the diaspora was also called for by the authors to counterbalance the political drift of the governments within their host country.

To bring these results together, the political blogs of the Malagasy diaspora are used as gateways and political tribunes that call for 'passive' actions from their readers through comments and linked information. Yet, these comments are highly critical of Malagasy political irregularities or unclear affairs, such that the blogs might appear as voices of the opposition that countervail the ruling governments. Regarding the few mobilisation posts, they are also organised against the governing government.

If this section is related to the political blogging that is born from the personal initiative of some members of the Malagasy diaspora, the next one is about online collective gatherings of the Malagasy diaspora: their groups and pages on Facebook.

4.3. The Facebook groups and pages of the Malagasy diaspora
4.3.1. What are the Facebook groups and pages of the Malagasy diaspora?

My analysis shows that the Malagasy diasporic communities scattered around the world rely on a wide network composed of at least 92 groups and pages on Facebook. This network was found through online crawling based on my previous knowledge of some Facebook groups and pages. These Facebook groups and pages are found in least 15 countries, including France, Canada, Benelux, Germany, the USA, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, the UK, Japan, Russia, Seychelles, Turkey, China, and Dubai. Within the geographical distribution of the groups and pages, France is the country that hosts most of the Facebook pages and groups of the Malagasy diaspora (58%, n=53). It also shows that a large

majority of them (79%, n=73) are located in Europe. After Europe, North America is the continent that hosts the second largest cluster of Facebook groups and pages of the Malagasy diaspora (11%, n=10). The rest of the groups and pages are scattered through other continents. In this sense, the geographical distribution of the Facebook groups and pages of the Malagasy diaspora has the same pattern as that of their websites.
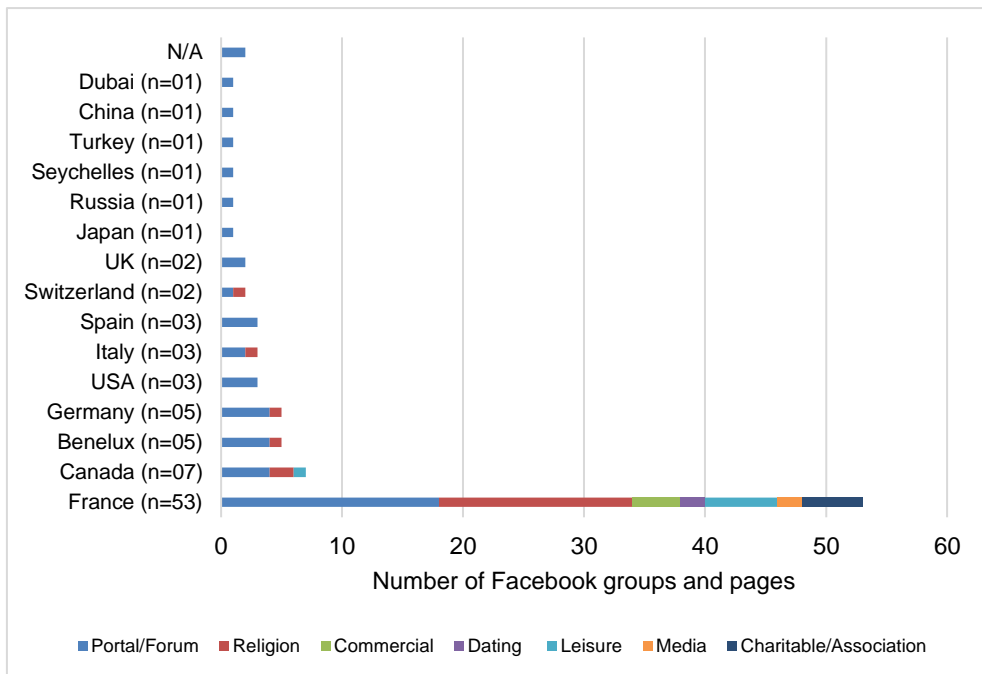
Figure 12. Facebook pages and groups of the Malagasy diaspora by country and by activity

As shown in Figure 12 the Facebook groups and pages of the Malagasy diaspora are used for a spectrum of purposes. A majority of the Facebook pages and groups (53%, n=49) of all the countries combined, and 34% (n=18) of the total of those based in France, are used as portals/forums. In fact, in countries where there are only one or two groups and/or pages, they are almost all used as portals/forums, while in countries with numerous groups and pages, portal/forum groups and pages are the majority. The portal/forum groups and pages are used as forums for generic information that might be of the interest to

the Malagasy diaspora: for example, information on the bureaucracy win the country where they are based, the Malagasy restaurants in the country where they are based, news and stories from the host country and country of origin, Malagasy festive organisations within the country where they are based, commercial exchanges among the Malagasy diaspora and on Madagascan products, and so on.

The second most important category are those groups and pages related to religion; these comprise 24% (n=22) of all the groups and pages and are 30% (n=16) of the groups and pages in France. The groups and pages related to religion represent existing and offline Malagasy religious communities or Malagasy churches in the country where they are based. They are all related to Catholic and Protestant churches and are used by the religious community as a channel for spreading information related to their offline organisation. Provided that they represent offline religious organisation(s) of the Malagasy diaspora, this category of groups and pages are present in countries where I assume that there are well settled Malagasy communities, such as France, Canada, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, and Benelux.

In France, where the majority of the Facebook groups and pages of the Malagasy diaspora are based, reflecting the geographical distribution of the Malagasy diaspora, the purposes and the uses of the Facebook groups and pages are more specific and diversified. There some groups and pages exist for commercial purposes (n=4), for charitable actions or associations (n=5), for leisure and entertainment (n=6), and even for ethnic dating (n=2). The groups and pages for commercial purposes are those created and run for exchanges of goods and services between Malagasy migrants in France and/or for Madagascan products for the Malagasy migrants in France. I argue that the diversification and specificity of the purposes of the groups and pages in France respond to the increasing

necessity of the Malagasy community as the number of community members increases.

4.3.2. Lifespan of the Facebook groups and pages
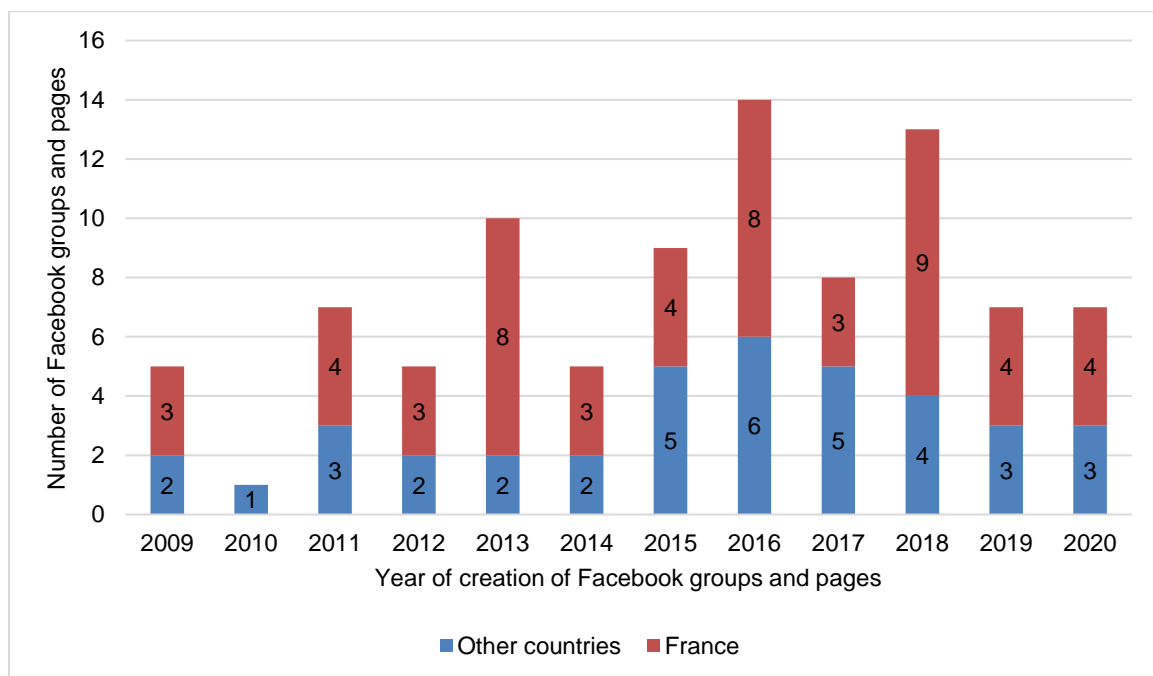
Figure 13. Distribution of the Facebook groups and pages created per year

Groups and pages of the Malagasy diaspora have existed on Facebook since 2009 and new groups and pages are created every year. This shows the longevity of the online gathering of the Malagasy diaspora. If 2016 is shown as the year when most of the groups and pages were created (n=14) in Figure 13, I argue that this results from a coincidence. This is because this year does not correspond to any particular social or political event in Madagascar or in the host countries that would have pushed the diaspora to come together. Moreover, these groups and pages are created for very diverse purposes and in very diverse geographic locations.

I noticed that some groups and pages that had existed for a long time were regrouped over time. This is the case of those related to the FPMA. If the group FPMA Aix Marseille (983 members) was created in 2011, other groups and pages bearing the FPMA label emerged over the following years, such as the new FPMA groups in France (of Vincennes, Mulhouse, Orléans), which were all created in 2020. Not only were these groups created at the same time, but they also have the same visual identity, which shows that online communities want to align themselves around the same visual identity and that they are growing.

I also found that some groups sharing the same purpose were created over time. This is the case of the group Izahay koa Malagasy – Donnez nous le droit de vote (1725 members, created in 2013), which was mirrored by another group along the same lines: Za koa hanorina (formerly 'Za koa Hifidy), which was created in 2018 and which has 14,100 members. These two groups both aim to collectively claim the right to vote for the Malagasy diaspora. This is also the case for the secret group Mamans Gasy de France (3,300 members, created in 2015), which was mirrored by the group Mamans malgaches en France et Europe (828 members, created in 2019). The purpose of these two groups is to bring together the mothers of the Malagasy diaspora. I noticed that in the first case, the second created group seemed to be more well organised, but that the opposite was true in the second case.
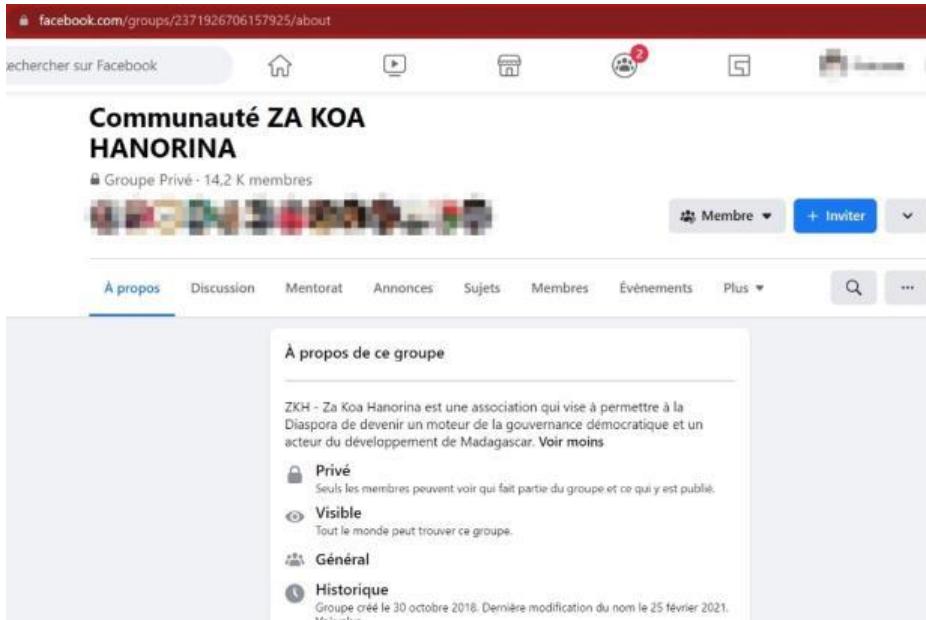
Figure 14. Overview of the Za Koa Hanorina group on Facebook

The last interesting point is the evolution of the diversity of the groups and pages. The groups and pages created in the early years were dedicated to meeting the ethnic needs of the Malagasy diaspora within their host country. These included, for example, groups related to religion and to Malagasy festive organisations, among others. It is from 2013 that I found groups such as Izahay koa Malagasy – Donnez nous le droit de vote (1,725 members, created in 2013), ZAMA Paris 2019 (4,224 members, created in 2016) or 'Za koa hanorina (14,100 members, created in 2018), who work for the collective engagement of the Malagasy diaspora with their country of origin. I understand that this shows the awakening of a collective commitment of the Malagasy diaspora to work together for Madagascar.

4.3.3. Contents of the Facebook groups and pages of the Malagasy diaspora

In section 4.3.1., the overview of the blogs, we saw that blogs are used for various purposes: as portals/forums, for religion, commercial, dating, leisure, media,

charitable/association. While the contents of groups and pages dedicated to specific purposes such as religion, commerce, dating, information, leisure/entertainment, and charitable/association are obvious, those of groups and pages serving as a portal/forum are not, despite the fact that they are the most numerous (53%, n = 49).

Portal/forum groups and pages are giant hubs for members of the Malagasy diaspora that have no practical or specific purposes. These are the groups and pages that bring together the most diaspora members compared to other categories of groups and pages. A great variety of topics are discussed within these groups and pages. This is how I became interested in what is discussed in these types of groups and pages.

4.3.3.1. Purposes of the posts

The analysis of the publications within the GSF group, which is one of the groups of the Malagasy diaspora in France with the most members (more than 14,000) revealed how these groups are used and the nature of the interactions that take place within them (see Figure 15). Throughout one month (October 2021), some 572 posts were published within the group, the equivalent of 16 posts per day on average. I noticed whether these posts were published anonymously or not depending on the topic addressed, among other reasons.

The Malagasy diaspora in France primarily uses the portal/forum Facebook groups and pages for commercial purposes. Almost half (49%, n=281) of the posts are intended to sell or buy products and/or services from other member(s) of the Malagasy diaspora. These products are products of all kinds imported from Madagascar. Nearly the remaining half (45%, n=262) of the posts are offers or requests for advice/recommendations, information, help/support, or the personal experience of other members of the diaspora. On the assumption that other members of the Malagasy community in France have gone through the same ordeal, the same procedure, or the same question, the members of the group discuss subjects of all kinds for free within the group. The rest of the posts (4%, n=27) are calls for mobilisation or posts aimed at the entertainment of the members of the group.

4.3.3.2. Topics of the posts

Regarding the topics discussed within the group, the Malagasy diaspora talks about everything and nothing. These topics can be grouped as follows: properties/accommodation, religion, mental and physical health, work,

bureaucracy, economic remittances, Malagasy products, connectivity, parcels, travel, entertainment, Madagascar, Malagasy national pride, among others.
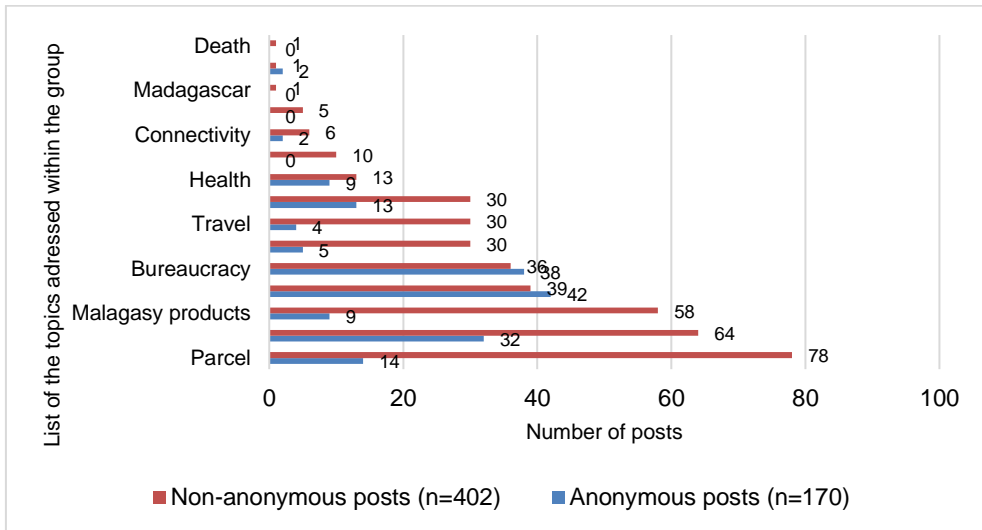
Figure 16. Topics of the posts within portal/forum groups and pages

Posts on sending parcels between Madagascar and France are the most recurrent within the group studied (16%, n=92). This means the transport of envelopes, larger packages, or even suitcases offered or requested by and for a member of the same group between the two countries. While this phenomenon may be rarely observed within other diasporic groups, it makes perfect sense within the Malagasy diaspora. The irregularity and rarity of freight flights between the two countries mean that freight transport companies are slow to deliver packages. In contrast, travellers between France and Madagascar are much more frequent and can serve as parcel carriers. In addition, the price charged by members of the group is much lower than that of approved transport companies.

After posts about parcels, many of the posts are offers or requests for work. On the one hand, members of the group post job offers within their workplace or any offer that they have found. It is also possible that the author of the post has a job at home that he or she wants to offer to the other members of the group.

On the other hand, others post a job application accompanied by an invitation to speak in private. This type of post amounts to 17% (n = 96) of the total.

There are also frequent posts on accommodation and flat-sharing issues. These are offers and requests for apartment or house rentals. It is curious to see that over half of the posts on this subject (n = 42) are submitted anonymously. This fact is contrary to existing flat-sharing applications, which are precisely based on the 'virtual' knowledge of the future flatmate through his or her virtual profile. The posts on administrative matters (n = 38) are also in this line with this: more than half of the posts on the question are published anonymously. The administrative issues are both Malagasy administrative issues (such as passport renewals or requests for official documents in Madagascar) as well as French administrative issues (such as renewal of residence permits in France or tax declarations in France, among others). I understand that given that this question is quite sensitive, many posts on it are anonymous.

During the uncertain times of Covid-19, unexpected issues such as travelling or health appear within the group as recurrent and important topics. In fact, the question of travelling is recurrent since mobility restrictions and travel bans are constantly being revised and are evolving both in France and Madagascar. This was particularly true for Malagasy diaspora, since Madagascar had its borders closed from more than 20 months due to Covid-19 restrictions. In such uncertain times in terms of travelling, issue such as ticketing are recurrent.

Other questions such as tips and hints on the cheapest way to call Madagascar or recommendations about the nearest Malagasy church in a given geographical territory, to name but a few, are also present within the group, although they are not as frequent as the topics mentioned earlier.

Finally, the Facebook groups are a great marketplace for ethnic Malagasy products. Some posts concern offers or demands for Malagasy culinary ingredients, indoor decoration items, clothes, and other products related to the Malagasy culture. I noticed that in some cases, the same product is proposed by the same author on a regular basis. This shows that a network of professional Malagasy ethnic item merchants is present within the group.

4.3.3.3. Interactions and engagement on the posts

When it comes to post interactions within the group, we found that posts on atypical and emotionally engaging topics are more likely to receive more interactions. In this way, although the posts on the question of parcels or of work are more numerous within the group, they generate a relatively low interaction rate, on the order of 26 and 15 per post on average, respectively (see Figure 17).

In contrast to this, I found that posts concerning national pride have a moderately high interaction average of 134 (see Figure 17). These posts talk about the participation or success of one or more members of the Malagasy diaspora in an international competition. But the same is also true for one or more Malagasy in Madagascar who participated in one or more international competitions. Finally, this type of post can be the celebration of the success of the Malagasy national football team in international competitions. Definitely, posts on the influence of Madagascar on the international scene arouse the interest of the members of the group.

