

Transnational Belonging in the Digital Age: A Comparative Social Humanities Analysis of Migrant Integration, Platformed Identity, and Institutional Inclusion in Canada and Germany

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary migration is increasingly mediated through digital infrastructures that reshape identity formation, transnational belonging, institutional inclusion, and social integration. While migration studies have traditionally examined settlement through labor markets, legal status, education, language acquisition, and citizenship regimes, digital communication now enables migrants to sustain cross-border familial, cultural, political, and affective ties while simultaneously negotiating incorporation into destination societies. This article comparatively examines Canada and Germany as two major migrant-receiving democracies with distinct integration traditions: Canada's multicultural citizenship-oriented model and Germany's historically more assimilationist but increasingly pluralized integration model. Drawing on social theory, migration studies, communication research, institutional analysis, and digital sociology, the article argues that digital transnationalism reconfigures integration from a linear process of incorporation into a multilayered field of belonging across platforms, institutions, communities, and national imaginaries. The study uses comparative interpretive analysis of migration policy documents, international migration reports, demographic data, platform society scholarship, and peer-reviewed literature. The findings show that digital connectivity expands migrant agency and transnational solidarity but also intensifies social segmentation, misinformation exposure, affective distance from host institutions, and contested national belonging. The article contributes to social humanities scholarship by developing a framework linking digital communication, transnational

identity, institutional recognition, and social inclusion in contemporary migration societies.

Keywords: migration; digital society; transnationalism; multiculturalism; integration; Canada; Germany; social humanities; platformed identity; belonging

INTRODUCTION

International migration has become one of the defining social transformations of the twenty-first century. Contemporary societies are being reshaped by cross-border mobility, demographic aging, labor market restructuring, forced displacement, geopolitical instability, climate vulnerability, and digital communication. The OECD's *International Migration Outlook 2024* notes that migration to OECD countries has remained historically high, with major destination countries including Germany and Canada receiving large inflows of permanent, family, labor, student, and humanitarian migrants (OECD, 2024). The World Bank's *World Development Report 2023* argues that migration can generate development benefits for destination and origin societies when governance systems align migrant capabilities, legal protection, and institutional inclusion (World Bank, 2023). These global patterns demonstrate that migration is not simply a demographic process; it is a transformation of social membership, cultural identity, political legitimacy, and institutional capacity.

At the same time, migration is increasingly mediated by digital infrastructures. Smartphones, social media platforms, encrypted messaging applications, digital remittance systems, online diaspora networks, translation tools, platform labor markets, and algorithmic public services now shape how migrants communicate, work, learn, remember, participate, and belong. Digital communication allows migrants to maintain continuous relationships with families and communities across borders, access information about rights and services, participate in diasporic political life, and construct hybrid cultural identities. Yet digital infrastructures also expose migrants to misinformation, surveillance, platform precarity, linguistic exclusion, racialized hostility, and unequal access to institutional resources (Leurs, 2023; Madianou, 2021).

This article examines these transformations through a comparative social humanities analysis of Canada and Germany. These cases are selected because both are major migrant-receiving democracies with advanced digital societies and significant institutional investment in integration, yet they differ historically and culturally in their models of national belonging. Canada has long institutionalized multiculturalism as a public philosophy and policy framework, linking immigrant integration to citizenship, diversity recognition, and pluralist national identity (Kymlicka, 1995; Bloemraad, 2006). Germany, by contrast, historically defined nationhood more strongly through ethnocultural and linguistic belonging, although it has substantially transformed its migration and citizenship policies since the early twenty-first century (Brubaker, 1992; Joppke, 2021). This contrast allows analysis of how digital transnationalism interacts with different institutional traditions of integration.

The social and humanistic problem addressed in this article concerns the changing meaning of

belonging in digitally mediated migration societies. Traditional integration frameworks often conceptualize migrant incorporation as a gradual transition into destination-country institutions through language acquisition, employment, education, residential stability, and citizenship. Such models remain important, but they are insufficient for explaining contemporary migrant experience. Migrants today do not simply move from one bounded society into another; they inhabit digitally connected social fields spanning origin communities, destination institutions, diaspora networks, and global cultural platforms. Integration therefore occurs not as a one-directional movement from “foreignness” to “membership,” but as an ongoing negotiation of layered affiliations.

