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Goldsmiths, University of London  
The Department of Media and Communications

**‘Doing Nation’ in a Digital Age:  
Banal Expressions of Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism  
in Polymedia Environments among Serbian Londoners**

Sanja Vico

A thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor in Philosophy

London, December 2018

## **Declaration of Authorship**

I, Sanja Vico, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated. The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. Quotation from it is permitted, provided that full acknowledgement is made.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

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## **Abstract**

This thesis looks at how Serbian Londoners negotiate their identities on different digital media platforms, with a particular focus on their ordinary expressions of nationalism and cosmopolitanism. By doing so, it examines whether different platforms invite different identities and whether there is anything culturally specific in the ways my participants engage with digital media. I draw on Madianou and Miller's (2012) concept of polymedia to refer to new media as an integrated environment of communicative opportunities. Following Deutsch (1953), I posit that national identities come into being through everyday communication practices and exist only as long as they are performed. Drawing on work in philosophy and sociology about doing things discursively, I propose to look at practices that 'do nation', and argue that we should think of national identities as a verb: 'doing nation'. To this end, ethnography, including participant-observation, online ethnography and autoethnography, and in-depth interviews were conducted between July 2015 and November 2018 with 40 participants. The results of this study show there is no single Serbian diaspora in London. Three waves of migrants have been identified: 1945-1990, 1990-2003, and 2003-2013. Each wave is diverse in terms of the class, age, gender and experiences of these participants. The findings show that most participants perceive Serbian national identity as stigmatised due to the legacy of the civil war in the 1990s. Most participants hence employ different strategies in polymedia environments in coping with the perceived stigma and redefining what it means to be Serbian. These strategies depend on the period of migration and choice of platform. The analysis further reveals that Facebook and Viber play a prominent role in supporting the diasporic imaginary among my participants. The thesis finally shows how identities are shaped, maintained and transformed through mediated interpersonal communication and different types of mediated co-presence.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

People of my generation, born in Serbia or Montenegro a little before the collapse of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) in 1991, may have lived in four countries without changing the address of their residence. After the collapse of SFRY and the emergence of new republics, the territory of Serbia and Montenegro was called The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) until 2003, when The State Union of Serbia and Montenegro was formed. Following a referendum in May 2006, the citizens of Montenegro voted for independence from Serbia. Given the civil war in the 1990s and the constant changes of the state borders in this region, it comes as no surprise that the Serbs have been deeply divided on the question of their national identity. As Gordy notes, it is not just the recent past that is unsettled – there is also no consensus on the future direction that Serbian society should take (2013, p.x).

Questions of Serbian national identity were complex even before the 1990s (Gordy, 2013, p.38). During and shortly after the Second World War (WWII), people in the region of the former Yugoslavia had been divided into Chetniks and Partizans, the former in support of the monarchy and identifying themselves as Serbs, and the latter backing the real-socialist regime in Yugoslavia and describing themselves as Yugoslavs (Jovic, 2009; Wilmer, 2002; Glenn, 1992). After the fall of Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1990s and a resurgence of nationalism in this region, a new division emerged between the so-called “First” (nationalistic) and “Other” (civic) Serbia (Gordy, 2013; Russell-Omaljev, 2016). The former supported the Milosevic regime and the war, and the latter was against both. The connection between the present and older divisions between communists and Chetniks (royalists) is not clear-cut, because some royalists stood against Milosevic, the war, and the state-controlled media. Some protagonists of the 1990s have changed their position over time, so some actors who constituted part of the pro-democratic opposition became anti-West Eurosceptics (Russell-Omaljev, 2016).

Both wars, especially the civil war in the 1990s, caused a great movement of people from this region to the United Kingdom. There is no official data on the number of Serbs living in Britain, but some estimates suggest about 70,000 Serbs live in Greater London (Serbian Council of Great Britain) – the highest concentration of Serbs in the UK by far (Britic, 2013). Many studies of media and migration have shown diasporas often remain connected to politics and public affairs in their country of origin – although this relationship can be ambivalent – and have argued that the media greatly facilitates this connection (see Anderson, 1992; Dayan, 2002; Georgiou, 2006, 2012; Madianou, 2005; Gillespie, 1995, 2000). Benedict Anderson (1992) famously argued that innovations in communications and transport lie at the roots of long-distance nationalism among diasporas. There are different manifestations of long-distance nationalism (Anderson, 1992), some of which are aimed at destroying regimes in their countries of origin. As one example, Anderson mentions the role of the Croatian diaspora in speeding up the collapse of Yugoslavia (1992, p.12). Other studies, by contrast, demonstrate that the ability to keep up-to-date with current affairs in the country of origin facilitated through the media can actually work against essentialising diasporic identities, where the media acts as an “agent of cultural de-mythologisation” (Robins & Aksoy, 2002, p.10), a term which refers to the role of media in de-romanticising images of the ‘homeland’.

This study is about how Serbian Londoners navigate digital media environments in order to negotiate their identities, with a focus on their banal expressions of nationalism and cosmopolitanism. While the 1990s marked a resurgence of nationalism in Serbia represented by ‘First’ Serbia as the dominant discourse, it was vigorously contested by ‘Other’ Serbia, consisting of some liberal politicians, intellectuals and members of the public who were anti-war, pro-peace, against state-controlled media and propagated civic, cosmopolitan values. More than a decade later, Serbia is in the process of negotiations for EU membership, but the effects of the recent past are profound and lasting. I draw on Stuart Hall’s (1990) understanding of identity as relational – always negotiated *in relation to a specific context*. This approach invites us to consider the context of reception – how Serbian Londoners negotiate their identities in relation to dominant discourses in Britain. In this regard, it should be noted that Britain was an ally of the Serbs and Yugoslavia through

both world wars, although the UK later joined the NATO forces that bombed Yugoslavia in 1999. In the years leading up to the June 2016 EU referendum vote, an anti-immigrant climate has been evident in the UK, particularly directed at Eastern Europeans, as Fox et al.'s (2015) study shows. In 2016, the UK was reported to be the country most concerned with immigration (Ipsos MORI, 2016). Mavra also finds that some Serbian Londoners were discriminated against because they were perceived to be Eastern Europeans (2013, p.29). This context raises the question of how Serbian Londoners express their identity in the context of their everyday lives in the UK, and also in relation to an 'imagined' country of origin. Today, when people inhabit their lives online as much as offline (Madianou, 2014b; Murthy, 2008), it is important to consider how Serbian Londoners perform their identities in digital media environments and whether different digital media platforms invite different identities, and if so, how. This thesis also tries to understand whether there is anything culturally specific in the ways in which my participants engage with digital media and what role mediated interpersonal communication plays in shaping their national and cosmopolitan identities, if any.

To answer this set of research questions I take a bottom-up approach to studying everyday discursive practices through which national and cosmopolitan identities are reproduced. I draw on the concepts of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) and banal or ordinary cosmopolitanism (Skbris & Woodward, 2007; Ong, 2009) that invite consideration of ostensibly mundane practices and symbols that are often taken for granted and overlooked by a casual observer. This includes the way that people decorate their homes, the use of deictic words 'us' and 'ours', or what they eat, what they listen to, ways of seeing, and manners of speaking. As Roger Silverstone contends, "the everyday... [is] a site for significant action... Because in the everyday our lives become meaningful" (1994, p.146). Therefore I study cosmopolitanism as "an identity that is lived and performed in everyday life" (Ong, 2009, p.451), as "a set of practices and dispositions" (Skbris & Woodward, 2007, p.734). This approach recognises that no one is a fully cosmopolitan or at all times, but cosmopolitan identity is also negotiated in relation to a specific context (Skbris & Woodward, 2007, p.735). Drawing on the philosophical tradition of doing things discursively (Austin, 1962; Back & Harnish, 1992; Searle, 1969; Strawson, 1964), I

develop the concept of ‘doing nation’ to argue, following Karl Deutsch (1966 [1953]), that national identities come into being through everyday communication practices and exist only as long as they are performed. As John L. Austin explains, in statements that he refers to as “performatives”, by “saying something we are doing something” (1962, p.120) – for example when a person says ‘I do’ before a registrar, that person is performing the act of marrying (1962, pp.5-7). Likewise, it is through *the small acts of sharing* habits, experiences, memories, preferences, and aesthetic norms with family and friends that the nation becomes alive and meaningful. I argue that much of family practices are also the practices that ‘do nation’, through which a repertoire of dispositions towards the nation is reproduced on a daily basis.

Relationships and interpersonal communication are no longer just maintained face-to-face, but have become significantly mediated, which is particularly the case for migrants. People often employ a variety of digital media platforms in their everyday lives to manage and maintain their relationships. Each platform is often used for different purposes. Thus, by drawing on Mirca Madianou and Daniel Miller’s (2012) concept of polymedia, I move from a platform-specific approach to study all new media as an integrated environment that provides a “menu communicative opportunities”, where the purpose of every platform is defined in relation to all other media available. Madianou and Miller (2012) have developed the concept of polymedia in the context of migration to explain *why* people use one platform over the other, and how they exploit the design and properties of different platforms to manage their family relations at a distance (Madianou, 2014a, 2014b). This concept emerges from a socio-technical approach to technology that recognises there is a mutual shaping between technology and society (Wajcman & McKenzie, 1999). Digital media are not neutral, their design (properties), social norms and intended publics can to some degree shape interactions among their users, enabling certain dynamics and constraining others (Baym, 2010; boyd, 2010; Papacharissi, 2010). Given that identities are relational (Hall, 1990), users may perform their identities differently in relation to different intended publics on various platforms. Although the architecture of digital media can structure interactions among users to some extent, the Internet is not a “placeless” space

(Miller & Slater, 2000, p.4). People are already socially and culturally positioned and they may appropriate different platforms in culturally specific ways.

I conducted ethnographic research over more than a three year period – including traditional participant-observation, online ethnography, auto-ethnography, media maps and in-depth interviews – with 40 Serbian Londoners, all of whom were adults and had lived in the UK for at least two years before this research commenced. The research was carried out between July 2015 and November 2018, with the most intensive fieldwork taking place in the first two years (between July 2015 and July 2017), and thereafter occasional follow-ups with some participants and analysis of their online activities. The sample includes an equal number of men and women aged between 22 and 56 at the time when the research began, comprising first and second generation migrants drawn from a period of migration between 1945 and 2013. Based on the insights of a pilot study, I differentiated between three waves of migration of Serbs to the UK: 1945-1990, 1991-2003, and 2004-2013. These three waves of migration have become the focal point of my analysis, because they were triggered by three major events in the former Yugoslavia – communism, civil war and democratic changes. Hence, participants who arrived in different periods were often motivated to migrate by different factors.

Even though the Serbian community in London is not large compared to some other European groups, such as Poles, it has a lively ‘community’ life, which includes numerous events and festivals – the main one being the Serbian month that runs from mid-January to early March every year, several Serbian organisations and societies, restaurants that provide traditional Serbian food and music, and many networking occasions. Britain and London have been a somewhat peculiar destination for the Serbs. In the years during and following WWII, it was primarily the Yugoslav royal family and state officials who sought refuge in London (Pryke, 2003). Later, in the 1970s and 1980s, London was perceived by most Serbian Londoners as appealing for its quirky cosmopolitan character (Bajic-Hajdukovic, 2008). The number of Serbs in London increased considerably in the 1990s, when many arrived fleeing the war or in order to avoid conscription and the socio-economic downturn as the result of the war. The scale of migration can in some contexts create certain



dynamics. Nina Glick-Schiller (2008) observes that in the case of smaller ethnic groups, more inclusive identities develop. She finds that due to insufficient numbers of Nigerians in Manchester to form their church, a pan-ethnic African identity has become prominent (2008, p.12), whereas among her respondents in Germany religion stands out as the most prominent source of alignment (2008, p.15). Given that identities are contextual (Hall, 1990), as already argued, it can be expected that in some context for some Serbian Londoners a Yugoslav or European identity is more prominent, while in other contexts the Serbian identity can become more pronounced and more exclusive of other identities.

The Serbian community in London has been considerably under studied, particularly among white ethnic minorities more generally (Georgiou, 2006), arguably because, as Gilroy (1987) emphasises, ethnicity has often been associated with race. So far, the literature on the British Serbs or Serbian Londoners in particular has been scarce and has covered only some aspects of this group that I deem important. For instance, Sam Pryke (2003) looks at long-distance nationalism (Anderson, 1992) among British Serbs and focused on the second generation of British Serbs born to the Serbian parents who arrived after 1945. He was primarily concerned with how the Serbian tradition and a sense of national identity were passed down to children. On the other hand, Ivana Bajić-Hajduković (2008) investigates the relationship between Belgrade parents and their migrant children in London, Toronto and Sydney, and considers the question of remittances and kinship. Thus, she does not study the questions of nationalism and cosmopolitanism in particular, and her studied group is confined to a particular segment among London's Serbs and also covers the period until the mid-2000s. While Lidija Mavra's (2010) study of Serbian Londoners explores questions of belonging, cosmopolitanism and ethnicity, it also encompasses the period until the mid-2000s.

However, the period after 2000 and particularly after the mid-2000s in Serbia is considerably different to the period of the 1990s and earlier. On the one hand, Serbia aspires to join the EU, and has started the process of membership negotiations. On the other hand, British visa regulations have become tougher since the mid-2000s, which means that

people from Serbia and most other countries in the region<sup>1</sup> have had a relatively restricted access to the UK. This may mean that only relatively better-off Serbs have been able to come and settle in the UK since the mid-2000s. Gayle Munro (2017) looks at all ethnic groups from the former Yugoslavia in relation to questions of transnationalism. While there are benefits from a comparative perspective, it does not allow for an in-depth analysis of the Serbian socio-historical perspective and the ways in which this could shape their sense of identity and their communication practices.

None of these studies consider the role of media in how Serbian Londoners identify and manage their relationships and lives in Britain. However, as Madianou demonstrates, digital media have become an integral part of migrants' relationships (2014b, p.667). Many studies, as already mentioned, have further demonstrated an important role for various media in sustaining and supporting national and cosmopolitan identities in relation to the diasporic context (see Anderson, 1992; Conversi, 2012; Georgiou, 2006; Gillepsie, 1995; Greschke, 2013; Miller & Slater, 2000; Miller, 2011). The Internet and digital media have often been hailed as 'cosmopolitanising' because they can facilitate encounters across borders between people from different cultural backgrounds, and it is understood that this can enhance reflexivity and the understanding of the other (Beck, 2002, 2006; Hannerz, 2006). As Beck emphasises, cosmopolitanism implies '*dialogic* imagination', which happens at "the clash of cultures and rationalities within one's own life, the '*internalized* other'" (2002, p.18). At the same time, people may create ethnic-based online communities, which may foster diasporic identities and networks (Greschke, 2013).

It is important to study *both* cosmopolitan and national identities in the context of Serbian Londoners for at least two main reasons. First, this analytical framework allows us to understand discourses on Serbian identity. While violent expressions of nationalism marked the period of the 1990s in the region of the former Yugoslavia, in parallel there was a smaller but vocal and proactive liberal part of the public and intelligentsia in Serbia, particularly in Belgrade, who were proponents of civic and cosmopolitan values. Second,

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<sup>1</sup> Only Slovenia (since 2004) and Croatia (since 2013) among the former Yugoslav republics had become members of the EU by the time of the writing.

the cosmopolitan perspective accounts for diversity of migrant experiences of the same origin (Glick-Schiller, 2008, p.10) and the extent to which migrants indeed “develop cross-cultural competences and no longer have a sense of primary national identity”, as Triandafyllidou argues (2006, p.291; cf. Hall, 2008, p.350). This perspective then also provides a counterbalance to methodological nationalism (Beck, 2007) and methodological ethnicism (Wimmer & Glick-Schiller, 2002; Glick-Schiller 2008), which refer to favouring nation states or ethnic groups as central units of analysis. When nationality or ethnicity shapes the lens through which scholars study migrant settlements, it consequently reproduces nationalist and ethnic paradigms. On the other hand, following Glick-Schiller (2008) and completely abandoning an ethnic group focused approach, would neglect the specific socio-political and historical context of Serbian Londoners that to some degree shapes their experiences and identities, and importantly, helps better understand some unremarkable and ordinary communication practices.

The results of this study indicate, as Delanty (2006) argues, that (liberal) nationalism and cosmopolitanism are not necessarily antagonistic. In fact, originally, both nationalism and cosmopolitanism were predicated on the values of difference, civil rights and freedom (Delanty, 2006). As this thesis shows, most research participants strategically employ various platforms to redefine their identities, whereby some participants also strive to reconcile the two apparent opposites: national and cosmopolitan identities. To describe some of these strategies and identity politics I develop the term ‘globalised difference’ to reflect the endeavours of some of my participants to present themselves as both different and similar to the world, both Serbian and cosmopolitan. Therefore this thesis questions Billig’s (1995) premise of banal nationalism as unnoticed and subconscious manifestations, and demonstrates that for some people in some contexts, banal symbols of nation can also become a matter of strategic efforts and no less effective in its consequences because of its strategic character. This thesis further shows how these strategies depend on the choice of platform and the period of migration.

Some practices of my participants may, however, be quite ordinary and defined as banal cosmopolitanism, confirming that ethnicity is also relational and contextual, not a matter of

some fixed characteristics or attributes (see Giddens, 2001; Young, 2011 [1990]). On the other hand, this study shows how Serbian Londoners connect and reconnect with each other on Facebook, forming layers of neighbourhoods which in turn reinforce their diasporic imaginary, but also in most cases reproduce differences among the participants who arrived in different periods. Because of the diverse experiences among my participants, and drawing on Rogers Brubaker's (2005) definition of diaspora as a stance, I define diaspora as 'a relational stance' to account for the dynamism, nuances and contextuality of diasporic identity as observed in the fieldwork. The thesis finally shows how my participants 'do nation' discursively through family practices and overall mediated interpersonal communication with strong ties. Many celebrations have both familial and cultural characteristics, such as *slava*, patron saint of family day. This is celebrated as both a family and religious holiday, and is also specific to Serbian culture. Likewise, many other mundane aspects such as food and jokes that are culturally specific, even the mere presence of some people, can invoke common *associations* and *recall* common experiences which may induce mutual understanding (see Deutsch, 1966 [1953]) and may bind people together, creating a sense of belonging and unity.

## **1.2 Outline of all chapters**

Chapter 2 theorises national and cosmopolitan identity to provide a theoretical framework for the analysis of the research findings in subsequent chapters. It first unpacks some of the key concepts of this thesis, such as diaspora, ethnicity, origins and meanings of nationalism and cosmopolitanism to position this research in relation to different approaches in the field. This chapter draws on Hall's (1990) understanding of identity as relational and always in process. In line with this, following Brubaker's definition of diaspora as stance or a "category of practice" (2005, p.12), the chapter proposes a definition of diaspora as a 'relational stance' to consider that migrants of the same origin in one country may not express all diasporic attributes either ever or at all times. Hence, this stance is not only a matter of degrees but of contextuality as well. Diaspora has often been associated with ethnicity. However, ethnicity is understood as a difference in relation to someone else, rather than a set of fixed attributes that only some people have, such as a diaspora (see

Giddens, 2001, Young 2011 [1990]). This understanding of ethnicity challenges the primordialist approach which posits there is a natural continuity between ethnicity and national identities. Instead, this chapter takes the modernist-constructivist approach to the origins of nations, which argues that nationalisms precede nations and that certain socio-cultural conditions need to be met for the nation to come into being. By drawing on Deutsch (1966 [1953]) and the philosophical tradition of doing things discursively, I propose the concept of ‘doing nation’ to argue that the nation comes into being and is reproduced through everyday communication practices and can exist as long as it is performed discursively. Accordingly, this chapter takes the bottom-up approach to studying cosmopolitanisms and nationalism as a set of practices and dispositions. It draws upon the concepts of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) and ordinary or banal cosmopolitanism (Woodward & Skribis, 2007; Ong, 2009) to analyse how these identities are negotiated in relation to specific contexts and everyday practices that reproduce national and cosmopolitan identities. This chapter also sheds light on the role of media in the context of migrants’ identities, but this topic is explored further in the following chapter.

Chapter 3 theorises the role of media in the context of migration and identities. This chapter discusses Madianou and Miller’s (2012) concept of polymedia, which is central to this thesis. Following Madianou and Miller (2012), it argues that in everyday life people employ a plethora of different platforms for different purposes where these new media create an integrated environment of communicative opportunities (Madianou & Miller, 2012). This concept emerges from the socio-technical approach and is developed in the context of migration to explain how migrants manage their family relationships at a distance. The chapter positions the thesis within a wider debate on the approach to communication technologies by taking both a socio-technical and a domestication approach to communication technologies. These approaches recognise that digital media are not neutral and that their affordances may shape interactions among users, but also that users can shape the digital media by adding new meanings to it and appropriate it in culturally specific ways. In the context of the debate on affordances, the chapter also discusses social or lateral surveillance (Andrejevic, 2005; Marwick, 2012) as one of the key characteristics of social media. In this regard, following Erving Goffman’s (1959) concept of self-

presentation in everyday life, the chapter discusses the role of intended audiences in the ways in which my participants perform their identities and what implications these may have in relation to identity performances on social media. Having discussed the roles of affordances and intended audiences, following Daniel Miller and Don Slater (2000), the chapter argues that we need to understand how particular digital media are used in a specific location within a specific cultural milieu, because the Internet is not a placeless space. People often use the Internet in accordance with their cultural norms and identity. This section of the chapter provides a better understanding of the findings, particularly in Chapter 6, and makes sense of some apparently quite ordinary and unremarkable practices among my participants. But to better understand how these cultural practices are reproduced the chapter finally looks at mediated interpersonal communication and explains the concepts of mediated co-presence, connected presence (Licoppe, 2004) and ambient co-presence (Madianou, 2016), as the analytical framework for discussing the findings, particularly in Chapter 8.

Chapter 4 provides the rationale for the research design and explains how the study was conducted. It provides detailed description of how each method was employed – ethnography and online ethnography, autoethnography, in-depth interviews, and media maps – as well as challenges that were encountered, how they were dealt with, and particularly addresses the criticism of the autoethnography and argues why it was nevertheless a legitimate method. In this chapter, I also reflect on my role as a researcher and explain how I managed to keep a critical distance. The chapter also explains the sampling process – who the participants are and how they were recruited. It then outlines how the pilot study was conducted and what the outcomes were, followed by a discussion of how the collected data was analysed, along with a consideration of research ethics.

Chapter 5 introduces the empirical findings and provides the historical perspective of who Serbian Londoners are to contextualise the subsequent debate on communication practices and identities of my participants. It starts with an overview of the Serbs in London, by delineating where they live, where they come from, what their experiences are, their demographic characteristics, and their organisations, institutions and societies. The chapter

argues there is no one single Serbian community in London: Serbian Londoners are dispersed across London and their experiences and backgrounds are remarkably diverse. This chapter identifies three waves of migrations – 1945-1990, 1990-2003, and 2004-2013 – and describes each of the waves, explaining their motives for migration, their personal backgrounds and characteristics, and depicting their everyday lives in London. The chapter then specifically addresses class backgrounds because the class has often been referred to as a central point of differentiating between migrants’ experiences (Colic-Peisker, 2008) and this question also comes up in other studies on Serbian Londoners (Bajic-Hajdukovic, 2008; Mavra, 2010). By juxtaposing personal stories of my participants, this chapter argues that their class backgrounds are rather complicated and that traditional categories of migrants are not entirely applicable to my participants. The findings also demonstrate the important role of London in how my participants identify, so the chapter finally discusses how London is perceived among Serbian Londoners and why they are attracted to this city. The chapter concludes that, despite many lines of differences among the participants from the three waves, what they all have in common is an orientation to the Serbian identity – although what it means to be Serbian may differ among them significantly.

The purpose of Chapter 6 is to show how my participants navigate polymedia environments to negotiate their identities in relation to dominant discourses in the UK. The chapter finds that most participants perceive Serbian identity as stigmatised due to the legacy of the 1990s. They then employ different strategies in coping with the perceived stigma and to redefine what it means to be Serbian. The chapter identifies two dominant discursive strategies. By drawing on Goffman’s (1963) sociological analysis of social stigma and Rebecca Adler-Nissen’s (2014) theory of stigma in international relations, this chapter argues that these discursive strategies represent ‘destigmatisation strategies’ and they can be defined as “stigma recognition” and “counter-stigmatisation” (Adler-Nissen, 2014). The strategies depend on the period of migration and the choice of platform. Banal cosmopolitanism is a manifestation of stigma recognition strategy often adopted by the third wave participants and some second wave participants, whereas banal nationalism is a manifestation of both strategies, adopted by most participants, but differently framed. The chapter then highlights the role of social surveillance on social media (Marwick, 2012) in

the ways in which my participants employ these two strategies, and on this basis, it distinguishes between publicly (such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) and privately (such as Viber, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger) oriented platforms, whereby strategies employed on the former are aimed at correcting national identity and on the latter lead to reinforcing it. The chapter also discusses the discourses of identity in ‘First’ and ‘Other’ Serbia and the emergent phenomenon of ‘Third’ Serbia, arguing that stigma recognition is the strategy of ‘Other’ and ‘Third’ Serbia, whereas counter-stigmatisation is the strategy of ‘First’ Serbia. The chapter also identifies the emerging form of identity politics that I term as ‘globalised difference’ among third wave and some second wave participants and traces the oscillations (Madianou, 2005) between ‘globalised difference’ and ‘being globalised’ – the “neoliberal celebration of difference” (Georgiou, 2013). This chapter focused on identity performances on publicly oriented platforms, while Chapter 7 looks at both privately and publicly oriented platforms, and Chapter 8 at privately oriented platforms.

The purpose of Chapter 7 is to further show how Serbian Londoners navigate polymedia environments, looking at nuances in practices on all different platforms and how they employ these platforms to manage their strong, weak and latent ties (Haythornthwaite, 2002). The chapter first juxtaposes two portraits for each of the three waves to illustrate how my participants navigate polymedia environments and to reflect on general findings on which platforms my participants use and for what purposes. Having done this, the chapter focuses on the role of Facebook and Viber. It argues that Facebook represents new neighbourhoods. Through social surveillance on this SNS, my participants are aware of the existence and everyday lives of other Serbian Londoners, often from the same wave, which would not have otherwise been made possible given the dispersion of the Serbs in London. The chapter then argues that Viber represents an important symbolic marker of belonging, similar to that of satellite television in Madianou’s (2005) study of Turkish diaspora in Athenes, but rather visible to the insider than the outsider. This chapter also tries to answer whether Anderson’s concept of long-distance nationalism can be applied to the context of everyday life and Serbian Londoners’ communication practices, and/or whether the digital media in the context of this research has a similar role of an “agent of cultural de-



mythologisation” of the Turkish satellite television in the study by Robins and Aksoy (2000).

Chapter 8 closely considers identity performances on privately oriented media that are employed primarily in maintaining strong ties, which often leads to reinforcing national identity. This chapter argues that national identities are also reproduced through family practices and shows how my participants ‘do nation’ transnationally through family practices. It considers the role of mediated interpersonal communication in ‘doing nation’, focusing on four interrelated elements – different types of mediated co-presence, ritual and phatic communication, and micro-coordination. It shows how all these practices can recall common experiences in a variety of ways that can often be national as much as familial. This chapter also shows that some practices are also manifestations of banal cosmopolitanism, thus reconfirming the arguments in Chapter 2 that migrant experiences should not solely be analysed through the prism of ethnicity. But it also argues that most of social networking sites (SNS) rather act as an agent of “cultural thickening” (Lofgren, 1995) than “an agent of cultural de-mythologisation” (Robins & Aksoy, 2000).

Chapter 9 synthesises the main findings and arguments of the thesis with the concluding remarks aimed at elucidating how these insights answer the research questions outlined in Chapter 3. This chapter also aims to explain how this thesis contributes to the wider understanding of identities and the digital media in the context of Serbian Londoners, and more generally to the existing theories in the field. It also reflects on the value of a qualitative (ethnographic) approach while it also takes into account its limitations and how they may have impacted on the results.