Still in terms of interactions, I discovered that two posts on the death of a member of the Malagasy diaspora aroused unprecedented enthusiasm (average reaction n = 1,341). These posts speak of the sudden death of two young Malagasy in France and Germany whose families appeal for the financial participation of members of the Malagasy diaspora for their repatriation, for lack

of means. Beyond the financial participation of the members of the group in the collection of funds, messages of comfort and consolation abounded on the posts. I understand through the intensity of the reactions on these posts that the emotional and cultural elements played an important role in the interactions on the posts.
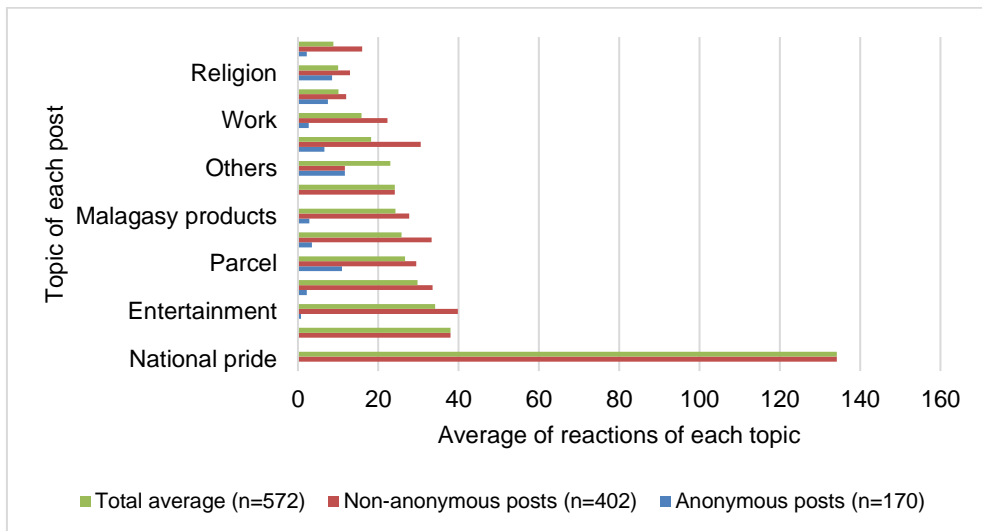
Figure 17. Interaction and engagement rates by topic

4.3.3.4. The question of solidarity within the group

Considering the importance of the issue of peer solidarity within diasporic communities, according to the literature review, I looked at this issue within the group and depict the posts on the issue. To my surprise, I discovered the existence of a chain of solidarity taking shape within the group.

The sudden Covid-19 pandemic sparked practical and emotional support chains among the Malagasy within the studied groups. Help-seeking posts abounded and attracted many reactions in a remarkably short period. For instance, faced with the sudden death of their respective mothers in Madagascar, two women in their thirties and forties posted in two different groups and each received approximately 120 comments in less than 24 hours in September 2020. Although

the posts focused on bureaucratic matters such as "*Quelles sont les démarches pour l'obtention de l'autorisation?*" ("What are the procedures for obtaining an authorisation [to enter Madagascan territory]?") or "*Où pouvons-nous effectuer les tests PCR pour rentrer à Madagascar?*" ("Where can I get PCR tests to return to Madagascar?"), the comments were mainly expressions of condolences written in Malagasy. A few top-rated comments publicly offered advice on what to do based on their personal experiences or invited the author to private communications for the same purposes.

Spontaneous solidarity initiatives in response to the Covid-19 pandemic were organised by members of the Malagasy community in France and were shared within different groups. In March 2020, the image of '*Bebe Antsika*' ("our grandmother")—a 65-year-old Madagascar-based woman who kept her magazine kiosk open during the imposed lockdown for economic reasons—went viral among the groups of the Malagasy migrants in France. An online crowdfunding was organised by a group of Malagasy in France and reached 1,292 euros in a few days. This story was so popular that a Facebook page dedicated to the woman was created which showed how she was using the fund in Madagascar. In the same line, a post of a lady asking for help in November 2020 quickly became very popular, with 400 reactions and 150 comments in a single day. In the post, the author narrated her encounter with a Malagasy student sleeping on the streets of Paris after losing his job. Maintaining the student's anonymity, the post's author asked for material support that she could forward to the student. Although the post was very popular, the opinions of the commentators were divided on the question. While some appealed for '*samy malagasy*' ("between Malagasy") generosity, others warned donors about donations to anonymous people and shared their negative experiences with this type of support.

This sort of spontaneous chain of solidarity was also observed within groups around the Christmas season. The manager of the GSF group organised annual public '*Noël Solidaire*' prize pools for Malagasy students in France whose families were in Madagascar. The organisation of this type of crowdfunding within the group is quite interesting. They are presented within the groups as professional advertisements with well-crafted infographics. Even though the posts generated little visible interactivity (with barely nine reactions and no comments), they were very much effective. The group's administrators launched the pool in the group and at the same time opened online registration for needy students who wished to be recipients of the funds; once the total amount was collected (in 2020, 4,172 euros), it was equitably distributed to the previously registered students. In parallel, other group members invited the students to spend Christmas day with their families, indicating the number of students they could accommodate.

In conclusion, the Malagasy diaspora is very active on Facebook. The existence of their active, popular, and efficient network of groups and pages on this platform is proof of this. If the groups and portal/forum pages – used as marketplaces and a site for solidarity by and for members of the diaspora – are the most numerous, those relating to religion are just as popular as them. This study also shows us that emotional and cultural elements play a prominent role in the intensity of interactions within these groups. Ultimately, the Malagasy diaspora has appropriated Facebook to facilitate their installation within their country of origin and at the same time, by maintaining a visible and strong link with their country of origin.

4.3.4. Cultural elements: *tanindrazana* and *fihavanana*

The concepts represented by the words *tanindrazana* and *fihavanana* are at the core of the Malagasy culture.

Firstly, as seen in previous sections, the word *tanindrazana* literally means the 'land of the ancestors'; the closest equivalent in English would be 'motherland'. However, if looked at through the Malagasy cultural codes, it would be the parcel of land where the unique and irreplaceable familial tomb is located and where all the descendants would be buried. Every member of a family is expected to 'come back home' to the familial tomb once he or she passes away. The act of 'coming back home' is so important for every Malagasy that the greatest social fear and insult is to be buried outside the *tanindrazana*.

Secondly, the word *fihavanana*, which has no literal translation in English, means "a call for respect and understanding of others, for the cohesion of an organic 'living together'" (Kneitz, 2016: 08). As an unwritten and non-binding social rule (Sandron, 2008), the *fihavanana* is a cultural word which, for some, is a social ideal towards which the country tends, while for others it is a constitutive element of the Malagasy national identity under construction.

I here argue that those cultural elements are reproduced within the digital practices of the Malagasy diaspora. Or better said, the intensity and frequency of the digital interactions of the members of the Malagasy groups and pages on Facebook are intimately related to the cultural codes of the Malagasy diaspora.

It is in that sense that, as mentioned above, the posts related to the sudden death of the relatives of some members of the Facebook groups and pages triggered such massive interactions. This intense reaction was intended to participate in a collective way to the 'going back home' of the person who passed away. It is also on behalf of the *fihavanana* that those who could not participate materially to this event showed their empathy towards the author of the posts.

5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This thesis is an ambitious exploratory and empirical study that seeks to give an overview of the digital activities of the members of the Malagasy diaspora. It focuses on three main aspects of this issue: their use of the web, their use of blogs, and their use of Facebook groups and pages. Bringing together our findings, I will now describe what the digital activities of the Malagasy diaspora on those platforms look like in general terms.

5.1.   Bringing the results together…

First, regarding the websites created and/or run by the Malagasy diaspora, I found out that a large majority of them are located in France. One of the striking findings about their websites is the fact that those of Christian churches (comprising up to 34% of all the Malagasy diasporic websites in France) are predominant. These websites are generally used as a communication channel for the members of the Christian community in each parish. Thus, they contain key information about the religious gatherings of the members of the communities as well as the biblical texts scheduled for each season of the year for them. They represent both Catholic and Protestant churches.

At the same rate as the religion-related websites, blogs are the second most predominant categories among the websites of the Malagasy diaspora. Although the blogs have very different characteristics and purposes (in contrast with the aforementioned religious websites), most of them tackle political issues back home in Madagascar. I discovered that most of them were launched after the 2009 coup d'état in Madagascar.

Then come the websites of non-profit organisations of the Malagasy diaspora. They are the third most dominant category among the websites of the Malagasy diaspora. These organisations can be sorted into two categories. On the one

hand, there are those NGOs created and/or run by the Malagasy diaspora based in the host countries and that are working in the areas of education, infrastructure, and child adoption initiatives in Madagascar. On the other hand, there are those associations created and/or run by and for the members of the Malagasy diaspora with the aim of entertainment, culture, or entrepreneurship, to name but a few. These associations directed towards the Malagasy diaspora itself are less numerous than those directed to Madagascar.

While researching the websites of the Malagasy diaspora, I also discovered that the websites of the diaspora are poorly connected. By 'connection', I mean the incoming and outgoing hyperlinks between the websites. The websites are grouped in small clusters and reciprocally refer to their peers within the clusters. In this sense, the blogs of the Malagasy diaspora, for instance, very rarely refer to those of the associations or the religion-related websites.

Regarding the political blogs of the Malagasy diaspora, some surprising findings come to enlarge the knowledge about this community. The first finding is that almost all of the political blogs of the Malagasy diaspora studied in this research are surprisingly longstanding and are still active. They were launched in the aftermath of a period of political turmoil that began in Madagascar in 2009: the coup d'état followed by a political transition until 2013. In this sense, they have existed for more than a decade. The emergence of the blogs in the aftermath of the coup d'état is significant. In fact, I found out that these blogs were, in a certain way, a political response of the Malagasy diaspora to the coup.

These blogs were found to be used by the Malagasy diaspora as tribunes for commenting on and analysing the political issues in Madagascar. The coup is the most recurrent and most frequently addressed political issue within the political blogs of the Malagasy diaspora. In a particularly intense way, through their posts, the blogs depict the political leadership of the regime that ruled the country after

the coup. As a voice of the opposition during the coup, they appeared to be more vocal again from 2018, since the same political leader of the transitional political regime after the coup won the democratic presidential elections in the same year.

I also found out that the political blogs of the Malagasy diaspora analysed in this study also acted as a space for political claims. Beyond the political criticism directed towards the governing government in Madagascar, parts of the blogs are dedicated to calling on the foreign partners of the Government of Madagascar to recognise the corruption and other scandalous actions of the government of Madagascar. All this is because the political bloggers who run the blogs here studied are involved to a high degree in the political sphere of Madagascar.

Our last findings are about the use of Facebook by the Malagasy diaspora in France. The Malagasy diaspora is present and very active in Facebook groups and pages. To summarise, these groups and pages can be described as hubs for peer-to-peer solidarity among the members of the Malagasy diaspora. The solidarity taking place in these groups and pages mostly concerns pragmatic exchanges of goods and services. These exchanges appear to be more active in tough times such as the Covid-19 pandemic. I also witnessed other types of very active solidarity chains around festive times, such as solidarity towards the needy of the community in the holiday season.

The surprising finding about these active and dynamic solidarity chains on Facebook is that they are organised by ordinary Malagasy citizens. They organise and ensure the rotation of the solidarity chain despite having no official status nor duties. They also ensure the proper functioning of the groups on Facebook. At given times, such as the holiday season, they organise online solidarity chains that are accurately organised offline. Finding these 'social authorities' that work sometimes in hierarchical groups is one of the most striking results of our study.

The results of this study give us an element to compose the image of the Malagasy diaspora. As pointed out by Paper 1, the social structure of the Malagasy diaspora is quite disparate and is formed by small-scale social groups, represented by clusters, whose members entertain a solid, reciprocal, and active relationship. This is the case of those involved in the entertainment cluster such as www.fetybe.com, www.discothequegasy.com, and www.gasikarts.com, or those in entrepreneurship such as www.fact-madagascar.org, www.zama-diaspora.com, and www.juniors-pour-madagascar.com. In contrast, there is a large cluster composed mostly of personal blogs such as www.madagoravox.wordpress.com, www.gazetyavylavitra.wordpress.com, www.blaogy.com, www.prettyzoely.wordpress.com, and www.tsimokagasikara.wordpress.com. The religion-related websites, which have no visible links among them nor with the other groups, act as satellite entities that compose the mosaic of the Malagasy website landscape, but they are independent and disconnected from the other clusters. This image of the religious entities that are not only autonomous, but also remarkably numerous, represents the offline organisation of the Malagasy diaspora that that is marked by the presence of very well structured and active religious organisations. Our findings are in line with the existing literature about the Malagasy diaspora, whose shared elements of identity are marked by a strong attachment to the religion as it is lived in their homeland (Claverie & Combeau-Mari, 2011; Crenn, 1994; Rabeherifara, 2009; Rasoloniaina, 2013; Razafindrakoto et al., 2017).

5.2.   Conceptual findings and plea

In addition to the various insightful contributions to the concept of diaspora throughout the years, this thesis brings to light a new element useful to understanding it. It brings a perspective that includes the following:

- *Optimism*: The life of diasporas is not necessarily (or should not) be focused or reduced to only a forced, hard, or traumatic escape. It is more about hope and the hard work that this requires of migrant or non-migrant people once settled in the country of residence.
- *Future-focused*: The life of diasporas is more about the future than it is about the past in all its aspects (nostalgia). It is not about what is left behind within the home country. It is more about the better life to come in the future.
- *Engaged*. The life of diasporas gets fully lived in its beauty and duty at the home and in the host country and in all its aspects: political, social, economic, and so on.
- *Non-discontinuous/non-sequential*. Within the life of a diaspora, there is no longer a break by the displacement from the left-behind home to the new home.

Ultimately, diasporas must be understood in terms of the essence of their existence as heterogeneous and "cosmopolitan" (Leurs & Ponzanesi, 2018) groups of humans who evolve and who cheerfully and unabashedly embrace dualities or multiplicities of cultures. These groups of humans feed on but are not limited only to their past history, as significant as it may be. On the contrary, they evolve and tend towards a better future, understood in a global sense, not just economic.

5.3. Paths to an effective engagement policy towards the Malagasy diaspora

I found out that the Malagasy diaspora has put in place the necessary structures to live 'at home' while being in their host countries with religious, leisure, and entertainment structures that are similar to those at home. In contrast, the remarkably poor entrepreneurship-related structures (as described in Paper 1 and

Paper 3) and the existence of a small political elite (as described in Paper 2) recall the existence of well-formed and highly skilled groups that carry with them only a few members of the Malagasy diaspora. Rather, the entertainment and religious structures are where the Malagasy diaspora is likely to be more present.

The Malagasy diaspora is somehow reluctant to form encompassing big structures and is more organised alongside smaller initiatives that impact the social and political spheres of Madagascar on a small and personal scale. This is attested by the existence of small but numerous individual and/or family-led associations and NGOs acting towards Madagascar, on the one hand, and the notable economic remittances towards relatives and families, on the other. Given these research-based findings, any homeland-directed engagement policy of the Malagasy diaspora needs to understand and work with these small structures. At the same time, when it comes to the engagement of the Malagasy diaspora for any action directed toward them within their country of settlement, they will need to work with bigger structures such as religious ones as an anchor.

Finally, the efforts of the Madagascan state to collectively and effectively engage the Malagasy diaspora vis-à-vis their country of origin should also include bringing the Malagasy diaspora closer to these institutions. In this sense, the external representations of Madagascar such as the embassies and the consulates play a crucial role. Indeed, the discussions within the groups and pages of the Malagasy diaspora show that not only do the members of the diaspora remain indifferent towards these institutions, but they are relatively critical of them. The most fervent critics in the Malagasy diaspora focus on the quality of services within these external representations. As an example, in one of the discussions a critic wondered how the embassy would manage mail-in ballots when it was unable to provide basic services. A renewed confidence in the institutions would facilitate a collective engagement of this diaspora.

5.4.   Towards future research on the topic

By giving only a big picture of the digital activities of the Malagasy diaspora, this thesis paves the way for further and deeper studies focused on particular digital platforms and specific topics of their digital activities.

Firstly, further studies could focus on the most used and current digital technologies used by the Malagasy diaspora. Since digital technologies and the digital environment is a fast-evolving field, the analysis of the most trending and up-to-date digital technologies must be at the core of future studies. Throughout the years of the evolution of this thesis, I have witnessed the growing use of TikTok, an app officially launched in 2016 which had already reached two billion downloads by August 2020.[11] This shows how important it is for research to follow the evolution of the digital field.

Indeed, when talking about the digital activities and presence of a given community, the diversification of the apps to be analysed is crucial. It allows the researcher to understand the different social dynamics that take place within those platforms. The focus on digital-native dating apps such as Tinder (launched in 2012) or Grindr (launched in 2009), to name but a couple, could fill gaps in the studies on the dating dynamics of the Malagasy diaspora residing in other countries than their own. In fact, this might reveal the 'match' preferences of the Malagasy diaspora. These results, in turn, could tell us more about the cultural intermingling of the Malagasy diaspora. The question of cultural contact that could end up in cultural assimilation or even inculturation is at the core of migration studies.

A study of apps used in professional activities, such as LinkedIn (launched in 2002), could also help researchers to understand the professional dynamics of the

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[11] The Global state of Digital 2021 from https://blog.hootsuite.com/tiktok-stats/

members of the Malagasy diaspora. A study of the diaspora's use of LinkedIn could, for example, confirm research of Razafindrakoto et al. (2017), who found that the members of the Malagasy diaspora are a highly-educated educated community.

An analysis of the Malagasy diaspora's use of messenger apps such as Facebook Messenger (launched in 2012), WhatsApp (launched in 2009), Viber (launched in 2012), or IMO (2007) could shed light on the 'mediational repertoires' of this community. This comprises the language choices, language modalities, and media channels chosen by the diaspora, as described by Lexander and Androutsopoulos (2019).

Studies of the presence and activities of the Malagasy diaspora on those platforms, to name but a few, would provide data that is crucial not only for an academic understanding their patterns of communication, butt also for social fields.

This thesis is among the primary studies to open the debate on the relationship of the Malagasy diaspora with its homeland. Alongside the few existing studies on the topic, it launches this debate that is at the core of research on migration and diasporic studies. In fact, this thesis shows that digital activities are a valid and useful tool for tackling social topics related to diasporas, such as their transnational political participation, relationship with the homeland, integration into the host country, and so on. This thesis opens the debate on such topics.

PART 2: PAPERS COMPILATION

6. PAPERS

In addition to the items mentioned before, the following complementary elements are part of this thesis:

ITEM 4	
Type of the ITEM: Conference paper	
Title: The Malagasy diasporic websites: an exploratory study	
Author(s): Fortunat Miarintsoa Andrianimanana	
Journal or Conference: Digital Diasporas: Interdisciplinary Perspectives	
Year: 2019	
Website/DOI: https://crosslanguagedynamics.blogs.sas.ac.uk/files/2019/05/Digital-Diasporas-abstracts.pdf	
Organiser: University of Westminster	
Venue: London (United Kingdom)	
Suggested citation: N/A	

ITEM 5	
Type of the ITEM: Conference paper	
Title: Online political participation as a metrics of diasporic connection to its homeland. The case of the Malagasy overseas	
Author(s): Fortunat Miarintsoa Andrianimanana & Nirintsoa Razakamanana	
Journal or Conference: ECAS 2019 Africa: Connections and Disruptions	
Year: 2019	
Website/DOI: https://nomadit.co.uk/conference/ecas2019/paper/48841	
Organiser: University of Edinburgh	
Venue: Edinburgh (United Kingdom)	
Suggested citation: N/A	

6.1. Paper 1

The first paper that composes this thesis is an attempt to give an overview of the use of the websites and blogs by the Malagasy diaspora. Entitled "Online weak ties, a sign of a diaspora in-the-making? The case of the Malagasy abroad. [Slabe onlajn veze, pokazatelj dijaspore u nastajanju? Studija slučaja Madagaskaraca koji žive u inostranstvu]", the paper is resumed as the following:

"Internet 2.0 fosters the emergence, connection, and association of a geographically dispersed community such as Malagasy migrants. This exploratory study analyses Malagasy online practices as a means to understanding the social dynamics and community-building in their host countries. The method employed relies on a parallel analysis of 121 websites and 82 Facebook public pages and groups created and/or managed by Malagasy migrants. The websites are classified according to the category of their activity and the networks they form, based on method used in the e-Diasporas Atlas project (Diminescu, 2012). Findings reveal that Malagasy overseas have the same geographical distribution both online and offline, but Facebook pages and groups are present in more countries than the websites what suggests a potential inverse correlation between belonging to a larger community and the need to be connected online. The network analysis of the websites uncovers that the Malagasy migrants' websites maintain a very weak connection among them and are split into several satellite networks around an interconnected group of political blogs. I conclude this significant weak connection among the MGWEB as a sign of a diaspora in-the making."