This issue matters theoretically because it challenges methodological nationalism in migration research, namely the assumption that the nation-state is the primary container of social life (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002). It matters historically because countries such as Canada and Germany have developed different institutional memories of migration, diversity, citizenship, and national identity. It matters institutionally because governments increasingly design integration policies through digital portals, online service systems, language-learning platforms, and data-driven settlement programs. It matters culturally because migrants use digital media to preserve heritage languages, religious practices, political memories, and diasporic narratives. It matters politically because migration remains a central site of polarization, electoral contestation, and public anxiety in many democracies.

A substantial body of scholarship has examined migration, transnationalism, and integration. Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (1995) introduced transnationalism as a framework for understanding how migrants sustain social relations across nation-state borders. Vertovec (2009) developed the concept of super-diversity to describe complex migration-driven social differentiation. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) analyzed segmented assimilation and intergenerational incorporation. Castles, de Haas, and Miller (2020) situated migration within global political economy and state transformation. Bloemraad (2006) demonstrated how citizenship policies shape immigrant political incorporation. Kymlicka (1995) theorized multicultural citizenship as recognition-based inclusion. Brubaker (1992) compared citizenship and nationhood in France and Germany, showing how historical traditions shape institutional belonging.

More recent scholarship has expanded these debates into digital society. Madianou and Miller (2012) developed the concept of polymedia to explain how migrants use multiple communication platforms to manage intimate relations across distance. Leurs (2023) analyzes digital migration as a field shaped by datafication, platform power, and migrant agency. Diminescu (2008) describes the “connected migrant” as a figure whose mobility is inseparable from digital communication. Gillespie et al. (2018) examine how refugees use digital media for navigation, information, and survival. Georgiou (2019) argues that digital media reshape diasporic politics and mediated belonging. While previous studies emphasize migrant connectivity and digital agency, other scholars argue that platform capitalism, surveillance, and algorithmic governance reproduce inequalities within migrant experience (Madianou, 2021; Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

However, current social humanities literature fails to sufficiently explain how digital

transnationalism interacts with institutional integration regimes. Existing scholarship remains limited in several respects. First, transnational migration research often examines cross-border ties without fully analyzing the digital infrastructures through which those ties are now sustained. Second, digital migration studies often emphasize platform use but devote less attention to national integration institutions and citizenship regimes. Third, comparative research between multicultural and post-assimilationist integration systems remains underdeveloped in relation to digital belonging. Fourth, public policy literature tends to evaluate integration through employment, language, and education indicators while underestimating affective, symbolic, and mediated belonging. Fifth, methodological approaches frequently rely either on macro-level policy analysis or micro-level ethnography without connecting institutional structures, digital practices, and identity formation.

This article addresses these gaps by developing an interdisciplinary comparative framework that links digital communication, transnational identity, institutional recognition, and social inclusion. The central argument is that digital transnationalism neither undermines nor guarantees integration. Instead, it restructures integration by multiplying the spaces in which belonging is produced and contested. Digital connectivity can support integration by providing information, emotional support, language learning, civic participation, and diasporic solidarity. Yet it can also reproduce segregation when migrants remain embedded in closed information networks, face online racism, encounter misinformation, or experience exclusion from digital public services.

The novelty of this article lies in conceptualizing integration as a platformed and institutionally mediated process. Rather than treating digital media as external tools used by migrants, the article understands digital infrastructures as social environments that shape identity, memory, trust, and civic participation. It also argues that national integration regimes influence how digital transnationalism is interpreted: in multicultural contexts, cross-border identity may be publicly recognized as compatible with citizenship, whereas in more assimilation-oriented contexts, transnational attachment may be more politically contested.

The analytical framework developed in this article proposes the following interpretive relationship: digital communication → transnational identity formation → institutional recognition or exclusion → social participation → civic belonging → societal cohesion. This relationship does not imply linear causality but identifies a sequence of social mechanisms through which digital connectivity becomes politically and culturally consequential.