## Chapter 2: National and Cosmopolitan Identities

This thesis explores how Serbian Londoners navigate digital media environments to negotiate their identities, with a focus on their banal expressions of nationalism and cosmopolitanism. It also examines whether different platforms invite different identities and whether there is anything culturally specific to how Serbian Londoners engage with digital media. It finally considers the role of mediated interpersonal communication in shaping national and cosmopolitan identities. To answer these research questions, I draw on Hall's (1990) understanding of identity as relational and an unfinished conversation, and in line with this I take a bottom-up approach to studying banal nationalism and banal cosmopolitanism as identities performed and negotiated in relation to particular contexts. Tracing the shifts from banal nationalism to banal cosmopolitanism in relation to different contexts, I develop the concept of 'doing nation' to argue, following Deutsch (1966 [1953]) and the philosophical tradition of doing things with words (Austin, 1962), that the nation becomes alive and meaningful through everyday discursive practices – small acts of sharing experiences, habits, and memories. Hence, I argue that, rather than thinking of the nation in static terms, the nation should be thought of as a verb – 'doing nation' – because its existence depends on continuous performativity.

Given that this thesis is about the Serbian diaspora in London, before proceeding to discuss national and cosmopolitan identities, this chapter first tackles the concept of diaspora. Literature on migration exists, but this thesis aims to rethink the concept of diaspora so that it not only refers to 'permanently settled' but also to recent migrants. In line with Hall's (1990) understanding of identity as relational, by following Brubaker's (2005) notion of diaspora as a stance (which refers to diasporic practices and a set of characteristics), I propose a definition of diaspora as a 'relational stance' in order to argue that this stance is not only a matter of degrees but also a matter of contextuality. Diasporas have often been associated with ethnic groups. However, ethnicity is also understood as a relational difference rather than a set of fixed attributes that only some people have – such as diasporas. As this chapter argues, many of those who constitute one diaspora may also

express cosmopolitan identities. The chapter then considers the origins and types of nationalism and cosmopolitanism to position this research within a wider debate. The chapter draws on the modernist-constructivist approach to national identity that understands nations as constructs brought about through certain socio-historical changes rather than originating from a natural continuity based on a common ethnicity. It also argues that nationalism (in its original manifestations) and cosmopolitanism have a common foundation – the values of difference, civil rights and freedom (Delanty, 2006). The chapter finally elucidates the concepts of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) and banal or ordinary cosmopolitanism (Skrbis & Woodward, 2007; Ond, 2009). By doing so, it questions whether the concept of banal nationalism is applicable to the case of Serbia (Spasic, 2017), and whether the normative dimension of cosmopolitanism can be eliminated, considering what distinguishes banal cosmopolitanism from globalism.

## **2.1 Unpacking the key concepts: diaspora, ethnicity, nationalism and cosmopolitanism**

### **2.1.1 Diaspora**

The concept of diaspora has evolved over time. First, diaspora was primarily understood in relation to *an orientation to a homeland*; it was then used to refer to organised forms of transnational migrant communities actively involved in homeland politics, what Anderson (1992) termed long-distance nationalism. More recently, diaspora has been used to refer to “*labour migrants who maintain (to some degree) emotional and social ties with a homeland*”, and has eventually come to encompass *all migrant communities* that are to some extent *dispersed in space* (Brubaker, 2005, pp.2-3, emphasis added). The predominant understanding of diaspora is one that entails three elements: “dispersion in space”, “orientation to a ‘homeland’”, and “boundary-maintenance” (Brubaker, 2005, pp.2-3). Orientation to a homeland and the practices of boundary maintenance often involve a “collective memory or myth about the homeland”, the longing for the homeland as an ideal place and the notion of *return* (Bhachu, 1995, p.224; Bhachu, 1993), engagement in homeland affairs and other expressions of solidarity and loyalty (Safran, 1991, pp.83-84).

According to this understanding, a diaspora is mainly seen as a stable social formation (permanently settled) and migration is experienced as ‘estrangement’ and ‘loss’ (see Ahmed, 1999).

[Diasporas are] made up of people from different cultural backgrounds, who have been *obliged* to live somewhere else but who remain in some deep ways also *connected to their homes*, cultures and places of origin, and consequently develop what I would call a *diasporic form of consciousness and way of life*... They are what, following the Jamaican anthropologist, David Scott, we should call ‘conscripts of global modernity’.

(Hall, 2008, p.347, emphasis added)

However, I question this traditional understanding of diaspora, because if identity is to be understood as relational, then diasporic identity has to be understood in the same way, as the following discussion explains further. As Hall’s definition of diaspora shows, debates on mobility are often centred on the dualism between sedentarist and nomadic perspectives. From a sedentarist perspective “culture depends on stability, rootedness, and continuity”, hence this perspective tends to perceive every mobility as inauthentic, alienating and uprooting (Morley, 2017, pp.59-60). The problem with this position is that identities, cultures, and communities are not necessarily or solely confined by geographically-bounded places (Morley, 2017, p.61), but importantly exist through *sharing* a set of practices and common experiences, as will be argued further in this chapter. The meanings of identities and cultures also become renegotiated in the context of migration. This means that for some of my research participants, migration may be voluntary and even desired, but at the same time they may preserve some ‘national practices’, such as discussing Serbian history over the phone with their left-behind parents or sharing recipes of traditional Serbian dishes. A nomadic perspective, on the other hand, tends to idealise all forms of mobility as cosmopolitan, progressive and emancipatory (Deluze & Guattari, 2010 [1987]), but fails to consider the character of the migration; under what conditions people migrate (Morley, 2017, p.62); and what people make out of their migration – the life they have in

their host societies and whether this indeed helps them develop “cross-cultural competencies” (Triandafyllidou, 2006, p.291).

Types of migrancy that are seen as fluid, temporary, ordinary and welcome are attributed different names to differentiate them from the term diaspora. James Wood (2014), for instance, calls this kind of migration “homelooseness”. I contend that the distinction between diaspora and other migrants (“homelooseners”) is flawed and may lead to essentialising identities, and I argue that there is a need to look beyond the sedentarist-nomadic binary. Not all members of one diaspora will express all defining characteristics of diaspora in all contexts or to the same degree. Some members of the Serbian diaspora in London may be permanently settled, organised, and connected to their homeland and foster a collective memory about it, yet they may neither experience migration as “estrangement” and “loss” (Ahmed, 1999), nor express the notion of return (Bhachu, 1995). On the other hand, other members of this diaspora may not be involved in community activities and may not express “a diasporic form of consciousness and way of life” (Hall, 2008, p.347), but at the same time they may be actively engaged in homeland politics and manifest a longing for the homeland as an ideal place. Others may not express any of these characteristics, yet they may occasionally go to church, for example at Christmas, and tend to socialise with people of the same ethnic origins, as further explored in Chapter 5.

I therefore aim to rethink the concept of diaspora by drawing on the research findings and analysis in subsequent chapters. I do not argue that there are no differences among people of one diaspora in terms of their migration experiences and ways of life. As Kevin Robins notes, “new logic of migration” can be identified today, whereby “Chinese merchants in Hungary do business in Budapest, but may be planning to retire in the United States” (2008, p.53). Most empirical studies of diasporas have shown how diverse they can be, as well as their varying degrees and modalities of relationships with their country of origin or that of their ancestors (see Miller, 2011). “Studies of what researchers often call ethnic ‘communities’ document divisions based on class, gender, generation, religion, region of origin, or politics among members of the ‘same’ group” (Glick-Schiller, 2008, p.3), and this is in line with the approach to national identity and national culture that this thesis

draws upon. As will be explained further below, national cultures are not a homogenous and coherent whole, thus it is wrong to assume that “nations possess some core values shared by most citizens” (Bonikowski, 2017, p.148).

The traditional definition of diaspora that includes “dispersion in space”, “orientation to a ‘homeland’”, and “boundary-maintenance” (Brubaker, 2005, pp.2-3), if strictly adhered to, excludes a number of groups (see Clifford, 1994). Hence, I argue that these elements, although relevant, should be understood in terms of *degrees, modalities and contextualities* of belonging. Rogers Brubaker proposes the definition of *diaspora as a stance*, rather than a bounded group (2005, p.12). This means that diaspora should be thought of as “a category of practice” where “‘diaspora’ is used to make claims, to articulate projects, to formulate expectations, to mobilize energies, to appeal to loyalties” (Brubaker, 2005, p.12). This approach allows for dynamism, process, change and nuance. However, Brubaker privileges an “active” stance or “committed” diasporas over the so-called “dormant” diasporas. This is again problematic because diasporic identity needs to be understood as relational and contextual. In some contexts and in relation to one set of issues some members of the diaspora may be more active than others, and vice versa. Therefore, I posit that diasporas should be understood as *a relational stance*. In this thesis, I draw upon the understanding of *diaspora as a relational stance* to refer to all migrants who share some common cultural practices in some contexts. This approach to diaspora first requires that I identify which cultural practices my research participants share, and then analyse how these cultural practices are communicated and shared through various digital media platforms, and whether different platforms invite different identity performances. Diasporas are often associated with ethnic groups; however, as the next section argues, ethnicity is not a set of stable attributes that only people who belong to a diaspora have, but a relational difference that anyone may have.

### **2.1.2 Ethnicity**

Ethnicity refers to the cultural practices and different learned (not innate) characteristics that make a group appear to be ‘culturally distinct’ to both themselves and others. These

characteristics usually include: language, history or ancestry (real or imagined), customs, cuisine, and lifestyle (Giddens, 2001, p.246). Ethnicity is most often used to refer to minority groups, *to label* anyone who is not adhering to the standards or practices of the majority population, and thus has a derogatory connotation (Giddens, 2001, pp.248-249). The key aspect of ethnic minorities understood in this way is *a sense of group solidarity* and *belonging* together, and they usually tend to be disadvantaged in relation to the majority population (Giddens, 2001, p.248). This experience of marginalisation or subordination sometimes leads to what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1987) terms “strategic essentialism”, which refers to mobilisation and strengthening of their identity as a strategy for subverting the politics of discrimination and claiming political recognition.

As Pratsinakis points out, a great deal of research on migration has tended to reproduce this image of an ethnic group, according to which “normal life” implies that people are supposed to stay in their nation-states. Pratsinakis observes that: “no sooner do immigrants arrive in the ‘host society’ than they are turned into ‘ethnics’ and scrutinised for ‘their’ cultural and social difference, especially if they are of lower class standing” (2017, p.97). This analytical framework has meant that most researchers have either studied levels of integration into a host society among ethnic groups or their relationships with the country of origin (Glick-Schiller, 2008, p.2). However, ethnicity is not an attribute that only certain segments of one population have (Giddens, 2001, p.248), because *everyone is just as specific as anyone else* (Young, 2011 [1990], p.171). Particularity and distinctiveness are not just attributes of minority groups – those who belong to the mainstream or the majority population are also particular, but they impose their standards as universal – standards against which everyone else is assessed (Young, 2011 [1990], pp.164-171). As Young notes, “difference thus emerges not as a description of the attributes of a group, but as function of the relation between groups and the interaction of groups with institutions” (ibid., p.171).

This relational character of difference can explain the shifting nature of insiders and outsiders over time, and thus who is considered an ethnic minority, as mentioned in Chapter 1. Reflecting on his own position as an ethnographer, Gerd Baumann makes a

significant point in this respect: “living in England as a German national, I was not assigned to a German ‘ethnic group’. Most white English people would be upset if they found themselves designated as an ‘ethnic group’, rather than ‘the population’” (1996, p.19). Similarly, Giddens (2001) notes, people from Indian descent were viewed as ethnic whereas people from Polish descent were not. In this sense, it can be argued that ethnicity was intrinsically related to race, as Gilroy contends (1987). This has arguably changed today, whereby some long-settled Asian Britons may feel they are more entitled UK residents than some recent Polish and other Eastern European migrants, which is, for instance, evident among the BAME members of UKIP, who are minority members themselves (Morley, 2017, p.137). Ethnicity is not static (Giddens, 2001, p.247), and people often adapt their traditions to a new context. Giddens notes, for instance, that Irish-Americans celebrate St. Patrick’s Day in an American manner. This understanding of ethnicity then challenges the discourses on national identity, which posit that nations are based on ethnicity and assumes a nation to be a coherent whole, as the next section further discusses.

### **2.1.3 On the origins and meanings of nationalism**

The term ‘nation’ derives from the Latin word *nasci*, which means to be born, and was first used in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. *Natio* then means a group of people united by *the place of birth* (Heywood, 1992, p.168). Hence, in its original meaning, nations were mainly associated with geography – where a person is *from*, in contrast to *what* experiences they have had. In line with my approach to diaspora, I also aim to question this understanding of national identity in *territorial terms* and to interrogate whether *cultural experience* that enables symbolic boundary maintenance may be a more important aspect of national identity. This is especially important in the context of this empirical study of Serbian Londoners. What is the homeland for Serbs from the former Yugoslavia? Before the fall of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, Serbs were spread all around the country, and after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, some cities and areas in Bosnia and Croatia, for instance, continue to be predominantly populated by Serbs. For some Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly Serbs in Republika Srpska, Serbia may be perceived as a



homeland, but this may not be the case for all Serbs dispersed across the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

Nationalism as an ideology or discourse and nations in modern terms emerged in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century with the French revolution, when the ordinary people stood up against the crown (Heywood, 1992, p.169). There are several interpretations of how and, importantly, why nationalism and nations were brought about at this specific time. These can be categorised as primordialism, modernism and constructivism (Heywood, 1992, pp.175-177). *Primordialism* is an umbrella concept that encompasses several approaches, such as socio-biological, perennialist and ethnosymbolist, that understand nations as based on ethnicity, and posit that there is a natural or organic continuity between nations and ethnic groups (Appadurai, 1996; Madianou, 2005). While socio-biological tradition is quite distinct, as it assumes kinship and natural ties between ethnicity and nations, I argue that there is a thin or almost non-existent line between perennialists and ethnosymbolists. Both perennialists and ethnosymbolists claim that there is a primordial attachment or *continuity* between ethnic group and nations, but neither position sees this attachment as natural. One of the most eminent proponents of ethnosymbolist tradition is Anthony Smith, who defines Western nations as “a community of laws and institutions” (1991, p.10) tied to “historic territory” or a *homeland*. Furthermore, according to Smith, nations depend on *shared memories, a sense of continuity and a sense of common destiny, or historical experience* (Smith, 1990, pp.179-180).

What Smith overlooks is that people have to be constantly *reminded of* their shared memories of past events and a sense of common destiny, and he does not discuss the importance of *modes in which the nation is flagged*, that is the ways in which people are reminded of the nation. This approach to nations also excludes a number of people who were not born in the country of their residence, or whose ancestors have different origins, but they may still feel attached to the country in which they live. In this sense, Smith implicitly denies the possibility of ethnic minorities in the UK feeling British. He also overestimates the ability of common laws and institutions to induce common imagining. Primordialists also incorrectly assume that conflicts between different ethnic groups are

inevitable (Huntington, 1996; Kaplan, 1994), thus they ‘de-politicise’ these conflicts (Madianou, 2005, p.11). The primordialists’ thesis comes up short in explaining a number of ongoing international conflicts and tensions, such as between Greeks and Macedonians, or Greek support of Palestinians. As Madianou points out, the latter, like the Greek-Serbian allegiance (especially during the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia<sup>2</sup> in 1999), should rather be interpreted through anti-Americanism, which originates from American interference in the domestic affairs of these countries (2005, p.94).

In the discussion that follows I draw on *modernist* and *constructivist* approaches to understanding the origins and meanings of national identity. These two related approaches recognise the importance of *the modes in which nations come into being and in which they are being reproduced*. Modernists posit that a national identity is brought about in relation to certain *socio-economic changes* (Heywood, 1992, p.177), such as the emergence of the 18<sup>th</sup> century novels written in vernacular languages and the press – what Anderson (1983) calls ‘print capitalism’. A number of studies have demonstrated that the media plays an important role in creating a sense of belonging to a shared national culture. For instance, Morley notes that the role of broadcasting in evoking “a past in common” and thus “constructing the conditions of viable membership of the ‘national community’” is vital (1992, p.267). In this context, the media’s role in sustaining diasporic identity has also been discussed (see Anderson, 1992; Dayan, 2002), although this does not necessarily reproduce one homogenous diaspora and this relationship between the media and diaspora may also be dependent on context and media (Georgiou, 2006, 2012; Madianou, 2005; Gillespie, 1995, 2000). Marie Gillespie argues that “transnational networks of media and communication are undoubtedly sustaining diaspora formations and enhancing a sense of diaspora consciousness” (2000, p.166).

Anderson (1992) famously states that innovations in communications and transport have enabled long-distance nationalism, as they allowed easier ways for migrants to travel ‘home’ and to stay tuned and active in political life of their ‘homeland’ on a daily basis. Anderson gives an example of a middle-aged man of Punjab Sikh origins, a successful

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<sup>2</sup> The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia at the time, which consisted of Serbia and Montenegro.

businessman who has been a citizen of Toronto for a long time, but who is also wholeheartedly supporting and sponsoring the movement of Khalistan in India: “He doesn’t participate substantially in Canadian political life: instead he lives, *through e-mail*, by long-distance nationalism” (Anderson, 1992, p.11, emphasis added). Although he has no intention of returning back to India, and despite the fact that he has no legal obligations to this country, it is precisely this kind of politics “that contributes so substantially to making ‘being Sikh’ in Toronto a serious affair” (Anderson, 1992, p.11). Anderson also recognises the importance of a wider socio-cultural context in which media consumption and communication practices take place, because communication practices are often contingent on these contexts. Ethnic minorities are not always socially well accepted, and may often be politically and economically subordinated, all of which can contribute to their longing for their homeland (Anderson, 1992, p.9). Ong and Cabanes explain that some elite Filipino migrants in the UK employ various new media to engage in homeland politics and public affairs also as a result of “feelings of alienation, rejection and exclusion” in the UK (2011, p.212). Also, the juxtaposition of people in a metropolis who arrive in great numbers from all over the world – carrying with them passports of different nation-states, which Anderson describes as their “international identity card” – contributes to their imagining themselves in national terms. Hence, communication technologies enable rather than determine people’s behaviour and identities, as will be argued in Chapter 3.

In a similar vein, constructivists posit that *nationalisms precede nations*. As Eric J. Hobsbawm, one of constructivism’s main proponents, claims: “nations do not make states and nationalisms, but the other way round” (1992 [1990], p.10). He further argues that the question of national identity lies at the “intersection of politics, technology and social transformation” and it cannot be understood “unless also analysed *from below*, that is in terms of assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people, which are not necessarily national and still less nationalist” (ibid., emphasis added). Similarly, Deutsch (1966 [1953]) states that it is through shared cultural and communication practices that boundaries are created, recreated and maintained that makes national identities possible. As he emphasises, “Societies produce, select and channel goods and services. *Cultures produce, select, and channel information*” (Deutsch, 1966 [1953], p.92).

Following Deutsch (1966 [1953]), I contend that we need to consider everyday communication practices through which experiences, habits, norms, aesthetics and memories are shared and reproduced. “The community which permits a common history to be experienced as common, is a community of complementary habits and facilities of communications” (Deutsch, 1966 [1953], p.96), which means that rather than being created by some sudden external forces, or through a natural continuity based on a common ethnic origin, “peoples are held together ‘from within’ by this communicative efficiency” (1966 [1953], p.98). This argument provides an alternative to Smith’s arguments on the origins of nations. According to Deutsch, the Swiss have four official languages and may have different ethnic origins, but are still able to act as one nation, and may feel they have more in common with their fellow compatriots than with other nations who speak their language. This is because they communicate more effectively their common experiences, such as learned habits, events in history, and taste preferences (Deutsch, 1966, p.97).

It is also important to highlight that *nations are not static* – they come into being through communication practices and they exist only insofar as they are performed (cf. Baumann, 1996, p.11). By drawing on philosophical and sociological traditions of doing things discursively (Austin, 1962; Back & Harnish, 1992; Bourdieu, 1992; Butler, 1988, 1997; Searle, 1969; Strawson, 1964), I argue that the nation should be understood as a verb – ‘doing nation’. John Langshaw Austin suggests that “in saying something we are doing something” (1962, p.12). He explains that not all utterances or statements describe or report something, and are neither true nor false, but rather “felicitous” or “infelicitous” based on whether or not they are effective. In some statements, an individual does not state what they are doing, but by saying it, they are doing it (Austin, 1962, p.6). “The uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action” (Austin, 1962, p.5), and these are called “performative sentences” or “a performative” (Austin, 1962, p.7). For instance, when a couple says ‘I do’ in the course of getting married, they are not reporting on a marriage, but they are performing an action of marrying, thus “to marry is to say a few words” (Austin, 1962, pp.5-7).

David H. Morgan argues that families are what families do (2011, p.37). Therefore, family should be understood in terms of a set of activities through which it becomes realised or actualised. These are ordinary, unremarkable practices that happen regularly on a daily basis (Morgan, 2011, pp.5-7). As Madianou emphasises in relation to her study of family relationships between Filipino mothers in the UK and their left-behind children in the Philippines, “families ‘come into being’ by acts of calling and messaging which are ‘fragments of daily life’” (2016, p.3). Engaging in these practices means *recognition* that “the set of people... are *distinguishable as family* and not as friends, colleagues, neighbours or whatever”, and “a sense of family is itself reconstituted through engaging in these practices” (Morgan, 2011, p.10, emphasis added). In the same vein, nations exist only through *the acts of sharing* habits, memories, preferences, and aesthetic norms. It is such banal communication practices that ‘do nation’ on a daily basis (cf. Deutsch, 1966 [1953]; Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008, p.537; Morley & Robins, 2002; Skey, 2011; Sumartojo, 2017, p.199). I argue that these national practices are implicated in different spheres of life that may not immediately be thought of as belonging to the national domain (cf. Morgan, 1996, pp.194-199), such as in mediated interpersonal relationships (like talking with a family through FaceTime). It is also important to recognise that national identities are not a mere trick of the imagination – besides people’s agency, these “practices are [also] historically constituted” (Morgan, 1996, p.189). There are social structures within which these practices are performed, and that may enable and constrain such practices (Morgan, 2011, p.7).

In this sense, Bourdieu rightly points out that the power of words cannot be found in the words themselves but rather in social relations and wider social structure, because language is socially conditioned (1992, p.107). He argues that “the illocutionary force” of “performatives” is only “*indicated* or, *represented*” in words, and adds: “the power of words is nothing other than the *delegated power* of the spokesperson” (1992, p.107, emphasis in original). These speech acts, regardless of how personal and banal they may be, take place between individuals who are socially positioned, hence these communicative acts also reproduce social structure (Thompson, 1992, p.2). Austin does posit that the success of “performatives” depends on *reception* or “*uptake*” of the intended meanings (1962, p.115). Kent Bach and Robert M. Harnish also emphasise that ordinary

performatives succeed if “one's audience infers one's communicative intention” (1992, p.94). But, as Bourdieu (1992) argues, these philosophers of linguistics do not fully acknowledge that felicity of a performative is socially conditioned. The success of the performative communication act depends on the audience and reception, but also on the authority of the speaker (who performs) and the appropriateness of the social situation (context), and whether the form of discourse is right (Bourdieu, 1992, pp.73-113). Drawing on this position, I argue in subsequent chapters (particularly Chapters 3, 6, 7 & 8) that it is crucial to study *intended audiences* and *social ties* as some of the key conditions to the success of discursive practices of ‘doing nation’. Importantly, as will be further argued in this chapter in relation to banal nationalism, but also in Chapters 3, 6 and 8, these performances of identity not only reproduce the nation, they also ‘work’ to reconstruct, subvert and transform national identities (see Butler, 1988, 1997; de Certeau, 1984; Bourdieu, 1977).

The concept of ‘doing nation’ not only refers to a set of practices and/or dispositions in a way that other concepts do – such as Anderson’s (1992) concept of long-distance nationalism – but it also refers to the *condition* of national identity. I devise the concept of ‘doing nation’ to indicate the *discursively performative character of national identity* in relation to the diasporic context. To reiterate my main argument: *the nation becomes alive through everyday communication practices and exists only as long as it is performed*. There are two main aspects of this understanding of national identity. First, it indicates that national identity must be continuously performed; and second, it has to be performed discursively. This means that even indirect speech acts – subtle, ordinary and less overt manifestations of nationalism, such as talk about food, jokes, habits, and other everyday mundane cultural references, constitute the practices that ‘do nation’. As Austin (1992) argues, to say something (even indirectly) is to do something – such as to say ‘I will’ in the appropriate context is to make a promise, or to say ‘I do’ before the registrar is to marry. In this sense, the concept of ‘doing nation’ does not replace the existing concepts, such as long-distance nationalism (Anderson, 1992) or banal nationalism (Billig, 1995); on the contrary, it includes them and emphasises how diasporas reproduce the nation through *ordinary interpersonal discursive practices*. While long-distance nationalism (Anderson,

1992) refers to the diasporic context and organised forms of manifestations of national identities, banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) refers to unremarkable, mundane and almost taken-for-granted manifestations of nationalism that are not tied to the diasporic context.

The modernist-constructivist approach has also been criticised for several reasons. The most persuasive critiques are perhaps that it does not have the capacity to explain loyalty to the nation to the extent that people are willing to sacrifice their lives for their nation, and that it posits that nation-states will come to be in decline (Madianou, 2005, p.12). However, as Mihelj argues, people “commit sacrifices not only out of a sense of loyalty to their co-nationals, but also in order to protect one’s dependents” (2011, p.252). I would further argue that these criticisms do not fully acknowledge the role of media in creating a sense of ‘loyalty’ among the people within one nation-state or ethnic group. Some studies suggest that the media played a vital role in fuelling ethnic conflicts that led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and in redrawing “boundaries between ethnic groups in conflict” (Jusic, 2009, p.21; also see Mihelj, Bajt & Pankov, 2009). Anderson identifies four key roles for the media through which nation is discursively narrated and reproduced: *ritual* of reading newspapers at specific times of the day (*simultaneity*); *discussion* of the same topics; and the *referential role* of the media – addressing readers as members of a community by drawing on familiar landscapes and using deictic words (1983, pp.27-32). These elements are what enable people to *feel* communion even though they will never meet most of their compatriots, which is why Anderson calls it “imagined community” (1983, p.6). As already mentioned in this chapter, many studies on the role of broadcasting and print media have empirically investigated and documented the relevance of media ritual, framing and selecting topics that people talk about in supporting a sense of national belonging. Media consumption is a “bonding experience”, “a social act” (Georgiou, 2006, pp.72-73).

However, what Anderson does not seem to take into account is that national audiences are heterogeneous and that diasporas may relate to the media texts in a host society. Gillespie notes that, among the audiences of Punjabi origin in Southall, “the ritual enjoyment of *EastEnders* as a ‘national soap’, or the evening national news bulletins, tends to affirm, even momentarily, a sense of belonging to a shared British culture” (Gillespie, 1995, p.98).

On the other hand, Gillespie argues that the Western production of the Hindu soap *Mahabharata* disrupts the process of identification among her participants because it is perceived to articulate Western values (Gillespie, 2000). In their study on the role of affect and emotion in national commemorations, McCreanor et al. (2017) show how affects and emotions that people may experience during two national days – Waitangi Day and Anzac Day – are conditioned by narratives of nationhood that people have adopted (McCreanor et al., 2017, p.230): “emotion and feelings at these national day events are easily perceived... as primary, spontaneous, non-rational and asocial” (ibid., p.221). However, there are no pure, unconstructed feelings “recruited prior to the process of making sense. To feel something is always to engage with human cultural history” (ibid., p.218). During these events, affect is then choreographed and a sense of belonging reinforced. The referential role of the media is particularly pivotal to constructing the feelings people may have at national days or at sports events when their national team wins a tournament, as will be further discussed in the subsection of this chapter looking at banal forms of nationalism.