This paper has been published in the peer-reviewed journal Sociologija, with the ISSN 0038-0318, on the 2019, within the Volume no. 61 and Issue no. 04. "Sociologija is a scientific journal in which theoretical, empirical and methodological papers in the fields of Sociology, Social Psychology and Social Anthropology are published." as presented in its website

(http://www.sociologija.org/). Sociologija is indexed in Scopus (Elsevier), ESCI (Clarivate), SCImago, DOAJ, CEEOL, Google Scholar, and DOI Serbia.

Paper 1. Andrianimanana, F. M., & Roca-Cuberes, C. (2019). Online weak ties, a sign of a diaspora in-the-making? The case of the Malagasy abroad. *Sociologija*, 61 (04), 631–643. https://doi.org/10.2298/SOC1904631M

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ONLINE WEAK TIES,
A SIGN OF A DIASPORA IN-THE-MAKING?
THE CASE OF THE MALAGASY ABROAD

Slabe onlajn veze, pokazatelj dijaspore u nastajanju?
Studija slučaja Madagaskaraca koji žive u inostranstvu

ABSTRACT: *Internet 2.0 fosters the emergence, connection and association of a geographically dispersed community such as Malagasy migrants. This exploratory study analyses Malagasy online practices as a means to understanding the social dynamics and community-building in their host countries. The method employed relies on a parallel analysis of 121 websites and 82 Facebook public pages and groups created and/or managed by Malagasy migrants. The websites are classified according to the category of their activity and the networks they form, based on method used in the e-Diasporas Atlas project (Diminescu, 2012). Findings reveal that Malagasy overseas have the same geographical distribution both online and offline, but Facebook pages and groups are present in more countries than the websites what suggests a potential inverse correlation between belonging to a larger community and the need to be connected online. The network analysis of the websites uncovers that the Malagasy migrants' websites maintain a very weak connection among them and are split into several satellite networks around an interconnected group of political blogs. We conclude this significant weak connection among the MGWEB as a sign of a diaspora in-the making.*

KEY WORDS: diaspora, incipient diasporas, Malagasy diaspora, connected diaspora; transnational identity

APSTRAKT: *Internet 2.0 podstiče nastajanje, povezivanje i udruživanje geografski rasutih zajednica poput madagarskarskih migranata. U ovoj eksplorativnoj studiji se kroz analizu onlajn praksi Madagaskaraca objašnjava društvena dinamika i građenje zajednice u okviru njihovih zemalja domaćina. Metodologija rada se oslanja na paralelnu analizu 121 veb stranice i 82 javne Fejsbuk stranice i grupa kreiranih i/ili administriranih od strane madagaskarskih migranata. Na temelju*

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pristupa korišćenog u projektu e-Diasporas Atlas (Diminescu, 2012) veb stranice su klasifikovane u kategorije prema aktivnostima i mrežama koje formiraju. Rezultati su pokazali da Madagaskarci koji žive u inostranstvu imaju istu geografsku distribuciju onlajn i oflajn, s tim da su Fejsbuk stranice i grupe prisutnije u više zemalja u odnosu na veb stranice što ukazuje na potencijalnu negativnu korelaciju između pripadnosti većoj zajednici i potrebe za onlajn povezanošću. Mrežna analiza veb sajtova je pokazala da madagaskarski migranti putem svojih veb sajtova održavaju veoma slabe veze kao i da su raspodeljeni u nekoliko satelitskih mreža okupljenih oko međusobno povezane grupe političkih blogova. Zaključak naše studije je da je ustanovljena povezanost putem slabih veza među MGWEB znak dijaspore u nastajanju.

KLJUČNE REČI: dijaspora, dijaspore u nastajanju, dijaspora Madagaskaraca, povezana dijaspora, transnacionalni identitet

The Malagasy migrants

The existing studies and official documents reveal no quantifiable and exact data about Malagasy migrants[3]. In 2017, however, Razafindrakoto (2017: 10) estimate approximately 170.000 individuals worldwide, with 145.000 of them in France[4]. It is the most relevant Malagasy migrants community and for this reason, current studies attempting to understand the phenomenon related to Malagasy migrants focuses mostly on the Malagasy in France. Given this number, the Malagasy form the largest sub-Saharan migrants community in France (Razafindrakoto et al., 2017: 12).

The research on Malagasy migrants, largely qualitative, focuses on how overseas Malagasy deal with their social settlement, adaptation and integration, on Malagasy cultural practices within their receiving countries (Claverie, 2011; Claverie & Combeau-Mari, 2011; Rakotoary, 2017; Rasoloniaina, 2013), and on their relationship to their country of origin, thereby attempting to describe their profile (Kotlok, 2016; M. (Institut de R. pour le D. Razafindrakoto et al., 2017).

First observed in Claverie's research (2011: 72) and confirmed by the report of the International Organisation for Migration (Kotlok, 2016: 19), Malagasy transnational migration is grouped into three periods. The first is from 1880 to 1970, which historically covers the period before independence[5]. This first group 'gone-to-come-back', is mainly composed of soldiers who joined the French army during world wars, along with skilled workers and scholars willing to continue their studies abroad because of the lack of a structure for research in

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3   The current data is based on international databases (like OECD's...) or the migrants statistics in the France (as mentioned in the most recent research on Malagasy migrants lead Razafindrakoto et al.,). The lack of an exact and updated database at the Malagasy government and the poor statistical data at the consular and embassies are its most plausible cause.

4   Including French overseas territories such as La Réunion.

5   The independence of Madagascar was officially declared on 1960.

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Madagascar during this period. The second wave occurred from 1975 to 1990 and was mostly composed of students. Both Claverie (2011) and Kotlok (2016) consider this second wave as a 'one-way migration'. From 1990, the migrants' motivation is diversified and is still under-studied. Claverie describes this third generation as a "generation of student-workers [who is] attached to its culture and its values and is maintaining it fiercely. It is a generation who no longer sees the western countries (particularly France) as an intellectual ideal (destination) but as a potential employment area" (Claverie, 2011: 72). This generation is characterised by its struggle for the 'real independence of Madagascar (from France)' and freedom from French interference both politically and socially. Even more, "it is also known for its political role and its remote participation in all the emancipation struggles of the country, from the quest for independence to the search for current political stabilisation (in Madagascar)" (Claverie, 2011: 73).

Rasoloniaina (2013: 02) and Razafindrakoto et al., (2017: 30) state that the Malagasy migrants are first characterised by their attachment to the religious practice they had in their country of origin. Christian churches being the most dominant religious communities in Madagascar, the Malagasy practise these religions in France as well. The parishes are therefore considered as their most significant meeting points. Understood as migrant religious-practitioners, their attachment to the religion 'acquired' in their country of origin and 'practised' in their host country is a means of maintaining their cultural references and identity in parallel with social integration in the host country.

Only few studies investigated the use of internet by Malagasy migrants and they share the hypothesis that internet complements the physical gathering places. It is a place where the community's members share information regarding their country of origin and host country; a place for strengthening the offline events organized in the host country (Claverie, 2011: 76; Kotlok, 2016: 32); a complement to the gathering places in the host country (Claverie & Combeau-Mari, 2011: 117); a space for debate and the emergence of new figures in the community who lack the means to become known in offline space (Kotlok, 2016: 32); and a space of mass mobilization for engagement in charitable and solidarity actions to be carried out in the country of origin (Kotlok, 2016; Rakotoary, 2017). The internet is thus a place of meeting and exchange in a horizontal and barrier-free way between the members of a community that is geographically dispersed and discreet in comparison to other sub-Saharan diasporas (M. Razafindrakoto & Razindratsima, 2017) at the offline level.

The concept of "diaspora"

The concept of "diaspora" has been comprehensively debated by scholars for decades. Although, the "Malagasy diaspora" only emerged in the Malagasy social debate lately after 2015[6]. In 2017, "Malagasy diaspora" was cited for first time by Razafindrakoto et al. (2017). In 2018, Rakotoary mentions the "connected

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6   A plausible cause is the establishment of the *Direction de la Diaspora* (Office for the diaspora) within the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Madagascar, as the Malagasy government officially launched a politics towards its migrants community.

Malagasy diaspora" for first time in her PhD thesis (Rakotoary, 2018). Remarkably, as the Malagasy public agenda stressed the notion of "diaspora", scholars also tended to switch from "migrants" to "diaspora".

It is clear that the concept of "diaspora" has developed over the course of its use in different disciplines. In this paper, it is understood as a group of migrants spread around the world and whose members share the feeling of belonging to an (imagined) homeland, culture, and origin, while being settled, and mostly integrated, within their respective host countries. The members of a diasporic community maintain and nurture a close relationship with and actions towards their country of "origin" (Safran, 1991: 83). While most of the criteria Safran outlines refer to the attraction of the homeland, Cohen, extends the concept by adding that the members of diasporic community also acknowledge that diasporic communities not only form a collective identity in the place of settlement or with their homeland, but also share a common identity with members of the same ethnic communities in other countries (Cohen, 1997). Brubaker emphasises the importance of the homeland in his description and characterises diaspora with the concepts of 'dispersion', 'homeland orientation', and 'boundary-maintenance' (Brubaker, 2005). His definition also considers the cause of the immigration: "this (the dispersion) is today the most widely accepted criterion, and also the most straightforward. It can be interpreted strictly as forced or otherwise traumatic dispersion" (Brubaker, 2005. 05).

The most recent understanding of a "diasporic community" takes into account two other concepts related to the personal practices and social dynamics of a diaspora: mobility and connectivity (Tsagarousianou, 2004; Diminescu, 2008).

– Mobility. While the act of migration has been commonly practised by humankind since the beginning of its history, the way it is done has changed considerably. With improvements in transport technology, migration flows have become easier and so people can travel from one territory to another with ease. The significant change in the difficulty of mobility has led current scholars to insist on the irrelevance of long-term "settlement".

– (Inter)connectivity. ICTs eliminated boundaries: the members of a diasporic community are not limited to the blurred line of geographical boundaries. Settled in their host country they are instantly and continuously connected with their "homeland", but also and above all, they are interconnected with one another. Considering this context, we understand and adhere to the idea that diaspora communities are connected in a significant way despite being physically and geographically disconnected.

The members of a diasporic community, share a common religion, culture or homeland, maintain a vivid and permanent relationship with their countries of origin and among them, with the internet and the technologies as the medium, and are foremost integrated into their host country. "It is their readiness and willingness to engage themselves with the building of a transnational imagination

and connections that constitutes the 'threshold' from ethnic to diasporic identification." (Tsagarousianou, 2004: 59).

Purposes, methods and data

This paper aims at understanding and mapping the online presence, practices, dynamics, and activities of the Malagasy migrant community on the internet. The internet is undoubtedly a space in which Malagasy living abroad gather and demonstrate their personal and social dynamics, and their online activities and practices can be understood as a metric of their relationship with their "homeland". We seek to analyse the online activities of Malagasy migrants by carefully examining Malagasy diasporic websites (MGWEB) and Malagasy diasporic public pages or groups on Facebook.

The MGWEB are here understood as those websites created and/or managed by a non-official individual or collective members of the Malagasy migrant community that deal with them (Diminescu, 2012). The profiles of the webmasters and the contents of their websites are the main criteria used in selecting the websites. While the profile of the webmasters allows us to see who are the connected Malagasy behind each website, their content shows what they (the webmasters) are saying about the Malagasy migrants. The end-users of the websites are not an essential element, as the websites are open access and not limited to the Malagasy migrants. We excluded the websites: (i) created and/or managed by Malagasy nationals abroad representing any Malagasy institution or state (e.g. embassies and consulates); (ii) dealing with the Malagasy migrants but created/or managed by non-Malagasy nationals; and (iii) of a political party.

The methods used in this paper are those used in the successful e-Diasporas Atlas project, a research project focused on the analysis of diaspora communities and their online presence (Diminescu, 2012), as defined in the following steps. Step 1: Web exploration and corpus building. Malagasy migrants websites were queried on Google using several keywords related to the Malagasy migrants' community in the Malagasy, French and English languages. We analysed the most salient websites depending on their content and according to our personal knowledge of the websites whose contents are related to Malagasy migrants.

Step 2: Data enrichment. The second step is a manual sequence of selecting/ filtering the most salient websites retained for the analysis in Step 1. The 121 websites retained were classified according to their geographical location, category, and language. Their geographical location was made possible by analysis of their WHOIS addresses and the three other categories were determined by their contents. Step 3: Network analysis. This last step was aimed at discovering and manipulating the existing networks between the selected websites. In this step, those MGWEB that maintain any relationships between themselves were detected using the Gephi websites network analysis program developed by the e-Diaspora Atlas project. The network visualisation consists of the intensity and the frequency of the external links that MGWEB share.

Findings

The geographical distribution analysis[7] reveals that more than half of the Malagasy migrants websites are concentrated in France 60.33% (n=73). Canada and Switzerland host the second largest concentration of websites with 11.57% (n=14) and 9.91% (n=12) of the total. Several websites are located in the following European countries and regions: Italy (8.13%, n=10), Germany (3.25%, n=4) and Benelux (1.62%, n=2). The remaining websites are located in Egypt, the UK, the USA and the Philippines. The most important part of Malagasy migrants websites are, therefore, located in Central and North-Western Europe: 84.29% (n=102). North America is the second most important host continent of MGWEB as 13.22% (n=16) of them are located in Canada and the USA. Geographical distribution shows that most of the Malagasy migrant websites are concentrated in western and economically wealthier countries, and there are almost no MGWEB in South America, Russia, Oceania, Middle East, Africa (except Egypt), and Asia (except the Philippines).

This first result matches with the existing offline mapping distribution of Malagasy migrants, as shown in the previous studies on the Malagasy migrants. Without any exact quantitative data on the dispersion of the Malagasy migrants around the world, due to several causes, the existing studies confirmed that there are mostly Malagasy migrants in western and economically wealthier countries (Kotlok, 2016; Razafindrakoto et al., 2017).

The language used in Malagasy migrants websites

The diasporic studies carried out to date demonstrate the significance of the language used in a diasporic community's offline everyday life in their host countries as well as in their websites. The distribution of languages reflects, above all, social integration and attachment to the homeland (Diminescu, 2012: 456).

The MGWEB in France, Germany, Benelux and Canada –which are the regions with the most websites– mainly use the host country's official language(s) (see Table 1). This language distribution is particularly interesting in France and Canada, where most of the MGWEB use French as the main language. This might be because French is a co-official language in Madagascar[8] and thus the webmasters of these websites have no problem in writing in French. However, as the same phenomenon occurs in Germany (where MGWEB use German), we consider it as an evidence of full integration into the host country's language system, and therefore society. Also, this means that it is inaccessible by the non-German-speaking Malagasy. The case of the websites in Italy seems to confirm this: there are as many Italian as Malagasy-speaking websites. Only the case of the websites located in Egypt is an exception as they are written in French and Malagasy. This might be due to the significant difference between Arabic, Malagasy, and French.

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7   Depended on the availability of the WHOIS and IP address of the websites.

8   As a matter of fact, Malagasy and French are co-official languages in Madagascar. While Malagasy is used in everyday life, French is more commonly used more for institutional and higher education purposes. Therefore, not every Malagasy in Madagascar speaks French; in general, the higher the educational level of someone is, the better he/she speaks French.

Table 1: The language used in the MGWEB per country

		Language distributions of the websites (%)			
		Host country's official language(s)[9]	Madagascar's co-official language(s)	Host country's +Madagascar's co-official language(s)	English
Geographical locations	FR (n=73)	50.68	43.83	-	5.47
	CA (n=14)	71.42	28.58	-	-
	CH (n=12)	58.33	41.66	-	-
	IT (n=10)	20	60	20	-
	DE (n=4)	75	-	25	-
	EGY (n=2)	-	100	-	-
	BENELUX (n=2)	100	-	-	-
	USA (n=2)	50	50	-	-
	PH (n=1)	100	-	-	-
	UK (n=1)	-	100	-	-

Source: Author's own data

Malagasy migrants' websites according to their activities

The contents analysis shows the activities of each website. We then distinguish those websites whose activities are oriented towards Malagasy migrants in the host country, be they for their social or personal needs, and those oriented towards the homeland. This is to highlight the importance of the connection to the homeland. Still, this raises the question of the "link to the homeland" that can be seen in doing homeland's practices in the host country or a direct implication for the homeland. Here we took as the main criteria the activities oriented towards the homeland as the most visible link to the homeland.

The first category, websites oriented to the activities run by and for Malagasy migrants in their country of residence lead in the landscape of MGWEB. The websites encompass the cultural and social practices of the Malagasy people in their country of origin and that are performed in their country of residence.

Table 2: Activities distribution of the websites

	Type of activities									
	Assoc – NGOs	Portal – Forum	Blog	Politics	Education	Religious	Media	Corporate	Leisure	Others
Number	21	11	34	1	1	37	10	1	4	1
%	17.35	9.09	28.09	0.82	0.82	30.57	8.26	0.82	3.30	0.82

Sources: Authors own data

Particularly, the predominant websites are those of Christian churches, as they represent 30.57% (n=37) of the total. France is the dominant host of the

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9   Are included in this category those websites located in part or full French-speaking countries (France, Switzerland, Benelux and Canada) and whose contents are entirely written in French even though it is a co-official language in Madagascar.

religious websites, with 66% of the total, followed by Switzerland and then Canada. Therefore, the number of the religious websites in these countries amounts proportionally to the number of Malagasy migrants in residence there. They represent the Roman Catholic church, and various protestant churches, which are the most practiced religion in Madagascar. The websites are used as an information channel for these communities, with information about the schedule of their meeting, their local organisation, and a place where the religious text scheduled for each season of the year are shared periodically. Assuming that religion does not represent the Malagasy culture, it still has a lot to do with the social organisation and dynamics of the Malagasy people as guiding their moral values and social life. These websites show evidence of very expanded and organised church institutions run by Malagasy migrants in their host countries.

Table 3: Percent of the MGWEB per activities and geographical locations

		Websites per activities (%)										Total (%)
		Assoc – NGOs	Portal – Forum	Blog	Political websites	Edu-cation	Reli-gious	Media	Corpo-rate	Leisure	Others	
Geographical locations	FR (n=73)	13.70	2.74	34.24	1.37	-	34.24	9.59	-	4.11	-	100
	CA (n=14)	14.29	14.29	28.57	-	7.14	21.42	7.14	-	7.14	-	100
	CH (n=12)	25	-	25	-	-	41.66	8.33	-	-	-	100
	IT (n=10)	30	20	20	-	-	20	-	10	-	-	100
	DE (n=4)	50	25	-	-	-	-	25	-	-	-	100
	EGY (n=2)	-	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100
	BENELUX (n=2)	50	-	-	-	-	50	-	-	-	-	100
	USA (n=2)	-	-	-	-	-	50	-	-	-	50	100
	PH (n=1)	-	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100
	UK (n=1)	-	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100

Sources: Authors own data

Interconnected political blogs: the most powerful websites

Blogs are the second most prevalent category of websites, covering 28.09% (n=34) of the whole. Yet, even if they are written and run by Malagasy migrants, they are not oriented only to Malagasy migrants, as blogs are open access and tackle universal topics. A large majority of these blogs address, most or entirely, political issues like elections or critiques of the governing government in Madagascar. Results show that among the most influential and active blogs are *gttinternational. blogspot.com*[10], *pakysse.wordpress.com*[11], *madagoravox.wordpress.com*[12], and *mcmparis.wordpress.com*[13]. Their descriptions (as shown in their content) reveal some common characteristics: they were all launched after the 2009 coup in Madagascar, to which they all express opposition.