The research objective of this article is to explain how digital transnationalism reshapes migrant integration, identity formation, and institutional inclusion in Canada and Germany, and what these dynamics imply for contemporary social humanities scholarship on belonging, citizenship, and digital society.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a comparative interpretive research design combining digital sociology, migration studies, institutional analysis, and critical social humanities interpretation to examine how digital transnationalism shapes migrant belonging and integration in Canada and Germany. The comparison follows a historically informed “most similar–most different” logic: both countries are advanced liberal democracies, major migrant destinations, digitally connected societies, and OECD members with developed integration policies, yet they differ substantially in their histories of nationhood, multicultural recognition, citizenship policy, language ideology, and institutional narratives of migration. Canada is analyzed as a multicultural citizenship regime in which diversity recognition is publicly institutionalized and migrant incorporation is normatively linked to plural national identity. Germany is analyzed as a transformed post-guest-worker and post-assimilationist integration regime in which legal and policy reforms increasingly recognize migration as constitutive of society, while public debates continue to negotiate language, cultural belonging, Islam, race, and national memory. The principal units of analysis are integration policy frameworks, digital communication practices, transnational identity narratives, institutional recognition mechanisms, public discourse on migration, and socio-cultural outcomes related to belonging and inclusion.

The empirical basis consists of OECD migration data, World Bank migration development analysis, national integration and citizenship policy documents, Statistics Canada and German Federal Statistical Office demographic materials, peer-reviewed migration and digital society literature, international reports from UNESCO and UNDP, and secondary qualitative evidence from published ethnographic and media studies. The study does not invent interviews, survey responses, or field observations; instead, it triangulates publicly available institutional data, comparative scholarship, and interpretive analysis of documented policy and media environments. Analytical techniques include comparative historical interpretation, discourse-sensitive policy analysis, institutional comparison, and thematic synthesis across social theory, migration studies, and digital humanities scholarship. Core variables include national integration ideology, digital connectivity, language policy, institutional recognition, transnational participation, public trust, discrimination, and civic belonging. Ethical considerations center on avoiding homogenizing migrant populations, treating migration status as socially differentiated, and refusing deficit-based interpretations of transnational identity. Limitations include the heterogeneity of migrant communities within each country, the rapidly changing nature of digital platforms, and the difficulty of measuring belonging through macro-level sources; however, the comparative design provides strong analytical leverage for theorizing how digital infrastructures mediate social inclusion within different institutional regimes.

Findings and Discussion

1. Digital Transnationalism and the Transformation of Migrant Belonging

The first major finding is that digital communication transforms migrant belonging from a territorially bounded experience into a multilayered and relational process. In both Canada and Germany, migrants increasingly maintain dense cross-border relations through messaging applications, video calls, social media groups, digital

remittances, online religious networks, diaspora media, and transnational political forums. These practices reshape everyday migration by reducing the communicative rupture historically associated with long-distance relocation.

In Canada, digital transnationalism frequently operates within a public discourse that is relatively compatible with multicultural citizenship. Migrants can sustain heritage languages, diasporic networks, and cross-border identities while also participating in Canadian institutions. This does not mean that exclusion or racism is absent. Rather, it indicates that Canada's official multicultural framework provides symbolic resources through which transnational belonging can be interpreted as legitimate within national identity (Bloemraad, 2006; Kymlicka, 1995).

In Germany, digital transnationalism interacts with a more ambivalent historical field. Germany has undergone major transformation from a country that long resisted identifying as a country of immigration to one that increasingly institutionalizes integration, skilled migration, and citizenship reform (Joppke, 2021). Yet public debates concerning language, Islam, Turkish-German identity, refugees, and national culture continue to shape how transnational attachment is perceived. Digital diasporic practices may therefore be interpreted both as ordinary migrant life and as evidence of insufficient integration depending on political context.

The comparative evidence indicates that digital transnationalism does not produce uniform integration outcomes. Its social meaning depends on institutional recognition. Where plural belonging is publicly normalized, digital connections to origin communities may support psychological security and civic participation. Where belonging is more strongly tied to cultural assimilation or linguistic conformity, digital transnationalism may become politically suspect.