The modernist-constructivist also does not seem to unanimously suggest that nation-states will go into decline. As Anderson writes, nationalism should not be perceived as yet another political ideology, like liberalism or communism, but as “*a pervasive way of imagining the world*” (Calhoun, 2017, p.23), “as if it belonged with ‘kinship’ and ‘religion’” (Anderson, 2016 [1983], p.5). This understanding may also explain what Heywood calls the “schizophrenic character of nationalism”, given that it has been adopted by several different ideologies (with the exception of anarchism), ranging from liberalism to fascism (Heywood, 1992, p.170). If nationalism is to be understood as “a pervasive way of imagining the world”, Billig shrewdly replies that it has “blocked out alternative ways of imagining the political past and present” (2017, p.318). In this context, it is also important to highlight that *national cultures are neither coherent nor homogenous*. In contrast to Beck’s argument that national identities are *monologic* (2002, p.24) and exclude “the otherness of the other” (2002, p.18), Bonikowski’s study of French and German identities demonstrates that “there may exist a common repertoire of dispositions towards the nation that transcends national boundaries... a French citizen is likely to imagine the nation in a manner more consistent with a similarly disposed German citizen than with another French



compatriot” (2017, p.164). As Sabina Mihelj points out, what being British means for the British National Party and the UK’s Liberal Democratic Party is quite different (2011, p.18). Nationalism emerged from the French revolution (this type of nationalism is seen as liberal nationalism) and as such, it was democratic and predicated on *freedom* against authoritarianism. *The value of freedom, the emphasis on civil rights and the value of difference* is what nationalism originally has in common with cosmopolitanism (cf. Cheah, 2006, p.490; Delanty 2006). In this sense, following Delanty (2006), I argue that nationalism and cosmopolitanism are not necessarily antagonistic. However, in contrast to Delanty (2006, p.261), I contend that these two concepts are not necessarily territorial forms of belonging. They can instead be much more closely related to the types of experiences people have – such as cuisine, taste preferences, aesthetic norms, habits and customs.

#### **2.1.4 On the origins and meanings of cosmopolitanism**

Cosmopolitanism, as another way of perceiving the world, is a much older concept than nationalism, dating back to ancient Greece, with a strong normative foundation – a moral call for global solidarity. It was first coined by Diogenes to refer to ‘individual liberty’, and then developed by Stoics to refer to someone who belonged to both the polis and “the cosmic order to the Gods” – a citizen of the world. For instance, Cicero claimed that “the gods treat the world ‘as though it were a single state or city’” (Inglis, 2012, p.11). The concept has then evolved to include a wide range of issues, such as social justice and social responsibility, ethics, and cultural affiliations (Inglis, 2012, p.11). As in the case of nationalism, there are also at least three approaches to cosmopolitanism (Delanty, 2006, p.363). The *universalistic position*, advocated by Martha Nussbaum (1996), understands cosmopolitanism as fundamentally different to nationalism, and nationalism as inherently wrong. This approach to cosmopolitanism draws on the premise of the universal humanity. Nussbaum argues that nationalism is wrong because nation-states cannot solve modern-day problems, such as environmental issues, on their own. The main problem with Nussbaum’s approach is, as Delanty points out, that it does not recognise “an important feature of cosmopolitanism, the *pluralism* of co-existing forms of life and overlapping identities”

(2006, p.364, emphasis added). Following Delanty's argument, I contend that *it is precisely the value of pluralism that distinguishes cosmopolitanism from globalism.*

Another notion of cosmopolitanism is mainly linked to the *rights of ethnic and racial minorities* (Kymlicka, 1995), and is often associated with international organisations such as the UN – this approach is limited because cosmopolitanism is not just found in the objectives of institutions or confined to a sense of solidarity with minority groups. Cosmopolitan values can also be found among ordinary citizens in their reactions to global events, such as the Occupy movement (Georgiou, 2013, p.146), but also in the fragments of everyday life, such as in the ways of seeing the world and others, as the notion of banal cosmopolitanism (Ong, 2009; Skrbis & Woodward, 2007), discussed in the next section, or vernacular cosmopolitanism (Georgiou, 2013) suggests. According to Myria Georgiou, “vernacular cosmopolitanism” comes from inevitable but not necessarily voluntary encounters with different cultures that forces people to be aware of the world's and a city's diversity. Consequently, people become more reflexive and develop “a set of orientations” and “a sense of responsibility towards both close and distant others”, as well as cross-cultural competences (Georgiou, 2013, p.146).

The third approach is *postcolonial* (Bhabha, 1994), and the main premise is that all identities are inevitably hybrid, hence cosmopolitan, as illustrated in Figure 1. However, the problem with the concept of hybridity is that, in contrast to its endeavours to reflect on ‘incompleteness’ and ‘constant negotiation’, it is in a certain sense static, because it suggests a mixture rather than multiple identities and senses of belonging whereby one identity can be emphasised more than another depending on the context. All these accounts study cosmopolitanism from a top-down perspective in its institutionalised forms and imply an instrumentalist position, which presumes that there are some external forces that push people to collaborate across national borders (see Beck, 2002; Cheah, 2006; Kymlicka 1995; Inglis 2012; Nussbaum 1996). Even Emmanuel Kant, the key figure of cosmopolitan thought in the era of Enlightenment, according to the revised historical perspective by Inglis (2012, p.15), took the instrumentalist approach to cosmopolitanism. This was an understanding that cosmopolitan order does not (primarily) derive from certain (abstract)

values (such as justice and equality), but because of war and trade, people seek peaceful resolution and start to cooperate (see Kant, 1795).

The aim of this study instead considers the everyday bottom-up perspective of cosmopolitanism, to empirically assess ordinary expressions of cosmopolitanism among Serbian Londoners in their everyday lives. In what follows, I will be drawing on the concepts of ordinary or banal cosmopolitanism that invite a re-examination of taken-for-granted elements of everyday life such as taste preferences, habits, manners, gossip and small talk – the ways of seeing and interpreting the world. These are not trivial concepts but subtle mechanisms through which identities are negotiated and reproduced. Further, I do not view cosmopolitanism as antagonistic to nationalism. On the contrary, as Pollock demonstrates using historical evidence, one can be at the same time both *universal and particular* (2006, p.625). Being cosmopolitan, or “a citizen of the world”, includes both *cosmos* and *polis* – the world and the city-state. Thus, cosmopolitanism bridges the worlds of local and global and signifies a living of “inclusive oppositions” (Beck, 2002, pp.18-19). Importantly, as discussed above, both nationalism (in its original, liberal form) and cosmopolitanism are predicated on the value of freedom and the recognition of difference (Delanty, 2006, p.359).



Figure 1: Tate Modern (March, 2017). Source: photograph by the author.

## 2.2 Identity as a strategic positioning

In this chapter, through discussions of diaspora, ethnicity, nationalism and cosmopolitanism, I have indicated that I draw on the understanding of identity as being contextual and relational, never complete or fixed (Hall, 1990, p.222). This position recognises that identity is both a matter of *becoming* and *being*: “it belongs to the future as much as to the past... *It is something – not a mere trick of the imagination*” (Hall, 1990, pp.225-226, emphasis added). In contrast to poststructuralists, who disregard the notion of identity altogether, this position acknowledges that identities are socially constructed *but* not completely freely chosen from a shelf of infinite choices. People always negotiate their identities in relation to a range of different powerful forces that aim to impose different meanings and definitions on them, thus “an understanding of culture as constantly reproduced, modified and transformed in the practices of social agents must be combined with a recognition that the *motivations for such activities* are also *constrained* and *enabled* by *social traditions* of cultural practice” (Coombe, 1990, p.234, emphasis added).

In contrast to essentialists, who rely on dualism (an either/or position) and treat identity as stable, my position acknowledges differences among things that are similar and similarities between things that are different (Young, 2011 [1990], pp.121-123). This is particularly clear from Bonikowski’s (2017) findings, as stated earlier, that there are no absolute differences between members of different nations, and national cultures are not coherent and uncontested. Identities are constantly being negotiated *in relation to a specific context*, in relation to something else. Hall shows how a single Afro-Caribbean identity becomes contested when it is not perceived in relation to “the developed West” (1990, p.228), because differences among Caribbean islands and their people then become more salient. Hence, “Martinique both is and is not 'French',” Hall concludes (1990, p.228). In a similar vein, Baumann notes:

The vast majority of all adult Southallians saw themselves as members of several communities, each with its own culture. The same person could speak and act as a member of the Muslim community in one context, in another take sides against

other Muslims as a member of the Pakistani community, and in a third count himself part of the Punjabi community that excluded other Muslims but included Hindus, Sikhs, and even Christians. In this way, they echoed the awareness of shifting identities...

(Baumann, 1995, p.5)

Another important aspect of identity is that “it is always constituted *within*, not outside, *representation*” (Hall, 1990, p.222, emphasis added). Given that digital media has also greatly enabled people to be producers of content and has thus created more opportunities for self-representation, the debate about identity has arguably become even more complex and relevant. Chapter 3 considers whether and to what extent digital media have provided people with more control over their image and managing self-representation. My aim in the subsequent chapters is then to explore what this means for the ways in which Serbian Londoners navigate an environment of proliferating and changing digital media platforms. Chapter 6 in particular considers this topic, showing the different ways in which different media platforms may enable people to reproduce and challenge dominant representations of the self and other.

The same people usually rely on both *dominant* and *demotic discourse* depending on different contexts (Baumann, 1995). Dominant discourse refers to situations in which people draw on prevailing (usually stereotypical) perceptions of their own culture and the world, while demotic discourse tries to challenge and reverse dominant representations. Following Madianou’s (2005) study framework, subsequent chapters, especially Chapter 6, strive to trace these discursive shifts from openness to closure among Serbian Londoners. Drawing on Hall’s understanding of identity, the modernist-constructivist approach to nationalism and Delanty’s (2006) discussion of cosmopolitanism, my aim is to study cosmopolitanism and nationalism *as identities that are lived and performed in everyday life*. Thus, I consider the expression of *ordinary cosmopolitanism* (Skrbis & Woodward, 2007) or *banal cosmopolitanism* (Ong, 2009), and *banal nationalism* (Billig, 1995) to argue that both should be studied and understood as *strategic positionings* that are dependent on context.

### 2.2.1 Banal nationalism

According to Hutchinson, the process of forming a national identity involves at least two types of nationalism: hot and banal nationalism (2006, p.304). *Hot nationalism* is seen as *episodic, conscious, organised and transformative*. It can unite a nation despite differences among its members, such as those based on class, region, gender or religion, because it presents loyalty to the nation as pivotal – hot nationalism “aims to instil the idea of the nation as a sacred and transcendent object of worship for which people must sacrifice” (Hutchinson, 2006, p.304). This type of nationalism depends on a sense of crisis, a sense that a nation is in danger. A crisis provides nationalist rhetoric with a cause or necessary arguments aimed at mobilising national sentiments and dismissing any other agenda and identity as less relevant (Hutchinson, 2006, pp.299-300).

However, as Billig (1995) argues, nationalism is invoked at times of crisis precisely because of the *banal unconscious daily reproductions of nations* through a set of representations, beliefs, and rituals, such as national myths and symbols, and on a more micro-level, through decorating homes. These shared forms of life, per Wittgenstein (1958) – habitus in Bourdieu’s (1977, 1990) terms, or habits of social life, in Billig’s words (1995, pp.6-8) – provide people with *guidelines* for their practices in everyday life and endows these practices with meanings (Hutchinson, 2006, p.304). Ludwig Wittgenstein’s term, “forms of life” refers to *the agreement in judgements* regarding values and practices and ways of seeing the world (1958, p.88e). In a similar vein, Pierre Bourdieu defines habitus as “a system of durable, transposable dispositions... principles which generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends” (1990, p.53). Billig (1995) notes that banal manifestations of nationalism are usually *unnoticed* because they are profoundly embedded in the quotidian: hidden in ordinary words, such as *ours* or *us*, or in images of flags on public buildings.

Billig (1995) concludes that banal does not mean naïve; because these ordinary symbols and words ‘prepare’ the nation to react in moments of crisis, they have certain effects. Billig argues that it is not a crisis that binds a nation, but rather these banal ways of flagging a nation on a daily basis. Drawing on the insights of a one-day survey of national newspapers in England, Billig demonstrates that well-established Western democratic countries rely heavily on national symbols and signs. He notes that former US Presidents drew heavily upon familiar images of American nationhood when referring to the war in the Middle East, and provides several examples of media coverage of American military intervention in the Middle East that operate on these principles (1995, p.112). Examples include a headline in *The Times* about the bombing of Baghdad that stated: “Clinton warns Saddam: don’t try to hit *us* back”, and *The Star*’s headline: “Fight back and *we* smash you, warns Clinton” (Billig, 1995, p.112, emphasis added). Billig draws on these example to highlight the uses of the deictic words ‘us’ and ‘we’ to argue that these are ‘hidden’ (banal) manifestations of nationalism, but many of his examples from the press actually refer to conflicts, which shows that ‘banal’ is not only about ‘peace’ and that hardly any day is completely ordinary, as the following discussion further demonstrates. Hence, in many contexts there are no clear distinctions between conflict and peace, as Billig’s (1995) thesis assumes. A conversation about the weather or sports is also a useful tool for boosting national sentiments, because it encourages the *imagining of national boundaries* (see Anderson, 1983; Gilroy, 1987; Billig, 1995). Likewise, images of familiar landscapes also ‘work’ as a form of *diffused attachment* to a country and its culture (see Anderson, 1983; Smith, 1990, p.173).

Several studies have shown that Billig’s concept also applies to other national contexts the UK or US. Arus Yumul and Umut Ozkirimli (2000) analysed 38 Turkish daily newspapers and found that a significant majority drew on a national paradigm in both their structure and their language. For instance, in terms of structure, most daily newspapers had “Turkey” or “Turkish” in its title and used a Turkish flag or map in their logos. 76 percent of newspapers also distinguished international news from domestic news with a heading such as “The World,” thereby creating a distinction between ‘us and them’ and presenting ‘them’ as less relevant to ‘us’ (Yumul & Ozkirimli, 2000, pp.790-792). By doing this, the authors

argue, the newspapers clearly do not question the naturalness of nationalism, but reinforce its premises, such as that “the world is divided into nations” and that “loyalty to the nation overrides all other allegiances” (see Smith, 1991, p.74, in Yumul & Ozkirimli, 2000, p.801).<sup>3</sup> In her analysis of television news and audience reception about a Greek-Turkish dispute over an airspace incident and the Kosovo crisis in 1999, Madianou finds all reports used an ‘us and them’ frame in both textual and visual representations despite political differences between the three selected channels (2007, pp.100-101). However, she also finds that the news audiences did not necessarily interpret these events using the dominant code. Insights from Madianou’s (2007) study show that the presence of a dominant discourse about the nation in the media does not always translate into dominant readings, which means people do not necessarily interpret media texts in the intended code. Therefore, I take a bottom up perspective of studying banal nationalism among Serbian Londoners. Similarly, Kevin Robins and Asu Aksoy (2002) find that migrants are self-reflective and do not necessarily decode media texts in a dominant ethnic code, which is why Turkish satellite television acts as an “agent of cultural de-mythologisation” for the Turkish diaspora in Britain. They argue that rather than fostering diasporic identities, the ability to keep up-to-date with cultural changes in Turkey undermines tendencies to romanticise and essentialise identity and attachment to a homeland.

On the other hand, Ivana Spasic (2017) argues that banal nationalism is not possible in Serbia due to the country’s historical and political background, including a lack of stability and continuity of nationhood. Spasic follows Billig’s argument that banal nationalism is only possible in well-established and prosperous nations of the West, whereas developing nations are thrown into pro-longed conflicts and permanent states of hot nationalism (1995, pp.5-7). Spasic addresses the issue of a national flag hanging limply on a public building as a manifestation of banal nationalism, and sheds a light on the controversy regarding the

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<sup>3</sup> It can be argued that this study has some methodological difficulties: the authors posit that they analysed 16<sup>th</sup> January 1997 as an ordinary day, but a week earlier there was a crisis in the news about the Greek Cypriots buying missiles from Russia, which was perceived as a threat to Turkey. It can be argued that a major crisis usually lasts for more than one day – news on current affairs are usually followed by commentary and more in-depth analysis that encompasses a week or more. On the other hand, as advocated later in this chapter, there is rarely ever a ‘completely ordinary’ day.



Serbian national flag as a potential argument against banal nationalism in the Serbian context. Due to Serbia's turbulent history since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the consequent geographical and ideological discontinuities, the Serbian national flag of today does not actually have a long history. The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which was founded in 1918 and later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia from 1929 until 1941, relied on monarchist symbols, which were later overthrown by the communist regime that came to power in 1945 (for more on this topic see Djokic, 2003). Upon gaining statehood – when Montenegro declared independence after the referendum in 2006 – the Serbian national flag had to be reinvented, as there was no ready precedent. Additionally, the flag used by the Serbian side in the civil war in the 1990s was not the same flag as the one in use today. Furthermore, the flag today has some ideological links to the monarchist era.<sup>4</sup>

Given all of this, there are two main problems that Spasic (2017) highlights. According to Billig, “routine, ‘cold’ forms of nationalism provide *the grounding* from which vigorous episodes of flag-waving nationalism can emerge” (1995, p.9, emphasis added). This poses the question of whether banal nationalism ‘led’ to the hot Serbian nationalism of the 1990s (Spasic, 2017). The pre-1990s banal nationalism could be termed “Yugoslav banal nationalism” given the powerful apparatus of symbolic everyday representations of Tito’s regime, which also begs a question about how the fall of Yugoslavia was possible, as Spasic (2017) notes. Secondly, given these different legacies and ideological connotations embodied in the flag, there is neither consensus about Serbian identity, nor about the flag. Therefore, the flag always evokes some emotion, either positive or negative (which is why the flag cannot be mindlessly embedded in the quotidian, as Spasic would argue).

While Spasic rightly points out historical discontinuities and a lack of consensus about Serbian identity, her critique has several limitations in relation to the perspective of Serbian Londoners. As will be illustrated in relation to the research findings in Chapters 6 and 8, the flag is only one manifestation of banal nationalism; it is not enough to look at one single

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<sup>4</sup> While the colours of the flag remained the same, the coat of arms has changed. The communist star on the flag of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has been replaced by a crown and a double-headed eagle that dates back from the time of the dynasty of Nemanjic, both of which directly evoke the monarchist tradition.

aspect and draw a broad conclusion that the concept of banal nationalism is irrelevant to the Serbian context. There are many other manifestations, such as decorating homes, food, popular culture, and humour. Thanks to constant technological improvements, such manifestations have received prominence and visual expressions in digital media environments, such as several very illustrative emojis that denote and connote these aspects of life, as will be demonstrated in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

Even though the flag may not be a widely accepted form of showing national ‘pride’, it does not mean that it is entirely irrelevant either. In contrast to Spasic, who asserts that the flag is not widely accepted because of its features – or more precisely the coat of arms featuring the crown, which relates to the era of monarchy – I argue that this may actually be mainly because nationalism in Serbia has negative connotations due to the war of the 1990s, the time of its aggressive/hot expressions. As a result of the war, Serbian manifestations of nationalism have been more closely scrutinised by domestic and international publics compared to other countries that have not gone through recent wars. Consequently, the national flag, as a more visible symbol of nationalism, has become a controversial issue. Similarly, Adler-Nissen points out that, after the Second World War, German leaders have been “carefully watched by the rest of the world and by its own population. Upholding credibility requires continuous effort because the state must live up to the highest moral standards and even outperform the ‘normals,’ convincing them that they are ‘better-than-normal’” (2014, p.160). This argument will further be elaborated on in Chapter 6.

Lastly, putting too much emphasis on discontinuities means arguing that history is linear. Even well-established nations of the West are not completely coherent and homogenous (see Skey’s critique of Billig, 2011 and 2009), nor do they have consensus at all times around their identities. Arguably the Union Jack did not mean the same thing for the British people in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s (see Gilroy, 1987) as it might today. It may still not be equally relevant to all sections of the British population, such as for migrants (see Morley, 2000), or for all parts of the country – England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. For Scottish nationalists and the SNP, especially on the eve of the Scottish

independence referendum, the Union Jack was arguably not as important as the Scottish flag. Likewise, for any group that seeks independence, such as Basque in Spain, or Quebec in Canada. Brexit is yet another example: the voting results in the EU referendum in Britain clearly showed profound differences between different regions in England as well as an urban/rural divide, for example, and their identification with the EU (see BBC News, 24 June 2016).

It is important to acknowledge that banal and hot nationalisms are not so distinct from one another; even Western consolidated nations with a long tradition of democracy are susceptible to hot nationalism. In his response to Spasic, Billig (2017) notes that Western nations are not immune to hot outbursts of nationalism – for instance, in the wake of Brexit – and adds that such division between the West versus the rest would create an inaccurate and dangerous dichotomy of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Moreover, the two types of nationalism are profoundly interwoven in practice (cf. Mihelj, 2011, p.167; Hutchinson, 2006, p.304): “When faced with a sudden conflict or catastrophe, every nation tends to fall prey to similar shifts in collective imagination... the loosely connected, diverse nation of citizens is replaced by an internally homogeneous, single-minded nation of warriors” (Mihelj, 2011, pp.95-96). The comparative analysis of Slovenian and Serbian public broadcasters in the light of the Yugoslav war in the early 1990s and US media (*New York Times*) coverage of 9/11 demonstrates this (Mihelj, 2011). Therefore, nation building is not a linear process – once the nation has been consolidated the times of hot nationalism finally give way to banal nationalism. Conversely, it is an uneven process, full of antagonisms, and shifts between episodes of ‘hot’ nationalism and long periods of ‘banal’ nationalism (Mihelj, 2011, p.97; Hutchinson 2005, p.300). Furthermore, as Madianou (2007) emphasises, today, it has become hard to distinguish between a crisis and a ‘completely’ ordinary day; there are often events that can be argued to stand out from the ordinary.

However, Spasic’s arguments shed light on another important aspect of banal nationalism that this thesis addresses in Chapter 6: the notion of the *unconscious* or *unnoticed*. The problem with this notion is that it implicitly assumes that nations are coherent and homogenous. In fact, every symbol is polyvalent. As several media audience studies have

shown, people do not always interpret media texts according to their intended, preferred or dominant codes (Hall, 2003; see Morley & Brunson, 1999; Sabry, 2005a). Madianou (2007), as mentioned above, finds that even though both public broadcaster and the major commercial television stations drew on elements of banal nationalism, some people would challenge this dominant discourse. In line with Spasic's arguments, Paul Goode (2017) also finds that most of his Russian interviewees were critical of the government's pervasive strategies of boosting patriotic sentiments, perceiving government-led patriotic rhetoric as inauthentic and unconvincing. Hence, it can be argued that, in some contexts and for some people, these ostensibly banal national symbols do not go unnoticed and are instead questioned. Likewise, Gesine Wallem (2017) also shows how most ethnic German migrants from the former Soviet Russia adopt the practice of changing their 'foreign-sounding' names to blend in better. Even though this practice has been supported by German government institutions, it reveals how something that is ordinary and banal becomes a matter of strategic efforts. In the context of this thesis, this means that my participants can also be aware of their banal manifestations of nationalism in some contexts, and even strategically perform banal nationalism. In this sense, banal nationalism not only *reproduces* the nation on a daily basis, but can also *transform* national identities in a subtle long-term way – Chapters 6, 7 and 8 consider this issue empirically. As Chapter 3 argues, by drawing on de Certeau (1984), the everyday is also the realm in which identities can be subverted and transformed, not just reproduced and maintained in the realm of everyday. Finally, Calhoun (2017), in contrast to Billig, posits that nationalism can also be benign because it is a crucial element of democracy, and this also seems to be in line with new politics of identity that have sought to reinforce national identities and give them positive attributes to fight against discrimination and marginalisation. After all, it is not an either/or position – one can be at the same time cosmopolitan and have a pronounced national identity, as shall be discussed in the following chapters.

### **2.2.2 Banal cosmopolitanism**

Unlike (banal) nationalism, which has been thoroughly and widely studied, studying cosmopolitanism empirically, from a bottom-up level, has been mostly disregarded so far

because of its traditionally normative character, “but cosmopolitan identity too is a performance of nuance and subtlety – defined as much by the ordinary as it is by the extraordinary” (Ong, 2009, p.458). Therefore, Ong invites us to consider the ‘unremarkable’, the ‘common’, or in Bourdieu’s (1990) words, that which would create habitus. This requires considering everyday practices through which habitus is performed – “habits of eating, manners of speaking, ways of seeing” (Ong, 2009, p.458). Thus, I draw on the understanding of cosmopolitanism as *a set of practices and dispositions* (Skrbis & Woodward, 2007, p.734) such as what people eat, listen to, and watch. Like national identities, cosmopolitan identities are incoherent and contextual. Based on empirical research conducted among middle-class people from various backgrounds in West Australia, Skrbis and Woodward concluded that when applied in everyday life, meanings of cosmopolitanism are rather a “negotiated frame of reference for dealing with cultural difference” (2007, p.745). *People selectively embrace cosmopolitan values, never fully or at all times* (Skrbis & Woodward, 2007, p.735), therefore, their study discards the binary opposition that seems to be inherent in the prevailing understanding of cosmopolitanism – where one either adheres to it completely, or not at all. Likewise, in his fieldwork in the multicultural neighbourhood of Southall in South-East London, Baumann (1996) shows that two opposite discourses about identity and culture – dominant and demotic – co-exist as people appropriate them according to context.

Skrbis and Woodward identify three cosmopolitan dispositions. First is *cosmopolitanness* that relates to *greater mobility of people* underpinned by innovations in transportation – faster and relatively cheaper ways to travel – which created more opportunities for people to be *exposed* to different cultures (Skrbis & Woodward, 2007, p.732). This was also underpinned by the Internet and innovations in communications because, as Urry and Szerszynski (2002) point out, mobility can also be *imaginative and virtual*. The second disposition refers to the demonstrated *knowledge* of others, “various cultural-symbolic competencies, subsuming the crucial cosmopolitan skill of codeswitching” (2007, p.732). The first two dispositions arguably constitute what Beck (2002) terms *cosmopolitanisation*. Cosmopolitanisation refers to an *internalised globalisation*, globalisation from *within* that not only implies interconnectedness but also the change of the *quality* of the national,

because the flows of ideas, people and shared global concerns or risks shape everyday experiences within national frames (Beck, 2002, p.17). The third type of cosmopolitan disposition relates to “the inclusive valuing” of cultural forms different from one’s own, which includes *willingness to engage* with them (cf. Hannerz, 2004).

Key to the understanding of ordinary cosmopolitanism is that everyone and anyone can be cosmopolitan; it dismisses the idea that it is an elitist ideal available only to the rich and those who travel. Ong (2009) argues that banal (or ordinary) cosmopolitanism is more class inclusive, unlike ‘ecstatic cosmopolitanism’ with a normative character (see Calhoun, 2002; Hannerz, 2004), which has been seen as reserved for the elites. For instance, Hage (2000, 2010) posits that ‘cosmopolitan capital’ is derived from cultural capital and serves as a distinction. Cultural capital, according to Bourdieu’s (1986) theory of three types of capital, refers to a range of symbolic markers such as taste preferences, education and dialects. Bourdieu explains that academic success and failure, for example, are not merely based on natural dispositions of students, but can derive from their different cultural capital, which “always remains marked by its earlier acquisition” (1986, pp.47-49). However, if cosmopolitanism may simply assume an exposure to different cultures and an *awareness* of other cultures and modes of living (Skrbis & Woodward, 2007, p.733), then the difference between cosmopolitanism and globalism becomes unclear. Skrbis and Woodward’s position is somewhat ambiguous in this sense, as they also argue that “globalised we all may be but this doesn’t make us cosmopolitans” (2007, p.732). The crucial question is *what* this exposure and awareness of others *means* for the understanding of others and willingness to engage with them. Unlike cosmopolitanism (or nationalism), globalism does not have “an inspirational force” that stimulates and mobilises people (see Beck, 2002, p.40).

Nevertheless, Skrbis and Woodward do recognise that cosmopolitanism requires reflexivity. Reflexivity refers to one’s ability to *consider others without deploying the coding system of one’s own culture* (Savage et al., 2005), and it has been seen by many scholars of cosmopolitanism as a prerequisite for cosmopolitanism. In the context of their study on young British people overseas, Savage et al. (2005) explain, the cosmopolitan

reflexivity would mean that they “look at their [other people’s] lives, thoughts and values from a perspective that did not take [British] referents as the explicit frame for judgement, but which was able to place them in some kind of broader comparative frame” (2005, p.191). Bourdieu posits that this reflexivity occurs at the disjunction between habitus and field, when habitus, as a “system of durable and transposable dispositions... does not fit the game” (Bourdieu, 1992, p.131). This means that the encounter with cultures different from one’s own may encourage reflexivity.