10   A political blog against other countries' interference in the Malagasy political sphere and of the 2009 coup.

11   A blog tackling Malagasy environmental and political issues.

12   A political blog launched after the 2009 coup in Madagascar.

13   A Malagasy citizen movement launched after the events of 2009.

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Associations by and for Malagasy migrants and/or Madagascar

A significant number (17.35%, n=21) of the corpus represent non-profit/charitable initiatives (see "Associations" in Table 3). These websites were divided into two main groups according to the target of the initiatives: those targeting the Malagasy migrants, and those targeting the Malagasy in Madagascar. Approximately two-thirds (67%) of them have as their final target the Malagasy living in Madagascar. These are mostly NGOs working in the areas of education, infrastructure, and child adoption initiatives in the host countries with projects based in Madagascar. The remaining websites (33%) are those built by and for Malagasy migrants in their country of residence, but whose actions are nonetheless indirectly oriented towards Madagascar. They are mostly designed for entertainment purpose, and as a communication channel for the Malagasy migrants in a given territory. They represent the most recent and developing entrepreneurial associations. Unlike the first category, these websites are mostly located in France (e.g., *zama-diaspora.com* aiming at gathering Malagasy migrants; *fact-madagascar.org* that federates the Europe-based NGOs working for Madagascar, and *juniors-pour-madagascar.com,* which is a point of convergence of Malagasy junior migrants-entrepreneurs willing to invest in Madagascar). These websites show emergent initiatives led by and for Malagasy migrants in their host countries but still oriented towards Madagascar.

This brief overview clearly shows the dominance of websites made by and for Malagasy migrants, such as association websites, websites for leisure, religious purposes, and so on. This reveals no well-structured social organisation of Malagasy migrants in their countries of residence, mostly in France, Switzerland and Canada. In contrast, the websites representing the activities oriented towards Madagascar carried out by a collective of Malagasy migrants is a very small and recent group, such as some NGOs.

Malagasy migrants website networks: a weak tie

The notion of "ties" has been comprehensively used in networks analysis and was successfully used in diasporic studies to uncover the interconnection of the websites of a corpus (Bruslé, 2012; Kumar, 2012; Severo & Zuolo, 2012; Westbrook & Saad, 2016). It refers to the intensity and the density of the inbound and outbound links that connect the websites. The "ties" have to do with the relation that maintain a website (or a node) of the corpus to another. A node is not necessarily connected to another; if it is, it is linked by an "edge". The websites that maintain the most inbound and outbound links and that gather a lot of websites around itself are named the "authorities". A group of nodes and edges gathered around an authority and related to another group refers to a "cluster".

Beyond their technical aspect, the "ties" are here assumed to represent also and foremost the relationship that interconnects the webmasters of these websites. The webmasters are interconnected and cite each other as they share various topics or causes. In fact, this is a benefit of ICTs in diasporic community-building: the act of sharing the same values, customs, culture of an imagined/claimed origin homeland. The intensity of the interlinking is then understood also as a mark of the intensity of the relationship.

The networks graph of the MGWEB below shows that there is no singular authority or node[14] among them. Instead, they are split into two core groups: an interconnected and powerful network of political blogs in the middle, with a group of satellite and disconnected websites surrounding this central network.

The network of the most prominent categories of Malagasy migrant websites (i.e. blogs and religious websites) are totally different. The interconnected blogs in the middle of the graph are the most powerful category (see Graph) and they exclude the other type of websites at the edge of the network. In fact, every blog is connected to at least one other blog. They also tend to have the same potentials. The satellite websites, composed mainly of religious, corporate and entertainment websites, have no interconnection between them and have clearly the weakest links. These are also split into smallest interconnected groups around the blogs: the entrepreneurial, entertainment, and a small group of religious websites.

Here, we assume that the very weak ties and connection between the MGWEB, with the exception of the blogs, represents their offline dynamics of their webmasters, and therefore the Malagasy migrants' community. This raises a fundamental question: why the very small number of MGWEB are so disconnected? Three main assumptions might be considered as elements of an answer: the fact that they are few, as was observed in the case of Egyptian diasporic websites (Severo & Zuolo, 2012: 17); the successful integration of Malagasy into their country of residence, as stated in previous studies (M. (Institut de R. pour le D. Razafindrakoto et al., 2017); or the difference of the subjects addressed on the websites.

Graph: Malagasy diaspora website networks.

Source: Author's own data

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14   A website attracting most of the links and which the other websites are related to.

Mapping the Malagasy diasporic groups
and pages on Facebook

Some public groups and pages[15] of Malagasy migrants communities on Facebook were also accessed and analysed in order to complete the mapping of the MGWEB. These groups and pages were created by members of the Malagasy community in a given territory or place for multiples purposes:

> 'Ity Pejy ity dia natokana ho an'ny rehetra izay liana amin'ireo hetsika maro samihafa tanterahan'ireo mpianatra malagasy eto Rosia.' (This page is dedicated to those interested in the several activities of the Malagasy students in Russia) (Russia, page, 3,724 followers).

> 'Nous avons quitté notre pays pour y préparer un avenir différent, nos enfants sont nés ici. Nous resterons toujours Malagasy.' (We left our homeland to prepare there a better future, our children are born in France. We will always be Malagasy) (France, page, 10,962 followers).

> 'this page is to help people in Madagascar to know more about America or help them to live in this country. In the future, I want to have a Malagasy organization in America.' (USA, page, 6,170 followers).

The data gathered from the Facebook pages and groups match, once again, the pattern of the offline distribution of the Malagasy migrants' community, and also the geographical distribution of MGWEB. France is the country with most of the Malagasy Facebook pages and groups (n=11), and with the largest number of followers. It is followed by Canada (n=4), and several countries such as Germany, Spain, Italy, the UK, China, Dubai, Japan, Korea, Mauritius, Philippines, Russia, Seychelles, Turkey, and the USA.

Despite this pattern, the most significant finding is that the Facebook pages and groups exist in more countries than the websites. The geographical mapping of the Malagasy migrants' pages and groups on Facebook shows there is also a significant number of connected Malagasy migrants in Asia and Russia. This means that Facebook is an online meeting point for the invisible and discrete Malagasy migrants spread over the world, and especially of those individuals not active on websites or blogs.

Conclusion

This paper analysed the online activities and practices of the Malagasy migrants, reflecting their offline social dynamics. The findings show phenomena related to the dynamics of the Malagasy, but also lead us to reflect on the online dynamics of a specific diaspora in the digital sphere.

The most surprising result is the lack of an authority and predominance of the notable strong ties of the individual blogs mostly related to political issues

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15   Data accessed according to their "public" access. The privacy policy of Facebook was respected in data collection. Facebook has recently made some information (i.e. the date of creation and the number of followers/members) of each page and group accessible. Data accessed on June 1[st], 2019.

in Madagascar. This demonstrates the importance of the bloggers' group and politically influential persons within the Malagasy migrant community that act, at the very least, as a watchdog group. This is an evidence of what the existing studies on the Malagasy migrants defines as a "potential elite group, geographically decentralized, but likely to influence the national trajectory (of Madagascar)." (M. (Institut de R. pour le D. Razafindrakoto et al., 2017).

The results also demonstrated the lack of online ties of Malagasy migrant religious websites, which is the most important category of the MGWEB. This is contradictory to the fact that the *fiangonana* (church) is a meeting point for Malagasy abroad (Rasoloniaina, 2013). It could be that the more frequented institutions in a given geographical space have a reduced need to make themselves visible and interconnected online, in contrast to the wide and recent initiatives, such as the entrepreneurs, who have a greater need to make themselves visible.

Finally, the remarkable predominance of the websites and also the Facebook groups built by and for Malagasy migrants (in other words, the few initiatives oriented towards the homeland) is also a significant result. A large number of websites are dedicated to providing the address of local Malagasy churches in the host countries or ethnic leisure centres (pubs, restaurants, etc.). We understand this as a desire of the Malagasy living abroad to live like at "home", while being integrated, at least geographically speaking. This, added to the lack of connection between the websites, shows the Malagasy migrant collective as a diaspora in-the-making or 'incipient diaspora' (Scheffer, 2003: 131).

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6.2. Paper 2

This second paper analyses the political blogs of the Malagasy diaspora. Entitled "Blogging as digital citizen participation: The case of the Malagasy diaspora", the paper is resumed as the following:

"This article analyses the political blogging of the Malagasy diaspora as part of their transnational political participation. It focuses on three aspects of the blogs: the most frequent topics addressed, how are the topics addressed, and the political bloggers. To do this, a Thematic Content Analysis based on four categories ("soapboxes", "transmission belts", "conversation starters" and "mobilisers") of four of their most active and influential political blogs was conducted. The analysis revealed that (i) the blogs are mostly "soapboxes" that consist of commenting the political issues in Madagascar, (ii) their contents were mostly focused on the coup d'état in 2009, and (iii) the bloggers are involved in direct political participation in parallel offline. This paper shows the role of the studied blogs as tribunes of opinions that gather a partisan audience discussing the Malagasy political issues, and as judgment tools contributing to the braking or fuelling of Madagascar's international relations."

This paper has been published in the peer-reviewed journal African Diaspora, with the ISSN 1872-5457 and EISSN 1872-5465, on the 2021, within the Volume no. 61 and Issue no. 04. "African Diaspora seeks to understand how African cultures and societies shape and are shaped by historical and current diasporic and transnational movements." as presented in its website (https://www.brill.com/journals/afdi/). African Diaspora is indexed in Web of Sciences, Scopus, ERIH PLUS, International Review of Biblical Studies, SocINDEX, SocINDEX with Full Text, Sociology Source Ultimate, and African Studies Abstracts.

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Blogging as Digital Citizen Participation

The Case of the Malagasy Diaspora

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Abstract

This article analyses the political blogging of the Malagasy diaspora as part of their transnational political participation. It focuses on three aspects of the blogs: the most frequent topics addressed, how are the topics addressed, and the political bloggers. To do this, a Thematic Content Analysis based on four categories ('soapboxes', 'transmission belts', 'conversation starters' and 'mobilisers') of four of their most active and influential political blogs was conducted. The analysis revealed that (i) the blogs are mostly "soapboxes" that consist of commenting the political issues in Madagascar, (ii) their contents were mostly focused on the *coup d'état* in 2009, and (iii) the bloggers are involved in direct political participation in parallel offline. This paper shows the role of the studied blogs as tribunes of opinions that gather a partisan audience discussing the Malagasy political issues, and as judgment tools contributing to the braking or fuelling of Madagascar's international relations.

Keywords

Résumé

Cet article analyse les quatre blogs politiques les plus actifs et influents de la diaspora malgache comme une forme de participation politique transnationale. Centré sur les sujets les plus fréquemment abordés, la manière dont ils sont abordés et le profil des blogueurs, une Analyse de Contenu Thématique basée sur quatre catégories («tribunes», «courroies de transmission», «initiateurs de conversation» et «mobilisateurs») a été menée. L'analyse a révélé que (i) les blogs sont majoritairement des «tribunes» consistant à commenter les questions politiques malgaches, (ii) leur contenu est principalement axé sur le coup d'État de 2009, et (iii) les blogueurs sont aussi impliqués dans une participation politique directe hors ligne. Cet article montre le rôle des blogs étudiés comme tribunes d'opinions rassemblant une audience partisane discutant des enjeux politiques malgaches, et comme outils de jugement contribuant à freiner ou alimenter les relations internationales malgaches.

Like many migrant communities, the Malagasy diaspora is not allowed to vote by mail in elections in their homeland (Comission Électorale Nationale Indépendante de Madagascar 2018). Madagascar's electoral law limits the voting process to voting in-person and does not provide Malagasy voters residing outside the country the option of voting by mail. We assume that the reasons for this disenfranchisement are logistical, technical, legal, and administrative. Yet this "potential elite group, geographically decentred [within their country of settlement], but likely to influence the national trajectory [of their country of origin]" (Razafindrakoto et al. 2017: 4) nurture an intimate, committed, and visible relationship with the political sphere of their homeland. With no rights to direct representative voting, many members of the Malagasy diaspora have adopted unconventional approach to political participation, which includes activities such as political blogging. This article examines the political blogging of the Malagasy diasporic community as a form of citizen participation in the digital sphere, focusing on how the members of this community use blogs to nurture a political relationship with their country of origin, their motivations for doing so, and considers the extent to which their political blogging constitutes real political participation.

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Political (micro)blogging can be defined as a "complex form of political participation that blends hypertext links, opinionated commentary, calls to political action, and requests for feedback in different ways at different moments in time" (Wallsten 2008). This phenomenon has been comprehensively investigated by scholars since its emergence in the late 1990s to early 2000s. Most studies consider political (micro)blogging in democratic countries and focus on the contribution of the political blogs (and thus the bloggers) to parties in electoral campaign processes (Graziano 2012; Larsson and Moe 2012; Sweetser, Golan, and Wanta 2008; Wallsten 2008). Also, political blogs have been shown to be run by politically engaged citizens who steer social mobilisations, such as the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong or the democratisation movement in the Arab Spring (Tam 2018; Müller-Funk 2016; Swanson 2016). Many studies point out other broad roles of the political (micro)blogs, finding them to be agenda-setters in the political sphere, collective spaces for political deliberation, or simply social conversation starters (Vaccari and Valeriani 2018; Pettersson and Sakki 2017; Costa and Silva 2014; Zhou 2009).

Very little attention has been paid to the specific political blogosphere of non-voting migrant communities such as the Malagasy diaspora. Existing research on the political participation of diasporic communities in their homelands mainly focuses on the importance of their external voting (Palop-García and Pedroza 2020; Lafleur and Sánchez-Domínguez 2015) or their physical political mobilisations in their country of settlement (Aboussi 2020; Dalmasso 2018; Beaugrand and Geisser 2016; Moss 2016; Müller-Funk 2016). All of these existing studies are limited to studying diasporic communities that take part in the electoral process of their homelands. Such studies have paid little attention to the digital aspect of political participation by such diasporic communities, despite the fact that many are a kind of e-diaspora, "a migrant collective that organises itself and is active first and foremost on the web and whose practices are those of a community whose interactions are 'enhanced' by digital exchange" (Diminescu 2012: 452). Indeed, since the emergence of the internet, the life of the migrants has been marked by connectivity and the platforms that allow blogging. Political blogging is therefore a crucial aspect of the political participation and action of migrant communities such as the Malagasy diaspora. We assume that the fact that no studies of Malagasy political blogging as such have been conducted is due to them being considered tools with no potential impacts in the political sphere in Madagascar.

In the months following its publication in March 2011, a blog post entitled *À quand un Ministère de la Diaspora ... ?* (literally: When will we have a Ministry of the Diaspora?) (Rakotomalala 2011) triggered a significant shift in Madagascan national policies towards the diaspora, thus showing the impact of

political blogging. This post on madagoravox.wordpress.com, one of the most prominent political blogs of the Malagasy diaspora, explains the importance of the remittances of the Malagasy diaspora community to Madagascar vis-à-vis the indifference, if not negligence, the Madagascan government displays towards them, as well as the need for a real national policy concerning Malagasy migrants. In 2016, five years after this and other posts on the same topic, the owner of Madagoravox and other members of the Malagasy diaspora organised the first gathering of a large part of the Malagasy diaspora including mostly scholars and entrepreneurs in the Malagasy diaspora from around the world to reflect on the topics raised in this blog post (Rakotomalala 2016). A year later, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Madagascar organised the first forum of the Malagasy diaspora (Andriamanga 2017). In 2020, the President of the Republic of Madagascar declared that external voting would be opened to the Malagasy diaspora for the presidential election of 2023. The author of Madagoravox subsequently started a social and political debate on the role of the Malagasy diaspora with respect to its country of origin through his political blog and parallel actions.

In contrast, another post from gtt-international.blogspot.com, one of the most active political blogs of the Malagasy diaspora, openly called for its audience to take part in an online petition. Thus, on 14 November 2018, an open letter with a signed petition addressed to the Madagascan electoral board urged the Malagasy diaspora to "not remain silent against the programmed vote-stealing during the [presidential] elections", to "read the letter and disseminate it widely via Facebook, e-mail and by any other means to their friends" and finally, to "encourage them to do the same and to sign it." (GTT-International 2018). On 3 March 2019, three months after the inauguration of the elected president, the electoral board of Madagascar acknowledged significant anomalies in the electoral census (Tétaud 2020). Although it may be difficult to attribute the gtt-international post as the reason for this statement from the electoral board, if nothing else the case shows how closely blogs track the political sphere in Madagascar.

These two examples of how blog posts triggered social debate show the role of political blogging as an unconventional form of political participation used by the Malagasy diaspora within the Madagascan public sphere. Considering these premises, this paper seeks to examine the practices of the Malagasy diaspora's political blogging and the impact of this blogging on the political sphere in Madagascar. It provides answers to three research questions (RQ): What are the topics most frequently addressed by the political blogs of the Malagasy diaspora (RQ1)? How are these topics addressed by the blogs (RQ2)? Who are the political bloggers of the Malagasy diaspora (RQ3)?

1   Political Blogs as Tools for the Analysis of Transnational Political
       Participation of the Malagasy Diaspora

A thematic content analysis (TCA) was conducted in order to analyse the polit-
ical blogs of the Malagasy diaspora. The TCA focused on four of the most active
political blogs used by members of the Malagasy diaspora: madagoravox.word-
press.com (based in France), alainrajaonarivony.over-blog.net (based in
France), rakotoarison.over-blog.com (based in France), and gtt-international.b
logspot.com (based in Switzerland). Previous research established that Mala-
gasy diasporic blogs are "those blogs and websites created and/or run by a Mala-
gasy diaspora from outside Madagascar" (Andrianimanana and Roca-Cuberes
2019: 635) and defined the list of the blogs run by the Malagasy diaspora. The
four blogs in this study were selected from this list. In addition to these cri-
teria, the four blogs were selected based on their focus on political issues in
Madagascar and on their influence. By 'influence', we refer to the intensity and
frequency of the mention or linkage of the blogs on other blogs and/or websites
of the Malagasy diaspora as found in our previous research (Andrianimanana
and Cuberes 2019).

The analysis relied on blog posts as the units of analysis. In total, 1,063 blog
posts – 113 from Madagoravox, 190 from Alainrajaonarivony, 179 from Rakotoari-
son, and 581 from Gtt-international – were selected for the content analysis. The
selected posts were related to Madagascan political sphere (institutions, polit-
ical actors, political circumstances, public policies, geopolitics). Posts about
international politics and the political sphere of the country of settlement of
the bloggers were excluded. Each post was manually retrieved from the blogs
for the analysis on 1 September 2020. All of the retrieved posts were published
between 15 July 2008 and 7 July 2020. A twelve year time period was selected
in order to understand how those political blogs and bloggers reacted to and
tackled a wide range of political circumstances and events in Madagascar,
especially the coup d'état in 2009, the presidential elections in 2013 and the
presidential elections in 2018. This methodology shed light on the variations
in the activity of political blogs throughout their lifetimes: from their infancy
and flourishing moments to their decline in the microblogging era with the
advent of Twitter. The thematic content analysis involved three main steps.
First, the primary and secondary topics of the blog posts were identified by
analysing a random sample of sixty blog posts composed of fifteen from each
blog. Second, these primary topics were double-checked by reading sixty addi-
tional blog posts. This procedure allowed us to enrich the list of primary and
secondary topics and to produce the final coding sheet. Finally, all 1,063 blog
posts were analysed. In this final step, each blog post was coded and classi-

fied according to how it fit into these four categories: 'link filters/transmission belts', 'soapboxes', 'mobilisers' or 'conversation starters'. These categories, coined by Wallsten (2008) and used by Tam (2018), are a replicable coding scheme that can be applied to analyse political blogs across specific contexts. Wallsten used this coding scheme to analyse the use of political blogs during the 2004 American presidential election campaign and Waekung applied the scheme to examine political blogging during the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong in 2014.