This finding challenges classical integration models that treat homeland attachment and destination-country incorporation as competing orientations. The evidence instead supports transnational migration theory, which argues that migrants often sustain simultaneous attachments across multiple social fields (Glick Schiller et al., 1995; Vertovec, 2009). Digital media intensify this simultaneity by making cross-border communication continuous, affective, and ordinary.

The societal implication is substantial: integration policies that frame transnational attachment as an obstacle may misrecognize contemporary migrant experience. Institutions should instead ask how digital transnational networks can support settlement, mental health, language learning, civic participation, entrepreneurship, and intercultural exchange.

2. Institutional Integration Regimes and the Politics of Recognition

The second finding concerns institutional variation in the politics of recognition. Canada's multicultural framework provides migrants with a relatively strong symbolic grammar of inclusion. Official multiculturalism recognizes cultural diversity as part of national identity and supports institutional accommodation through settlement services, language programs, anti-discrimination frameworks, and pathways to citizenship. This recognition does not eliminate inequality, but it provides a normative basis for claiming belonging.

Germany's integration regime has changed significantly, particularly through citizenship reforms, skilled migration policies, and public recognition that Germany is a migration society. Nevertheless, its institutional model remains more strongly shaped by language acquisition, labor market incorporation, constitutional loyalty, and cultural integration. These priorities are not inherently exclusionary; indeed, language and employment are essential to participation. Yet they can become exclusionary when they imply that cultural difference must be overcome before full belonging is recognized.

The comparative evidence reveals that institutional recognition mediates digital identity formation. In Canada, digital diasporic expression may be more readily understood as part of multicultural citizenship. In Germany, similar practices may be more likely to encounter public scrutiny when they intersect with contested histories of migration, religion, and national identity.

This reflects underlying socio-cultural mechanisms within national identity formation. Canada's immigration-based national narrative gives the state a strong interest in presenting diversity as constitutive of society, even though Indigenous critiques and racial inequalities complicate this narrative. Germany's historical memory, postwar constitutional identity, and guest-worker legacy create a different symbolic field in which belonging has been repeatedly renegotiated through language, citizenship, and cultural participation.

The findings align with Brubaker's (1992) argument that citizenship regimes reflect historically specific understandings of nationhood. They also extend this argument by demonstrating that digital communication changes how such regimes are lived. Migrants do not merely encounter integration policy through state institutions; they interpret it through digital networks, diasporic media, and transnational public spheres.

The scholarly implication is that recognition must be analyzed at multiple levels: legal recognition through citizenship, institutional recognition through policy, symbolic recognition through public discourse, and mediated recognition through digital representation. Integration failure may occur not only when migrants lack services but when institutions fail to recognize the legitimacy of multilayered belonging.

3. Language, Platformed Publics, and Social Participation

The third finding is that language operates as both a resource for inclusion and a boundary of social participation. In both Canada and Germany, language acquisition remains central to employment, education, public service access, and civic participation. However, digital platforms alter the relationship between language and integration by enabling migrants to navigate multiple linguistic environments simultaneously.

In Canada, multilingualism is institutionally normalized to a greater degree through official bilingualism and multicultural policy, although English and French remain dominant gateways to institutional participation. Migrants may use heritage-language digital networks for emotional support and information exchange while gradually acquiring official-language competence. These digital networks can function as informal settlement infrastructures by distributing knowledge about employment, housing, schools, legal rights, and healthcare access.

In Germany, language acquisition occupies a particularly central place in integration policy. German-

language competence is widely understood as essential for social participation, institutional access, and citizenship. Digital tools such as translation applications, online language platforms, and migrant community forums can support this process. Yet digital language environments can also produce segmented publics in which migrants remain largely within heritage-language information networks.

The comparative evidence indicates that platformed publics are ambivalent. They expand participation by lowering barriers to communication and collective organization, but they may also reinforce social segmentation if algorithmic recommendation systems cluster users by language, ethnicity, religion, or political identity. This finding corresponds with digital sociology research showing that platforms do not simply connect individuals; they structure visibility, interaction, and social boundary formation (van Dijck et al., 2018; Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

The theoretical linkage here concerns Bourdieu's concept of linguistic capital. Dominant-language competence remains a form of institutional capital, but digital media allow migrants to sustain alternative linguistic capital within diasporic fields (Bourdieu, 1991). The result is not linguistic isolation but differentiated participation across overlapping social spaces.