I also posit that cosmopolitanism is not an elitist ideal. As some studies show, the privileged – those who travel or have more power – do not necessarily express a cosmopolitan outlook. For instance, in their study of YouTube responses to the anti-Islam film *Fitna* (2008), Mihelj et al. (2011) find that digital media do give voice to the otherwise underrepresented in traditional media. Digital media also enable them to manage their image, but who gets heard depends on the existing power relations and people with less power are more likely to listen and adjust their arguments in relation to the arguments of others. Cosmopolitanism, according to these scholars, “involves willingness to suspend and even question one’s own judgment, and acknowledge one’s embeddedness in power relations” (Mihelj et al., 2011, p.619). This demonstrates that the privileged may not always be the ones who are more likely to hold a cosmopolitan outlook. In her study of travel blogs by young Britons taking a gap year to travel, Helen Snee (2013) finds that such encounters with different cultures do not necessarily lead to better understandings of the other. As Snee (2013) shows, this group of people tended to use their own culture as a referential framework, which relies upon popular narratives, and therefore reproduces stereotypical portrayals that aimed to romanticise or reify the other. In addition to this, Lamont and Aksarotva’s (2002) research on cosmopolitan values among the working class from different ethnic backgrounds also counters the presumption that cosmopolitanism is ‘reserved’ for elites. However, Snee (2013) and Savage et al. (2005) do not address the question of whether people also use a stereotypical approach to their own culture. Cosmopolitanism implies *dialogical imagination*, which also means “the capacity to see oneself from the perspective of cultural others and to give this practical effect in one’s own

experience through the exercise of boundary-transcending imagination” (Beck, 2006, p.89). This matter will be explored in the following chapters in relation to the research findings.

Beck argues that we live in an age of banal cosmopolitanism: a cosmopolitan reality with short episodes of national manifestations. He notes that, shortly after protests in Birmingham over the planned buyout of British company Rover by German company BMW, people gathered in a pub around the corner to drink German beer (2000, p.79). However, he describes new identity politics as an emerging ‘enemy’ of cosmopolitanism, because it excludes those who do not belong to the group, assuming only those who belong can understand the suffering and oppression of their members (Beck 2002, p.39). In contrast, as has been shown in this chapter, we still live in a world of nations, where media production, consumption and referential systems are still very much shaped by the national framework (cf. Billig, 2017; Calhoun, 2017; Madianou, 2006; Mihelj, 2011).

It remains to be discussed in the following chapters what this banal cosmopolitan reality means for people’s relation to others and to themselves, as well as whether and in what ways new identity politics may be the enemy of cosmopolitanism. Subsequent chapters shall explore Serbian Londoners’ banal everyday communication practices that ‘do nation’ and whether any digital media platforms support long-distance nationalism (Anderson, 1992) when applied to the perspective of everyday life<sup>5</sup>, or act as an “agent of cultural demythologisation” (Robins & Aksoy, 2000), encouraging banal cosmopolitanism. In doing so, I shall also seek to examine whether the concept of banal nationalism is applicable to the case of Serbian Londoners, given that Spasic (2017) suggests it is not possible in the Serbian context. I will also consider what characteristics distinguish banal cosmopolitanism and globalism among Serbian Londoners in their everyday life.

## **2.3 Conclusion**

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<sup>5</sup> Originally, Anderson (1992) developed the concept of long-distance nationalism to refer to organised forms of nationalism, such as attempts to change politics in the country of origins.



By drawing on Hall's (1990) understanding of identity as relational as the central starting point, this thesis brings together concepts of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) and banal or ordinary cosmopolitanism (Skrbis & Woodward, 2007; Ong, 2009) to argue that people negotiate and reproduce their identities in relation to different contexts through everyday ordinary practices and symbols. Through the synthesis of these concepts, by drawing on Deutsch (1966 [1953]) and the philosophical tradition of doing things with words, I have developed the concept of 'doing nation' to emphasise the performative character of national identity and to argue that national identities come into being through everyday discursive practices. This is particularly important in relation to the diasporic context where relationships have become increasingly mediated. Drawing on this framework, this chapter has also attempted to rethink the concept of diaspora to include all migrants of common origins who in some contexts share common practices that reflect their orientation to homeland. Following Brubaker's (2005) definition of "diaspora as a stance", I have proposed a definition of *diaspora as a relational stance*, which means that these practices are not only a matter of degrees but also of context. Diasporas are often understood to be predicated on common ethnic origins; however, this thesis has argued that ethnicity rather refers to a relational difference than a list of attributes that only members of diasporic communities have. Given that everyday communication practices are becoming increasingly mediated, and this is especially the case for migrants, the next chapter discusses how people, particularly migrants, navigate digital media environments to negotiate their identities and relationships. This chapter has argued that identity is constructed within representation (Hall, 1990); hence, the next chapter considers self-presentation online and what role (if any) the architecture and design of different digital media platforms plays in how people perform their identities on these platforms.

## **Chapter 3: Digital Media Environments in the Context of Migration**

The world of digital media has been rapidly expanding and changing since the late 1990s, with an explosion of social networking sites from the mid-2000s and more sophisticated versions of smartphones that support 3G and 4G Internet connection and third-party software applications. Cheaper, more instant and more mobile communication, and the availability of a plethora of different platforms, have created more opportunities for migrants to maintain and strengthen their existing social ties, and also to expand their networks and reach out to people from around the world. Steven Vertovec (2004), for instance, contends that cheap telephone calls represent the social glue of migrant transnationalism. As shown in the previous chapter, new means of communication have enabled some diasporas to be actively engaged in homeland politics and public affairs, facilitating their “orientation to a homeland” (Bhachu, 1995; Brubaker, 2005; Safran, 1991) and long-distance nationalism (Anderson, 1992). At the same time, these new media have been praised for enabling exposure to different cultures as a prerequisite for developing a cosmopolitan outlook (see Beck, 2002, 2006; Norris & Ingelhart, 2012).

The speed of all these changes may not have been as significant as in the late nineteenth century, which witnessed the invention of radio, cinema, photography, and steam engines, as David Morley argues (2007, p.6). However, the changes in communication of the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century have led to several significant large and small scale societal transformations. Mirca Madianou and Daniel Miller (2012) argue these new media have altered the phenomenon of migration to a large degree. In their study of Filipino female migrants in Britain and their left-behind children in the Philippines, Madianou and Miller (2012) found that new media have enabled such women to mother at a distance and have thereby provided them with a socially accepted justification to migrate and prolong their stay abroad. Yuiko Fujits (2006) also demonstrates how media representations of cities such as London and New York, circulated through both traditional media and the Internet, have influenced some Japanese middle-class youngsters to move to

these cities. As Fujita (2006) explains, media images of these cities created an impression that New York City was similar to Tokyo and that London could help them increase their cultural capital.

The ambivalent role of both traditional and digital media in the context of migrants' identities, as discussed in Chapter 2, suggests, however, that there are no direct or 'inevitable' social consequences of these media. Therefore, this thesis draws on a socio-technical approach to understanding digital media that takes into account both technical properties of technologies and a wide range of socio-cultural factors. I seek to examine in which contexts, under what conditions and why these various media may facilitate national and cosmopolitan discourses. To this end, I explore how people navigate the environment of these various digital media platforms in order to understand which media people use for what purposes. Rather than studying digital media as discrete platforms, I will be studying them as an integrated environment where every medium is defined in relation to all other media available. In what follows, I draw on Madianou and Miller's (2012) concept of *polymedia*, which refers to all new and old media as an *integrated environment* that people navigate to *manage* their relationships and, I suggest, identities. This requires me to examine whether and to what extent the design, intended publics and social norms of different digital media platforms *shapes* the ways in which people engage with digital media and *invite* certain identities. For instance, do Facebook and WhatsApp invite national identities, while Twitter and Instagram are more cosmopolitan? Individuals, at the same time, always appropriate the media as already socially situated subjects (see Hall, 2003; Miller, 2011; Slater & Miller, 2000; Taylor, 2012) – as subjects who belong to a specific society and culture, as argued in Chapter 2. This means that it is also important to look at the role of the socio-cultural contexts in which communication practices take place.

In this chapter, I first explain the socio-technical approach, including the domestication of technologies approach, and contrast it to technological determinism and the social construction of technology approach to position this debate within the wider scope of different approaches to digital media and to make a case for why a perspective on everyday life matters. By doing so, I will also unpack the concept of affordances. Having done this, I

elucidate the notion of digital media as ‘environments’ and provide the rationale for drawing specifically on the concept of polymedia. Following Don Slater and Daniel Miller (2000), as well as Miller (2010), I ask if there is such a thing as the Internet or Facebook, or whether these concepts are the result of the meanings that people in a specific location ascribe to them. In line with this, I also look at the role of these different digital media platforms in sustaining, expanding and transforming people’s social ties. As argued in Chapter 2, the communicative success of ‘doing nation’ depends on who speaks and who their audiences are. Therefore, I argue that people’s significant others or strong ties should also be taken into account – alongside technology and culture. Hence, this chapter eventually discusses types of mediated co-presence and what this enhanced mediated presence may mean for migrants’ social ties and relationships.

### **3.1 A Socio-technical Approach, Affordances and the Everyday Life Perspective**

I draw on a socio-technical approach to understanding the relationship between digital media and society. This approach views technology and society not as separate spheres that influence each other, but as mutually constitutive (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999, p.41). Technology matters to the way people live together (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999, p.2), but there is also a certain degree of “the interpretative flexibility” in the ways in which people engage with technology (Pinch & Bijker, 1984). Hence, this approach takes into account both how the design of digital media may shape people’s interactions and how certain technologies become adopted and appropriated by people in specific socio-cultural contexts, arguing that there is mutual shaping between technology and society (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999). This position represents neither a utopian nor dystopian vision of the role of digital media in society. Both utopian and dystopian perspectives endow technology with explanatory power, disregarding social, economic, political and cultural forces that may influence how people engage with technology, and its consequences. Utopian and dystopian perspectives see technology either as a solution or a problem and therefore belong to the technological determinism approach. Both perspectives have historically perceived technologies as promises or threats, such as that they will “make life easier” or,

conversely, “create new opportunities for infidelity” (Marvin, 1988, pp.62-70). The underlying assumption is that technology has certain “effects” on society regardless of social context, as if it acts outside of society (Baym, 2015; boyd, 2012; MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999). Baym argues that this position dates back to Socrates, who argued that written words would undermine the oral tradition of Greek philosophy and rhetoric, and it presupposes that media users are passive recipients (2015, p.28). On the other hand, the social constructivist approach endows society with the explanatory power: it argues that society shapes technology, and disregards the ways in which the technical properties of the digital media could enable and invite certain interactions and dynamics among users.

Marshall McLuhan is one of the most prominent technological determinists, who famously stated that “‘the medium is the message’ because it is the medium that *shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action*” (2001 [1964], p.9, emphasis added). Technology “amplifies and accelerates existing processes”, he argued. When the railway was invented, it accelerated the scale of movement and created new types of cities, work and leisure (McLuhan, 2001 [1964], p.8). The socio-technical approach also recognises that communication technologies can amplify what is already there (see Madianou & Miller, 2012). However, McLuhan seems to later contradict this argument by stating that “any technology could do anything but *add* itself on to what we already are” (2001 [1964], p.12; emphasis in original). Drawing on the same technological determinist position, Joshua Meyrowitz (1985) argued that television abolished geographical and symbolic boundaries and as a result people have lost their sense of place. By contrast, geography and place have remained undoubtedly significant even in today’s context of proliferating digital media (see Morley, 2017; Miller, 2011). Furthermore, the fact that technologies are not neutral does not mean that media are the single ‘cause’ of change (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999). The social consequences of technologies also depend on a range of social factors. In their study of migration and new media, Madianou and Miller (2012) find that the consequences of digital media on the relationships between migrant mothers and their left-behind children also depend on several social factors, such as the quality of the pre-existing relationships, the children’s age and the availability of technologies at the time of separation (Madianou,

2014a, pp.336-338; Madianou & Miller, 2012, 2013). The findings of this study prove that the role of digital media cannot be analysed independent of social contexts.

Technological determinists, among other things, criticise the quality of mediated interactions and raise concerns around authenticity of online self-presentation. They claim technology changes how people relate to each other, and this is often seen in negative terms (see Turkle, 2011). Sherry Turkle cites a study of the relationship between bonding and types of communication, which showed that face-to-face communication led to the most bonding, while texting led to the least (2015, p.23). The problem here is that the quality of the pre-existing relationships was not considered and this seems to be an important aspect to be taken into account, as observed Madianou and Miller's (2012) study, mentioned above. Furthermore, other studies show that the frequency of communication matters more than the type. Walther (1995) finds that more frequent computer-mediated communication led to more intimacy and sociability than infrequent face-to-face communication. Drawing on the insights of her ethnographic study of how teenagers engage with social media, danah boyd concludes that "most teens are not compelled by gadgetry as such – they are compelled by friendships" (2014, p.18).

The main argument of the socio-technical approach – that technology and society are mutually constitutive and that there is thus a mutual shaping, as already mentioned – further means that scientists or innovators are embedded in society, and that users also shape the innovation process. Technological innovations are not just a matter of production, consumption is an important element of innovation as well – what people do with technology also has an impact on future technologies (Silverstone & Haddon, 1996, p.44). As Michel de Certeau emphasises:

In reality, a rationalised, expansionist, centralised, spectacular and clamorous production is confronted by *an entirely different kind of production, called 'consumption'* and characterised by its ruses, its fragmentation (the result of the circumstances), its poaching, its clandestine nature, its tireless but quiet activity, in short by its quasi-invisibility...

(1984, p.31, emphasis added)

Roger Silverstone and Leslie Haddon observe that feedback from early adopters of CD-i had a major impact on the future design of the product (1996, p.53). Even at the stage of production, artefacts are designed with users in mind (Silverstone & Haddon, 1996, p.49), therefore, it can be argued that technological changes are “evolutionary rather than revolutionary” (Haddon, 2006, p.199). A social constructivist approach, whose main proponents are Trevor Pinch and Wiebe Bijker (1984), also emphasises how users shape the innovation process. Pinch and Bijker stress there is always a degree of the “interpretative flexibility” in the ways in which different social groups understand and engage with technology (1984, p.409), and there is also a certain flexibility in how technologies are designed (1984, p.421). The authors argue that the social groups for whom the artefact has some meaning are not homogenous (see Pinch & Bijker, 1984, p.424). While some people may find one aspect of an artefact appealing, some may dismiss it and others might even oppose it. The authors look at the history of the air tyre and note that for some the tyre was a way of going faster, whereas for others it was an ugly looking way of making the low-wheeler more unsafe (Pinch & Bijker, 1984, p.422). This interpretative flexibility means that change is not “inevitable”, as technological determinists argue, and every “stabilization or closure” – when an innovation gets accepted and adopted by most social groups – always remains “a matter of degree” (Pinch & Bijker, 1984, p.424).

However, there are problems with the social construction of technology approach as well. It does not recognise that technical features may shape to some extent the ways in which people engage with the technology (see Baym, 2015) and can have real social consequences. The socio-technical approach invites consideration of the social consequences of technologies (see Madianou & Miller, 2012), but bearing in mind that technologies do not “affect all people in all situations in the same way” (boyd, 2012, p.14). As Donald MacKenzie and Judy Wajcman highlight: “the failure of a ‘hard’ technological determinism does not rule out a ‘soft’ determinism (Smith & Marx, 1994), and to say that technology’s social effects are complex and contingent is not to say that it has *no* social effects” (1999, p.3; emphasis in original). Hence, the socio-technical approach posits that

technologies are not neutral; their design can enable some options and disable others (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999, p.3). The architecture or affordances of digital media are structuring interactions in different ways (Madianou & Miller 2012, p.330). Resembling architecture in a physical environment, the architecture of digital media also suggests and enables certain types of interaction, while constraining others (Papacharissi, 2010, p.200). In other words, interactions through Facebook, WhatsApp or email will be structured differently (Madianou, 2014, p.330): “the design of SNSs *promotes* the development of different cultures” (Donath 2007, p.236, emphasis added). In the context of this PhD research, it is important to consider the role of affordances in the ways in which migrants engage with digital media to understand whether different platforms invite different identities among Serbian Londoners, and why they do so.

boyd defines affordances as *properties* and *characteristics* that make possible and encourage practices (2012, p.10). Taina Bucher and Anne Helmond (2017) distinguish between low-level affordances and high-level affordances. In the case of the former, affordances represent a platform *design or properties* of different platforms, such as the like button or hashtags that afford certain actions such as clicking, sharing, or liking. High-level affordances refer to *dynamics* that are created at the intersection of technical features and users’ practices (high-level affordances) (Bucher & Helmond, 2017, pp.12-13), or to “*communicative outcomes*” (Treem & Leonardi, 2012, p.147, emphasis added) of the relationship between technical properties and users’ practices. High-level affordances include content persistence, visibility, spreadability, searchability, mobility (portability) and temporality (Baym, 2015), replicability, scalability (boyd, 2011), editability, and association (Treem & Leonardi, 2012).

Understanding the affordances as “dynamics” (Bucher & Helmond, 2017) or “communicative outcomes” (Treem & Leonardi, 2012) means the affordances are not stable characteristics of technologies, but also contingent upon what people do with these characteristics. Hence, definitions such as “imagined affordances” by Neff and Nagy



(2014)<sup>6</sup>, “vernacular affordances” by McVeigh-Schultz and Baym (2015)<sup>7</sup>, or Hutchby’s (2014) “communicative affordances”<sup>8</sup> seem appropriate as they put more emphasis on the users. They seem to suggest there is *a synergy* between design and people’s practices. In Hall’s (2003) model of encoding and decoding that shows how people can interpret media texts in dominant (intended), negotiated and oppositional codes, through their practices people can also appropriate, adapt, and reject certain functions and properties of SNSs (Papacharissi, 2010, p.216). We can consequently understand affordances as “both relational and functional” (Hutchby, 2014, p.87) and consider both what technology does to users and what the users do to technology (Bucher & Helmond 2017, p.16). This thesis draws on the definition of affordances as dynamics created at the synergy between platform design, users’ perceptions, needs and expectations, and socially defined norms.

The socio-technical approach also includes the process of domestication of technologies that recognises the relevance of affordances and posits that social media are so deeply ingrained in our daily lives that they have become taken-for-granted and almost invisible (Silverstone, 1994, p.166).

The domestication of technology refers to the capacity of a social group (a household, a family, but also an organisation) to appropriate technological artefacts and delivery systems into its own culture—its own spaces and times, its own aesthetic and its own functioning—to control them, and to render them more or less ‘invisible’ within the daily routines of daily life.

(Silverstone, 1994, p.98)

The process of domestication thus means to “make things our own”, “imprinted by, and expressive of, our identities” (Silverstone, 1994, p.174), to naturalise them (p.83), to make

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<sup>6</sup> Neff and Nagy identify three elements of affordances: users’ perceptions, attitudes, and expectations; the functionality of technologies; and the intentions of designers (2014, p.1).

<sup>7</sup> The term stresses the ways in which users understand and negotiate technology in their everyday lives.

<sup>8</sup> In this definition, affordances are both *functional* and *relational*. Functional insofar as they enable and constrain certain activities, and relational because their functionality differs among users and depends on context. For some users in some contexts certain affordances have certain functions, whereas for others they do not (2014, p.87).

them, or not make them, “acceptable and familiar” (Silverstone & Haddon, 1996, p.46). Lynn Spigel (1992) shows how television evolved from being viewed as revolutionary to gradually becoming a normalised and constitutive part of everyday life. Research on domestication originally focused on the adoption of technologies, mainly television, in the context of the household, but then expanded to other areas such as the Internet and mobile media, to include how individuals and society appropriate technologies (Haddon, 2006, p.196; Haddon, 2007, p.26), because the process of domestication does not just take place in the home (Silverstone & Haddon, 1996, p.46).

With the emergence of smartphones, being online has become “the default position” (Madianou, 2014b, p.667) for their users, creating an ‘always on’ lifestyle (boyd, 2012; Turkle, 2011). Due to mobility of these gadgets, availability of the Internet and ability to access SNSs through them, the transition between online and offline has become seamless and unnoticed by most people. Madianou notes that her participants would say they spent less time online than they actually did, and compared to how much time they used to spend online before acquiring a smartphone, but in fact they did not consider checking Facebook on their phone as being online (2014b, pp.673-674). boyd’s remarks on the difference between Internet usage in the early days and now also echoes this sense of ordinariness around today’s communication technologies (2012, p.4). She notes that while in the 1990s people would go to online chatrooms in order to *avoid* their local communities, nowadays most teenagers use the Internet to *connect* to the people in their community (2012, p.4). This means that participating online is not seen as eccentric anymore – as a form of subculture and resistance to the norm – but has become the norm, an integral part of everyday lives (2012, p.7). Before people used to connect with others they did not know based on their similar interests to form topic-centred communities, whereas today, boyd argues, people connect with others they already know based on their pre-existing social ties (2012, pp.7-8).

To domesticate technologies means to *incorporate* them into one’s daily routines. It also means to *redefine* technologies to suit a person’s interests, whereby people can ascribe new meanings to technologies and not adopt the intended ones (Silverstone et al., 1992, pp.16 &

24). Only through appropriation does an object become *authentic* (Silverstone et al., 1992, p.21). As Miller points out, authenticity of an artefact does not stem from a particular style of manufacturing process but from being the constitutive element of people's understanding of themselves and others (1987, p.215). In a similar vein, Julie Soleil Archambault emphasises that there is a “dialectic nature of the relationship between users and the technology” – people's practices transform these technologies into socially meaningful artefacts (2011, p.453). It should also be acknowledged that individual users' practices are also to some degree socially conditioned – embedded in a wider set of social relations. Therefore, I will also address the socio-cultural contexts of Serbian Londoners, and look at what meanings Serbian Londoners ascribe to digital media platforms, whether there is anything culturally specific to how they employ different platforms. What emerges from a socio-technical approach to digital media is the concept of media environments. Media environments refer to all new media as an integrated environment, where there is an interdependency between diverse platforms. This concept acknowledges both users' agency and the ways in which the design of platforms can enable or constrain certain interactions, as the next section elaborates.

### **3.2 Polymedia and Self-Presentation Online**

In everyday life, most people<sup>9</sup> employ a variety of different platforms for different purposes and for interacting with various others, creating a configuration of usage. This is why, as Licoppe argues, “to understand how a given relationship might be shaped by communication technologies, one needs to take into account the way the management of a given relationship will rely on the whole available technoscape” (2004, p.135). Therefore, I move from a platform-specific position that considers these different platforms as discrete media to focus on digital media as environments. Several concepts have been developed to refer to media environments, such as mediation (Martin-Barbero, 1993; Silverstone, 1999; Thompson, 1990), mediatisation (Hjarvard, 2004; Krotz, 2007; Schulz, 2004), media

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<sup>9</sup> Assuming they have access to the Internet and the costs are affordable. The concept of polymedia that I draw on in this thesis and later explain in this chapter assumes that three conditions are met: access, media literacy and affordable costs (Madianou & Miller, 2012).

ecology (Ito et al., 2010; Slater & Tacchi, 2004), media manifold (Couldry, 2011; Couldry & Hepp, 2017), and polymedia (Madianou & Miller, 2012).

Mediation theory posits that media profoundly permeates people's everyday lives; it recognises media's pervasive role and is concerned with the overall consequences of this condition (Couldry, 2008; Livingstone, 2009; Silverstone, 2005; Thompson, 1990). Mediation theory also acknowledges the *mutual shaping* of society and media (Couldry, 2008) and stresses the importance of a contextualised understanding of media's role (Livingstone, 2009, p.6). Thus, mediation is seen as a "dual process" – mediated communication shapes society and culture, but also "social and cultural activities mediate the mediations, [...] technologies and conveyed meanings are appropriated through reception and consumption" (Silverstone, 2005, p.202). Hence, it also takes place in the processes of reception and consumption (Martin-Barbero, 1993, p.2; Silverstone, 2005, p.189). Mediatisation similarly refers to cumulative consequences of socio-cultural changes driven by media (Krotz, 2008; Hepp & Krotz, 2014), that is, how a society and culture are transformed by and through media (Couldry, 2008, p.375). Stig Hjarvard defines mediatisation as "the processes through which core elements of a cultural or social activity (e.g. politics, religion, language) assume media form. As a consequence, the activity is to a greater or lesser degree performed through interaction with a medium" (2007, p.3). To distinguish the concept of mediatisation from mediation, Andreas Hepp and Friedrich Krotz write that mediatisation is concerned with "how the process of mediation has changed with the emergence of different kinds of media", whereas mediation relates to how communication mediates meaning construction (2014, p.7).

The concept of media ecology or communicative ecology also refers to all media (both new and old) as an environment and is concerned with how people navigate this environment to stay connected and maintain their social ties, including how people shift between online and offline contexts (Ito et al., 2010, pp.42-50). However, media ecology (or communicative ecology) refers to media as a place-based system (Ito et al., 2010, p.31) – how people appropriate new ICTs in conjunction with existing technologies in specific locations (Slater & Tacchi, 2006, p.10). The concept of media manifold, developed by Nick

Couldry (2011), also refers to interdependency between a plethora of platforms and a variety of users' practices in terms of both how they access and use these media (Couldry, 2016, p.31), or, as he initially put it, "a complex web of delivery platforms" (Couldry, 2011, p.220). In his later formulation of this concept, together with Hepp in their book *The Mediated Construction of Reality* (2016), the authors argue that while media environments offer an infinite set of possibilities, in their everyday lives people actually employ a reduced set of options from this "many-dimensional media universe". So the authors use the concept of media manifold to "keep in view both the social actor's position within a much larger institutionalised environment of interdependent media and the situated complexity of that actor's everyday choices of media" (Couldry & Hepp, 2016, p.56)

However, as Madianou points out, none of these concepts attempts to explain *why* people use one platform over another; by contrast, the concept of polymedia is concerned with how users *exploit the affordances of different digital media platforms to manage their relationships* (Madianou, 2014a, p.330; Madianou, 2014b, p.771). Madianou and Miller (2012) develop the concept of polymedia to refer to all new media as "an integrated environment of communicative opportunities" where every individual medium (both old and new) is defined in relation to other media available (Madianou, 2014a, p.330; Madianou, 2014b, p.670). The concept was initially used in the context of migration to explain how Filipino migrants in the UK navigate polymedia environments to manage their relationships and emotions with their left-behind families in the Philippines. Thus, polymedia is not just an environment – it also includes an "emotional intent", and considers the micro dynamics of communication practices (Madianou & Miller, 2012). This is a distinctive characteristic of the polymedia concept and the reason why this concept is more useful for this thesis – which tries to understand how Serbian Londoners engage with different platforms to negotiate their identities – than other similar concepts.

Polymedia is both a *theoretical approach* to understanding *the uses and consequences* of constantly changing new media, and a *concept* that refers to new media as an *integrated environment*, where there is interdependence between platforms. Madianou and Miller (2012) find that people employ several different media in order to manage their

relationships, bypassing the limitations of individual platforms (Madianou & Miller, 2012, p.124). The idea that people use several mediums for communicating with different others in multiple social contexts (based on who, when and where) is not very new. In his study of communication in multilingual settings, Fishman (1965) has observed that a person in Belgium may speak French with his work colleagues, Flemish at home with his family and yet Dutch with his friends in a pub. However, polymedia environments arguably provide users with a wider “*menu of communicative opportunities*” (Madianou, 2016). This means that even non-participation is meaningful. One’s choice not to use a certain medium may convey a message that one wants to avoid a certain type of interaction with particular individuals (Madianou, 2014b, pp.676-771; Madianou & Miller, 2012). In contrast to the concept of media ecology, the concept of polymedia is not limited to any geographical places (Madianou, 2014b, p.771), and is not simply interested in how people *maintain* their relationships at a distance, but importantly considers how they *manage* their relationships.