A blog post was coded as a 'link filter' or 'transmission belt' when its content originated from another source and was solely copied and/or linked on the blog with no modification. Since the primary purpose of a link filter post is to inform the reader, it was associated with the function of 'informing only'. A blog post was coded as 'soapbox' when it provided the readers with the opinion, standpoint, thoughts, observations and/or experiences of the author on a given political topic or circumstances. Soapbox posts are associated with the function of 'commenting only'. A blog post was coded as a 'mobiliser' when its contents and form were intended to mobilise the reader to take direct political action or to join an ongoing direct political action undertaken by others. Mobiliser posts were associated with the function of 'mobilising'. In previous studies using the same analysis (Tam 2018; Wallsten 2008), a blog post was coded as a 'conversation starter' when the blogger asked for a given answer from the reader through a simple question within the blog post or by enabling a channel of communication, such as a comments section or by providing an email address. However, this study found that through posts, the bloggers entered into dialogue with readers without explicitly asking a question about the topic addressed in the post. Moreover, the blogs studied here all provided email addresses publicly and featured a comments section. Thus, this analysis concluded that every post was a 'conversation starter'. Therefore, a dimension was added to the 'conversation starter' category to include posts that set new political topics to be addressed. A post was also coded as a 'conversation starter' when its content directed a question to a specific group, such as political decision-makers or national authorities, for them to consider the question or to make a corresponding decision. In this way, all mobiliser posts are conversation starters, but not all conversation starters are mobilisers because mobiliser posts call for specific action outside the blog.

Finally, it was determined that a blog post could be coded to have more than one function ('comments only', 'informs only', 'starts a conversation only', and 'mobilises only'). There are 16 possible combinations of the four initial functions. In the analysis of 1,063 blog posts, examples were found of posts that fit into 13 of the 16 possible combinations: (1) informs only, (2) comments only,

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(3) mobilises only, (4) starts a conversation only, (5) informs and comments, (6) informs and mobilises, (7) informs and starts a conversation, (8) comments and mobilises, (9) comments and starts a conversation, (10) mobilises and starts a conversation, (11) informs, comments and mobilises, (12) informs, comments and starts a conversation, and (13) informs, mobilises and starts a conversation.

2 The Political Blogs: Mostly as Tribunes for Political Analysis

The analysis revealed that the political blogs of the Malagasy diaspora act mainly as soapboxes. 52% of the posts from Madagoravox, 80% from Alain-Rajaonarivony, 21% from GTT-International and 3% from Rakotoarison were comments only. However, when those blog posts coded as comments are combined with any other function (informs, starts a conversation and/or mobilises), the results change significantly: 96% of the posts from Madagoravox, 98% from AlainRajaonarivony, and 78% from GTT-International use the function of soapbox (see Table 1). If those blog posts coded as soapboxes are divided into two clusters – soapboxes with any form of call for action (comments and starts a conversation or comments and mobilises) and soapboxes without call for action (comments only or comments and informs) – the latter is clearly dominant. 75% of the total soapbox posts of Madagoravox, 94% of AlainRajaonarivony's, and 52% of GTT-International's are without call for action.

With only around 5% of its posts coded as soapboxes, the blog Rakotoarison differs from the other three. Unlike the other blogs, a clear majority of its posts (97%) were used as transmission belts. Rakotoarison's purpose is solely to inform its readers by linking to or quoting information from other sources such as diasporic websites, media, institutions, or other sources. Transmission belts are considered to be the simplest form of posting, but in linking or quoting content from other sources, the authors go through an intentional process of source selection, topic selection and content sharing. In this sense, although the author does not provide their own standpoint on a given political topic or circumstances, they participate in spreading a specific topic and share the perspectives they consider relevant for readers.

The results also showed that few of the blog posts call their readers to action. Indeed, only 32% of the posts from GTT-International, 19% from Madagoravox, and 2% from AlainRajaonarivony were coded as conversation starters. Only 8% of the posts from GTT-International, 2% from Madagoravox and 2% from AlainRajaonarivony mobilised their audiences. Considering this situa-

TABLE 1   Distribution of the blog posts by their functions (%)

Functions and percentage	MDG	ARJ	GTT	RKT
Comments and mobilises	1.77	1.58	4.65	–
Comments and starts a conversation	16.81	0.53	14.63	–
Comments only	52.21	80.53	21.69	2.79
Informs, comments, and mobilises	0.88	0.53	1.72	–
Informs and comments	23.89	13.16	28.57	2.79
Informs and mobilises	–	0.53	1.38	–
Informs and starts a conversation	0.88	–	2.93	–
Informs, comments, and starts a conversation	0.88	1.58	7.06	–
Informs, mobilises, and starts a conversation	–	–	0.34	–
Informs only	1.77	1.58	9.81	94.41
Mobilises and starts a conversation	–	–	0.52	–
Mobilises only	–	–	0.17	–
Starts a conversation only	0.88	–	6.54	–

SOURCES: AUTHORS OWN DATA

tion, GTT-International is the blog that most frequently calls its readers to participate directly or indirectly in political mobilisation or action. This shows that the four political blogs of the Malagasy diaspora studied here publish their opinions and comment on political events and happenings in their homeland more than they call for action.

3   The Political Blogs: Longstanding Tribunes for Political Analysis

Three of the four political blogs of the Malagasy diaspora (Rakotoarison, Madagoravox, and AlainRajaonarivony) started their activity in 2008. As Figure 1 shows, these three blogs were remarkably active during their first year of existence (2009) and their activity has decreased since then. Over the course of 2009, the three blogs published 195 articles. In the same year, GTT-International blog started posting. Following the scheme of the three other blogs, GTT-International was more active during the first two years of its existence and dropped its activity throughout the following years. This repeated scheme of activity in all four blogs could be understood as an example of the general (global) scheme that blog lifetimes do not exceed four years. The surprising result, though, is that although major political events, such as the coup d'état in

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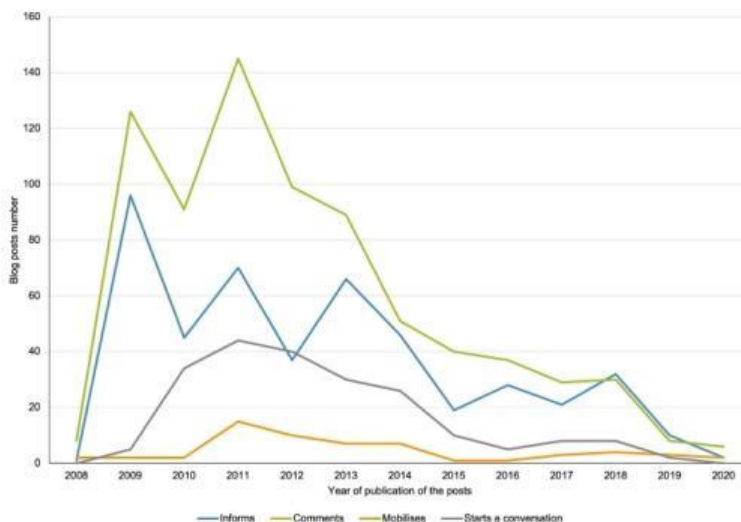
FIGURE 1   Main use of the blogs over a twelve year time frame

2009 or the presidential elections in 2013 and in 2018, were expected to trigger a strong reaction from the political bloggers, (which they did in a certain way (see Figure 1)), 2011 was the peak of activity for all four blogs, with 214 posts that year between all four. The 2011 posts were mostly related to the peace-building process in Madagascar and the resolution of the political conflict that had resulted in the coup. In that year, the posts revolved around the stakeholders of the coup, specifically the regime led by coup leader Andry Rajoelina, the ousted president Marc Ravalomanana, the appointed representation from the international community in charge of the political reconciliation, and the traditional and religious national authorities.

The scheme of the activity on each blog might also be related to the purpose of each blog. Madagoravox's author states that he started his blog after he was "shocked by the events of 2009 [coup d'état]" and that he wanted to "share his shots and strokes, to deliver his humble analysis, compile citizens' opinions that touched him and some dossier that he considered relevant ... in hoping to shed light on the [political] events in Madagascar ..." (Rakotomalala 2010). GTT-International was created after "a collective was born spontaneously in Europe after the coup d'état in March 2009. We were outraged by the way in which a group managed, in a few months, to seize all the powers in our country, thanks to violence and with the obvious political and financial support of foreign powers" (GTT-International 2009). The descriptions of the blogs by their

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authors explain that the blogs' lifetimes are intimately related to the political events in Madagascar and that the coup d'état in 2009 was one of catalysts for their activity.

As is shown in Figure 1, through twelve years of posting, the blogs were very active from 2009 to 2014 in the form of commenting, linking information, starting conversations and mobilising for action. This period corresponds to the period between the coup d'état in 2009 and the presidential elections in 2013. In fact, even though the distribution of the four categories is clearly unequal, giving space to more 'passive' commenting rather than 'active' political mobilisation, all four blogs follow the same trajectory of being active until 2014 and then experiencing a plummet in activity afterwards.

4   The Political Blogs: Tribunes of Opposition against a Coup d'État

In order to detect the main topics of the blog posts, a double-phased thematic content analysis was carried out. First, main and secondary topics of 60 blog posts (composed of 15 blog posts from each of the four studied blogs) were scrutinised. Second, these main topics were double-checked and enriched by reading another set of 60 blog posts. This procedure involved 12% of the total number of blog posts studied, and allowed us to identify and investigate the following prominent topics:

(1)   Presidents and national leadership [abbreviated as PRM]: current and former presidents, their national leadership models, their roadmaps and development policies, etc.

(2)   Madagascar and its International Relations [INT]: Madagascar's bilateral and multilateral relations.

(3)   Religious, traditional and military authorities' involvement in politics [REL]: the interconnection of religious authorities, traditional authorities and military authorities with the general politics of the country.

(4)   Coups, political crisis, and political transitions [COUP]: the development of the coup d'état, the post-coup political crisis, the post-coup political transition, the post-coup government, the causes and consequences of the coup, the political or civilian actors involved in the coup, the peace-building process after the coup, etc.

(5)   Presidential and parliamentary elections and referendums [ELE]: the electoral board, the contested electoral results, anomalies during the elections, electoral observation, candidature during the elections.

(6)   Governments and national policies [GOV]: development and general policies, structure of the government, members of the government, etc.

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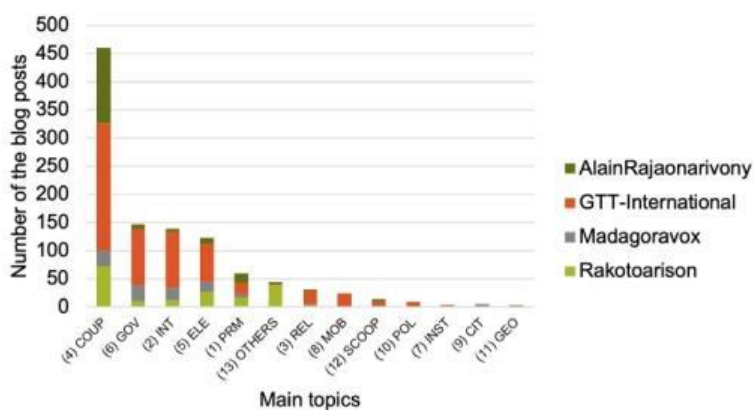
FIGURE 2   Main and sub-topics of the blogs

(7)   Other political institutions and organisations [INST]
(8)   Unconventional political actions and mobilisations [MOB]: sit-ins, street demonstrations, political gatherings, online petitions and those political actions and mobilisations other than elections taking place in Madagascar
(9)   Citizens and the political sphere [CIT]: all those topics related to the interconnection of Malagasy citizens and the political sphere of Madagascar such as political awareness and political engagement.
(10) Political parties and opposition [POL]: all those topics related to the political parties in Madagascar, such as their structure and restructuring and their involvement in elections or unconventional political actions and mobilisations.
(11) Geopolitics that impact Madagascar [GEO]
(12) Political scoops and 'unclean' affairs [SCOOP]
(13) Others: all other topics related to the political sphere of Madagascar addressed in the blog posts.

The second step consisted of coding the 1,063 posts according to the main topics discovered in the first step, as shown in the Figure 2. The analysis showed that more than 43% (n = 460) of all the blog posts (n = 1,063) had COUP as their main topic. In fact, more than 70% of AlainRajaonarivony's posts, around 42% of Rakotoarison's, around 39% of GTT-International's, and more than a quarter of Madagoravox's were coded as COUP. Moreover, beyond the extensive coverage, the blogs tackled the COUP topic in detail with key information and on a regular basis. The 460 posts related to the coup d'état addressed the following, among other topics:

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- the political regime during the political transition (n = 100, 21.73%)
- the peace-building process and conflict resolution after the political crisis (n = 96, 20.86%)
- the popular protests, riots, pillage and street demonstrations during the crisis (n = 56, 12.17%)
- political exile and return to the homeland as a result of the coup (n = 53, 11.52%),
- the causes and social and economic consequences of the coup (n = 52, 11.30%),
- foreign states' (possible) involvement in the coup and in the peacebuilding and conflict resolution process (n = 46, 10%),
- those responsible for the carnage on 7 February 2009 (n = 45, 09%),

These numbers show that the blogs discussed the topic of the political regime put in place after the coup d'état: the 'Haute Autorité de la Transition' [HAT] (literally, High Authority of the Transition). The blogs extensively covered the HAT regime's structure, political scandals, national policy proposals, political alliances, relationship with its political opponents, and international recognition, among other aspects. Andry Rajoelina – the leader of the HAT and the coup d'état in 2009 – and Marc Ravalomanana – the ousted and exiled president during the HAT – were the key figures in the blogs' coverage and the main political actors during the coup and the political transition. Furthermore, even when the blogs addressed main topics other than COUP, such as GOV or INT, which are the most-addressed topics by the blogs with 26% of the total posts, most blog posts make a reference to the coup d'état.

5   The Political Bloggers of the Malagasy Diaspora: Active Transnational Political Actors in Their Homeland

The content analysis of the blog posts showed other types of political participation apart from political blogging engaged in by the authors of AlainRajaonarivony, GTT-International, and Madagoravox. In the case of Madagoravox, the author, Patrick Rakotomalala, allied with the green party of Madagascar, Hasin'i Madagasikara (literally, The Essence of Madagascar), on 9 May 2013. Rakotomalala led the campaign of the party's leader, Saraha Georget, during the presidential race at the end of 2013. Mr Rakotomalala states in his blog that "shocked by the events of [the] 2009 [putsch led by Andry Rajoelina in Madagascar]", he started his blog in order to propose his analyses, to compile the political opinions of the Malagasy citizens that touched him, and to compile the political dossiers that he considered relevant. Alain Rajaonarivony (the author of the

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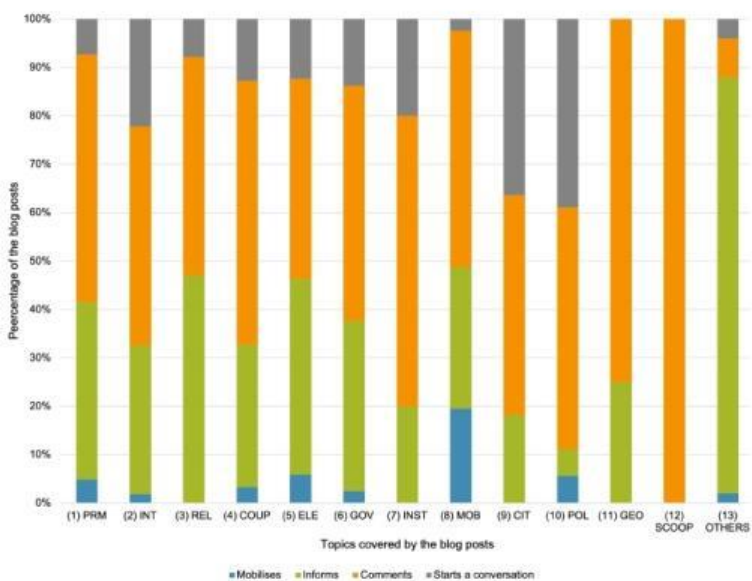
FIGURE 3   How the topics are addressed in the blogs

blog with his name) revealed in a blog post on 2 July 2013 that he had been a close collaborator of the ousted president Marc Ravalomanana and accompanied Ravalomanana on his state visits during his presidency. The authors of GTT-International blog are members of the association GTT-International, which acted as a political lobby against the HAT. Since the creation of the Association and its blog in 2009, they have sent 41 open letters to international or regional institutions (such as the European Parliament, the United Nations, the African Union) or to certain political parties in Madagascar in order to ask for an amendment or embargoes and sanctions towards the HAT by pointing out the undemocratic nature of the government.

6   Blog Posts Addressed with the Same Pattern in the Political Blogs

The analysis revealed that the blogs addressed the topics with a similar distribution: a significant number of comments, followed by linked or quoted content and finally a very few starts a conversation or mobilises (Figure 3). It is striking that the four most-covered topics (INT, COUP, ELE and GOV) have almost the same distribution.

7 Readers Comments on the Blog Posts: A Scarce and Partisan Interaction

In general, the blog posts generated very little user engagement. Three of the four blogs – Rakotoarison, AlainRajaonarivony, and GTT-International – have negligible numbers of comments. While Rakotoarison registers twelve comments on its 179 blog posts, AlainRajaonarivony triggered two reactions and GTT-International only four comments. Madagoravox registers the highest average engagement rate (6.84 interactions per article) from its audience. This rate was calculated from a total of 773 user comments on the whole blog divided by the total number of the blog posts (113). The blog post with the highest engagement rate (n = 122) is titled *"Ivato 21 Janvier ... Témoignage d'une citoyenne ordinaire ..."* (Ivato, January 21. Eyewitness account from an ordinary citizen ...) (published on 23 January 2012, in Madagoravox). This post is the narrative of the personal experience of an 'ordinary citizen' who went to Ivato (the international airport of Antananarivo) to welcome the ousted President, Marc Ravalomanana, who was expected to arrive home from his political exile on that day. Unfortunately, his flight was not given permission to land at the airport and so had to return to South Africa, where Ravalomanana resided in exile. The core of the blog post explains the brutality that the riot police directed at the demonstrators at the scene, as lived by the narrator. Most of the comments blamed the governing political regime, led by Andry Rajoelina, and commander of the riot police. This ensemble shows the position of the blogger, as an opponent of the "putschist political regime" (his words), and his audience mostly shares his position. The same pattern of the blogger pointing out anomalies of the political regime and the position and interaction of his audience is repeated in the most popular posts the blog. This is also the case for the post *Les Chroniques de Ragidro ... Défendre le retour de Ra8 ...* (The Chronicles of Ragidro [the surname of the blogger] ... Defending the Return of Ra8 ... [the ousted and exiled president]) (published 17 June 2011, 52 comments), as well as for the post *Juan de Nova, du gaz dans l'eau entre Madagascar et la France* ... (Juan de Nova, gas in the water between Madagascar and France ...) (published 27 March 2012, 25 comments). In this latter post, the blogger analyses the implications of France engaging in the 2009 political crisis in Madagascar by helping Andry Rajoelina. The GTT-International blog also relies on same the pattern as Madagoravox. An online petition that it launched which garnered a total of 583 signatures was directed to the international community to protest against the political regime of Andry Rajoelina, as is clear from its title *Appel a la communauté internationale. Sauvez Madagascar du totalitarisme absolu.* (Call to the international community. Save Madagascar from absolute totalitarianism) (Launched in 2010).