The societal implication is that integration policy should not oppose heritage-language digital networks to national-language acquisition. Instead, institutions should engage multilingual digital spaces as bridges for public information, civic education, health communication, and democratic participation. Governments and civil society organizations can improve inclusion by providing verified information across languages and collaborating with trusted community-based digital networks.

4. Digital Inequality, Misinformation, and Trust in Institutions

The fourth finding is that digital transnationalism produces both inclusion and vulnerability. Migrants often rely on digital networks to obtain information about immigration procedures, employment, housing, education, healthcare, legal rights, and social services. However, uneven digital literacy, language barriers, algorithmic targeting, and misinformation can expose migrants to exploitation or institutional distrust.

In Canada, settlement organizations increasingly use digital communication to reach newcomers, but access remains uneven across age, class, refugee status, language, and rural-urban location. Highly educated migrants may navigate digital systems effectively, while vulnerable groups may face difficulties with online forms, automated systems, and platform-based information overload. Digital inclusion therefore depends not only on internet access but on institutional literacy and trust.

In Germany, digital public services and integration platforms can improve access, but bureaucratic complexity and language barriers may limit usability. Migrants navigating asylum procedures, residence permits, employment recognition, or welfare systems may encounter fragmented digital information environments. Informal digital networks often fill these gaps, but they may circulate incomplete or inaccurate information.

The comparative evidence indicates that trust is a central mechanism linking digital information to institutional inclusion. Migrants are more likely to use official digital services when they perceive institutions as

accessible, fair, linguistically responsive, and culturally legitimate. Where official systems are difficult to navigate, migrants may rely more heavily on peer networks, diaspora influencers, or informal intermediaries.

This finding contributes to social humanities scholarship by connecting digital inequality with institutional trust. Digital exclusion is not merely technical; it is relational and institutional. People may have devices and connectivity yet remain excluded if they cannot interpret bureaucratic language, fear surveillance, or distrust official communication.

The policy implication is that digital integration strategies must be co-designed with migrant communities, multilingual organizations, and trusted civil society actors. Digital public services should be evaluated not only by efficiency but also by accessibility, cultural responsiveness, privacy protection, and trust-building capacity.

Table 1. Comparative Matrix of Social Variables, Institutional Mechanisms, and Societal Outcomes

Variable	Canada	Germany	Empirical/Interpretive Evidence	Analytical Interpretation
Integration Regime	Multicultural citizenship-oriented model	Post-assimilationist integration model with strong language emphasis	Citizenship and integration policy literature; OECD migration reports	Institutional narratives shape whether transnational belonging is recognized or problematized
Digital Transnationalism	Often interpreted as compatible with plural national identity	More politically ambivalent in debates over language, Islam, and national culture	Migration and digital diaspora studies	Digital belonging is mediated by national identity regimes
Language and Participation	Multilingual community networks coexist with English/French institutional access	German-language competence remains central to integration and citizenship	Integration policy and sociolinguistic literature	Language functions as both institutional capital and social boundary
Platformed Publics	Diaspora media support	Heritage-language networks	Digital migration scholarship	Platforms create both bridges

	settlement information and community formation	support continuity but may be scrutinized		and segmented publics
Institutional Trust	Multicultural policy provides symbolic resources but inequalities persist	Trust mediated by bureaucratic access, historical memory, and recognition struggles	Comparative integration studies	Trust depends on institutional responsiveness and recognition
Digital Inequality	Uneven across class, age, refugee status, language, and region	Uneven across legal status, language proficiency, and bureaucratic literacy	OECD and digital inclusion literature	Digital access does not equal digital inclusion
Civic Belonging	Citizenship pathways support political incorporation	Reforms expand belonging, but cultural debates remain salient	Citizenship and political sociology literature	Legal inclusion and symbolic inclusion may diverge
Societal Outcome	Greater normative compatibility between diversity and national belonging	Ongoing renegotiation of migration society identity	Comparative social humanities interpretation	Integration outcomes depend on institutional recognition of multilayered identity

The table demonstrates that digital transnationalism produces divergent societal outcomes depending on institutional context. Canada and Germany both experience digitally mediated migration, but the meaning of digital belonging differs because national integration regimes provide different symbolic and institutional resources. The comparison reveals that digital connectivity alone neither integrates nor isolates migrants. Its effects are mediated by recognition, trust, language policy, institutional accessibility, and public discourse.