In his earlier criticism of this concept, Couldry (2016) argued that polymedia does not consider “interrelations” between a number of different interdependent mediums and their “structured complexity” (Couldry, 2016, p.30), which does not seem to be the case, as already explained. In their further criticism, Couldry and Hepp posit that polymedia does not “capture the interrelated *complexity* that is characteristic of the digitalised media environment as a whole”, that is “the *relation* between the reduced set of daily options and the infinity of options in principle available” (2016, pp.55-56, emphasis in original). However, it can be argued that while there are similarities between concepts such as polymedia and media manifold, these are different concepts that try to address different aspects of the role of media in society and culture. Hence, rather than dismissing and replacing the concepts of media manifold, mediation, mediatisation, or media ecology, the concept of polymedia co-exists with these other relevant concepts, as Madianou (2014b) also suggests.

In this thesis, I will draw on Madianou and Miller’s (2012) concept of polymedia in order to understand how Serbian Londoners navigate digital media environments in order to make an argument about whether different digital media platforms invite different identities

– considering in what ways the affordances of a variety of platforms might influence online self-presentation among my participants. The choice of platforms usually depends on who people want to interact with and what affordances can facilitate the type of interaction they want to achieve. For instance, studies have demonstrated the importance of webcams for mothers with younger children, because of their visual cues (Madianou, 2012, p.336). Apart from *affordances* and *intended audience*, Alice Marwick identifies the other two factors that people’s online identity performances depend on: *social norms* – what is seen as acceptable versus unacceptable behaviour on social media – and *social contexts* – some SNS are created for a specific purposes and are more likely to be used in a specific way, compared to other SNS (2013, p.357).

Polymedia environments provide a stage for enacting identities and facilitating encounters. As argued in Chapter 2, identities are relational – always negotiated in relation to something or someone else. This means that people may perform their identity differently in relation to different intended audiences, norms of appropriate behaviour and social contexts. Identities are always a result of self-presentation and image-management, not only in an online sphere but offline as well (Goffman, 1959). People are always adjusting their behaviour in relation to social situations. Social cues – including visual, contextual and auditory – play an important role in defining social situations or contexts: they give meanings to social interactions and thereby enable them to be understood (Baym, 2010, p.7). As Goffman explains, people need information about those they are engaged with in order to define the situation – to manage mutual expectations and outcomes of the interaction (1959, p.15). Therefore, an individual’s audience has a formative role in shaping their identity (Goffman, 1959, p.25), and this applies to social media as well. In relation to the concept of ‘doing nation’ that I developed in Chapter 2 to argue that national identities come into being through ordinary communication practices and depend on continuous performativity, by drawing on Austin (1962), I have emphasised that communicative success depends on intended audiences. Following Bourdieu (1992), I have also stressed that the role of everyday communication practices in ‘doing nation’ also depends on the authority of the speaker. However, I argue that the speaker not only has the authority by the virtue of their status or symbolic power, but this power and authority are defined in relation

to a particular audience, who through their practices can legitimise the authority of the speaker (cf. Bourdieu, 1977, 1990). This is why it is important to consider the role of social surveillance on social media in order to understand how Serbian Londoners perform their identities on various platforms.

Social surveillance (horizontal or lateral surveillance) is an inherent characteristic of social media (Andrejevic, 2004; Marwick, 2012; Tokunaga, 2010). Social networking sites are designed to look at what others are ‘up to’ and to be looked at (Joinson, 2008; Lampe et al., 2006). People broadcast themselves with a particular audience in mind and look at themselves through the eyes of others (Marwick, 2012, p.378), which is why Hampton (2016) describes social networks as a “persistent-pervasive community”. This comes as no surprise given that “*surveillance... is a basic feature of the modern world*”, as Zygmunt Bauman and David Lyon argue (2013, p.vi, emphasis added). While social surveillance is different to traditional (vertical) surveillance that Bauman and Lyon (2013) have in mind (where institutions and organisations are only able to look at, but not be looked at) insofar as it takes place between individuals and is most often two-way, the consequences are the same – it creates “panoptic-type effects”, people modify their behaviour as a result of awareness of being watched (Marwick, 2012). Marwick observes that “while surveillance is typically undertaken to manage, control, or influence a particular population, social surveillance leads to *self*-management... The internalization of the surveilled gaze” (2012, p.381). One tries to imagine who their audience will be in order to adjust their behaviour and self-presentation according to the group norm (boyd, 2010, p.44) and, importantly, also accordingly to *what they want to achieve*. Consequently, people’s identity performances on social media are in most cases *strategic* (Marwick, 2012).

Following Goffman (1959), it can be argued that people’s identity performances are in most cases strategic when interacting with others. As he explains, people have a front region that relates to formal behaviour when they are being watched, and a back region for how they behave when no one is watching. The world of digital media has significantly complicated this concept, and has prompted people to be even more strategic and constantly aware of being watched – digital information can be archived and later searched and retrieved, and



easily disseminated thanks to the affordances of content persistence, searchability and spreadability (see boyd 2010). An individual is never fully in control of their self-presentation and image management; the front and back region can sometimes collide. This happens when a post that was created in a certain context reappears in a new context that may convey different meanings to the original and thus attract new (unintended) audiences – this is called “context collapse” (boyd, 2010, p.49), which can be particularly relevant for migrants who are likely to have multiple networks from their country of origins and their host society, as two or more different socio-cultural contexts. This is also because certain algorithms and platform designs enable others to contribute to the online pool of information available about individuals (Baym, 2010, p.111), by for instance posting on a wall or tagging in posts and pictures – Marwick and boyd call this “networked privacy” (2014, p.13). Algorithms are, broadly defined, encoded procedures based on mathematical formulas and calculations that identify patterns in the collected data to create a desired output, such as by selecting and recommending information, ads or memories that are relevant based on previous searches, views or traffic (Bucher & Helmond, 2017; Gillespie, 2014; Van Dijck, 2012). These algorithms also make it possible for old posts to reappear at the top of a person’s social media feed if the post gets updated, such as when someone makes a comment. When an old post reappears in a new context – both in terms of time and audiences – it could lead to the above-explained context collapse.

An individual’s public profiles on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn are also easily accessed from any browser by people who they are not connected with and who might not have accounts on these SNSs, which further complicates who the audiences are. As lists of friends and followers on SNSs are growing, it is likely that people lose sight of everyone in their social media circles. Facebook, for instance, allows users to customise audiences for every post, but this requires that users know exactly who their publics are. It has arguably become much harder for users to govern what they ‘give off’ in digital media environments compared to offline settings. Hence, both visible and invisible audiences matter when it comes to online performances of self. In Chapters 6, 7 and 8 I will explore how people navigate the polymedia environment to manage their self-presentations online and what consequences social surveillance on social media may have on how Serbian Londoners

perform their identities in the polymedia environment – whether different intended audiences on different platforms, such as Facebook and WhatsApp, have any role to play in how my participants preform their identifies on these platforms.

Strategies defined in this chapter can also be understood as tactics in Michel de Certeau's (1984) terminology. De Certeau writes that tactics are the weapon of the weak, signalling the absence of power: "A tactic is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. [...] The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organised by the law of a foreign power" (1984, p.37). On the other hand, for de Certeau, strategy represents a system that manipulates power relations, within which people may use tactics to subvert the practices, representations and structure of the system. In short, a strategy would be what Ferdinand de Saussure calls 'langue' (a system), whereas a tactic would be 'parole' (an act) (de Certeau, 1984, p.32). I contend that certain strategies people take on social media should be understood as tactics following de Certeau's terminology, that may actually reveal people's vulnerabilities and a lack of power in the dominant system of representation, which they employ to subvert and transform these representations – from within, not leaving or rejecting the system, as de Certeau explains (1984, p.32).

The architecture of digital media also encourages people to 'categorise' and 'define' themselves, by adding a short biography visible to everyone, choosing a nationality, a country of origin and a city of residence or selecting from a drop-down list of options. It is also possible to 'categorise' oneself by selecting preferences such as music and sports – by 'defining' one's taste. Vocabulary choices may also be revealing in terms of age or nationality, for example (Baym, 2010, pp.112-113). Language and alphabets, as well as taste performances are also some of the means through which nationalism is reproduced on a daily basis (Mihelj, 2011, p.21; Billig, 1996). All these seemingly mundane communication practices are 'doing nation' in a subtle, almost invisible, yet effective way. This is why managing national representations on social media domains are part of increasing diplomatic efforts.

Finally, Baym posits that *interactivity* per se is not enough to produce *a sense of community* (2010, p.72). She notes that an online community depends on *shared spaces*, understood as *third places* (Oldenburg, 1989) – “neither work nor home”, places where people ‘hang out’, which are perceived to be “vital sites of informal social life, critical to social cohesion.” It also depends then on *shared practice* – “routinized behaviours” that may also include unconscious actions, *social norms*, *shared identities*, and *interpersonal relationships* (Baym, 2010, pp.72-81). For instance, Madianou (2014a) finds that a Filipino mother in the UK and her daughter in the Philippines often shop together online via Skype, browsing online stores and sending each other pictures in attachments (2014a, p.338). On the other hand, in her study of the Cibervalle online forum, Heike Mónica Greschke (2013) argues that this platform fosters an ethnic-based online community and represents a *home* for the participants, either understood as a *homeland* (given that people interact based on their shared national and diasporic identity) or as a place of security and comfort. Cibervalle is a niche forum that attracts Paraguayans from across the world, where members can offer support to each other, “locate compatriots” who live nearby and meet them in person (Greschke, 2013, p.2). As this example shows, people can appropriate certain platforms according to their cultural or national identity. Digital media users are always embedded in certain socio-cultural contexts and their practices online may reflect these contexts. The next section further discusses the relevance of socio-cultural contexts, helping to better understand and interpret some apparently ordinary practices observed in the fieldwork, as Chapter 6 will show.

### **3.3 Is there such a thing as Facebook or the Internet? Socio-cultural contexts of social media usage**

Miller and Slater (2000) and Miller (2010) argue that social norms on social media are very much culturally conditioned. Miller goes as far as to claim that “there is no such thing [as Facebook]” (2010, p.158), or the Internet (Slater & Miller, 2000). Facebook and the Internet more generally do not have a meaning outside of a particular cultural context and a particular place in which they are used. The Internet “is not a monolithic or placeless ‘cyberspace’; rather, it is numerous new technologies, used by diverse people, in diverse

real-world locations” (Miller & Slater, 2000, p.4). Based on his fieldwork in Trinidad, Miller concludes that the meanings that Trinidadians ascribe to Facebook localise and appropriate the social networking sites in their own distinct manner. Facebook in Trinidad is usually referred to as *Fesbook* or *Macobook*, *fes* meaning to become close with another person too quickly, and *maco* meaning being too nosy, both of which are considered to be specific characteristics of Trinidadian culture and everyday life (Miller, 2011, pp.159-161). When the marriage of one of Miller’s respondents broke down this was understood to be caused by infidelity and nosiness – both seen as integral parts of Trinidadian identity that Facebook mirrored.

However, Facebook is not just used to reflect what “being Trini” *already* means, but also as a means for people to realise their otherwise constrained identity, what Slater and Miller (2000) call “expansive realisation”, as well as to envisage a novel form of self that they have always wanted to be, termed as “expansive potential” (Miller & Slater, 2000). Facebook therefore “provided a natural platform for enacting on a global stage core values and components of Trinidadian identity such as national pride, cosmopolitanism, freedom, entrepreneurialism” (Miller, 2011, p.3). It fed participants’ natural curiosity of world affairs, enabling them to do business and promote their national culture (Miller, 2011, p.2). Therefore, Miller concludes that “‘being Trini’ is integral to understanding what the Internet is in this particular place; and that using the Internet is becoming integral to ‘being Trini’”.

Likewise, in his more recent work, Miller (2016) shows how Facebook is used in England as a means of avoiding one’s relatives. He explains that Facebook was first seen as a problem because of concerns around how it undermines boundaries of people’s private spheres, whereas individuals later came up with a solution – using Facebook as a means of keeping people at a distance. This was termed a “goldilocks strategy”, meaning “neither too cold, nor too hot, but ‘just right’” (Miller, 2016, p.5). Therefore, online participation does not mean “‘disembedding’ from an offline reality” (Miller, 2016, p.5), but new forms of sociality and new forms of identities may emerge. In a similar vein, Andrew Taylor (2012)

demonstrates how indigenous people across the world adapt and adopt different technologies to suit their needs.

However, Miller's emphasis on cultural differences and appropriation of the Internet and Facebook is somewhat overstated. First, Miller's position does not take into account the ways in which affordances may shape users' interactions. Hence, Miller's earlier approach can be described as social constructivism of technology, as explained earlier in this chapter. There is a difference between saying the Internet is not one single thing and saying it is nothing ("there is no such thing"). Second, this position also has a tendency to reify cultural identities by overlooking cross-national similarities, whereby it somewhat falls into the same trap as Katz and Liebes (1990) in their study on cross-cultural readings of *Dallas*. Even though Miller stresses the vital importance of other identities, such as gender and professional identity, these often tend to be understood within a cultural code (see 2016, p.5).

Ethnography of communication practices in other national contexts show similar insights to Miller's (2010). For instance, Archambault's (2011) ethnographic study of how people in Southern Mozambique use mobile phones also demonstrates that infidelity and jealousy are prominent cultural traits that become accentuated due to mobile phones – because phones enable realisation of these characteristics but also because they are repositories of personal information (see Ling, 2008, p.97) due to their affordance of storage capacity. As Archambault pithily puts it: "phone is a forensic science to crime scene investigation" (2011, p.453). However, couples understand that their break-ups are triggered because of mobile phones, which is why some partners opt not to have one or are prohibited from owning one, but Archambault explains that infidelity and jealousy are deeply ingrained in Southern Mozambique culture. The author also notes that rumours spread quickly through mobile phones, which in some cases leads to deadly consequences. Rumours are closely linked to "obsession with the neighbour's life", another prominent feature of this culture. Miller and Horst (2006), in their study on the role of ICTs for development in Jamaica, also find that these are the predominant ways in which Jamaicans use mobile phones. Marwick writes that jealousy in social media is also not alien to the Western context (2014, p.381).

Marvin also notes that increase in infidelity was seen as one of the consequences of advancements in communication technologies. Even though Marvin (1988) discusses the infidelity in the context of a technological determinism approach whereby technology is understood to be ‘the cause’, it still shows how certain uses and motives are actually widespread and not necessarily tied to a specific culture.

By comparing these ethnographic studies of social and mobile media in different cultural settings, it can be concluded that there are some common characteristics of how people from different socio-cultural backgrounds appropriate such media. To refer back to Bonikowski’s (2017) arguments discussed in Chapter 2, there are no core values shared by all members of one nation, there are rather cross-country similarities in terms of people’s values and characteristics. This is why this thesis also aims to consider communication practices of Serbian Londoners that may be similar to the general UK adult population, rather than solely focusing on what is particular and distinctive about their practices, as Chapter 7 particularly demonstrates. I do not intend by any means to undermine the value of Miller’s (2010) insights. There are variations between different cultures, such as in idioms that describe their practices (*namorar*, for instance, is a Southern Mozambique word to refer to choosing casual dating over marriage) or some gender inequalities and imbalances. Importantly, Miller (2010) points out the processes of localisation and users’ agency. In order to understand how these cultural codes are shared and why socio-cultural contexts and local identities remain relevant in the age of globalisation and the Internet, I contend that we need to examine mediated relationships. To this end, I discuss next the role of three types of mediated co-presence in maintaining and reinforcing social ties and identities.

### **3.4 Mediated, connected and ambient co-presence**

The notion of ‘doing nations’ that I proposed in the previous chapter invites us to consider everyday communication practices through which national identities are negotiated and maintained. National culture can exist only as long as it is performed, that is as long as

people *share* their experiences, habits and ways of life (see Bauman, 1996; Deutsch, 1954). A nation becomes realised only through the acts of communication in the same vein as language does in the act of speaking (see de Certeau, 1984, p.33, Deutsch, 1954). Likewise, cosmopolitan identity, as argued in Chapter 2, is also a matter of performance and nuance (Ong, 2009), negotiated in relation to a particular context (Skrbis & Woodward, 2007) and refers to one's willingness to engage with the other (Hannerz, 2004). This means that cosmopolitan identity also becomes realised through communication practices. Hence, we need to consider mediated interpersonal communication and mediated co-presence in order to understand how identities are shaped, maintained and transformed over time. While some authors argue that everyday life is the realm in which identities are maintained (see Billig, 1995; Skey, 2011), as explained in Chapter 2, I argue that ordinary practices can also drive change and have transformative potential. It is the field of often hidden unnoticed and subtle power struggles. As de Certeau writes in relation to Indigenous Indians colonised by the Spanish:

Even when they accepted their subjection, the Indians often used the laws, practices, and representations that were imposed on them... they made something else out of them or by transforming them from within – not by rejecting them or by transforming them (though that occurred as well), but by many different ways of using them... They remained other within the system... They diverted it without leaving it.

(1984, p.33)

Baym (2010) suggests, as noted earlier, that *interpersonal relationships* are one of the key constitutive elements of an (online) community. A number of television audience studies have proved the importance of the social context in which media consumption takes place. Media consumption is a “bonding experience” and “a social act” (Georgiou, 2006, pp.72-73). Today, much of these interactions that would previously happen in the living room, pub or shopping mall (see Hebdige's [1979] study of youth subcultures and the meanings of style) have moved online. Social media, as mentioned above, represents both spaces where people ‘hang out’ – ‘coolspaces’ (Baym, 2015; boyd, 2012, p.4) – but also home

(Greschke, 2013). As in the offline setting, the polymedia environment enables people to chat directly or to simply be aware of the presence of other people without any direct interaction. This is especially the case for migrants whose families and friends live abroad. Madianou notes that digital media have become constitutive of relationships in the cases of prolonged separation (2014b, p.667). According to Madianou (2014b) and Madianou and Miller (2012), these new media have enabled Filipino mothers in the UK separated from their children to do family at a distance, thus maintaining their identities as mothers. The ability to be mothers at a distance provides them with a socially accepted justification to leave and sometimes prolong their stay abroad, which has altered the phenomenon of migration, as mentioned in this chapter's introduction (Madianou & Miller, 2012). These various digital media enable us to have a sense that:

Those who are absent are present, always and everywhere. Sociability is no longer dependent on geographical proximity. It thus becomes possible – as recent studies have already shown – for people who live isolated from their neighbours in one place simultaneously to be tied into dense networks stretching across continents.

(Beck, 2002, p.31; also see Wellman & Rainie, 2011)

The availability of a plethora of different digital media platforms and greater Internet availability has enhanced and made possible different types of mediated co-presence, such as mediated co-presence, connected presence and ambient co-presence. Mediated co-presence implies direct communication, such as a phone call, whereas connected presence (Licoppe, 2004) signifies a continuous flow of communication, “a ‘continuous conversation’, consisting of a multitude of interactions, united in time through the construction of shared expectations and routines, and of a common world” (Licoppe, 2004, p.138).

Ambient co-presence is a type of mediated co-presence that refers to a “peripheral yet intense *awareness* of distant others” that are both “significant others” and “wider social circles” (Madianou, 2016, p.16; emphasis added). This is enabled by an ‘always on’ culture brought about by Internet availability and relatively inexpensive mobile data arrangements



as well as the affordance of portability (Madianou, 2014b, 2016). Ambient co-presence in particular is dependent on visual, mobile and locative affordances that make possible a constant awareness of the daily rhythms of others, which offers emotional reassurance and supports an individual's sense of belonging (Madianou, 2016, p.15). This means that ambient co-presence is not passive, it is an indirect interaction and as such it is also a "dynamic practice" (Madianou, 2016)

Other forms of mediated co-presences play a similar role in providing an emotional reassurance and reinforcing the relationships. A simple message, such as 'good morning, have a nice day', or a message with only an emoji or sticker, conveys meanings of care and presence, where the content of the message is often secondary to the act of sending it, as Madianou and Miller observe: "Texting often has a phatic function, an emotional reminder of the distant other" (2012, p.290). Phatic communication, as one of six basic functions of verbal communication, "may be displayed by a profuse exchange of *ritualised* formulas, by entire dialogues with the mere purport of prolonging communication" (Jakobson, 1960, p.5; see also Malinowski, 1949). These ritualised communication practices represent a bonding experience, as the insights of the research on older media has also demonstrated (see Anderson, 1983; Morley, 1992; Silverstone, 1994). A study of Finnish television audiences showed that the *daily ritual* of watching the news had even greater importance than the information conveyed. Although Finnish audiences were interviewed straight after watching the news, they showed very little knowledge of the content (Nordenstreng et al., 1972, in Morley, 1992). Micro managing and micro coordinating of everyday activities through mobile phones have a similar function of reaffirming relationships (see Ling & Yttri, 2002). "Each of these mediated interactions reactivates, reaffirms, and reconfigures the relationship" (Licoppe, 2004, p.138), however this is not to say that (in some contexts and for some people) this ubiquity of constant contact may pose a burden. Mediated co-presence can have both positive and negative consequences (Madianou, 2016, p.17). Social media tends to augment what already exists (Madianou & Miller, 2012). For interpersonal relationships, this means that where there is a problem or rupture in a relationship, people will not welcome all aspects that these media afford.

Internet mediated communication also supports cosmopolitan imagination and geographical and symbolic mobility. In her study of the Internet cafés in Ghana, Jenna Burrell (2012) argues that the ability to connect with people from other countries online allowed these internet users in Ghana to symbolically transcend borders and embrace cosmopolitanism – an identity that has perhaps been constrained due to an inability to travel – thus the Internet had a function of both expansive potential and expansive realisation in Slater and Miller’s (2000) terms. Likewise, Saskia Witteborn (2014) shows how younger people in refugee camps in Germany use the Internet to connect with Germans, which helps them to blend in and present themselves as cosmopolitan, and consequently help them cope with the precarious life in refugee camps. In a similar vein, Cara Wallis (2012) shows that for Chinese women who migrated from rural to urban areas in China, mobile phones are more than material objects or a mere status symbol, but represent a means to enter imagined modernity. Purchasing a mobile phone was the first thing these women would do when they moved to urban areas because “the very act of possessing a phone was a way to assert one’s autonomy from ‘othered’ rural identity and to feel part of a modern cosmopolitan culture” (2012, p.89).

However, all three scholars conclude that these are only coping mechanisms that help people mitigate precarious life conditions or discrimination that do not essentially challenge power inequalities and the status quo. Nevertheless, the authors recognise these people’s agency in a sense that these technologies did enable them to realise their potential and envisage the self they had always wanted to be (Miller & Slater, 2000). Hence, in the following chapters I seek to question whether the desire to blend in – which often shows that people adhere to the dominant discourses and system of representation – always necessarily means legitimising the existing structures of power and perpetuating the status quo; or whether the system can be challenged from within, without leaving it or rejecting it, as de Certeau (1984) argues.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This thesis takes a socio-technical approach to understanding digital media that acknowledges there is a mutual shaping between users (society) and technology. In line with this approach, I draw on the concept of polymedia, developed by Madianou and Miller (2012) that understands all different media, including old and new, as an integrated environment of communicative opportunities and is concerned with how people navigate this environment to manage their relationships, as well as their identities. The underlining premise is that different media have different affordances and are therefore employed for different purposes. I have argued that we should understand affordances as a result of the synergy between individual users, technological characteristics and a wider society. The way people navigate these environments and perform their identities online depends on the affordances of these media, their intended publics, social norms and cultural contexts.

Following Slater and Miller, I have also contended that the Internet is not “a placeless cyberspace” (2000, p.4) and thus it is imperative to be studied in a particular location and in a particular cultural context, rather than irrespective of these. In this regard, I have also pointed out that while in different cultural contexts people may use these various digital media in distinctive ways according to their cultural identities, some of the arguments in this respect have overstated the role of culture, overlooking cross-cultural similarities. Following an earlier proposed concept of ‘doing nation’ and studies that show the pivotal role of significant others in the ways in which people identify and perceive the world around them, I have argued that we need to consider mediated interpersonal communication and different types of mediated co-presence in order to understand how national and cosmopolitan identities are brought about, maintained and transformed over time. I have also questioned whether identities can be not just maintained but challenged and changed through everyday ordinary practices.

Given this theoretical framework, this thesis is concerned with exploring how Serbian Londoners navigate the polymedia environment in order to negotiate their identities, and what the role of affordances and social surveillance is in how they perform their identities on diverse digital media platforms, if any. It also considers whether any of these platforms have become ‘Serbianised’ in the same ways that Facebook has become ‘Trinidadianised’,

according to Miller (2010), and, if so, how; and finally, what the roles of mediated interpersonal communication and different types of mediated co-presence in shaping national and cosmopolitan identities are. All of this requires me to explore who Serbian Londoners are – what they do, where in London they live and why, where they came from (not necessarily Serbia), when they arrived in the UK, why, who they socialise with most often and where, their taste preferences –their overall life trajectories. Before proceeding to address these issues, in the next chapter I will explain how this research has been carried out and provide methodological rationale for the research design.

# Chapter 4: Research Design and Methodology

## 4.1 Research Strategy and Rationale

As argued in Chapter 2, I draw on an understanding of identity as contextual and relational (Hall, 1990, 2003), and in line with this, I study cosmopolitanism and nationalism from the bottom-up perspective, as identities that are lived and performed in everyday life (see Madianou, 2007; Ong, 2009; Skrbis & Woodward, 2007). In Chapter 3, I explained that I move from the platform specific approach to study media as integrated environments of communicative opportunities, whereby every platform exists in relation to all other media available (Madianou & Miller, 2012). Chapter 3 has also argued that digital media are not neutral; their affordances, intended publics and associated social norms may enable and constrain some types of interaction among the users (Baym, 2010; boyd, 2010; Marwick, 2012; Papacharissi, 2010). In this chapter, I have also emphasised the importance of understanding how digital media are appropriated in a particular socio-cultural context, and how these contexts can shape the ways in which people engage with digital media (Miller & Slater, 2000). This analytical framework required a prolonged observation of how Serbian Londoners navigate digital media environments and how they express their identities in different contexts and on different platforms. It also required me to conduct in-depth interviews in order to gain insights into their personal histories, everyday life routines and communication practices, asking which media they use, how often and for what purposes. Therefore, I carried out ethnographic fieldwork over a three year period (July 2015 – November 2018), including participant-observation, online ethnography and autoethnography, as well as semi-structured in-depth interviews, complemented with media maps, with 40 participants, constituting an equal number of men and women. All participants were adults and had lived in London for at least two years before this research commenced in July 2015.

Ethnography has been the main method of studying the everyday life, identities and cultures of specific communities or societies (see Baumann, 1996; Gillespie, 1995;

Madianou, 2006; Morley, 1992; Silverstone, 1994) because it provides “depth” or “thick” descriptions (Hine, 2000, p.42; Geertz, 1973) of people’s discourses and practices in their “naturally occurring settings or *field*”<sup>10</sup> (Brewer, 2000, p.6; see also Walsh, 2006, p.228). Ethnography also has an advantage because of its longitudinal character (Madianou, 2010, p.435), which allows a researcher to identify changes in these practices and discourses over time and in relation to different contexts. The longitudinal nature of this study also enabled me to explore whether some (major) events, such as Britain’s June 2016 vote to leave the EU, had any consequences on identities and a sense of belonging among my participants (see Chapter 6). Importantly, ethnography can provide a “nuanced understanding” (Madianou, 2010, p.435) and does not require an *a priori* hypothesis (Hine, 2000, p.42); therefore it allows patterns to emerge from the data. Quantitative methods such as surveys and questionnaires, on the other hand, aim to test established theories and concepts by finding correlations between variables and the frequency of occurring patterns (see Walsh, 2006, p.228). Hence, these methods do not account for nuances, hidden motives and meanings of people’s behaviour and actions, and they do not provide an understanding of a wider social context (see Silverman, 2011, p.66; Berg, 2009, p.229). Conversely, ethnography emphasises the “importance of *context* and *process* in understanding behaviour” (Silverman, 2011, pp.66-67), and by participating in the field the researcher is able to understand meanings and everyday practices (Brewer, 2000, p.6).