8 Conclusion: The Blogs as Tribunes and Gateways

Based on empirical data, this is the first scholarly study that provides an overview of the political blogs of the Malagasy diaspora by focusing mainly on three aspects: the topics that the blogs address, the way these topics are addressed by the bloggers, and the profiles of the bloggers.

Regarding the first aspect, we found that the contents of the blogs focus mainly on the coup d'état that took place in Madagascar in 2009. Through their posts, bloggers have extensively explored this political event. First, they predicted the possibility of a major political crisis due to the alteration of the political atmosphere in Madagascar during the year before the coup. Next, they also followed the unfolding of the coup very closely and shared the key and essential elements of events necessary to understanding it on their blogs. Finally, they followed and reported on the political authority that led the coup and governed the country afterwards. Besides the coup, the bloggers dedicated another significant part of their publications to the analysis of issues relating to the successive governments of the country as well as the elections and international relations of Madagascar.

Regarding the second aspect, it has been shown that these topics were addressed by the bloggers through comments, analysis, thoughts, opinions, or standpoints. As seen in the results, political blogs are used as 'soapboxes', which means mostly comments. In the case of the Malagasy diaspora, political blogs are public tribunes of observation of political events where bloggers are mainly focused on commenting on topics related to the Malagasy political sphere.

Finally, regarding the profiles of the bloggers, the analysis identified that, in parallel to their political blogging, the authors of the analysed political blogs are or have been strongly active in the political sphere in Madagascar. They are or have been involved in top political positions, such as advisor to a former President or campaign leader for a candidate during a presidential election. Others are engaged in political lobbies.

The question that remains is: To what extent can the political blogging of the Malagasy diaspora be called political participation? And what could its impacts back home be?

Transnational political blogging one of the sort studied in this paper is comprised within the spectrum of Anderson's (1998) and Schiller's (2005) notion of 'long-distance politics'. The case of the political blogging of the Malagasy diaspora is particularly interesting due to its characteristics, mechanisms, and impacts when compared to the use of political blogs and other digital platforms by other African diasporas in the political spheres of their countries of origin.

On the one hand, the political blogs of the Malagasy diaspora are used as gateways and tribunes for disseminating key political information that would be difficult for 'ordinary' Malagasy citizens to access. From time to time, the information is intended to make a public appeal to a given politician. They also serve as public channels and tools for exerting pressure on the politics of Madagascar through displaying sometimes 'heavy political dossiers' or online petitions addressed to the politicians of the country. The blogs are also addressed to international financial or state partners of Madagascar abroad in order to lobby against Malagasy politicians. In this sense, we can say that despite having no visible or direct involvement with and influence on their national counterparts who remain in the country, these political blogs are used as powerful 'judgement tools' that can fuel or brake foreign financial aid or political cooperation towards the country. Also, few of the blog posts attempt to mobilise the country fellows within the country of settlement or the country of origin from time to time. In other words, the political bloggers of the Malagasy diaspora act as whistleblowers or watchdogs towards the political sphere of their country of origin, and act at particular times, such as the putsch in 2009, as voices of the opposition against the undemocratic political regime in power. We understand that this form of passive intellectual key information-driven long-distance political participation (Schiller 2005) is intimately related to the historical, political and social contexts of Madagascar. Yet, we saw that political blogging is secondary and complementary to the direct involvement of the political bloggers in the political sphere of Madagascar. We understand that this fact is mainly fostered by the Malagasy diaspora's strong political interest in the politics of their country of origin. In fact, some scholars have already asserted that political interest is a predictor of participation in following or launching political blogs (Bimber et al. 2015; Greuling and Kilian 2014; Daekyung and Johnson 2012).

On the other hand, the features of the political blogging of the Malagasy diaspora are quite different from the transnational political participation of other African diasporas in terms of their form and purpose. In postwar societies such as Eritrea, Burundi, or Rwanda, another form of political participation is enabled by the diaspora so that it can take part in the nation-building process (Jones 2016; Turner and Kleist, 2013; Kleist 2008; Turner, 2006, 2008; Bernal 2005). In other African societies ruled by authoritarian regimes – as is the case of Zimbabwe, Morocco, Tunisia, or Egypt – the transnational political participation of the diaspora is more likely to be related to the democratisation process (Karekwaivanane, 2019; Aboussi 2018; Dalmasso 2018; Müller-Funk 2016; Leijendekker and Mutsvairo 2014; Mutsvairo 2013; Kuhlmann 2012).

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This overview of the political participation of the African diasporic communities in their countries of origin sheds light on the fact that the historical, political, and social contexts of a given country pave the way to one or another way of political participation. Scholars agree on the tangible impacts of transnational political participation of the diaspora on the country of origin. This fact is more valid than ever in the current era in which an increasing role is given to (or expected from) diasporic communities, and particularly the African diaspora, despite the intense and ongoing scholarly debate on the role of digital technologies in those political transnational participations. Regarding this topic, we argue that digital technologies are used to interact with and to mobilise people in the same ways people did the same thing before these technologies existed. In this sense, political blogging might be compared to the discussions of politically engaged people in pubs or at home, and the impacts of such discussions should not be minimalised. Only the use of digital native platforms and means of political participation such as 'hacktivism' break from the pre-existing political participation forms.

This study enables many directions for future studies on the digital participation of the Malagasy diaspora in their country of origin. Future studies could be undertaken on more interactive, accessible, and popular platforms such as Facebook or Twitter. Being the most used social media platform in Madagascar, studies of Facebook in particular would allow for deeper and more comprehensive analysis of political interactions. Although these platforms have a more restrictive privacy policy that limits such analysis, they permit a broad range of analyses of social interaction.

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6.3.   Paper 3

This second paper analyses the political blogs of the Malagasy diaspora. Entitled "The Facebook groups and pages of the Malagasy migrants in France: a peer-to-peers and spontaneous solidarity hubs", the paper is resumed as the following:

"How do social platforms as Facebook help migrants communities to cope with the adversities of the migration journey? This is the question that paved our way to this study and to explore the online and offline experiences of the Malagasy migrants in France in migration journey. I rely on complementary mixed methods including an online survey (2021, n=340) and participant observation of in-group and public interactions of 28 Facebook groups and pages of this community for this study. I learnt from our observation that the question of peer-to-peers solidarity, as collective response to the adversities of migration, is present and very active within the Malagasy community in France. The exchanges are intense and continuous on questions like administrative FAQs or parcels sending or receiving between France and Madagascar. Also, solidarity chains are temporary activated from time-to-time to respond to a specific need and particularly of collectively challenging times like the Covid-19 pandemic. However, I noticed that the Malagasy in France exchange less on other vital issues such as finding work on their groups and pages."

This paper has been published in the peer-reviewed journal *Social Sciences*, with the ISSN 2076-0760, on the 2021. "Social Sciences is an international, open access journal with rapid peer-review, which publishes works from a wide range of fields, including anthropology, criminology, economics, education, geography, history, law, linguistics, political science, psychology, social policy, social work, sociology and so on." as presented in its website (https://www.mdpi.com/journal/socsci). *Social Sciences* is indexed in Web of Science, Scopus, EBSCO, Academic OneFile (Gale), China Academic Journals

(CNKI), DOAJ, EconBiz, J-Gate, ProQuest, PSYNDEX, RePEc, EconPapers, IDEAS.

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Article

The Facebook Groups and Pages of Malagasy Migrants in France: Hubs of Peer-to-Peer and Spontaneous Solidarity

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Abstract: How do social platforms such as Facebook help migrant communities cope with the adversities faced during the migration journey? This is the question that drove this study, which explores the on- and offline experiences of Malagasy migrants in France during their migration journeys. We use complementary mixed methods, including an online survey (2021, n = 340) and participant observation of in-group and public interactions on 28 Facebook groups and pages of this community. We found that peer-to-peer solidarity as a collective response to the adversities faced during migration is present and very active within the Malagasy community in France. The exchanges among the members of this community concerning matters such as administrative issues and the transport of parcels between France and Madagascar are intense and continuous. Beyond this, solidarity chains are temporarily activated in response to specific needs, and particularly in collectively challenging times such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Our research also found that in their groups and pages, the Malagasy in France engage less frequently in other vital issues, such as finding work.

Keywords: Malagasy diaspora; e-diaspora; transnational solidarity; Facebook; imagined community

1. Introduction

The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic has led us to revisit the issues of human (im)mobility and online togetherness, and the question of communities. It has also reminded us of the vital role played by digital platforms such as Facebook in nurturing and maintaining communities and in collectively dealing with shared adversity. This paper considers one of the migrant communities hit hard by the pandemic: Malagasy migrants in France. Most Malagasy migrants found themselves trapped by the separation from their loved ones, and sometimes by the loss of family members, due to the closed borders of their country of origin for more than a year and a half. At the same time, they were affected by the restrictive measures taken against the COVID-19 pandemic within their host country. As a consequence, their sense of belonging to a community had never been challenged to such a degree. In this paper, we examine the self-organised structures the Malagasy migrants in France used to face this challenge.

1.1. Imagined (Migrant) Communities, COVID-19, and Facebook

The physical distancing and social isolation measures taken around most of the world to fight against the COVID-19 outbreak brought together communities of all kinds online (Wiederhold 2020). For obvious reasons, socially determined circles such as families, life-long friends, and colleagues are likely to have set meeting routines (Lebow 2020), for these circles are composed of people who know each other and who maintain a determined type of relationship. For less obvious reasons, people coming from different geographical locations, ages, genders, and other variables found themselves gathering on online platforms during the successive lockdowns. In these spaces they created online and 'imagined communities' whose members had no previously determined relationship. They rarely

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gathered for collective entertainment, worship, debates, or conferences, to name but a few motives. In contrast to the first kind of circles, these 'imagined communities' were formed by people sharing the same values, aspirations, tastes, ambitions, political standpoints, cultures, countries, etc. (Kriz 2020; Parish 2020; King et al. 2020; Amin et al. 2020). For these 'imagined communities', having something in common appears to be the key factor in the creation and maintenance of such circles. Although 'imagined communities' have always existed—before online platforms they were created in bars, children's playspaces, gaming rooms, etc.—today's 'imagined communities' are different because of how they deal with the issues of connectivity and ubiquity.

'Connectivity' drives human relationships, circles, and communities. The aforementioned bars, children's playspaces, gaming rooms, etc., paved the way for other kinds of meeting spaces such as online forums, videoconferencing platforms, as well as instant and group messaging platforms. Humans are embracing the 'era of connectivity' as well as the era of online social networking platforms (Diminescu 2008). People with shared common factors and desire to belong to a community can instantly find one, as being part of a community has never been so easy, as long as they remain connected through digital technologies.

'Ubiquity' best describes the current post-mobility era (Twigt 2018; Wilson et al. 2012). Through continuous and intense connectivity, humans are physically in one place yet present everywhere. Geographical boundaries have never been blurrier when it comes to (imagined) community building. Physical distance is increasingly being challenged by video conferences, voice calls, group chats, online forums, and other digital meeting points and spaces enabled by digital technologies. Social networks bring together people who feel that they belong to a community.

'Imagined communities' are composed of a mixture of people who share a common cultural identity and aspirations enabled through connection as well as ubiquity (Anderson 1983; Georgiou 2019; Tsagarousianou 2004). However, what makes these connected or online imagined communities different from physical and legally constituted communities is that membership in their communities goes beyond traditional access or duties.

(Online) migrant communities such as those of Malagasy migrants in France—the subjects of this paper—fit perfectly into this understanding of imagined communities. Where the communities that form around a celebrity gather around the same icon or idol, migrant communities unite around a shared culture or country. The most interesting dynamic in migrant communities is the interconnection of their members despite their obvious heterogeneity, which appears to be enabled by a shared country of origin. Amongst migrant communities, there is (i) constant connectivity both within their host countries and with their country of origin, and (ii) ubiquity, since they are physically in their host countries and at the same time very present in their countries of origin (Diminescu 2008, 2012). Some scholarly studies have shown that migrant communities have organised themselves online and offline for different purposes. Most of them have shown that the gathering of migrant communities goes beyond simple 'togetherness' and can lead to a wider spectrum of common actions (Ajder 2020; Marino 2015; Kumar 2012; Mesbah and Cooper 2019; Nancheva 2021; Aboussi 2020). In comparison to other imagined communities, the community building of migrant communities is even more complex since it is intimately intertwined with the feeling of national belonging, which is the result of a mixture of national pride and belief in a shared culture and origin (Christensen 2012; Christiansen 2004; Ellison 2013; Elling et al. 2014).

This paper elucidates the experience of a very understudied community, Malagasy migrants in France, in terms of the theoretical concept of 'imagined communities'. It seeks to explore whether this community, whose members are heterogeneous, relies on self-organised structures on social networking platforms. Additionally, it seeks to explore the self-organised communitarian actions within the community as they cope with common adversities faced during their migration journeys, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.2. An Overview of Malagasy Migrant Communities in France

With approximately 150,000 individuals, France is the first destination of Malagasy migrants. Nine of every ten Malagasy migrants live in Europe and 85% of them are residents of France, including both metropolitan and overseas territories. This makes Malagasy migrants the largest sub-Saharan migrant community in France, after migrants from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia (Kotlok 2016; Razafindrakoto et al. 2017).

The life of Malagasy migrants in France features a wide range of adversities that encompass every stage of their migration journey. These adversities begin in their homeland, where transnational migration appears to be mainly motivated by social adversities such as chronic economic poverty and cyclical political turmoil. The increase in the number of Malagasy migrants in France from 76,000 in 2000 to 148,000 in 2005 (Razafindrakoto et al. 2017, p. 10), for example, attests that their migration is intimately related to the political turmoil of 2002. After what is often a traumatic escape from their country of origin, most Malagasy migrants in France face the challenge of settling into a new society. Although 'culture shock' and integration are common phenomena faced by almost all immigrants, the immense structural economic differences between their country of origin and their country of settlement is another significant challenge faced by the Malagasy in France.

Yet, existing studies on Malagasy migrants in France show that the specific adversities they face go well beyond these cultural and economic gaps, for they must also contend with the phenomenon of 'social downgrading'. This term refers to the downward shift of migrants' social status in the host country. As 'potential elites' in Madagascar—highly educated people from the Malagasy bourgeoisie (Claverie 2011; Claverie and Combeau-Mari 2011; Crenn 1994; Kotlok 2016; Razafindrakoto et al. 2017)—they see the boundaries of their social status become blurrier as they are downgraded to 'ordinary people' once settled in France. This is not only a social but also psychological challenge for them.

As for community building, Malagasy migrants in France rely on offline and powerful self-structured associations that gather the members of the communities for mostly festive or religious motives (Claverie 2011; Crenn 1994; Rabeherifara 2009). Studies find the Malagasy in France to be very active within associations related to Malagasy churches settled in France. They also have an annual appointment, the *Rencontre National Sportif* (RNS), which includes sports contests organised by and for Malagasy migrant communities (Claverie 2011). These social structures were created to help the Malagasy in France 'feel the Malagasy rhythm while being in France', as a slogan of an annual venue of RNS puts it.

Recent studies have shown that Malagasy migrants in France use online platforms as tools for community building and for displaying their shared and common identity (Andrianimanana and Roca-Cuberes 2019; Rakotoary 2019). In line with these studies, this paper focuses on the online social dynamics of these Malagasy migrants, who have mostly been studied through analyses of their offline activities in the existing literature.

2. Research Design

To answer the research questions, this paper relies on complementary mixed methods that include Netnography (applied to Facebook) and an online survey. Netnography was used to search for the online self-organised structures of Malagasy migrants and, when they existed, to explore the self-organised actions undertaken as a community within them to cope with the adversities faced during their migration experience. The online survey was designed to complement the Netnography and was designed to explore the personal intentions of Malagasy migrants for engaging in the construction of communities both online and offline.

The Netnography analysis (Kozinets 2002; Bowler 2010) was conducted on twenty-eight groups (both private and public) and pages from March 2020 to July 2021. It relied on the following four interdependent and complementary steps.

Step 1: Identification of groups and pages on Facebook. Apart from those groups and pages known by the authors before this research, the groups and pages on Facebook were searched for manually using keywords such as "*Malagasy eto Frantsa*", "*Gasy eto*

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Frantsa" or *"Malgaches en France"* (meaning "Malagasy in France" in the Malagasy and French languages). In total, forty-two groups and pages were found in this first step. All forty-two groups, whether private or public, were selected for initial consideration. While public groups (four out of the total) were easily accessible, access to private groups was moderated by their administrators and we answered some questions (most of the time in Malagasy) and/or gave them some personal data before being accepted (or not) into the groups. Our requests for access to four groups were denied.

Step 2: Selection of the groups to be analysed. In order to analyse spontaneous, unofficial, and day-to-day conversations between ordinary Malagasy citizens, conversations were retained from the forty-two groups found in the previous step, i.e., large, active groups and pages run and/or managed by and for ordinary Malagasy citizens in France with more than one hundred followers or members. The following were excluded: groups and pages run and/or managed by and for Malagasy migrants in France that represent or are related to Madagascar's foreign representations abroad (such as its embassy or consulates), those run and/or managed by non-Malagasy citizens, and those that denied our membership requests. In total, twenty-eight of the forty-two groups and pages identified in Step 1 were retained for the analysis. The geographical location of the administrators of the groups and pages, i.e., France, were publicly visible on Facebook as part of its commitment to transparency. The citizenship of the administrators was easily detected by their (nick)name(s) and, on some occasions, by the questions asked in applications for membership to the groups or by the rules set within the group—usually in Malagasy. Additionally, the citizenship of the administrators was easily detectable since they moderated conversations in almost all the groups by providing some comments in Malagasy.

Step 3: Detection and selection of the conversations and interactions to be analysed. Posts and conversations that took place between March 2020 and July 2021 were retained. This timeframe was selected in order to comprise conversations and interactions that took place throughout the core of the COVID-19 pandemic. Conversations and interactions occurring in uncertain and socially (as well as individually) challenging times such as the COVID-19 pandemic were deemed particularly relevant to shedding light on our research questions dealing with social and individual online solidarity mechanisms put in place by Malagasy migrants. Therefore, conversations were analysed weekly and directly noted.

Step 4: Analysis of the conversations and interactions. Above all, for ethical and privacy reasons, conversations and interactions were not downloaded from the platform, nor was the personal information of the members who interacted in the conversations downloaded. The conversations were analysed weekly and the results were directly made note of, with a focus on the frequency, intensity, topics, and engagement rates (number of reactions, shares, and comments) of the interactions.

We chose Facebook for our analysis as it is by far the most used social networking platform in the world, with more than 2.7 billion users in 2020—the equivalent of more than 65% of total active social network users (DataReportal 2020, p. 93). In this sense, for Malagasy migrants in France, we understand Facebook to be "inevitably mainstream and more demographically representative" (Kozinets 2010, p. 10). We also chose Facebook for methodological reasons, since Facebook is an online space for communities, where the observation of social dynamics is "faster, simpler, cheaper, naturalistic, and unobtrusive" (Kozinets 2002, p. 1) compared to offline observations. Finally, this choice was motivated by the proven relevance of this platform, since other empirical studies of other diaspora communities in the same line have already been successfully carried out on Facebook (Nancheva 2021; Mesbah and Cooper 2019).

The online survey was conducted from 23 to 28 March 2021 with the Google Forms platform, which is commonly used for online surveys due to its ease of use. The online survey was relayed to members through the Facebook groups of Malagasy migrants by the authors before the Netnography was conducted in order to reach more informants (n = 340). Apart from basic demographic variables (such as age, gender, region and length of residence in France, level of education, and professional status), the questionnaire also collected

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information on variables relating to the affiliation of the informants to Facebook group(s) and page(s) created and/or managed by and for Malagasy migrants. The online survey also included questions on the affiliation of the informants with any offline organisation or groups created and/or managed by and for Malagasy migrants in France.