The deeper analytical implication is that migration societies must move beyond binary distinctions between integration and transnationalism. Digital life enables migrants to inhabit multiple social worlds simultaneously. The key question is not whether migrants maintain homeland ties, but whether destination institutions recognize

multilayered belonging as compatible with civic participation. Social cohesion is therefore strengthened not by suppressing transnational identity but by building institutions capable of translating plural belonging into shared participation.

5. Digital Memory, Diaspora Politics, and Intergenerational Identity

The fifth finding concerns the role of digital memory in shaping intergenerational migrant identity. Digital archives, family video calls, social media histories, online commemorations, diaspora news, and platformed cultural production allow migrants and their descendants to maintain collective memories across distance. These practices are particularly important for refugee communities, racialized minorities, and diasporas shaped by colonial violence, war, displacement, or political repression.

In Canada, digital memory practices often intersect with multicultural public culture, where diasporic histories may be expressed through community media, cultural festivals, online archives, and educational initiatives. Yet these practices also raise difficult questions concerning whose histories are recognized within national memory. Canada's multicultural narrative is complicated by settler colonialism, Indigenous sovereignty, anti-Black racism, and unequal recognition of different migrant histories.

In Germany, digital memory interacts with a dense historical culture shaped by Holocaust remembrance, postwar constitutional identity, and debates over migration memory. Migrant communities, particularly Turkish-German, Arab-German, and refugee communities, increasingly use digital platforms to articulate histories of labor migration, racism, belonging, and exclusion. These narratives challenge older national memory frameworks by insisting that migration is not peripheral to German history but constitutive of contemporary society.

The comparative evidence indicates that digital memory can democratize historical representation by enabling communities to document experiences often marginalized in official archives. However, platformed memory can also become polarized when diasporic conflicts, nationalist narratives, or traumatic histories circulate without institutional mediation.

This finding extends memory studies by showing that digital migration transforms the archive from a state-centered repository into a participatory and platformed field of cultural contestation. It also contributes to cultural studies by demonstrating that identity formation depends on the circulation of remembered histories across media systems.

The societal implication is that integration should include historical recognition. Migrant belonging is strengthened when public institutions acknowledge diasporic histories, not merely provide labor market access. Museums, schools, archives, libraries, and digital humanities projects can support social cohesion by incorporating migrant memories into public culture.

6. Civic Participation, Digital Mobilization, and Democratic Inclusion

The sixth finding is that digital communication reshapes migrant civic participation. Migrants and diasporas

use digital platforms to organize community support, advocate for rights, participate in homeland politics, mobilize around racism and discrimination, and engage with local institutions. This produces new forms of civic agency that exceed conventional measures such as voting or party membership.

In Canada, migrant digital mobilization often connects settlement issues with broader struggles over racial justice, labor rights, housing, education, and immigration reform. Digital platforms allow migrant communities to circulate petitions, organize mutual aid, and challenge discriminatory narratives. Citizenship pathways and multicultural recognition may provide institutional openings for translating digital mobilization into formal political participation.

In Germany, digital mobilization has become increasingly important in anti-racist activism, refugee solidarity networks, and migrant self-representation. Movements challenging racism, Islamophobia, and exclusionary nationalism use digital media to contest dominant narratives and build solidarities across cities and communities. Yet migrants without citizenship or secure legal status may remain excluded from formal political representation, even when they are civically active.

The comparative evidence suggests that democratic inclusion must be understood beyond citizenship status alone. Digital civic participation can expand voice, but institutional responsiveness determines whether voice becomes influence. This finding aligns with Habermasian concerns about the public sphere while also challenging classical public sphere theory by emphasizing multilingual, diasporic, and platformed publics (Habermas, 1989; Fraser, 1990).