Alongside the ethnography, semi-structured in-depth interviews have helped me to collect *detailed accounts* of personal histories, everyday life and communication practices of Serbian Londoners (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000, p.39). Interviews have further provided with me an opportunity to enquire about some observed practices, dig further into topics that emerge from the ethnographic fieldwork and obtain an in-depth understanding of my participants’ sense of belonging, their motives for using different media or behaving in a certain way, and their personal experiences (see Wisker, 2001, p.165). As Chapters 6 and 8 particularly show, interviews helped me to obtain a better understanding of some ordinary and unremarkable practices on social media. The interviews often provided me with the

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<sup>10</sup> ‘Natural’ refers to places and spaces where people spend most of their time, where practices and discourses take place on a regular basis.

context to interpret these practices. However, there is often a discrepancy between what people say and what they actually do (Hammersley, 2006, p.10), because people are not always self-reflexive and/or cannot always recall all details about their communication practices and everyday life, which is also why ethnography remains a crucial methodological choice.

Traditional ethnography in this thesis was coupled with online ethnography for several reasons. Traditional ethnography cannot and should not be abandoned and replaced by online ethnography for the study of online interactions; the two should only supplement each other in order to facilitate a deeper understanding of the online. As Cristina Flesher-Fominaya emphasises, “studying online participation exclusively cannot tell us anything about non-participation, it only captures the behaviour of those who are already participating. This makes it harder to explore factors that inhibit online participation” (2016, p.96). This means, as Chapter 7 particularly shows, that studying non-participation in digital media environments informs our understanding of participation. In polymedia environments, where every platform exists in relation to all other media available and provides a communicative opportunity (Madianou & Miller, 2012), non-participation is meaningful – it can send a message that a person wants to avoid certain types of interaction with certain people. Further, unlike social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, I was not able to regularly monitor the participants’ activities on privately oriented platforms such as email, Viber, FaceTime and WhatsApp. In interviews participants were asked to show me some of their interactions on privately oriented platforms, but some of the most revealing insights spontaneously emerged from the ethnographic fieldwork – while ‘hanging out’ with people in their ‘natural’<sup>11</sup> settings. Finally, digital media are profoundly embedded in everyday life and people bring their offline lives into their online lives, as Chapter 3 has shown. As a part of my ethnographic fieldwork, I visited most of my research participants at their homes, joined them in their regular activities, such as running errands or taking children to martial art classes on Saturdays, and attended their birthday parties and Christmas dinners. All of this provided

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<sup>11</sup> Natural refers in this context to any setting that was not purposefully arranged for the sake of this research, such as the home of the respondents, places where they frequented – cafés, neighbourhoods, galleries, and things they normally do – birthday parties, running errands, etc.

me with an opportunity to obtain a deeper understanding of my participants' personal histories, but also for studying nationalism and cosmopolitanism from a bottom-up perspective. As argued in Chapter 2, the concepts of banal nationalism and banal cosmopolitanism invite us to look at ostensibly mundane practices such as the ways people decorate their homes (Hutchinson, 2006), what they eat and listen to, ways of seeing (Ong, 2009), and who they socialise with.

In this chapter, I first explain how I conducted the ethnography, and provide more arguments, supported by examples, for why it is important to conduct both online and traditional ethnography. I also elucidate the relevance of the autoethnographic approach of this study and its credibility as a method. I then move on to demonstrate how the interviews were collected and what my topic guide consisted of, followed by the review of media maps, their purpose and use in this study. Having done this, I address the sampling criteria, that is: how I recruited my participants and what kinds of data I collected. The final section of this chapter deals with how the pilot research was carried out, and the methods that were applied to analyse and interpret the collected data. Finally, I reflect on some ethical implications of my research and provide a brief explanation of how I protected the privacy of my participants and confidentiality of their data.

#### **4.1.1 Ethnography and Online Ethnography**

I observed and participated in both the offline and online activities and interactions of my research participants on a daily basis, where I took field notes, photos and screenshots (see Geertz, 1973; Marcus & Fischer, 1986) of everything relevant to the problems outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, the so-called “foreshadowed problems” (Walsh, 2006). This allowed me to ask questions and involved me posting photos or updating statuses, liking or commenting on my respondents' posts, as well as attending birthday parties, Christmas lunches, or joining my participants in running errands and taking their children to school (see Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p.1). In doing this I was interested in *the details, the routine*. As Silverman illustratively explains:



If you go to the cinema primarily in order to see ‘action’ (car chases, holdups etc.), then it will take a big effort for you to become a good ethnographer. On the other hand, if you are intrigued by the *details* of policework and criminal activity, you are very much on the right lines. This is because social science observation is fundamentally about understanding the routine rather than what appears to be exciting.

(Silverman, 2011, p.69)

As a participant-observer, I immersed myself in the studied group, which enabled me to obtain some very revealing findings (see Walsh, 2006). For instance, one respondent reposted my Facebook update about smart benches, created by a Serbian IT team, being installed in New Cross, Southeast London. In relation to a wider context, this endorsement made me realise that banal nationalism is often employed as a strategy of redefining Serbian national identity, as this example demonstrates – by informing others (mainly non-Serbian Facebook friends) of the achievements of a Serbian-based company, as Chapter 6 further argues. This is why the bottom line of my research is that “we cannot study social world without being part of it” (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, p.249).

I take an approach that draws on the view that online and offline are inseparable (see Miller & Slater, 2000; Haythornthwaite, 2002, p.388). There are at least two dimensions to this argument. *First, digital media and technologies profoundly permeate our daily lives in many ways* (see Murthy, 2008, p. 849): we bring our ‘offline’ lives into ‘online’ spaces, and *vice versa*. On several occasions when I was spending time with Angela (30), she received or made FaceTime calls to her parents. In fact, that is how I met her family – through Facetime, as Chapter 8 reveals. In a similar spirit, I learnt much more about Alexander’s (33) uses of WhatsApp and his relationship with his brother through prolonged contact. On one occasion, when we went to the Royal Academy of Arts to see Ai Weiwei’s exhibition, he showed me messages he was receiving from his brother on WhatsApp at that moment. He then told me they had gone out together the night before and his brother was referencing that. From this, I was able to get a more profound insight into Alexander’s relationship with his brother and importantly the role WhatsApp plays in sustaining this relationship.

*Second, this thesis argues there is no dichotomy between online identities and offline identities.* As noted in Chapter 3, drawing on Goffman's (1959) analysis of the presentation of self in everyday life, people always perform and negotiate their identities depending on a variety of factors, such as their audiences, trying to manage the impressions they leave and what they 'give off'. Furthermore, to describe cultures as "they really are" and aim to reveal "true" identities presumes these to be homogeneous, unchangeable and singular (Hine, 2000, p.49). This argument is often discussed in relation to arguments about self-management online. While some would contend that the Internet enables people to have greater control over their self-representation, the opposite may also be true. The Internet and social media give everyone a greater potential to look at others and to be looked at, which can actually weaken the potential for self-management. As Chapter 3 has shown, it can be much harder to manage self-presentation online than offline. Due to the affordances of content persistence and searchability information can be archived and later retrieved. On social media platforms users' contacts and friends also add to the pool of information about the user, such as by tagging them in a photo or commenting on their walls or posts. This is one aspect of Marwick and boyd's (2014) concept of "networked privacy". All of this means that the "front region" (how people behave when no one is watching them) and the "back region" (how they behave when they are being watched) (Goffman, 1959) can more easily collide in an online sphere than offline.

A certain level of credibility can only be ensured by *the reflexive role of the researcher*. This entails several aspects. First and foremost, the researcher needs to beware of their convictions. As Friedrich Nietzsche points out, "convictions are more dangerous enemies of truth than lies" (1994 [1878], p.233), because while lies inevitably take a truth into account, firmly held opinions usually make one deaf to the arguments of others. For the ethnographer this can be of particular concern in relation to events that strongly contradict their principles, such as racist or xenophobic remarks. This has turned out to be an extremely important lesson for me. As will be mentioned in Chapter 6, in the wake of the EU referendum in the UK, I have experienced some forms of discrimination. Regardless of whether I shared the views of my participants or not, I always refrained from giving my

own point of view and arguments on any of the issues raised. Instead, I carefully listened to and asked questions framed in such a way as to understand participants' motives and backgrounds, rather than validating or encouraging them to reconsider their position. Attempting to understand the motives behind my participants' actions and perceptions was not only a method of developing empathy with them, but also an attempt to make sure that my views did not influence their responses and practices in any way, as well as a way to test my hypothesis, give them a voice and thus ensure my interpretations take their positions into account. However, in subsequent chapters, I may provide interpretations and conclusions that not all participants may agree with, but I aim to do justice to their experiences and personal narratives. By being able to compare and contrast data of 40 participants collected by different methods, such as interviews and participant-observation both offline and online, I was able to analyse all data in context and identify common patterns.

One of the potential risks of ethnography – which requires complete immersion into a community, such as learning its language, adopting its habits and following its customs (see Walsh, 2006, p.233; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p.2) – is that the ethnographer may “go native”. This means that “their view [of participants] of the world becomes natural and taken for granted, to the point where it simply becomes invisible” (Deacon et al., 1999, p.262). In such instances, as Deacon et al. note, “it becomes impossible to arrive at any explanation of the experiences and motives of those we observe other than those they themselves express” and therefore “produces descriptions rather than explanations” (1999, p.256). These arguments are even more relevant for the researchers who *are* ‘native’ – who study their own cultures, like myself. I will reflect more on this issue in the following section on autoethnography. Although I share a history, culture and language with my participants, our attitudes towards this history and identities may differ significantly, as they also differ among my participants themselves. As Madianou points out, it is important to recognise that “our societies are not homogenous not only ethnically, but also socially and culturally” (2002, p.106). Furthermore, I shall be both quoting my participants and providing my interpretations of their activities by drawing on the existing research in the

field, because what people say does not usually consist of ‘self-evident’ facts, but their definitions of the situation (cf. Silverman, 2011, p.98).

The researcher also has to maintain a *critical distance* (Silverman, 2011, p.68). If scholars do not keep this critical distance, they become “academic mercenaries” (Okely, 1982, p.29, cited in Strathern, 1987, p.16). This posed a challenge for me in several instances. First, some of my participants were keen to take part in this research because they hoped it could shed different light on their identities and experiences that they thought were misrepresented by the British media. In this case, I made sure to reiterate that I could not assess British media coverage of the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s because it was beyond the scope of my research, but I would ensure to have represented different voices. I also had to maintain a delicate balance between empathising with and critically assessing often very poignant stories of the refugees. During my first meeting with Ivana (54), a Serbian refugee from Croatia, she brought with her a folder with dozens of documents that proved her story, but rather than talking about the documents at length, I tried to understand how her experiences shaped her perceptions, identities and communication practices. I would always take notes of all the details of the encounters with my participants – from describing how their home was decorated and what media was used during our meeting or the places where we met, to conversations that took place, facial expressions, intonations, and gestures. All of these were later analysed in relation to participants’ online activities.

As will be further explained in Chapter 5, the group of Serbian Londoners is remarkably diverse and geographically dispersed in London. There was not one geographically bounded space or ‘field’ in traditional ethnographic terms: a Serbian neighbourhood or community, where I conducted this research (see Bajic-Hajdukovic, 2008, pp.46-47). Given the multi-sited nature of the fieldwork, I participated in and observed my informants’ everyday activities at various locations. Some of the locations I conducted fieldwork and interviews include Highgate, Hampstead Heath, Clapham Common, Putney, Battersea, Richmond, Brockley, Honor Oak Park, Croydon, Old Street, Notting Hill, Ealing and Shepherd’s Bush. I would meet them at their homes or in a café at their workplace or in

their neighbourhood, join them in running errands, attend their birthday parties, their children's school concerts, and I also attended their activities around the church.

Online ethnography has often been criticised because it departs from some canons known in traditional ethnography, such as that it is used to “study places that are not places” (Berg, 2009, p.226), unlike traditional ethnography that looks at communities, societies and their cultures in “spatial terms” (Clifford, 1992, quoted in Hine, 2000, p.58), as bounded places and bounded cultures. However, as my example of Serbs in London demonstrates, today, in a metropolis such as London, some diasporic communities are becoming more dispersed around the city and less densely concentrated in particular neighbourhoods. Furthermore, as argued in Chapter 3, the internet is not *a boundless space*, as has often been claimed (see Hine, 2000, p.10). In Chapter 3, I contended that we need to understand how people in a particular socio-cultural context appropriate the Internet, because it is only through such appropriation that the internet becomes meaningful (see Miller & Slater, 2000). Therefore, “local contexts of interpretation and use [of the Internet]... form the ethnographic field” (Hine, 2000, p.10). This means that studying how Serbian Londoners navigate digital media environments and perform their identities on different platforms is to study the uses of the Internet in this particular context, through which boundaries are symbolically enacted (cf. Hine, 2000, p.25). Today, when communities, cultures and media have increasingly become transnational – as is the case for the Serbs in London and their communication practices – online ethnography enabled me to study the everyday practices and cultural forms of this transnational community (see Berg, 2009, p.227).

Therefore, following Castells (1997), Hine suggests that we should focus instead on *connections* – “the space of flows”: “flows of people, information and money circulate between nodes which form a network of associations increasingly independent of specific local contexts” (Hine, 2000, p.61). Studying connections, she adds, enables us to acknowledge and examine difference, heterogeneity and incoherence (Hine, 2000, p.61), which is particularly valuable for this research topic. This also requires studying social interactions as *texts* (see Hine, 2000). However, this has been transformed in the digital environments where written texts are the equivalent to speech. Comments on Facebook or

Twitter are the equivalent of chat, yet they are traceable, permanent and retrievable (Baym, 2010), which may shape the interaction differently in comparison to offline interaction.

Finally, the funnel structure of ethnography means the focus of research is gradually narrowed down as the research progresses, and as the patterns and themes emerge (see Walsh, 2006, p.229; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p.175). There is a dialectic process between theory and field, whereby one informs the other. As Walsh notes, “the process of observation itself establishes problems and the possibilities of inquiry into them” (2006, p.230). Therefore there are no clearly defined, separate stages in this process of collecting data, unlike in the case of quantitative methods. Ethnography is a “living craft” (Hine, 2000): “the research process is one of a constant interaction between problem formulation, data collection and data analysis” (Walsh, 2006, p.223). I had a flexible guideline doing fieldwork, and theory shaped some of my research questions; however, some topics of this thesis emerged from the data, as illustrated in Chapter 6. I started with a theoretical framework which provided me with some instructions on what I was looking for, because “without some perspective... there is nothing to report” (Silverman, 2011, p.80). Having a theoretical framework is also what distinguishes a researcher from a ‘casual observer’. As Hine clearly states: “it is more than something that simply happens to us as a result of being in an exotic place” (2000, p.48).

The general rule is that the collection of data should be terminated once “theoretical saturation” has been reached (a concept formulated by Glaser & Strauss 1967, cited by Walsh, 2006), when no new insights or points of view appear in the research. However, this has proved to be much more difficult in practice, because being a participant-observer has become a way of life for me, perhaps especially so given that I belong to the community I study. I spent two years of intense fieldwork, and an additional 15 months casually meeting with some of my participants and collecting their online data that supported or challenged identified patterns and emerging theories in this thesis. Consequently, I developed a good rapport with most of my participants, which made it even more challenging to completely withdraw from fieldwork. This issue will be further addressed in this chapter under the section on ethics.

### 4.1.2 Autoethnography

Although this thesis is not an autoethnography, I draw on some autoethnographic elements to complement ethnographic observations and insights for the reasons I discuss in this section. Autoethnography is defined as “an approach to *research* [“autoethnography as a process”] and *writing* [“autoethnography as a product”] that seeks to *describe* and *systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto)* in order to *understand cultural experience (ethno)*” (Ellis et al., 2011, emphasis added). There were several historical preconditions that set a context in which autoethnography emerged, such as the postmodern break with metanarratives, new identity politics that attempt to subvert colonialist legacy and the new understanding of the relationship between authors and their texts inspired by literary criticism (Clifford, 1986; Ellis et al., 2011; Marcus & Fischer, 1986). The end of metanarratives meant the end of universal truths and norms that regulate relations among people and the world (see Lyotard, 1979). In line with this break with the universalist perspective, one of the key arguments of identity politics was that the marginalised groups should be the only legitimate representatives of themselves, because they are the only ones who can fully understand their struggles (see Spivak, 1987; Young, 2011 [1990]). This is linked to postcolonial critique of how the West has represented non-Western societies (Said, 1979; Marcus & Fischer, 1986). Edward Said argues that the rhetoric that Western authors used to describe and write about other cultures always “exemplified and reinforced Western domination” (Marcus & Fischer, 1986, p.1). The critique pointed out “the subtle influences of the ethnographer’s own culture upon the work of interpreting another culture” (Marcus & Fischer, 1986, p.111). Likewise, the new understanding of the relationship between authors and their texts is based on the argument that authors’ personal experiences and life are inevitably, or at least legitimately, reflected in their writing.

Ellis et al. (2011) identify several different approaches to doing autoethnography. Although I argue that differences among these approaches are subtle or not very clear-cut, I could roughly describe my approach as a mixture of a *narrative ethnography* and *layered accounts*. Narrative ethnography has a storyline, an element of autobiography, but also

includes analysis of a researcher's experiences and of others, where the focus is on the members of the studied group (cf. Tedlock, 1991). Layered accounts put emphasis on the dialogical juxtaposition between a researcher's own experiences and the experiences of their respondents. Layered accounts also "use vignettes, reflexivity, multiple voices, and introspection to 'invoke' readers to enter into the 'emergent experience' of doing and writing research" (Ellis et al., 2011). My own experiences that I analysed for this thesis were mainly 'epiphanies' – that is the experiences that in some ways may have had an impact on my life in London (Ellis et al., 2011), related to and experienced because of my *cultural identity*. I also provide some details about my personal history to provide the context for analysing the data. I do this through storytelling – by introducing characters, scenes and plot development. In analysing autoethnographic observations, I mainly use "first-person" narrative.

An autoethnographic approach acknowledges that researchers' experiences inform, shape and inspire their research and that objectivity is rather an elusive construct. However, as Strathern (1987) shows, it is wrong to assume that ethnographers who study their own culture and society will inevitably and naturally have a better insight into the subject of their enquiry. In fact, there can be much more in common between ethnographers of different national and cultural backgrounds than there may be between them and their research participants with whom they share cultural identity. National identity is not necessarily and always the 'primary organiser' of our experiences and worldviews; instead, professional identity, for instance, on some occasions may play a more important role both for researchers (like myself) and the members of the studied culture (my research participants). The degrees of familiarity with one's own group are, hence, limited and shifting (Strathern, 1987, p.16). This means that even ethnographers who study their 'own culture' will have to go through the same "long periods of familiarisation" that ethnographers who study other cultures undergo, because there is "the inevitable social distance" between the researcher and different segments of the studied population (Strathern, 1987, p.16). As already discussed in Chapter 2 in relation to the critique of Beck's argument that national identity is monologic (2002, p.24), nations are not coherent homogenous wholes (see Bonikowski, 2017).



As will be demonstrated in the context of Serbian Londoners in the next chapter, there are many differences among my participants in respect to their age, gender, generation and the time of immigration to Britain, social class, profession, area where they live in London and the region they came from, all of which may have shaped their experiences, lifestyles and preferences. Hence, I may have more in common with some of my participants than others. Having moved to London for the first time in September 2012, I belong to the more recent arrivals of Serbs in London, and thus I do not share the same experiences and identities as my research participants who had arrived in the UK in the 1990s or before, or those who were born in London. Furthermore, growing up in Herceg Novi in Montenegro, I was surrounded by somewhat different cultural and historical references to people who grew up in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, or Croatia. This coastal town is situated at the entrance of the Bay of Kotor that used to be controlled for four centuries by the Venetians, Ottomans and Austro-Hungarians, all of whom left visible cultural traces in the language, customs and architecture of this region. For a shorter time, the town was also under the jurisdiction of the French and Spanish. Having moved to Belgrade, the capital of Serbia, at the age of 18, arguably as a result of my Montenegrin dialect, I was always prevented from becoming a ‘legitimate Belgradian’. Soon after my arrival in Belgrade, Montenegro recognised Kosovo’s self-declared independence from Serbia, which was very badly received by the Serbian authorities and the majority of the public. In this sense, both physical and cultural geography have shaped my identity in different ways to some of my respondents from other regions of the former Yugoslavia, or those who, indeed, have never lived there.

This example of my personal history also reveals the importance of *how people (researchers) are perceived*. Identity, which is the central argument of this thesis, is always in a *dialogue* – we do not choose our identities from infinite possibilities, but we rather negotiate our identities *in dialogue* with an array of powerful forces that are trying to attach different attributes and identities to us. Therefore, I argue that my experiences during my time in London are very important, not only because I share linguistic and cultural codes with my participants, but even more so because I *am perceived* to be Serbian in my

everyday interactions with people in London. Due to my accent, I have regularly been asked where I am *from*, from a friendly chatter in a bar, to inquisitive remarks at social events. As soon as I say that I am from Serbia and Montenegro, I am placed in certain categories and associated with popular perceptions of Serbs and Montenegrins – unless the person has never heard of the two countries. These associations may vary from a vibrant nightlife in Belgrade, luxurious resorts and picturesque scenery in Montenegro, Novak Djokovic, the tennis player, to the war of the 1990s. I had never felt strongly about my national identity or had thought about myself as a Serbian and Montenegrin before I came to London, until I started being regularly asked about my origins. Even though some of these conversations were pleasant and mutually enriching in many ways, they imposed certain identities on me that in some ways have shaped my experiences and everyday life in London. Autoethnography has thereby enabled me to get a better insight into the context of reception – that is how Serbs are generally perceived in British society and what consequences this may have for their identities, as well as for the ways in which they use digital media to negotiate their identities, as shall particularly be explored in Chapter 6.

People do not always consider and analyse *why* they do what they do, nor do they always recall all events from the past that may actually have had transformative effects. Allen (2006, cited in Ellis et al., 2011) pithily explains why auto-ethnography is a valid means of getting insights into one's culture and identity:

[Autoethnographers must] 'look at experience analytically. Otherwise [you're] telling [your] story – and that's nice – but people do that on *Oprah* [US television programme] every day. Why is your story more valid than anyone else's? What makes your story more valid is that you are a researcher. You have a set of theoretical and methodological tools and a research literature to use. That's your advantage. If you can't frame it around these tools and literature and just frame it as 'my story,' then why or how should I privilege your story over anyone else's I see 25 times a day on TV?

I was then able to compare my own experiences with personal accounts of my participants who generously shared many details of their personal history, everyday life and communication practices with me, and often invited me into their homes and to birthdays and other celebrations. While it is true that autoethnographers also need to familiarise themselves with the studied group and should avoid assumptions that will achieve a “greater understanding” as an “inherent insider” (Strathern, 1987, p.17), it is also important to take into account how the researcher who studies their cultural group is perceived by the group. Because of the shared cultural identity, some of my participants were more willing to speak openly and reveal more to me than they might for an ‘outsider’. This can be explained by the concept of cultural intimacy (Herzfeld, 1997), which refers to the situation whereby, for instance, only members of a nation can criticise aspects of their identity or politics themselves, but the same freedom is not socially applicable to outsiders (cf. Madianou, 2007). The problem that may occur in such circumstances is that the research participants can have certain expectations of the researcher, such as sharing their points of view and understandings of identity, and can be motivated to participate in research for political ends, expecting the researcher to help them achieve their objectives. In this research, I disclosed the research topic and objectives, and also explained to my participants that while their voice would be represented, they may not agree with all interpretations made in this thesis.

Autoethnographers are also criticised for just repeating commonplace occurrences that do not reveal anything new, leading to “unnecessary mystifications” (Strathern, 1987, p.17). Some of my findings, especially in Chapter 5, may indeed seem ‘obvious’ or self-evident to some (or the majority) of my participants. However, some of my interpretations and analyses may also seem quite “unrecognisable” (particularly in Chapters 6 and 8) from the perspective of (some of) my respondents (see Strathern, 1987, p.18). Presumed familiarity can also be a trap as one may neglect some important details because they may be too familiar to the insider, while they may be completely novel to an outsider. Moreover, because some cultural facets are familiar for the insider they may also seem to be self-explanatory, and hence the insider may not engage with such facets in a fulsome manner. Given that I belong to the more recent arrivals, much of the life and history of older Serbian

migrants in Britain had previously been unknown to me. Semi-structured interviews conducted alongside ethnography were therefore important for questioning assumptions and taken-for-granted fragments of everyday life.

### **4.1.3 Interviews**

Forty semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face (one via Skype), each lasting between one and two hours. They were all recorded and later transcribed. The semi-structured form of the interviews allowed the informants to “talk at length”, “with time to reflect” (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000, p.45), and provided me with the opportunity to ask sub-questions, adjust wordings for each interviewee and stimulate “free associations” (Gorden, 1975, p.72). In turn, this enabled my interviewees to reveal more about themselves (Berger, 1998, p.57), to reveal their emotions, but also to reflect on important events and their actions. It would often happen that my participants would look at me in confusion, with a facial expression of a person without a ready answer, before saying “I haven’t thought about it”. This is when some valuable unconscious attitudes and motives emerged (Berger, 1998, p.55; Ayres, 2008, p.811).

Semi-structured interviews enabled me to further develop some interesting points from participants’ answers (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000, p.45; Wisker, 2001, p.170), whereas close-ended questions would limit the possible range of answers (Wisker, 2001, p.166; Gorden, 1975, p.61). Semi-structured interviews are sometimes criticised because the conversation can go “off the point” (Wisker, 2001, p.168), but this can turn out to provide the most fruitful insights into the topic or new perspectives of the topic (see Wisker, 2001, p.167). As Strathern (1987) notes, the aim of researchers is to help both “insiders” (“cultural members”) and “outsiders” (“cultural strangers”) better understand norms and practices that constitute one culture. There are studies that have drawn on focus groups to study issues around national belonging (see Georgiou, 2012). However, I did not choose to conduct focus groups for several reasons. The main one is that I consider the issue of identity a sensitive one, especially when it is contested to a degree that Serbian identity is. Most of my participants would not be willing to speak openly about their personal histories and

share intimate details with other people. In fact, most agreed to take part in this research precisely because their data was anonymised. Finally, sensitive topics such as the question of identity requires a relationship of trust and the full attention of the researcher as well as an in-depth exploration, whereas in focus groups it may be challenging to focus attention on each interviewee individually (see Bauer & Gaskell, 2000, p.48). In focus groups, there is also the risk of conformity among the participants who may feel their view is not the dominant one or they may refrain from expressing their opinion.

A topic guide served as a *framework for conversation*, containing a list of topics to be discussed (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000, p.40) and probing questions for each topic in order to have comparable and classifiable responses (Gorden, 1975, p.60-61; see Appendix A). While I covered all the interview topics with each respondent, some specific questions were not necessarily applied to everyone, or I did not necessarily follow the same sequence of questions. This depended on specific circumstances of the interviewees and their answers, but also on the fieldwork findings. The topic guide covered issues such as: personal histories, daily routines and social connections, general digital media use, use of specific platforms, and conversations held in both online and offline spaces. During my question about my participants' ordinary day, I also asked them to draw media maps by jotting down all media they used throughout a day, as the next section further explains.

#### **4.1.4 Media Maps**

Interviews and fieldwork findings were complemented with media maps. In order to understand how Serbian Londoners navigate digital media environments in their everyday lives, participants were asked to create their own media maps (Madianou et al., 2015), jotting down which media they use, how often, for which purposes and on which devices. They were asked to describe an ordinary day, pinpointing how these different media and devices were embedded in their everyday lives. Insights obtained through media maps and interviews were coupled with the data collected through ethnographic fieldwork. These maps helped me to visualise their everyday communication practices and compare these among my participants. The maps also enabled my participants to fully and more

systematically express themselves, allowing them time to recall and to reflect on their communication practices.