3. Results

3.1. Active and Popular Self-Created Facebook Groups and Pages

Facebook groups and pages are highly popular among Malagasy migrants in France. As mentioned in the previous section, there are at least forty-two groups and pages whose numbers of members and followers range from 110 to 151,000 in total. The Facebook groups and pages of Malagasy migrants in France are used as gathering spaces for various motives. Some were created to bring together Malagasy migrants from a given geographic area for no specific reason. This is the case for the groups *Malagasy à Paris* ("Malagasy in Paris", 2721 members, created in 2016), *Gasy de Toulouse* ("Malagasy in Toulouse", 2400 members, created in 2012), *Malagasy à La Réunion* ("Malagasy in La Reunion Island", 2722 members, created in 2016), *Groupe de Diaspora—Malagasy de Poitiers* ("Group of the Malagasy diaspora in Poitiers", 274 members, created in 2020), and the most popular Malagasy page of the Malagasy in France named *Malagasy en France* ("Malagasy in France", 151,236 followers, created in 2013).

Other groups and pages were created for mutual aid and solidarity between the members of the Malagasy migrant communities. This is the case for groups such as *Malagasy Mifanampy eto Frantsa* ("Malagasy Helping Each Other in France", 1623 members, created in 2018) and *Gasy Miray hina sy mifanoro hevitra eto Frantsa sy Europe* ("United Malagasy in France and Europe", 2809 members, created in 2018). These groups are used as community spaces for Malagasy migrants in France who need or offer a wide range of help. For example, *Réseau malgache d'entraide pour nourrir les démunis durant le confinement* ("Madagascan mutual aid network to feed the needy during lockdown", 4100 members) was created spontaneously in 2020 at the start of the Coronavirus pandemic in response to a spontaneous and temporary need. Its sole objective is to bring together Malagasy migrants to help the poorest families in Madagascar in specific circumstances. In the same line of solidarity, the *Gasy Misera Nationalité eto France (Conseils et Rex Nationalité Française)* group ("Malagasy group of information and guidelines on French citizenship", 6200 members, created in 2018) was created specifically to provide mutual assistance with administrative procedures in France, including applications for French citizenship.

Pages such as *Discothèque malgache Paris France* ("Malagasy discos in Paris, France", 7531 members, created in 2011) and *Fêtes malgaches de Toulouse* ("Malagasy parties in Toulouse", 1923 members, created in 2012) were created for leisure and in particular festive events. Groups such as *Rencontres Malgaches en France et Europe* ("Malagasy dating in France and Europe", 789 members, created in 2016) or *Gay malgache en France* ("Malagasy gays in France", 289 members, created in 2013) are used as online dating spaces for Malagasy migrants.

Some were created for commercial exchange of goods and services between Malagasy migrants in France. Groups such as *Gasy Serasera eto Frantsa—GSF Ofisialy* ("Official Malagasy Communication group in France", 14,100 members, created in 2013), *Gasy Sera eto Lyon* ("Malagasy Communication group in Lyon", 1000 members, created in 2016), *Vide Dressing des Mamans Gasy de France* ("Clothes-swap group of Malagasy mummies in France", 646 members, created in 2018) and *Le boncoin Gasy du Sud de France* ("Malagasy Le boncoin in Southern France, 2700 members, created in 2018) are examples of such groups. The public description of the latter sums up the motives of this category of groups: "We created this group to bring together the Malagasy community in the South [of France] and to allow everyone to have their little business of Malagasy products or others here in France".

We also found Malagasy church groups such as *FPMA Evry Fitiavana* ("FMPA Evry Love", 110 members, created in 2014). According to the public description of the group, it is

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intended "to communicate, to share messages, information … and everything concerning the life of the church [FMPA of Evry]". The same description mentions that this group "respects the rules and values of the FPMA". The acronym "FPMA" seemed curious to us because of its meaning: *Fiangonana Protestanta Malagasy aty Andafy* ("Malagasy Protestant Church in France"). The FPMA group is a subsidiary of the national structure of the FJKM church (*Fiangonan'i Jesoa Kristy eto Madagasikara*) ("Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar"), which is a Protestant reformed church and one of the most-frequented churches in Madagascar.

Finally, other groups were created for social claims directed at Madagascar's institutions. For example, the group *'Za koa hifidy*—later renamed *'Za koa hanorina* ("I want to build too", 14,100 members, created in 2018 on the eve of the Malagasy presidential elections of the same year)—called for the organisation of a symbolic consultation of the voting intentions of Malagasy migrants in France. The purpose of the group *Nous sommes aussi des malgaches*—*donnez-nous le droit de voter* ("We are also Malagasy—give us the right to vote!", 1725 members, created in 2013) is also in line with the previous group.

This brief overview of groups and pages shows the existence of structures and organisations built by and for Malagasy migrants in France on Facebook. We discovered that while these groups and pages are self-constructed, they are also self-regulated and self-moderated by ordinary Malagasy citizens. The constitution of these groups and pages is similar to that of communities governed by shared cultural codes on the one hand and by civility and civic morals on the other. The use of Malagasy proverbs such as *"tsy misy manana ny ampy fa sambatra izay mifanampy"* ("No one is self-sufficient, blessed are those who help each other") as the governing law for some groups attests to the importance of the cultural component in the construction of these groups, as is the case of the GSF group in Figure 1. Despite the fact that these groups and pages have been structured around very specific purposes, in general, they are made to bring Malagasy migrants together in France and to facilitate their migratory experience. The names and purposes of the groups show the main adversities faced by the Malagasy migrants in France in a comprehensive way. These adversities can be linked to administrative difficulties within their host country, the limitation of their rights vis-à-vis their countries of origin, not to mention day-to-day material difficulties, etc. The following section addresses in detail the in-group interactions addressing these adversities and the personal and collective solidarity actions undertaken by the Malagasy migrants to deal with them.

Gasy Serasera eto Frantsa (GSF Ofisialy)

Groupe Privé · 14,2 K membres

Membre ▾   + Inviter

Figure 1. Capture of the largest Facebook group of the Malagasy in France: Gasy Serasera eto Frantsa (GSF)—14,200 members.

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3.2. Facebook Groups and Pages: Hubs for Peer-to-Peer Solidarities

The posts within each group vary because they do not all have the same purpose. Within the largest groups, the most popular and frequent posts are related to offers and requests for parcel shipping on flights between France and Madagascar. Within groups, these posts are displayed first by the Facebook algorithm because of their almost daily frequency and their popularity in terms of engagement rates. Usually written in a contracted Malagasy language, comments on these posts feature expressions of courtesy such as *"azafady"* (please) or *"tompoko"* (Madam/Sir), which encourage cordial exchanges. The interested users are generally invited by the post's author to continue the exchanges through private messages for more details and final formalities.

For example, in July 2020, a young man in his thirties offered his services to a group: "Bonjour groupe. Poids Tanà—Paris 23 kg × 2 dispo le 17 juillet. 12€ le kg, 10€ pour les enveloppes. Pas de cigarettes, d'alcool ou d'objets sujets à des complications aux douanes. À rendre à xxx et à récupérer à xxx. Merci." ("Hello group. Tanà-Paris 23 kg × 2 available on July 17th. €12 per kg, €10 for envelopes. No cigarettes, alcohol, or items subject to customs complications. Pick up in xxx [a square in Antananarivo] and delivery in xxx [a city in France]. Thank you") (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Capture of an offer of freight from the GSF group.

The brevity of the information provided by the author and the popularity of the post show the familiarity of the members of the group with this type of post. The thirty remarkably courteous interactions on this post appeared for three days until the offered 'weight' was exhausted. These interactions were short, and the author of the post invited each commentator and potential 'buyer' to private message to close each conversation. The post was closed by its author about ten days before his departure.

Posts related to administration and bureaucracy are also popular within the groups we observed. While they appear as sporadic but frequent posts in generalist groups, there are also entire groups dedicated to resolving such issues. Discussions on visa and residence permit applications, passport renewal procedures, and procedures for applying for French naturalisation are the most recurring topics. A Malagasy father, residing in France and traveling to Madagascar, wrote in one group: *"Bonjour GSF. De passage à Madagascar et titre de séjour égaré, j'ai demandé un visa de retour. Quelqu'un serait-il passé par là ? Combien de temps cela leur prenait-il ?"* ("Hello GSF [the name of the group]. While in Madagascar, I lost my residence permit, I applied for a return visa [in the French Embassy in Madagascar]. Has anyone gone through this? How long did it take them?") (July 2020). Most of the interactions with this post were emotional support and encouragement (for example, *"Good luck, we've been there!"*) from other members of the group. Some other members of the group offered advice on how to avoid such incidents and to secure French documents when travelling to Madagascar. A number of other comments based on personal experiences were offered as answers to the post. One participant in the discussion posted a link to the official website of the French government, mentioning the procedures to be undertaken in the specific case of loss of a French residence permit while abroad.

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The same interaction scenario was quite frequent within the group dedicated to applications for French citizenship. Offers of support and assistance based on personal experience and/or knowledge of the members of the group are very commonly repeated within this group in response to others' personal cases and problems related to these applications. These range from a simple question on the procedures for the application for naturalisation to others requiring careful attention to detail, such as the inscription of a newborn in the birth registry by a new French husband and the request for naturalisation of the child. Other cases had to do with the recognition of the French citizenship of deceased grandparents so that their grandchildren could obtain French citizenship, or the recognition of a child born out of wedlock by his French father. These peer-to-peer interactions on bureaucratic questions, which featured government websites and are displayed in the description of the group, helped us to understand the nature and importance of such informal support groups.

Professional service offers and demands are also among the most recurrent posts. Some posts sought recommendations for drivers, nannies, dentists, painters, masons, lawyers, etc., within the groups. Nonetheless, what makes the interactions on professional exchanges curious is, apart from the fact that there is no dedicated group to this issue, the existing posts on this topic are frequent and at the same time unpopular (receiving barely one or two reactions) in the generalist groups where they are posted. Moreover, the authors of the posts are sometimes cautious. It is common to find service requests that mention *"mpiasa tsy tara lava na 3 andro vao vita"* ("workers who will not arrive late and take 3 days to complete the job"). The lack of visibility of France-based Malagasy entrepreneurs and the little interaction with these posts were striking and led us to speculate that: (i) the exchanges on this matter go directly to private messages, or (ii) due to the COVID-19 pandemic, outdoor works were very much reduced, or (iii) the Malagasy migrants make little exchanges on professional services, or (iv) there are other communication channels where discussions on professional service exchanges take place.

The sudden COVID-19 pandemic sparked practical and emotional support chains among the Malagasy within the studied groups. Help-seeking posts abounded and attracted many reactions in a remarkably short period. For instance, faced with the sudden death of their respective mothers in Madagascar, two women in their thirties and forties posted in two different groups and each received approximately 120 comments in less than twenty-four hours in September 2020. Although the posts focused on bureaucratic matters such as *"Quelles sont les démarches pour l'obtention de l'autorisation?"* ("What are the procedures for obtaining an authorisation [to enter Madagascan territory]?") or *"Où pouvons-nous effectuer les tests PCR pour rentrer à Madagascar"* ("Where can we get PCR tests to return to Madagascar?"), the comments were mainly expressions of condolences written in Malagasy. A few top-rated comments publicly offered advice on what to do based on their personal experiences or invited the author to private communications for the same purposes.

Spontaneous solidarity initiatives in response to the COVID-19 pandemic were organised by members of the Malagasy community in France and were shared within different groups. In March 2020, the image of *"Bebe Antsika"* ("our grandmother")—a 65-year-old Madagascar-based woman who kept her magazine kiosk open during the imposed lockdown for economic reasons—went viral among the groups of the Malagasy migrants in France. An online crowdfunding was organised by a group of Malagasy in France and reached 1292 euros in a few days. This story was so popular that a Facebook page dedicated to the woman was created which showed how she was using the fund in Madagascar. In the same line, a post of a lady asking for help in November 2020 quickly became very popular, with 400 reactions and 150 comments in a single day. In the post, the author narrated her encounter with a Malagasy student sleeping on the streets of Paris after losing his job. Maintaining the student's anonymity, the post's author asked for material support that she could forward to the student. Although the post was very popular, the opinions of the commentators were divided on the question. While some appealed for *"samy malagasy"*

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("between Malagasy") generosity, others warned donors about donations to anonymous people and shared their negative experiences with this type of support.

This sort of spontaneous chain of solidarity was also observed within groups around the Christmas season. The manager of the GSF group organised annual public *"Noël Solidaire"* prize pools for Malagasy students in France whose families were in Madagascar. The organisation of this type of crowdfunding within the group is quite interesting. They are presented within the groups as professional advertisements with well-crafted infographics. Even though the posts generated little visible interactivity (with barely nine reactions and no comments), they were very much effective. The group's administrators launched the pool in the group and at the same time opened online registration for needy students who wished to be recipients of the funds; once the total amount was collected (in 2020, 4172 euros), it was equitably distributed to the previously registered students. In parallel, other group members invited the students to spend Christmas day with their families, indicating the number of students they could accommodate.

The Malagasy in France use their groups and pages as spaces for collectively sharing and celebrating Malagasy success stories worldwide. The popularity of several series of posts on Margherita Davico ("Marghe"), a young singer of French-Malagasy origin who won the song contest "The Voice" in France in 2020 attests this. Some days before the final contest, a post about Marghe in the *'Za Koa Hanorina group* proclaimed *"Alefa Madagascar. Marghe est en finale"* ("Go Madagascar! Marghe is in the final [of the The Voice competition]") in the group from a public page. A few days later, photos of Marghe's victory were posted in the group with two very popular posts (863 reactions and 114 comments) and with captions featuring Madagascar flag emojis as well as words such as "national pride". Beyond the feeling of national pride manifested in the reactions and in the comments, practical and material solidarity was shown through the massive participation of Malagasy people in France during the public vote for the competition (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Capture of a post on 'Marghe' in the 'Za Koa Hanorina' Group.

In the same line, collective support among Malagasy people in France for Malagasy talents from all sectors and levels is widespread among the groups and pages. This is the case for posts about Aina Ramadison, Ambassador of Madagascar within the International Organisation of Gastronomy and competitor in the "Best Chefs Africa" awards, and the same was true for Michael Arivony, a baritone participant in the "BBC Cardiff Singer of the World" awards and Nantenaina Mazava, a Madagascar-rooted basketball player playing with a basketball team in Florida (USA).

This flag-motivated solidarity shared by the members of the groups contrasts with a manifest and collective dissatisfaction vis-à-vis Malagasy institutions. The Malagasy embassy in Paris, as the supreme representation of Malagasy institutions in the metropolitan French territory, was regularly questioned by members of Malagasy groups in France and aroused intense interactions. Within the groups observed, this embassy was mostly negatively judged for the quality of its consular services (its institutional activities) as well as for its relationship with the Malagasy in France (its humanitarian activities). These judgments were made through posts describing the experiences of some members of the groups and pages as users of these institutions. In March 2020, for example, a woman posted a request in the GSF group: *"Mba saika hangataka feedback ho an'ny olona nanao passport taty amin'ny Ambassade, mety firy volana vo vita kay azafady?"* ("I would like feedback from someone who has applied for a passport renewal with the Madagascan Embassy in Paris, how many months does it take them, please?"). The responses were divided between those who proposed the best procedures based on their personal experiences, those who relativised the effectiveness of the embassy, and those who ironically laughed at it: *"Omeo anay anio ny "deadline fanaovana passport" sahaza ho anay."* ("Give us this day the duration of passport renewal") or even *"Ataovy mafimafy ny fivavahana."* ("Strengthen your prayers"). Another appeal was also particularly interesting. In line with the group's rule of avoiding any references to politics, a post in the group in September 2020 made by one of the managers of the GSF group asked the embassy about its duties of solidarity towards its citizens and resulted in numerous reactions (203 reactions and 167 comments in one day), with some very negative comments directed at the embassy. This post shows the magnitude of the distance between the Malagasy people in France and Malagasy institutions, such as the Malagasy embassy in Paris, as well as the weight of peer-to-peer and non-institutional solidarity among the Malagasy in France.

To conclude this section, the thematic analysis of the interactions of Malagasy migrants within their groups and Facebook pages describes the types of adversities they face and reveals the nature of the solidarity they put in place to deal with such adversities. On the one hand, there is sustained solidarity in responding to frequent and continuous needs, such as a common search for a solution to administrative issues, despite their recurrence within the groups and pages. On the other hand, solidarity in responding to sporadic necessity with a greater emotional component, such as the case of *Bebe Antsika* or Marghe in The Voice contest, elicits a lively interaction from the members of the group(s). In other words, the emotional component of the adversities seems to have a greater impact on the members of the groups and pages than frequency and 'practicality'. Additionally, we have discovered that there are several efficient patterns in which solidarity chains work. Some solidarity chains are born within the groups and/or pages and thereafter end offline (such as in the case of *Bebe Antsika*). There is also the opposite case: some chains of solidarity take shape outside social networks and are brought into them (such as the case where support was offered to a student economically affected by the COVID-19 pandemic).

3.3. Self-Structured Solidarity Organisations on Facebook and Offline

While the results of the Netnography allow us to discover the ongoing mechanisms of solidarity put in place by Malagasy migrants in France on Facebook, the results of the online survey presented in this section complement those of the Netnography and are intended to explore the personal intentions of Malagasy migrants in using Facebook as a tool and a place for solidarity.

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The results of the online survey show that a large majority of the Malagasy migrants who participated in the questionnaire (92%, n = 314) declare affiliation to at least one Facebook group and/or page created and/or run by Malagasy migrants. This complements our finding in the Netnography that Facebook groups and pages of Malagasy migrants are very active and popular.

Among the Malagasy migrants in France who declare that they are a member of at least one Facebook group and/or page, a majority of them (66%, n = 207) declare that they are affiliated with at least an offline organisation—association or NGO—run by Malagasy migrants and, at the same time, a majority of them (61%, n = 191) declare that they are not affiliated with the Malagasy embassy in France (see AF 1.2 and AF 2.1 of Figure 4). In other words, while the Malagasy migrants are very active in associations and on Facebook, they seem to be reluctant when it comes to the affiliation with Malagasy institutions.
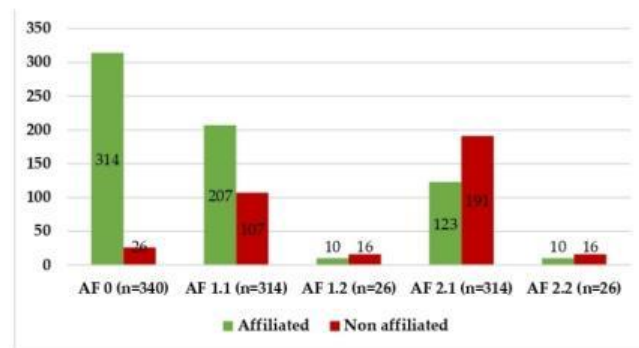

Figure 4. Distribution of the affiliation of informants with Facebook groups, with the Malagasy Embassy in France, and with offline organisation(s) of Malagasy migrants. AF 0: Affiliation with Facebook groups (n = 340); AF 1.1: Facebook-affiliated informants also affiliated with offline Malagasy group(s) (n = 314); AF 1.2: Facebook-affiliated informants who are not affiliated with offline Malagasy group(s) (n = 26) AF 2.1: Facebook-affiliated informants who are affiliated with the Malagasy Embassy (n = 314); AF 2.2: Facebook-affiliated informants who are not affiliated with the Malagasy Embassy (n = 26).

Regarding their day-to-day use of Facebook, the majority of the Malagasy community in France who are affiliated with any group or page of Malagasy migrants on Facebook (57%, n = 180) state that they frequent them at least once a day. Almost one-third (30%, n = 93) declare that they consult the group(s) and/or page(s) they are affiliated with more than once a week. The rest (13%, n = 41) declare that they check the group(s) and/or page(s) they are affiliated with at least once a week or monthly.