The broader implication is that integration policy should recognize migrant civic agency rather than treating migrants primarily as service recipients. Participatory platforms, migrant advisory councils, digital consultation processes, and community media partnerships can strengthen democratic inclusion. However, such initiatives must avoid tokenism and ensure that digital participation influences institutional decisions.

Scholarly Propositions

Proposition 1: Digital transnationalism transforms integration from linear incorporation into multilayered belonging.

Migrant integration can no longer be adequately understood as gradual absorption into a single national society. Digital communication enables migrants to sustain simultaneous affiliations across origin communities, destination institutions, diaspora publics, and global cultural networks. Integration is therefore best conceptualized as negotiated participation across overlapping social fields.

Proposition 2: Institutional recognition mediates the relationship between digital identity and social inclusion.

Digital transnational practices produce different outcomes depending on whether institutions recognize plural belonging as legitimate. Multicultural recognition can convert transnational identity into civic participation, while assimilationist expectations may problematize the same practices as evidence of social distance.

Proposition 3: Digital inclusion requires institutional trust, not merely technological access.

Connectivity alone does not guarantee inclusion. Migrants may remain excluded if digital public services are linguistically inaccessible, bureaucratically opaque, culturally unresponsive, or perceived as surveillance-oriented. Trust is therefore a central condition of digital integration.

Proposition 4: Platformed migrant publics reshape democratic participation and historical memory.

Digital platforms allow migrants and diasporas to produce counter-narratives, mobilize politically, preserve collective memory, and challenge exclusionary representations. These practices expand democratic voice but require institutional responsiveness to generate durable inclusion.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined how digital transnationalism reshapes migrant integration, identity formation, and institutional inclusion in Canada and Germany. The study demonstrates that contemporary migration cannot be understood through linear models of incorporation alone. Migrants increasingly inhabit digitally mediated social fields that connect origin societies, destination institutions, diaspora communities, and global platforms. These connections transform belonging into a multilayered, relational, and contested process.

The comparative findings show that Canada and Germany both experience the social consequences of digital transnationalism, but institutional context shapes how those consequences are interpreted and governed. Canada's multicultural citizenship framework provides stronger symbolic compatibility between transnational identity and national belonging, although inequalities, racialization, and settler-colonial tensions remain significant. Germany's integration regime has undergone major transformation, increasingly recognizing itself as a migration society, yet language, national memory, religion, and cultural belonging remain politically contested fields. In both cases, digital communication expands migrant agency while also generating risks of segmentation, misinformation, digital exclusion, and contested legitimacy.

The theoretical contribution of this article lies in conceptualizing integration as platformed and institutionally mediated. Digital media are not external tools added to migration experience; they are social infrastructures through which identity, trust, memory, and participation are produced. The article extends transnational migration theory by showing how digital communication intensifies simultaneous belonging, and it extends digital sociology by demonstrating that platformed identity is shaped by citizenship regimes, integration policies, and historical narratives.

Empirically and interpretively, the article contributes by comparing two major migrant-receiving democracies with distinct institutional traditions. The analysis shows that digital connectivity alone does not determine inclusion. Its outcomes depend on institutional recognition, language policy, trust in public systems, digital literacy, anti-discrimination protections, and opportunities for civic participation.

The societal implications are clear. Integration policy should move beyond deficit-based

assumptions that treat transnational attachment as a barrier. Governments and civil society institutions should engage multilingual digital networks, support digital literacy, build trusted public communication channels, protect migrants from online harm, and include diasporic histories in public culture. Digital public services should be designed not only for administrative efficiency but for accessibility, dignity, privacy, and trust.

The study has limitations. It relies on secondary and institutional sources rather than original ethnographic fieldwork, and migrant experiences vary substantially by class, race, gender, religion, legal status, generation, and country of origin. Future research should conduct comparative ethnographies of migrant platform use, analyze multilingual digital discourse corpora, examine algorithmic discrimination in public services, and explore digital belonging among second-generation youth.

Ultimately, this article demonstrates that digital society has transformed migration into a new field of social humanities inquiry. The central question is no longer whether migrants belong here or there, but how institutions can recognize, support, and democratically govern the complex forms of belonging that migrants already live.

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