## **4.2 Sampling**

Forty participants – an equal number of men and women, all adults who had lived in London for at least two years prior to July 2015 when this research commenced – were recruited through the snowball technique on the basis of self-identification as Serbs. These participants do not necessarily come from Serbia, but from different republics of the former Yugoslavia, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia and Macedonia. There are also participants who were born in the UK or elsewhere in the world and have never lived, or for only a brief time, in Serbia or other former Yugoslav republics. This number has been evenly split across three identified waves of migration: people who arrived between 1945-1990, 1990-2003, and 2003-2013. Some previous studies on diasporic communities and their media consumption have also demonstrated the important role these other people's identities, such as age, generation and gender (see Georgiou, 2006; Gillespie, 1995). Therefore, these categories, alongside others such as class, profession and the area where Serbs live in London have been considered while analysing the data. Sample sizes in qualitative research are not usually large as it requires immersion into the studied group and examines the details, thus this sample does not claim generalisability. Nevertheless, the data should be comparable and credible. Data collection as well as the recruitment of participants should stop when the “theoretical saturation” has been achieved (Walsh, 2006), as already mentioned.

Some of the participants I found through other Serbian people I knew either from the UK or Serbia, and others were found through mutual international friends. A few participants I met at events organised at the Embassy of the Republic of Serbia to London, run by Serbian societies and organisations in the UK, or at various other occasions, such as a book launch and birthdays, or in a church's community centre. The community around the Serbian Orthodox Church at Ladbroke Grove and business people were particularly difficult to recruit, taking me about a month to arrange an interview with some participants. People

either saw participation as time-consuming or did not like the idea of me ‘researching them’, telling me they had been through a lot and were not willing to talk about it, even though they knew they did not need to reveal any sensitive details. Conversely, other participants welcomed me into their homes but did not approve of me following them on social media. Also, not all participants use the same range of digital media platforms, nor do they all use it with the same frequency and intensity. However, this may provide interesting findings about why people choose to use one platform over another and therefore may ultimately provide more insights into both the media and identities.

As already mentioned, this study has taken place over the course of two years, which enabled me to immerse myself in the culture and everyday life of the participants (see Silverstone, 2011, p.71). Also, as Walsh suggests, three aspects of sampling must be taken into account in an ethnographic approach: *time*, because “attitudes and activities may vary over time so a study may have to represent this”; *people*, since “people vary so a range of types should be investigated”; and *context*, given that “people do different things in different contexts” (2006, p.231). However, with some respondents, interviews were conducted only once, whereas others were repeated. I have also included some interviews conducted in 2013, for the purpose of my MSc dissertation, because they correspond to the findings of this PhD research. I have had many encounters with some of my participants, where they generously shared many aspects of their lives with me – like Christmas lunch, birthday parties, welcomed me into their homes, invited me to exhibitions and theatres (for which I was very grateful) – whereas I met with others only once or twice. This sustained interaction provided me with deep and meaningful insights. The pilot study conducted prior to this research also informed some sampling decisions, as the following section explains.

### **4.3 Pilot Study**

Before starting the core research, I first carried out a pilot study in September and October 2015. The study was smaller in scope and involved only 10 participants. The aim of this pilot research was to test the research design and relevance of the theoretical framework and its main arguments. As a result of this research, I reorganised my sample to divide my

respondents into three groups, each representing three dominant waves of migration of Serbs to Britain and London (these waves of migration will be dealt with in-depth in Chapter 4). Accordingly, the findings of this pilot also illuminated some important features of this community that became central themes in the later analysis.

## 4.4 Analysis

In ethnographic research, as already mentioned, it is hard to separate discrete stages in the research process. Instead, these different stages usually happen simultaneously whereby one shapes, informs and helps reformulate another. Therefore, the analysis of the fieldwork findings started while I was collecting data – I created *analytic memos* (Walsh, 2006, p.235) to associate the findings with established theories and concepts, but also to reformulate my research questions and include emerging topics and themes (Berg, 2006, p.228). The data collected in fieldwork, such as screenshots of social media pages, my notes, and transcribed interviews were then coded according to emerging themes or topics (see Walsh, 2006). There were several stages to this. First, as discussed, pilot research enabled me to *familiarise* myself with the data and reorganise my sample (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Then, I was identifying patterns (central themes) in practices and interviews (see Howitt, 2013, p.175), implicit and explicit (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p.10), that were both *data-led* – the coding was led by the topics that emerged from the data – and *theory-led* – with coding guided by the theoretical framework<sup>12</sup>. This stage is usually called *open coding* (Berg, 2006, p.228) or *initial coding* Braun and Clarke (2006). Having completed the initial coding, I defined and labelled these themes (see Howitt, 2013, pp.182-187). I also created typologies to describe people who belong to each of the three identified waves and to describe differences between them. This method of analysis is advised when certain groups share similar behaviour patterns and culture (Berg, 2006, p.230).

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<sup>12</sup> Other names for methods of identifying themes are: *observer categories* – themes that are theory-led, and *folk categories* – data-led (Berg, 2009, p.229).



## 4.5 Research Ethics

All respondents were adults older than eighteen years and all data was anonymised and stored safely in a password protected computer (see ESRC, 2015, p.51) for 10 years<sup>13</sup>. I used pseudonyms to refer to my participants in the analysis stage. I asked my participants for oral consent after I had provided them with an information sheet that contained details about the objectives of my research, how it would be conducted, how I would use their data, and how I would protect their anonymity and informed them of their rights (see Appendix B). The rights of participants were: to withdraw from the research at any time without any consequences; to request that some of their activities or statements are not reported and analysed; and to request a transcript of their interview and a copy of the whole study once it has been published. I disclosed my role and the purpose of this study to my participants. I did not reveal all details about my findings and interpretations of the data while my research was ongoing, as this could have affected the findings (see Walsh, 2006), but I always aimed to establish a relationship of trust. This means I aimed to maintain an honest and decent attitude (Morley, 2007, p.72), and to contribute to and deepen their understanding of the complexity of their community, by providing them with a more holistic picture. Thus, I tried to engage “in a reciprocal, rather than an exploitative, or ‘extractive’ relationships with” my respondents (Morley, 2007, p.72). Hine points out that to be a participant requires the researcher to “share some of the concerns, emotions and commitments of the research subject” (2000, p.47). I established a good rapport with most of my participants and the immersive nature of my participant-observer role sometimes led to a prolonged contact. However, this did not mean that I took their point of view and definition of a given situation as self-evident facts. As already mentioned, I do not necessarily share the views of my participants and we also have different personal histories. As a researcher, I was also able to compare different accounts to create the bigger picture, and by drawing on existing studies and theories in the field I was able to identify implicit and hidden meanings and motives, and to conceptualise them. I have undergone Research

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<sup>13</sup>According to LSE Code of Research Conduct, the standard is 7 years (2018, p.4), but when the data is anonymised and safely stored it can be kept for longer.

Ethical Review to obtain approval to conduct this research, and the completed form is enclosed in Appendix C.

## Chapter 5: Who are the Serbian Londoners?

In many of my Sunday visits to the Serbian Orthodox Church Saint Sava at Ladbroke Grove, the only one in London to date, situated next door to lively Portobello Road, I could hear Serbian language at every corner of the street. As I got closer to the church, I could see people mingling in the courtyard after the Sunday morning liturgy, greeting each other, while children played together (see Figure 2).



Figure 2: The Serbian Orthodox Church Saint Sava at Ladbroke Grove, West London.

Children would usually communicate in English among themselves, whereas adults would mostly speak Serbian. They would then proceed to the restaurant at the community centre next door for lunch, coffee, and chatter. On a plate there would normally be *sarma* (cabbage rolls with meat) or *gibanica* (cheese pastry; see Figure 3). The smell of cigarettes, coffee and *rakia*<sup>14</sup> would blend with the murmur of different voices and dialects, while the walls above were painted with traditional folk costumes of Serbia (see Figure 4). People would talk about their personal affairs, discuss politics and current affairs in Britain, Serbia and the world, or recall past events they had attended or



Figure 3: Gibanica, a traditional Serbian pastry, made with cheese, served in the Community Centre at Ladbroke Grove in West London.

The plate has an emblem of the Serbian flag and the coat of arms with the cross and four 'S' written in Cyrillic.

<sup>14</sup> Traditional drink in the Western Balkan region with about 40% alcohol, derived from different kinds of fruit, most famously plum, pear and apricot, served in small portions.

memories they shared. Meanwhile, children would attend a Sunday school next door where they would be taught Serbian language and history. Occasionally, people in Serbian Society or The Circle of Serbian Sisters would host events or organise fundraising mainly aimed at helping impoverished people in Serbia and Kosovo, but also those affected by disasters in Britain, such as the residents of Grenfell Tower in 2017<sup>15</sup> (see Figure 5). They would sell home-made food and people would flock to buy and contribute. On those days, the centre would be busier and livelier for longer hours.



Figure 5: The Community Centre in Ladbroke Grove, West London.

I have opened this chapter with what is typically thought of as a Serbian community, both by insiders and outsiders. Since beginning my research in early July 2015, I have continually been directed to study this ‘church community’ whenever I say that my research is about Serbian Londoners. Indeed, the regular attendees at the church and the centre are mainly older arrivals – people who arrived before or during the 1990s; however, they represent only one of the constituent groups of Serbian Londoners. My findings show

<sup>15</sup> 72 people lost their lives and many more were injured in a fire that engulfed Grenfell Tower residential building in North Kensington, West London, on 14 June 2017 (BBC News, 2018). James Brokenshire MP, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (2018) pointed out this was “the greatest loss of life in a residential fire since the Second World War”.



Figure 4: Research Participant's Facebook post.

that there is no one single Serbian community in London, nor is there a single definition of who Serbian Londoners are. Their different personal and family histories and backgrounds make this group remarkably complex and diverse. Other migration studies have also contested the notion of diaspora as a homogenous group and have documented the diversity among migrants of the same origin (see Ong & Cabanes, 2011; Sreberny, 2000). For instance, Annabelle Sreberny shows there is no one single Iranian ‘community’ in London; Iranians living in London are both geographically spread and internally diverse (2000, p.185). Sreberny finds that Iranians of different political affiliations and class backgrounds tend to congregate around different areas in London, whereby they constitute multiple local Iranian communities, often dependent on a specific area of London, such as Harrow Iranian Community Centre (2000, p.186).

In my study of Serbian Londoners, I have not found the location in London to be the main organising principle of Serbian ‘communities’ in London. There are several Serbian organisations in London, including: Serbian Society, Serbian Council of Great Britain, the Circle of Serbian Sisters, Association of Serbian Chetniks Ravne Gore, the Serbian City Club, London Sport Society, and Camden Knights Basketball Club. However, many of my participants, particularly more recent arrivals, do not belong to any Serbian organisation or community centre in London, as will be shown in this chapter. However, as is the case with Iranians in London in Sreberny’s study (2000, p.186), many of my participants also come together on specific occasions throughout the year, but they do not constitute one long-term community. While there are many differences among my participants, explored in this chapter, what they all have in common is an orientation to Serbia and the Serbian identity in some contexts – even though what it means to be Serbian may differ significantly among them.

Most of Serbian Londoners have settled in areas of West London, such as Ealing Broadway, Acton, Shepherd’s Bush, Holland Park, Notting Hill and Ladbroke Grove. This is particularly the case for the participants who arrived before and during the 1990s. There are also several Serbian restaurants along Uxbridge road, mainly in Ealing Common and Acton, such as The Corner Terrace, and Mugi’s Coffee Bar, and several shops that sell

Serbian food products, such as Dunav<sup>16</sup> shop. But there is also Fulham Kitchen in Fulham, the Paya and Horse Pub in Battersea, and EXER parties in Blag Club Kensington, with tunes from the former Yugoslavia. However, since the 1990s, and especially with more recent arrivals (after roughly 2003), they have become spread across London. Other locations where Serbian Londoners live, as mentioned in Chapter 4, include: Battersea, Clapham Common, Putney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Richmond, Crystal Palace, Blackheath, Honor Oak, Shoreditch, Highgate, and so forth. Given the constant changes of state borders in the Western Balkans, as seen in Chapter 1, my research participants come from different republics of the former Yugoslavia: Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Macedonia. Some of them are from Belgrade, while others are from smaller towns and cities, and few are from rural areas. Some had also spent most of their life living abroad, such as in the United States, Latin America, Africa, Asia, and other European countries, before they moved to London. Due to the historical, political and cultural differences between these places, geography may have also added more layers to the identities of these participants. Sabry (2005b), for instance, finds in his research on Moroccan youth that there are great variations between Moroccans from different regions and class backgrounds, and thereby concludes that there is no singular Moroccan popular culture.

Growing up in a coastal town in the Bay of Kotor, Montenegro, I have arguably been exposed to somewhat different cultural references compared to people from Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, and Macedonia, or to Serbs who spent their childhood living in other countries. Those who emigrated in the 1990s from the war-affected areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina or Croatia, and those who came from the safe zones and bigger cities such as Belgrade, may have quite different experiences and attitudes. Likewise, people who have spent most of their childhood or adulthood living in third countries are likely to have different perceptions and manifest different patterns in behaviour and identities. For instance, Baumann shows how people from South Asia who migrated first to East Africa and then to Britain, whom he refers to as “twice migrants”, have several cross-cutting cleavages of regional, religious caste, and class categories which are not common for all

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<sup>16</sup> Dunav means the River Danube that flows through Serbia and the capital, Belgrade.

South Asian Southallians (1996, p.112). Most media and migration studies have shown that generational identities, gender and age of migrants play an important role in the ways in which they engage with the media, and how they identify and go about their everyday life (Georgiou, 2006; Gillespie, 1995). According to Gillespie, second generation migrants of Punjabi origins in Southall, West London, often tend to be “less willing to embrace all aspects of their cultural heritage” (1995, p.76), have more “ambivalent attitudes to the idea of national identity” (1995, p.110), and consume more Western media productions than first generation migrants (1995, p.81).

Although regional, generational, age, gender and professional identities are all important in the context of my study on Serbian Londoners, my fieldwork and interview findings show that *the period of migration* plays the most crucial role in the ways in which my participants identify and engage with digital media. For instance, Norman (40), who came from Belgrade to the UK in 1991 at the age of 17 to study A levels, shares similar a repertoire of dispositions towards the nation as, for example, some participants who came

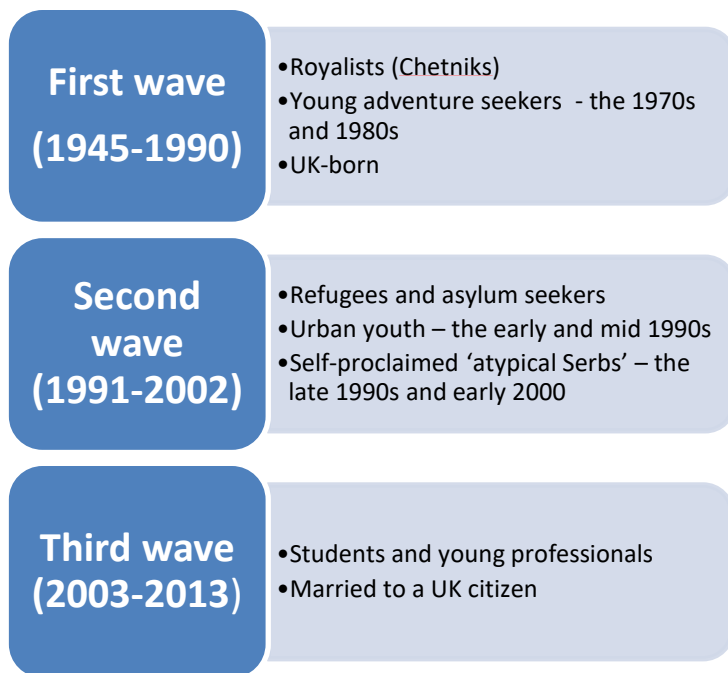


Figure 6: The Waves of Migration of Serbs to the UK and London.

in the mid-1990s as refugees from Croatia. The period of migration has a particularly significant explanatory potential because there have been several major events in the region of the former Yugoslavia that have triggered *different motives* for migration that could be briefly summed up as communism, civil war and democratic transition. Hence, I have identified three major waves of migration of Serbs to London

that can help us understand why there is neither one single definition of who Serbian Londoners are nor a single Serbian community in London. These major waves are: 1945-1990, 1990-2002, and 2003-2013 (see Figure 6).

## **5.1 Waves of migration**

Based on my fieldwork findings, the first big wave of Serbs to arrive in the United Kingdom (UK) came shortly after the Second World War (WWII), fleeing communism in the former Yugoslavia. As supporters of the monarchy, they were considered ‘enemies of the state’ and hence they were asylum seekers in Britain. This group is called royalists or Chetniks (see also Bajic-Hajdukovic, 2008; Mavra, 2010; Pryke, 2003). Most of the people who arrived between 1945 and 1950 came through the European Voluntary Workers (EVW) programme when war camps were liberated, as will be explained in section 5.1.1, and their families joined them later. There is another type of migrants within this wave: participants who arrived in the 1970s and 1980s, who are somewhat different to the post-WWII arrivals. This was the time when Yugoslavia had solid international relations with both the East and the West and it was relatively easy for its citizens to travel. Participants from this group were usually younger people in their 20s, some without higher education degrees, seeking an adventure. Hence, in the analysis that follows in subsequent chapters, I call these individuals ‘young adventure seekers’.

Ivana Bajic-Hajdukovic (2008) and Lidija Mavra (2010, 2013) offer somewhat different categorizations of the three waves of Serbian Londoners than the one discussed here. Both authors analyse these two periods of migration (1945-50 and 1960-90) as separate waves. Bajic-Hajdukovic (2008) distinguishes between the first wave (1945-1970), consisting of royalist and asylum seekers, and the second wave (1970-1990), consisting of well-off Yugoslavs, mainly highly ranked business representatives from Yugoslav companies. She finds that the second wave was unfavourably perceived by the first due to their communist affiliations (2008, pp.29-30). Mavra shares similar insights, and identifies the first wave as taking place between 1945 and 1960 and the second wave between the late 1960s and 1990 (2013, p.34). Some of Bajic-Hajdukovic’s (2008) and Mavra’s (2010, 2013) conclusions do



not apply to my findings. Mavra notes that ethnicity is the least important for Serbs who arrived in the UK between the 1960s and the mid-1980s (2013, pp.13-14). Many of my participants who arrived during the 1970s and 1980s have more in common with the post-1945 migrants today, such as the way they identify and the orientation to the Serbian customs and tradition. This does not mean that the first wave is homogenous. There are differences among them in terms of their experiences and motives of migration. Hence, within the first wave, I distinguish between royalists (post-1945), young adventure seekers (the 1970s and 1980s), and the UK-born (second generation). Overall there are seven participants who were born in the UK, but I have categorised two of them as the second and third wave, because their families left the UK shortly after they were born, and they returned as adults. This means that these two UK-born participants who I classify as the second and third wave did not grow up in the UK and their motivations to return are more like other participants who came in the same period. In this sense, although the period of migration has the greatest explanatory potential, generation complicates the analysis for the first wave to some degree, but not for the other two waves.

The civil war in the former Yugoslavia that broke out in 1991 propelled the second major wave of Serbian migration to London and the UK. The 1990s saw the largest influx of people from this region to London and this wave represents the most heterogeneous one. Among the research participants are not only refugees from the war-affected areas, but also younger people, from Belgrade and other urban areas, who came in the early 1990s. They either aimed to avoid conscription (men) or were already in Britain when the war started and were stuck, or came from low-income households and saw the situation as an opportunity to escape precarious living conditions, seeking asylum in Britain. This wave also includes the participants who came in the early 2000s, because their decision to emigrate was mostly in response to the events prior to 2000, such as the civil war, NATO bombing, international sanctions and isolation of the country, inflation and the financial crash, and the overall socio-cultural downturn. Most participants among this later group described themselves as 'atypical' Serbs and were reluctant to take part in this research because they did not identify with what they perceived to be the Serbian diaspora in London. They explained their self-description as 'atypical' by the fact they worked in the

media industry, did not belong to any Serbian organisation in London, and did not go to the Serbian church in London. Hence, I have identified three dominant types of people among this wave: refugees, urban youth and the self-proclaimed ‘atypical Serbs’.

While Bajic-Hajdukovic (2008) and Mavra (2010) classify the period of the 1990s and early 2000s as the third wave of Serbian Londoners, I identify the third wave as the participants who have arrived since 2003. This wave is not as wide in scope as the previous two, but it is qualitatively different. It mainly encompasses students and professionals under 40 working for international companies, and a few who have married a UK citizen. Mavra also recognises that people who arrived after 2000 were mostly high-skilled migrants (2013, p.8) and their motives for migration are overall different to the previous two waves. Importantly, the context of reception (in the UK) is also different after 2000 (see Munro, 2017). Most of my participants from the third wave do not tend to live in the ‘traditionally Serbian areas’ and are seldom members of Serbian organisations. However, this does not mean they do not have networks of Serbian friends.

### **5.1.1 The First Wave (1945 – 1990)**

The first Serbian community in London, made up of people who arrived shortly after the Second World War, was formed in areas of West London, primarily around Shepherd’s Bush. They were mainly Chetniks – royalists (in support of the monarchy and against Tito’s regime). Hence, they were unable to return after the war as they would have faced prosecution. The majority were only able to find jobs initially as manual workers in factories within the EVW (see Pryke, 2003, p.157), even though some of these people had university degrees and were highly skilled. This trend was also observable on a global scale. As Martin and Wajcman show, many people who immigrated to Australia before the 1970s had been working within this programme in factories that flourished in the post-war era (2004, p.167).

My grandfather went from being an economist to a cook in a factory. Their degrees were not recognised. There were not council flats; you were not entitled to

unemployment benefits. You were a third-class citizen as a foreigner. London you see today is nothing as London in the 1950s. It was not because you were Serbian; it was because you were not English. Imagine how it was for a judge who was 50 years old, having to work in a factory. He earned fairly enough money to live, and he would send all money to his wife in Yugoslavia, who could not travel because she did not have a passport because her husband was the enemy of the state. A first amnesty of passports was in 1954.

(Tara, age 40)

Hence, most Serbs who came to the UK at that time settled in manufacturing cities, such as Leicester, Birmingham, Derby, Halifax, and London. In Shepherd's Bush, there was a British Leyland factory and rents were inexpensive at the time. In the late 1940s, the Serbian Orthodox Church was also established in this area. Recalling growing up in the 1970s and 1980s in this neighbourhood of the densely-knit Serbian community in Shepherd's Bush, Tara says:

Until my involvement in Serbian Society, I did not really mix with our community very much. I mean I have some neighbours, you see them on the street, but I was not actively seeking them out. You could not avoid them in Shepherd's Bush, even if you wanted to. [...] You go down the street and somebody is calling your 'baba' [grandmother] to tell her what you have done wrong, which happens in Shepherd's Bush. Everybody knows your 'baba'. You cannot misbehave as a teenager because all eyes were on you, like 'Radio Mileva' [a Serbian archaic informal idiom for nosiness]. 'You did not buy the apples. How do you know? Sasha saw you and you were only carrying bread.' [laughter] So, for me, the last thing I wanted to do was meet Serbian people.

(Tara, age 40)

This account shows how for this wave, the decision to migrate was often considered in relation to social networks, following a migratory path, and driven by emotional factors, rather than rational calculations (Morley, 2017, p.143). It also shows how in such densely-

knit diasporic communities, the way of life of a country of origin can be translated into the country of emigration. As Pryke also shows, Serbs born in the UK to Serbian parents who arrived before 1990 are usually raised in respect of Serbian history and tradition (2003, p.159). “The family acted as the forum for the conveyance of some aspects of the folk tradition [and memory] and Serbian Orthodoxy, especially family *slavas* [Saint’s day, a patron of family] and *kum* [Godfather]” (Pryke, 2003, p.159). One of the participants told me many finer details about Serbian migration to the UK, and when I asked her how she knew such details, she said that her parents had passed it down to her. She also has intense communication with her ‘kumovi’ (Godfather and Godmother and their children) on Facebook, often posting pictures with them. Many among this wave have attended the Sunday language school next to the church and are active in Serbian organisations. For example, one of my respondents, a daughter who was born in the UK to two early arrivals explained that she had to become a member of one Serbian society because it was, as she described it, “an emotional blackmail” by her family.

Diana (25) was born to parents who came to the UK after the WWII. When I visited her at her home, I noticed several old black and white photos of her family hanging on the wall in the hall. There were some familiar scenes and quarters of Belgrade in the photos, such as Skadarlija. The kitchen table was decorated in a quite typical traditional Serbian style, covered with red plaid tablecloth and a bowl with chili peppers on the table, evoking “a sensual world of the past” (Morley, 2000, p.52). These individual elements of decorating the house do not take place and cannot be understood in isolation, “they signify together as an expression of the systematic quality of a domestic aesthetic which in turn reveals... universe of the household” (Silverstone et al., 1992, p.23). As argued in Chapter 2, these daily banal manifestations of nationalism provide people with “guidelines” in their everyday practices (Billig, 1995; Hutchinson, 2006). I was welcomed cordially and made to feel at home by the spontaneous manner of the young host. She also offered me several times to stay for lunch. All this reveals how Diana’s upbringing was supported by many references to Serbian culture and tradition. In May 2014, when Serbia and Bosnia were engulfed with floods that left several cities, towns and villages devastated, Diana and her brother helped to raise money and donations for those affected. As argued in Chapter 2,

national culture exists only insofar as it is performed (see Baumann, 1996; Deutsch, 1966; Hobsbawm, 1992) and these daily banal reproductions of national identity, as Billig (1995) suggests, arguably enabled this sense of national solidarity at this critical moment.



Figure 7: Restaurant at a community centre next to the church.

On the left Queen Elizabeth II of the UK and on the right the Serbian Royal family Karadjordjevic, Prince Aleksandar and Princess Katarina.

close links between the British royal family and the former Serbian royal family, as well as the engagement of British nurses in Serbia in the First World War (cf. Munro, 2017), as will be demonstrated in Chapter 6.

One participant, Tanya, on her own initiative, lent me a book on the life and work of Dr Katherine MacPhail, a Scottish doctor who greatly contributed to orthopaedic surgery in Serbia during the war and ran the Anglo-Serbian Children's Hospital in Belgrade (see Mikic, 2007). In the main hall of the community centre there are pictures of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Aleksandar and Princess Katarina Karadžorđević (Figures 7 and 8). Crown Prince Alexander II (in the photo) is a son of Petar II Karadjordjevic, who was exiled in 1941 following Germany's invasion of Yugoslavia. Alexander II was born in London and was baptised at Westminster Abbey – his godparents were King George VI and his daughter, later Elizabeth II (Munro, 2017). Furthermore, the restaurant next to the

The church has been an important institution for the first wave of Serbian Londoners and still plays a significant role in their lives. It represents a national as much as a religious institution for most within this wave, as well as some later arrivals (also see Bajic-Hajdukovic, 2008; Pryke, 2003, p.159). Participants in this wave, and some from the second, often emphasise the

church is named after Lady Paget, a British humanitarian who helped in Serbia during the Balkan wars and WWI.



Figure 8: Framed photos in the Community Centre, Ladbroke Grove.

(Left) Crown Prince Alexander II Karadjordjevic and Princess Katarina Karadjordjevic and (right) Queen Elizabeth II.

### 5.1.2 The Second Wave (1990 – 2003)

As mentioned above, broadly defined there are three types of participants within this wave: ‘urban youth’ (from the early and mid-1990s), refugees, and the self-proclaimed ‘atypical Serbs’ (from the late 1990s and early 2000s) (see Figure 5.5). The participants who came in the late 1990s and early 2000s described themselves as ‘atypical,’ and therefore “not a good example”. After some doubt about how they would fit into this research, they agreed to take part. Taking a distance from ‘Serbianness’ comes, to some extent, from a desire to differentiate themselves from other Serbian people in London, mainly associated with the church, but also with nationalistic connotations that may be conveyed in their views. Georgiou also finds an “uneasy relationship” among some members of the Arab community in London, but none actually distanced themselves from other Arabs (2013, p.102). The reluctance of my participants can be explained to some extent by the fact, as Bajic-

Hajdukovic also observes, that the Serbian Orthodox Church backed Milosevic's regime in the 1990s, often giving blessings to paramilitary brigades (2008, p.38). Therefore, for this subgroup within the second generation, 'Serbianness' refers to a set of symbolic and cultural meanings associated with Milosevic's regime, as will further be discussed in Chapter 6.