When it comes to action on the group(s) and/or page(s) they are affiliated with, most of the Malagasy in France (69%, n = 218) declare that they use them mainly to observe the posts and comments made by other members of the groups and/or pages. A total of 53% (n = 168) of those who declare that they are members of at least one group and/or page indicate that they are inclined to react to ongoing interactions or publications. A relative minority of 27% (n = 84) say that they actively use these groups and pages to create and/or share a post to generate discussion. What makes this finding curious is that while the majority of the Malagasy migrants declare being affiliated with at least one group or page of the Malagasy migrants, only a few report using them in an active way.

Most of the Malagasy migrants in France affiliated with at least one of these groups or pages declare using them mostly to learn about the news from their country of origin and/or their host country (69%, n = 218). Approximately one-third of Malagasy migrants

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(32%, n = 101) report using them to discuss the social, political, and/or economic situation of their country of origin and/or their host country, among other motives. Another third of them (31%, n = 98) declare using them mainly to maintain emotional bonds with their country of origin, among other motives. A total of 21% (n = 66) declare using the groups and/or pages for ethnic commercial motives (to sell and/or buy products from Madagascar in France) or to organise or search for Malagasy cultural events in their host country. It is therefore clear that these Malagasy migrants use these Facebook groups and pages mainly as newsrooms.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

This paper presents specific and yet essential aspects of the online communities and communitarian solidarity actions of Malagasy migrants in France through an analysis of their Facebook groups and pages.

The results of the Netnography show that Malagasy migrants in France rely on very active and popular networks of self-organised and non-institutional groups and pages on Facebook. These groups and pages are driven by different purposes but serve as a gathering space for heterogeneous members that unite individuals that share the same culture, language, and country without having had any previous contact or relationship offline. Additionally, these Facebook groups and pages were found to be hubs for active and ongoing 'peer-to-peer' chains of solidarity. On the one hand, there is sustained solidarity in responding to frequent and continuous necessity, such as a common search for a solution to specific administrative issues despite their recurrence within the groups and pages. On the other hand, solidarity in responding to sporadic necessity with a greater emotional component, such as the case of *Bebe Antsika* or Marghe in The Voice contest, elicits a lively interaction from the members of the group(s). In other words, the emotional component of the adversities seems to have a greater impact on the members of the groups and pages than frequency and 'practicality'.

Some solidarity chains are born within the groups and/or pages and thereafter end offline (for example, the case of *Bebe Antsika*). The opposite—chains of solidarity that take shape outside social networks and are brought into them—was also found in the case where support was offered to a student economically affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The most striking finding here is that there are multiple factors to account for in the 'peer-to-peer' nature of these interactions. First, the solidarity chains are above all non-institutional actions that take place between ordinary citizens. They exist between peers who share common cultural factors and a common country of origin. Additionally, these solidarity chains take place between people who share the social experience of being migrants. The experience of the Malagasy migrants in France is, however, quite different from the solidarity chains of other migrant communities from low-income countries in high-income countries, such as the Bulgarians in the United Kingdom or the dynamics of some African diasporas in the US (Mesbah and Cooper 2019). In fact, if we compare the Facebook groups and pages of the Malagasy migrants in France with those of Bulgarians in the UK, we notice (i) that the Malagasy in France have no specific group or page dedicated to professional exchanges, and (ii) that posts related to this topic in general groups are less frequent than within the Facebook groups and pages of Bulgarians in the UK, as reported by Nancheva (2021). Overall, we believe that this is intimately related to the high level of integration of the Malagasy in France and to their high educational qualifications, as described by Razafindrakoto et al. (2017). This results in the Malagasy needing less support from their peers in the areas of work and business. Another possible explanation has to do with the role of offline associations, which seem to be "safer" spaces for face-to-face exchanges on such vital matters. These associations contrast with online public platforms such as Facebook, where the phenomenon of "social downgrading" would be more difficult to bear if publicly displayed.

This paper, like those listed above, sustains the concept of 'imagined communities' that Tsagarousianou (2004) mentions. Do the Malagasy migrants form a real 'community'

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within their Facebook groups and pages? If we understand this concept to refer to the existence of solidarity and mutual aid among members of a group gathered around shared factors, such as country of origin and the cultural factors detailed in this paper, we can easily answer the question affirmatively. If we understand the concept in its 'organisational' and structural sense, we could answer affirmatively as well. However, if the concept of 'community' were to be understood in the sense of legal and moral duties towards members of the same community (assistance) or towards the community itself (regular financial contributions or fees and membership card), the answer is no. This same debate can also be extended to other contexts of online gathering and is not limited to only migrant groups, as Cervi's (2019) study of online travel recommendation groups attests.

This paper contributes to the understanding of the dynamics of the Malagasy community in France in their groups and pages on a general platform such as Facebook. Future research on other more specific platforms such as LinkedIn could reveal additional factors of professional mutual support among the Malagasy community in France in terms of work and business and other aspects of this community.

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ABBREVIATIONS

HNA   : Hyperlink Network Analysis

NGO(s)   : Non-Governmental Organisation(s)

TCA   : Thematic Content Analysis

HAT   : *Haute Autorité de la Transition* (High Authority of [political]
Transition)

NOTAM   : Notice to Airmen (regarding any change in the component
               such as facility, service, or procedure of, or hazard in the
               National Airspace System)

MFAM   : Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Madagascar

NDEP   : National Diasporic Engagement Policy

ANNEXES

Annexe 1. Certificate of Attendance and of Presentation at "Digital Diasporas: Interdisciplinary Perspectives" international Conference

This is to certify that

Fortunat Miarintsoa Andrianimanana

attended and presented his paper on

'*The Malagasy diasporic websites: an exploratory study*'

at the 'Digital Diasporas: Interdisciplinary Perspectives' international conference

6-7 June 2019, London (UK)

N. Wells

Dr Naomi Wells

Chair of the Digital Diasporas: Interdisciplinary Perspectives conference committee

Annexe 2. Certificate of Attendance and of Presentation at "Africa: Connections and Disruptions" international Conference

ECAS 2019. Africa: Connections and Disruptions Edinburgh, June 11-14 2019

To:
Department of Communication
Pompeu Fabra University
Carrer Ramon Turró 93
1º2ª
Barcelona
08005
Spain

To whom it may concern.
Re: Participation of Fortunat Miarintsoa Andrianimanana
The ECAS held their conference in Edinburgh from 11th June to 14th June, 2019. Over 1370 delegates attended for four days of panels and presentations.

This is to certify that Mr Fortunat Miarintsoa Andrianimanana attended the conference, and presented a paper entitled **Online political participation as a metrics of diasporic connection to its homeland. The case of the Malagasy overseas.**.
The abstracts of the panel and papers along with other panel information was published on the ECAS website at https://ecasconference.org/2019/home.

Mr Andrianimanana's participation in this event was much appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Triinu Mets
Conference administrator
admin@ecasconference.org

Annexe 3. Certificate of completion of Treball de Nova Recerca (TNR)

Cristina Gorgues Griñan, de la Unitat de Gestió i Administració de Comunicació de la Universitat Pompeu Fabra,

CERTIFICO: Que el Sr. **Fortunat Miarintsoa Andrianimanana**, matriculat al Doctorat en Comunicació de la Universitat Pompeu Fabra, ha assistit a les Taules de Nova Recerca en les dates següents:

16-11-17
14-12-17
18-01-18
15-02-18
15-03-18
12-04-18
10-05-18
22-05-18
21-03-19
11-04-19

L'assistència a aquestes deu sessions equival les **20 hores** que els doctorands han d'acreditar per superar l'Activitat Formativa 3 del Doctorat en Comunicació.

I perquè consti als efectes oportuns, signo aquest certificat.

P.A

Barcelona, 2 de maig de 2019

Departament de Comunicació

Annexe 4. List of the web sites of the Malagasy diaspora

Corpus of the Paper 1 (after crawling process)	
www.malagasymiray.net	http://www.discothequegasy.com
www.rns-cen.com	http://www.fetybe.com
www.madagascarclubdefrance.com	www.blogdemadagascar.com
www.zama-diaspora.com	www.madagoravox.wordpress.com
http://www.purplecorner.com	www.tsimokagasikara.wordpress.com
https://www.ttmr8.org	www.tomavana.wordpress.com
http://www.haisoratra.org	www.serasera.org
http://www.harinjaka.com	www.sainagasydadabe.blogspot.com
https://fact-madagascar.org	www.digigasy.com
www.fkmp.fr	www.povonline.wordpress.com
http://www.fpma-toulouse.com	www.mcmparis.wordpress.com
www.kirindy.de	www.gtt-international.blogspot.com
www.razaplin.org	www.prettyzoely.wordpress.com
http://rasoamanarivo.katolika.org	www.gazetyavylavitra.wordpress.com
www.advantistalyon.com	www.tenykely.wordpress.com
http://www.fkmsm.ch	www.blaogy.com
http://www.ravinala.org	www.gtt-international.blogspot.fr
http://vaovao.org	www.ampitapitao.blogspot.fr
http://www.tetezanaonlus.org/	www.andrianjorar.wordpress.com
http://www.sekoly-malagasy-montreal.com	www.agir.avec.madagascar.over-blog.com
http://www.ames-katolika.org/	www.alainrajaonarivony.over-blog.com
http://gasyegypte.co.nf/	www.madagasikaramalalako.com
http://fimpima-frantsa.org	https://pakysse.wordpress.com/
http://gasymiray.ca/	https://besorongola.wordpress.com
http://www.eam-zazamalagasy.org	https://onglalana.wordpress.com
http://www.fjkm-quebec.ca/	https://fantatro.wordpress.com
http://www.tanora-canada.org/association.htm	www.ikalakely.blogspot.com
http://www.rsm-montreal.com	www.mia-casa.over-blog.com
http://www.anglikana.fr/	www.saveoursmile.wordpress.com
http://www.flmparis.org/version2/	https://watchmada.wordpress.com/
https://www.fpma.church	http://forumsedra.tripod.com/
http://fpma-nantes.org	http://iammadagascar.blogspot.com.es/
http://www.fpma-paris.org/	https://tsingorydancefr.weebly.com
http://fpma-grenoble.fr/	http://fpmccanada.wixsite.com
http://fpma-dijon.org/	https://www.fjkm-betela-fahamarinana-paris.com/
http://www.fpma-melun.org/	http://sehatrakatolika.homily-service.net
http://fpma.nancy.free.fr/	http://nirina.populus.org
http://www.fpma-toulouse.fr/	www.fgc-canada.blogspot.com
http://fpmatroyes.free.fr/	http://www.fkmsm.ch/labo/wordpress/
http://fpmafihobiana.org/v4/	http://fjkm.saint.denis.free.fr/
http://www.fjkm-gland.ch/	https://tanikomadagascar.wordpress.com
https://www.sa-fpma-paris.org/	http://agir.avec.madagascar.over-blog.com
http://www.ccmg.website	http://tanikomadagascar.zohosites.com/
https://www.zazakelysuisse.ch	www.gasikarts.com
http://www.fsmsuisse.org	www.dagoradiosound.info
http://www.jaimemadagascar.ch	www.madamagazine.com
http://www.mkmb.be/	www.tiakobe.fr
http://fjkmrenneslaval.com/	www.koolsaina.com
http://www.freunde-madagaskars.de	www.feosyako.ch
https://www.malagasy-germany.org/	http://www.diaspora-dynamique.com/
	takariva.com

http://www.fpmccanada.org/ http://malagasy-canada.org https://www.fjkm-wagner-finoana-paris.org/ http://www.fjkm-ziona-vaovao-paris.fr/ http://maudigascar.blogspot.com/ http://tetezanamada.org/ http://www.aina-madagascar.org/ http://olombaovao.ancmf.com http://www.andryrungi.it/ https://blog.barijaona.com/ https://www.juniors-pour-madagascar.com	http://malagasy.it/ https://gasyinthephils.webs.com https://malagasyintheuk.co.uk https://radio.fpma.church/ http://www.fjkm-montrouge.fr/ http://katolika.org/ https://www.madaplus.info/ http://www.fjkm-strasbourg-famonjena.fr/

Annexe 4. List of the Facebook groups and pages of the Malagasy diaspora

Facebook groups and pages of the Malagasy diaspora					
Name	Members	Purpose	Creation	Based in	Privacy
01 Za koa Hanorina	14100	Social claim	2018	France	Private
02 Gasy Serasera eto Frantsa	13600	Portal/Forum	2013	France	Private
03 Malagasy en France	10962	Portal/Forum	2013	France	Public
04 Malagasy en France	8200	Portal/Forum	2016	France	Public
05 Discothèque Gasy Paris France	5912	Leisure	2011	France	Public
06 Gasy Misera Nationalité eto France	5400	Portal/Forum	2018	France	Private
07 Fetybe	4139	Leisure	2009	France	Public
08 Réseau malgache d'entraide pour nourrir les démunis pendant le confinement	4100	Charitable	2020	France	Private
09 Malagasy diaspora news	4729	Media	2018	France	Public
10 Co-voiturage Gasy en France	3800	Commercial	2014	France	Public
11 Mamans Gasy de France	3200	Portal/Forum	2015	France	Secret
12 Malagasy à Paris	2600	Portal/Forum	2016	France	Public
13 Fédération FEO Madagascar	2111	Portal/Forum	2016	France	Public
14 Gasy Miray Hina sy Mifanoro Hevitra eto Frantsa	2400	Portal/Forum	2018	France	Private
15 Gasy de Toulouse	3998	Portal/Forum	2012	France	Public
16 Tanora Malagasy eto Frantsa	2100	Portal/Forum	2015	France	Private
17 Gasy aty La Réunion	4047	Portal/Forum	2016	France	Private
18 Izahay koa Malagasy - Donnez-nous le droit de voter	1725	Social claim	2013	France	Public
19 Fiangonana Katolika Malagasy eto Parisy sy ny Manodidina	1435	Religion	2013	France	Public
20 Le Bon Coin Gasy du Sud de France	3207	Commercial	2018	France	Public
22 Malagasy Mifanampy eto Frantsa	1930	Portal/Forum	2018	France	Private
22 Fety Gasy de Toulouse	3998	Leisure	2012	France	Public
23 Jeunes catholiques malgaches de France	2443	Religion	2011	France	Private
24 ACMA Aumônerie des Catholiques Malgaches d'Aquitaine	243	Religion	2017	France	Public
25 JMJ ANCMF Jeunes catholiques malgaches de France	1855	Religion	2013	France	Public

26 Gasy Sera eto Lyon	1088	Portal/Forum	2016	France	Private
27 Rencontre Malgache en France et Europe	811	Dating	2017	France	Private
28 Vide dressing des Mamans Gasy de France	732	Commercial	2018	France	Public
29 Sera Gasy eto Frantsa	18000	Commercial	2017	France	Private
30 Maman malgache en France et en Europe	828	Portal/Forum	2019	France	Public
31 Mpianatra Malagasy eto Frantsa	444	Portal/Forum	2018	France	Private
32 Gasy Misera eto Frantsa	2200	Portal/Forum	2019	France	Private
33 Gay Malagasy eto Frantsa	295	Dating	2013	France	Public
34 Groupe diaspora - Malgaches de Poitiers	205	Portal/Forum	2009	France	Private
35 CCMAM- Communauté Catholique Malgache de Marseille	202	Religion	2016	France	Private
36 Jeunes de la communauté catholique malgache de Lyon	148	Religion	2011	France	Private
37 FPMA LYON	208	Religion	2013	France	Private
38 Communauté catholique malgache de Nancy	142	Portal/Forum	2015	France	Public
39 FPMA Evry Fitiavana	113	Religion	2014	France	Private
40 FPMA Montpellier	88	Religion	2018	France	Private
41 FPMA Yvelines Fahazavana	60	Religion	2015	France	Private
42 FPMA Orléans	22	Religion	2020	France	Private
43 FPMA Mulhouse	23	Religion	2020	France	Private
44 FPMA Aix Marseille	983	Religion	2011	France	Public
45 FPMA Vincennes	184	Religion	2020	France	Public
46 STK Aix Marseille	506	Religion	2009	France	Public
47 Arivo Ampielezana by Za Koa Hanorina	983	Social claim	2019	France	Public
48 ZAMA Paris 2019	4224	Social claim	2016	France	Public
49 FETY MALAGASY ETO LA REUNION	1100	Leisure	2016	France	Public
50 FKMP - Fiangonana Katolika Malagasy eto Paris sy ny manodidina	2313	Religion	2013	France	Public
51 Collectif Sport Malagasy - CSM	8954	Leisure	2019	France	Public
52 ÉGLISE PROTESTANTE MALAGASY au Canada	4350	Religion	2012	Canada	Public
53 Advantista Malagasy eto Kanada	91	Religion	2016	Canada	Public
54 Malagasy mifanohana eto Kanada	1754	Portal/Forum	2018	Canada	Public

55 Malagasy in Toronto	84	Portal/Forum	2013	Canada	Public
56 Diaspora Malagasy Canada	2000	Portal/Forum	2016	Canada	Public
57 Serasera Gasy eto Canada	5494	Portal/Forum	2016	Canada	Public
58 RSM Montréal 2020	500	Leisure	2019	Canada	Public
59 Au Pair Malagasy en Allemagne et en Autriche	7300	Portal/Forum	2020	Germany	Private
60 Malagasy Eto Alemaina	2760	Portal/Forum	2018	Germany	Private
61 Tanora Malagasy eto Allemagne	4300	Portal/Forum	2009	Germany	Private
62 Zanaky ny Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy eto Allemagne	190	Religion	2020	Germany	Private
63 Firaisankinan'ny Malagasy eto Hamburg	834	Portal/Forum	2015	Germany	Private
64 Malagasy eto Belgique	3000	Portal/Forum	2013	Benelux	Private
65 Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy eto Bruxelles	1033	Religion	2011	Benelux	Private
66 Madagascar au Benelux	1428	Portal/Forum	2010	Benelux	Private
67 ᴍɢ Communauté Malgache du Luxembourg ʟᴜ	138	Portal/Forum	2014	Benelux	Private
68 Aupair Malagasy aty Pays bas	1800	Portal/Forum	2016	Benelux	Private
69 Malagasy mifanohana eto Seychelles	441	Portal/Forum	2015	Seychelles	Private
70 Malgaches résidents de Turquie/Malagasy monina eto Torkia	81	Portal/Forum	2014	Turkey	Private
71 Fikambanan'ny mpianatra Malagasy eto Beijing	827	Portal/Forum	2019	China	Public
72 Mpianatra Malagasy eto Rosia	3724	Portal/Forum	2016	Russia	Public
73 Union of Malagasy in Dubaï	4300	Portal/Forum	2019	Dubai	Public
74 Malagasy eto Italia	2100	Portal/Forum	2009	Italy	Public
75 Diaspora Malagasy eto Italia	1100	Portal/Forum	2016	Italy	Private
76 Fiangonana Protestanta Malagasy eto Roma - Italy	866	Religion	2015	Italy	Public
77 Malagasy eto España	37	Portal/Forum	2017	Spain	Private
78 Malagasy All Around	12536	Portal/Forum	2018	N/A	Public
79 Collectif de la diaspora malagasy	2160	Portal/Forum	2017	N/A	Public
80 Malagasy eto Japana	391	Portal/Forum	2017	Japan	Public
81 Malagasy in America	6170	Portal/Forum	2015	USA	Public

82 Malagasy in the USA	583	Portal/Forum	2015	USA	Public
83 Malagasy in the USA	3023	Portal/Forum	2020	USA	Public
84 Association of Malagasy in the UK	566	Portal/Forum	2017	UK	Public
85 Association Of Malagasy In The UK	193	Portal/Forum	2017	UK	Private
86 Malagasy eto Suisse	413	Portal/Forum	2011	Switzerland	Public
87 Aomoneria katolika Malagasy Eto Suisse	65	Religion	2012	Switzerland	Public
88 Emission Gasik'arts	1332	Media	2012	France	Public
89 Rencontre Nationale Sportive – RNS	72429	Leisure	2014	France	Public
90 Vila malgache	500	Portal/Forum	2018	Spain	Public
91 Madagascar Espana	1200	Portal/Forum	2011	Spain	Public