Their reluctance also shows their relation to Serbian identity; more specifically it shows a sense of responsibility (see Gordy, 2013) – elaborated on in Chapter 6 – which signifies their sense of belonging. In fact, two participants who belong to this group returned to Serbia for good during this research. The self-proclaimed 'atypical Serbs' do tend to socialise with many other Serbian Londoners, but only with a few like-minded individuals who share a similar understanding of what it means to be Serbian. Their networks also tend to be from professionally related circles. At the same time, many of the self-proclaimed 'atypical Serbs' are heavily engaged with the news and public affairs in Serbia, some of them expressing a long-distance nationalism, mainly through Twitter and occasionally Facebook, as Chapter 7 reveals. Boris (49) is one example of this group of participants. On



Figure 9: Celebrating *slava*. Facebook post of a second wave participant.

the wall of his living room there was a calendar with all his visits to Belgrade noted down. The calendar and Twitter, in Boris's case, have a function of bridging the gap between here and there, the reality and the desire, as well as negotiating his sense of belonging between Britain and Serbia, London and Belgrade (see Morley, 2000). This example also evidences why diaspora should be understood as *a relational stance*, as argued in Chapter 2. While Boris follows news from Serbia closely and expresses the "notion of return" (Bhachu, 1995, p.224), he does not show "diasporic consciousness" (Hall, 2008, p.347).

The prevailing picture among my participants about who the Serbian diaspora is, as briefly mentioned in this chapter's introduction, is the one that congregates around the church.

When I tried to arrange an interview with Ivana (54, second-wave), she asked me to meet close to the Serbian Orthodox Church. As I asked her to give me more specific reference, she exclaimed: “Sanja, you are doing research on Serbs, you must know where the church is”. For refugees and some participants characterised as ‘urban youth’, the church and its community were an important anchor that provided them with relevant information and emotional support. The Serbian Society was also founded at that time, with the aim to help refugees and other migrants with the language, accommodation, administration, and jobs, among other issues. For example, Ivana told me that she and her young daughter were first baptised in 1994 when they came to London. She explained that she finally decided to escape after being imprisoned in her hometown in Croatia because she was a Serb. She had a daughter with a Croat man, but when the war started they separated and after a few years she came to London, following her brother and sister. Today, she disapproves of mixed marriages between ethnic groups from the Balkans, but she supports her daughter’s relationship with a Western-European man. This shows how ethnic identities among some of my participants became ethnically conscious only after the war. Similarly, by drawing on survey data from 1989 to 2003, Karin Dyrstad (2012) found that ethnic-nationalism increased during the conflict, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. While pre-war interethnic relations were good in most regions of the former Yugoslavia overall, with the notable exception of Kosovo (2012, p.820), the individuals in Croatia who were directly exposed to the war became considerably more nationalistic (Dyrstad, 2012, p.828).

For other participants in this wave, the community around the church remains an important place for socialising. Natalia (42, ‘urban youth’) was showing me photos of herself and her mother celebrating ‘Serbian New Year’s Eve’<sup>17</sup> in a Serbian restaurant in West London when I met her on a lunchbreak in the canteen of the company where she worked. When I met her for the first time, in a restaurant next to the church, she had Momo Kapor’s Serbian language book in front of her. Natalia explained that she liked to read in Serbian, but she also wanted to expose her son (12), who was born in the UK, to this culture. Kapor was a famous Serbian writer and painter, who wrote widely about Belgrade, the city where he

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<sup>17</sup> Serbian Orthodox Christians follow the Julian calendar, which is 13 days behind the Georgian, according to which New Year’s Eve falls on 13<sup>th</sup> January.



spent most of his life, and Sarajevo, his hometown. Before I went to Belgrade for Christmas holidays, she asked me to buy her a church calendar for her kitchen wall, because, she added, it also served to educate her son. In a similar spirit, Morley provides an example of a Barbadian flag hanging on the house of a Barbadian-British family in the UK as an effective marker of a space of belonging to this transnational imagined community. He quotes Gary Younge, who recalls that, while growing up in the 1960s in a town outside London, his mother used to keep this flag in order to remind them that theirs was not an English household and that this meant different habits, a different set of cultural norms and values (2000, p.52). In their family home in London, there are several Orthodox icons with Saints, such as St. Michael, the patron saint of her family. Figure 5.9 shows the day when they were celebrating *slava*. For those participants who do not live with their immediate families, it is through mediated interpersonal communication and different types of mediated co-presence that these described national practices are enabled and facilitated, as Chapter 8 will demonstrate.

Some of the participants in this wave, whom I call ‘urban youth’, do not necessarily raise their children strictly with references to the Serbian tradition, although they may celebrate *slava* and both Christmases. I was accompanying one participant, Deyan (42), when he was taking his son to martial arts class on Saturday afternoon. While we were strolling through West London and looking for a place for lunch, Deyan told me in Serbian that he “definitely felt Serbian”, so that his son could not understand: “I do not want to influence him. He was born here and he is growing up here, so he should feel British”. However, his son is inevitably exposed to some elements of Serbian tradition, such as *slava*, which Deyan regularly celebrates in his home in Ealing Broadway. Growing up in Ealing and attending a primary school there, his son has several classmates with Serbian origins too. Deyan mentioned he sometimes socialises with parents of his son’s Serbian classmates. This again demonstrates the varying degrees and modalities of being part of a diaspora, which are always dependent on context, as posited in Chapter 2.

### 5.1.3 The Third Wave (2003 – 2013)

Most of my participants in this wave are from privileged backgrounds, mostly from Belgrade, and other bigger cities in Serbia or Montenegro, including some “serial migrants” (Ossman, 2013). I borrow Susan Ossman’s (2013) term “serial migrants” to refer to people who had changed several places before settling in London, but my uses of this term significantly differ from its original meanings. Ossman (2013) develops the concept to describe a group of people who do not feel cosmopolitan, but who are acutely aware of borders and limits, and to exclude those who moved to a third country to work for the same employer (such as international transferees). Participants among the third wave have a pronounced professional identity and often express banal cosmopolitanism. Some of their communication practices and identities can also be explained by their age, as most are under 40. They typically have many international friends or Serbian friends who also live abroad and whom they met through education, friends of friends, or through work, or through attending the same Belgrade high school. Unlike the majority of participants from the first two waves, for whom the destination of migration was not necessarily the most important facet of their migration project, for third wave participants, it was. Most of them *chose* London for its cosmopolitan and quirky character, as the following conversation illustrates:

Q: Where do you feel at home?

Tamara: Kind of here.

Q: How would you define yourself in terms of your identity?

Tamara: *A citizen of the world. I belong to the global market. Very modest, well... [laughter]*

Q: Can you explain that?

Tamara: I function really well here, my top friends are Greek, American, Armenian, Indian... and my boyfriend is Italian. It is very natural for me and *I click with most of these people much more than with people in Serbia.*

There are a few remarks in this conversation that require our attention and that will be discussed more in-depth in the following chapter – “a citizen of the world” and “I belong to the global market”. This juxtaposition describes frequent shifts among this group from cosmopolitanism to becoming globalised, whereby the latter is more associated with expressions of social status and linked to accentuated professional identity. Some examples of social status expressions include the presentation of self as different from and ‘more cultured’ than people in Serbia. This behaviour is similar to *sapeurs* who dress extravagantly with bright colours in order to draw a distinction between people who travel and those who do not (Tamagni, 2009). In a similar vein, they try to distinguish themselves through their taste performances online, such as by checking in to upscale restaurants in London on social media, or posting photos from their holidays. Also, in interviews, they would often emphasise that they felt disconnected from people in Serbia because of the new experiences gained in London, through which they developed different tastes, interests and attitudes to most other people.

I have established myself here well. I have my friends here, I know the place well. So I feel right now that this is my home, when I actually go home ‘home’ – to Serbia, where I originally come from, it doesn’t actually feel like home because I left, obviously I have friends there and my family is there, but it’s not my life, it’s boring, nothing is happening. I used to go to Belgrade in summer for three months. I feel I don’t belong there anymore, my friends are doing different things and they are kind of different. So there is feeling *we don’t have anything in common anymore*.

(Marina)

However, based on her Instagram feed and interactions, Mariana is well-connected with her friends in Serbia. Likewise, fieldwork findings show Tamara, introduced above, has a wide network of Serbian (and Croat) friends in London and maintains close bonds with her Belgrade friends. In fact, some of her closest friends are her friends from her high school and undergraduate studies in Belgrade. There would always be an international crowd at her birthday parties, but with a significant proportion of people from Serbia and the former

Yugoslavia. One of her best friends from Belgrade would always come to London to play music at her birthday party.

Language is also a very important social glue and cultural reference, and time at high school and university tends to be formative in shaping the identities of this group. Angela lived in Latin America in her teens, where she completed high school. She then moved to the US to study, before coming to London to do a Master's degree in 2010. At her birthday party I met some of Angela's friends and the majority were from the cities and countries where she lived, plus some Canadian friends and her British co-workers. In the interview, Anja told me she had felt most confident speaking in English, because she had spent most of her life abroad. Likewise, Ana was born in Vienna to Serbian parents, grew up in Moscow, and came to London in 2009 to do a BSc. Since she attended a German high school in Moscow, she made very good friends with Germans and Russians, including some Serbian friends, and British friends from university.

Somehow I always find people who speak two or three languages that I also speak, and that is usually the platform on which we click and base our friendship. Because I am not only Serbian, I also speak other languages and I can connect with you on another level, you know what I mean.

(Ana)

Another relevant characteristic of this group is that it does not tend to congregate in the aforementioned areas of West London – it is dispersed all over London. They tend to live in areas close to work or university, or areas that are affordable or fashionable. Most do not usually socialise intensely with Serbian Londoners from the other two waves, although they may know some people from the second wave, it is less likely they know anyone from the first. Importantly, these interactions are often driven by professional as much as ethnic or national motives. Even though this group does not belong to the 'church community', some participants from this wave do occasionally attend Sunday liturgies and some events organised by Serbian organisations, such as the Serbian City Club.

In early March, after the Sunday liturgy, there was an exhibition held in the church about women in the First World War. There, I saw Ana, a third wave respondent who came to London in 2009; while talking with her I noticed a daughter of the lady who organised the exhibition and we approached her to greet her. As soon as we came closer, they both exclaimed as if they already knew each other. They told me that they had a mutual friend who had studied with Ana and who had put them in touch. This shows, in contrast to other studies of Serbian Londoners (Bajic-Hajdukovic, 2008; Mavra, 2010), that more affluent migrants do not necessarily have loose sense of ethnic or national identity (all the time), even if their professional identity remains prominent nonetheless. Bajic-Hajdukovic finds in her research on Belgrade parents and their children who immigrated to London that instead of a shared ethnicity, it is rather “shared urban experience, social class, historical memory, food, music and interests... which act as cohesive factors among new Serbian immigrants” (2008, p.29). Sara (22), a student in her final year of undergraduate studies when we met, came to the UK to do A levels at the age of 16 and stayed to pursue a BA degree in Law. She told me she had her “Balkan crew”, which consisted of people from the former Yugoslavia who now lived in London and she met through university and friends. This shows the arguments of the “weakening of ethnicity” among better educated migrants from middle class backgrounds, as in the case of Colic-Peisker’s (2008) study of Australian Croats, do not completely apply to the case of Serbian Londoners. The examples of Ana and Sara also demonstrate the importance of studying informal social networks of migrants, instead of focusing primarily on more organised types of interactions, such as community centres. Migration studies have often emphasised that class plays a crucial role in the ways in which migrants identify and go about their lives in a host society. As discussed in Chapter 2, most scholars of cosmopolitanism also argue that cosmopolitanism is an elitist ideal, reserved for the well-off. Therefore, a more thorough discussion of class backgrounds of Serbian Londoners seems important. The following section will further explore and juxtapose class backgrounds and motivations of migration for all three waves.

## **5.2 Migration and Social class**

Britain has always been an ‘atypical’ destination for Serbian migration because, unlike some other countries – such as the United States, Canada, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, and Australia – the UK has not experienced massive migration from this region (see Pryke, 2003, p.156; Bajic-Hajdukovic, 2008, p.29). The attribute ‘atypical’ does not just indicate the scale of Serbian migration, but also its structure, and this is particularly relevant in the case of London. Sam Pryke finds that there is a regional and class pattern in the migration routes of Serbs to Britain between 1945 and the 1970s (2003, p.154). Serbs from Krajina and Bosnia, for example, settled in Leicester and Derby, whereas those from central Serbia mainly went to Birmingham (Pryke, 2003, p.158). London at that time was predominantly a destination for upper-class Serbs from military backgrounds, including the royal family of King Petar II Karadjordjevic (Pryke, 2003, p.158). By contrast, the Yugoslav government had an agreement with Germany and other European countries about sending guest workers (*gasterbeiter*) to these countries because Germany suffered from a labour shortage at the time and the Yugoslav economy required a boost (Munro, 2017, p.16). Some participants from the first wave (1945-1990), mainly royalists, had first settled in other UK cities, such as Derby and Halifax, before they moved to London. Many participants, particularly from the third wave, were attracted by London’s cosmopolitan and “quirky” character (cf. Bajic-Hajdukovic, 2008, p.28). The peculiar character of Serbian migration to the UK may provide us with novel insights into the phenomenon of migration and questions of identity, as well as their interplay with technology.

The findings of my study show that traditional categories of migration, such as economic and lifestyle migrants, are not entirely applicable to the case of Serbian Londoners. As other studies have also demonstrated (see Crawleya & Skleparisb, 2018; Madianou & Miller, 2012), participants in this research were driven to immigrate to London by a *mix of various, but often interrelated, motives*. The findings also suggest that economic capital is not the key explanatory variable for the degree of openness to other cultures. Even though most participants across the three waves belong to a broadly defined middle class, it is important to bear in mind that their economic capitals do not always correspond to their cultural or social capitals, and vice versa.

The fieldwork findings show that the class backgrounds of my participants are complex due to the discrepancy between different types of capital, such as social, economic, cultural and symbolic (Bourdieu, 1986, 1989). Bourdieu defines economic capital in relation to a person's wealth, whereas cultural capital, as explained in Chapter 2, refers to a range of symbolic markers such as taste preferences, education and dialects. Social capital refers to personal connections and social ties (1986, p.47), and symbolic capital to status and reputation (1989, p.21). As Bourdieu notes, symbolic capital "is nothing other than economic or cultural capital *when it is known and recognised*" (1989, p.21, emphasis added). Ong and Cabanes (2011) reveal this discrepancy between different types of capitals among elite Filipino migrants in London. The authors find that there are differences in economic and symbolic capital among postgraduate Filipino students in London, whereby the self-funded 'economic elite' is often looked down upon by the Chevening scholars, those with more symbolic capital (Ong & Cabanes, 2011, p.213).

Some among my participants have moved up the social ladder since they came to Britain or have taken jobs for which they are overqualified. This means that they may be educated to a degree level but have a low-paid job, as other studies of migration also reveal. Madianou and Miller found that some Filipino women who immigrate to the UK to work as caregivers used to be teachers or held other highly skilled positions in the Philippines (2012, p.41). Ivana (54), a Serbian refugee from Croatia, used to be a high school teacher in linguistics before arriving in London. Fleeing the civil war in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, she first found a temporary job as an assistant to a primary school teacher. Meanwhile, she has also completed an MA in History of Arts in London, but she still could not find a job equivalent to her qualifications, so she started a part-time job as a librarian. Of course, forced migration in Ivana's case is different from the example of Filipino female care workers in the UK. Refugees are involuntary migrants and unable to return to their homeland. However, two decades later, Ivana is a UK citizen and able to travel, but she is still overqualified for the job she does, and her cultural capital is higher than her economic capital.

Conversely, some participants with no higher education degree managed to start their own businesses and became relatively well-off. Nick (55), who came to the UK in the mid-1980s in his early twenties without qualifications, launched his own company in the construction industry. Similarly, when I met Ivan (38) for his first interview, we sat in an upscale bar in a private members club in Notting Hill of which he was a member. Ivan came to London with his family when the civil war broke out. He was 17 at the time and started working soon after, having completed secondary school. Today, he runs his own business in the service industry. Despite not having a higher education degree, Ivan enjoys a middle-class lifestyle.

While social class is still relevant, it is neither determining in any way, nor clear-cut. This stands in contrast to some other migration studies, such as Colic-Peisker's (2008) study of Croats in Australia and America. Colic-Peisker distinguishes between *ethnic transnationalism* among the working class migrants who came to Australia after WWII until the early 1980s and to whom ethnicity is central to their life, and *cosmopolitan transnationalism* among the middle class migrants, who arrived in the late 1980s and 1990s, to whom career and professional life are more important (2008, p.220). Unlike the working class Australian Croats, the middle class are fluent English speakers, and they have more in common with people in the host society with similar interests and social backgrounds (Colic-Peisker, 2008, p.12). Language does not seem to have any relevance in the case of Serbian Londoners: all participants are fluent or native English speakers. Most are also bilingual and speak Serbian fluently, with a few exceptions among the UK-born who speak very little Serbian or none. Most participants have a university degree and have different occupations, including: scientists, journalists, librarians, academics, hairdressers, surveyors, architects, artists, doctors, economists, bankers, civil servants, students, unemployed, secondary school teachers, security guards, waiter, and marketing professionals. Comparatively, the third wave (2003-2013) has the most affluent and highly educated participants with diverse networks of contacts. However, in contrast to Mavra, who argues that more affluent Serbian Londoners show looser ethnic affiliations (2013, p.15), ethnicity remains relevant for many of my participants.



I also find that the identities and lifestyles of Serbian Londoners as well as their degrees of openness to other cultures are least dependent on their economic capital and most dependent on their social capital and family backgrounds. This was particularly apparent when respondents were asked about their voting intentions in the 2016 EU referendum in the UK and their views on the British decision to leave the EU. As Bourdieu insists, “social origin” has a lingering relevance (1984, p.5) because cultural capital “always remains marked by its earlier acquisition” (1986, p.49). While education of this group is an important factor, it is less important if singled out and more important when coupled with their social capital. Their family history is particularly important, such as whether they backed the so-called ‘First’ or ‘Other’ Serbia, as will be more discussed in the next chapter. This means that we need to look at how these participants ‘do nation’ discursively through family practices and look closely at their strong ties, as Chapters 7 and 8 strive to do.

Bajic-Hajdukovic (2008) points out that Serbian migration to London before the 1990s was mainly political, while during the 1990s it was mainly economic. However, *who are economic migrants?* The term ‘economic migrants’ is typically used to refer to people who move in pursuit of a better life, with relatively few or no skills, from impoverished countries (Semmelroggen, 2015). However, migrant workers can never be and never are just workers (Constable, 2014), nor are their reasons for migration ever just economic – there is always an interplay of personal, family and social motives (Madianou & Miller, 2012, p.32-35). As Crawleya and Skleparisb also emphasise, “dominant categories fail to capture adequately the complex relationship between political, social and economic drivers of migration or their shifting significance for individuals over time and space”, criticising these categories as “categorical fetishism” (2018, p.48).

Many participants in the third wave had professional motives for emigration that were intrinsically intertwined with aspirations for a better standard of life. In this sense, the third wave could be defined as lifestyle migration, but in fact it represents a mix of economic and lifestyle reasons. Furthermore, in contrast to dominant trends in lifestyle migration studies that point at urban migrants moving to rural or coastal areas (Benson & Osbaldison, 2014), or to less busy and “human-sized” cities such as Berlin (Griffiths & Maile, 2014) in pursuit

of a better lifestyle, this research shows an opposite dynamic. My participants chose London because it is a big cosmopolitan city with many career challenges and opportunities, whereby economic reasons, which are often associated with economic migrants (Semmelroggen, 2015), and career advancement, are integral parts of “self-development” and “pursuit of a better way of life” which characterise lifestyle migration (Benson & O’Reilly, 2009). Tamara’s (33, third wave) account illustrates this idea, talking about her holiday in California:

It was nice, but I thought I would like California more. I liked San Francisco, *but it was small compared to London*. [...] I feel at home here. Whenever I go abroad, I get bored. [...] I came to study [and] completely fell in love with this place. Everybody was talking to me in the streets. It happened once that when I was entering tube someone gave me his ticket because he did not need it. [...] It’s like Belgrade, it is full with people at 3am. Before, I was going to Germany every summer, and it was always dead there at 10pm, and no one ever talked to you, or cared about you...

She also reveals that even though she likes going to Belgrade, she does not want to return, mainly due to professional reasons: “In Serbia, there is no serious company [in her industry], so I do not see it as a professional challenge. And I am 90% work and 10% fun”. John (36, third wave) was born in the UK, but shortly afterwards his family moved back to Belgrade. Although they moved around Europe and lived for a short time in several other places, he spent most of his childhood and adolescence in Belgrade. After graduating, he decided to settle in London. “It seemed like the best option in terms of what I wanted to do professionally,” he explains.

There are also examples where the socio-cultural climate in their country of origin is intrinsically intertwined with political context. Liam (47, second wave, the self-proclaimed ‘atypical Serb’) came to London in 2001 because he could not adjust to the mentality in Serbia, which was set against a backdrop of a decade of Milosevic’s regime and socio-economic decline. As a consequence, he did not find his working environment stimulating

enough. As he recalls, “You were always trying to be different from someone else. We have an expression in Serbia for that ‘*Što se praviš Englez!*’ [Why are you pretending to be an English], and it describes my situation well”.

Some of the people who came in the 1970s and 1980s, who I describe as “young adventure seekers”, did not have university degrees and belonged to a roughly-defined working class; they were not necessarily driven by economic reasons, but rather having an adventure. Furthermore, some participants who came for mainly economic reasons, from smaller underdeveloped towns, now – once they have moved up the social ladder – put more emphasis on ‘quality of life’ in London. Given that, as illustrated above, London has played a vital role in many of my participants’ migration projects and their lives once they have moved, it is important to also examine the relationship between London – as a context of reception – and the identities of Serbian Londoners. This requires me to ask how Serbian Londoners perceive London and what it means for their sense of belonging.

### **5.3 London as both a cosmopolitan and British city**

Most participants are drawn to London for either its cosmopolitan or its British character. As one participant from the second wave points out, “London can be anything, whatever you make out of it,” evoking the words of Peter Ackroyd in his biography of London that “one could become anybody [in London]” (2000, p.775). “It is in the nature of the city to encompass everything... It is illimitable. It is infinite London,” writes Ackroyd (2000, pp. 778–779). Given these limitless opportunities and ways in which people can be in the city and live in the city, in this study London has the ambivalent role. The participants who are more likely to emphasise London’s cosmopolitan character are mainly the third wave and the so-called “serial” migrants (Ossman, 2013) or people who had lived in several different countries before moving to London. They also tend to identify more with cities than with countries. Thereby they identify both with a local and a global, bypassing a national. I borrow Roland Robertson’s concept ‘glocalisation’ to refer to this phenomenon. Robertson originally employed the term ‘glocalisation’ to replace the concept of globalisation that was often used to refer to the global processes that undermine the local, and to indicate the

simultaneity of global and local influences. He argues that “the compression of the world... involves... the incorporation of locality, processes which themselves largely shape... the world as a whole” (1995, p.40).

My application of Robertson’s concept ‘glocalisation’ is more similar to David Conradson and Dierdre McKay’s (2007) term “translocal subjectivities”, which the authors develop to refer to “multiply-located senses of self amongst those who inhabit transnational social fields” (2007, p.168).<sup>18</sup> ‘Translocal subjectivities’ implies that most transnational migrants continue to have intense emotional commitment to families and friends in particular locations and, importantly, that these locations are *within* the nation, and are not nation-states. The authors argue that nationality is “a second-order framing of identity” that only becomes important in official settings, whereas in everyday life people tend to identify with specific people and places within the nation (Conradson & McKay, 2007, pp.168-169). Likewise, Ong and Cabanes find that some Filipino migrants have attachments to their hometowns and kinship networks rather than a loyalty to the nation-state (2011, p.202). Georgiou, similarly, finds that most of her participants of Arab origin in London identify both with a transnational Arab community and as Londoners. She concludes, “commitment to a transnational (diasporic) and urban community was much more dominant than their commitment to a nation,” thus symbolising a sense of “recognition and globality” (Georgiou, 2013, p.102). As one of my participants reports, “The thing I take out from there [Chile] is a very specific Latin American experience that informs my identity shaped by the city I lived in, more than the fact that it was in Chile” (Angela, 31, third wave).

By ‘glocalisation’, I refer to specific type of migrants, often ‘serial migrants’ like Angela, who have a pronounced cosmopolitan identity and show particular consciousness (see Sassen, 2005). Elena’s (50, second wave) account also illustrates this idea. Having been born in Belgrade and then living in several other countries in Europe and the US, Elena moved to London in the late 1990s; her decision to move was motivated by a mix of career and lifestyle reasons.

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<sup>18</sup> Conradson and McKay (2007) draw on Appadurai (1996), who employs the term ‘translocality’ to describe how communities become extended through geographical mobility across the borders of their country of origin.

I identify as European. Any sort of nationalist insularity, whether it is Serbian or British, is something I really have trouble accepting and identifying with. There are several identities that are important to me and actually what is perhaps more important to me than countries are cities. There are certain cities that I care about, because I lived there or because I have strong links to them. So, one of those cities is Belgrade. I feel much more strongly related to Belgrade than I do to Serbia, because I travelled very little within Serbia itself and when I do go to Serbia it is always to Belgrade. And, most of the people I know in Belgrade are people I can relate to, who are not insular, who are not xenophobic, who are not racist, who are open to the world and world's culture... I have a strong link to Geneva. I don't like Switzerland. I don't feel Swiss, even though I have a Swiss passport. And I feel very strongly about London.

Mavra (2013) also observes that some Serbs in London identify as European and do so in lieu of identifying as Yugoslavs, given that the country no longer exists. However, for my participants, as Elena's account demonstrates, European identity signifies a sense of 'glocalisation' – urban (local) and cosmopolitan identity. Similarly, Mila (40) was born in the UK while her parents were doing post-doctoral studies; they stayed for two years and then moved back to Belgrade. They returned to England in 1989, just before political turmoil and the fall of Yugoslavia. She moved to London from a smaller English town to pursue an MSc degree and has stayed there ever since.

[I am] a Londoner, definitely. I have struggled for a long time about identity and then I realised I don't have to be a Serbian, or British, or anything. I do not need to put myself in a box. I can just be me, and that is why London is basically home, because everything goes in London, you don't have to be of a particular nationality, or dress in a particular way, or behave in a particular way.

This is what Iris Marion Young means by the "ideal of city life" – "openness to unassimilated otherness" (2011 [1990], p.227) and "the being together of strangers" (ibid.,

p.237). This is similar to what Kevin Robins implies about London as “a cognitive model” or “a tool for thought”: a certain way of thinking about difference (2001, p.87). Young argues that only “city life” affirms group difference and offers a persuasive alternative to the dichotomy between liberal individualism and communitarianism, both of which suppress difference (2011 [1990], pp.226-227). Liberal individualism puts too much emphasis on individuals and neutral standards, disguising the fact that these are the standards of the privileged, and consequently disregarding the persisting underlying inequalities. “The ideal of community”, on the other hand, is oppressive insofar as it requires all its members to conform to the norm, thus reducing similarities to sameness. In contrast to the dominant narrative of alienation, city life encourages social networks and subcultures to flourish (2011 [1990], pp.236-238). In cities, difference is seen as “erotic”, “an attraction to the other, the pleasure and excitement of being drawn out of one’s secure routine to encounter the novel, strange and surprising” (Young, 2011 [1990], p.240). City life allows people to be exposed to different perspectives. Various public spaces facilitate encounters and interactions with people who hold different opinions or belong to different ethnic or cultural groups, and exposure to different aesthetics (Young, 2011 [1990]). As Robins emphasises, “One does not exist in the city in the same way that one exists as part of the nation” – while the nation is an abstract and disembodied community, the city presupposes “embodied cultural experience” (2001, p.87).

However, not all participants are willing to engage with other cultures that they might encounter in the city. This attitude is more prominent among the first wave, especially ‘young adventure seekers’, and some in the second wave, such as ‘urban youth’ and refugees. These participants are more likely to emphasise London’s ‘Britishness’, drawing on British tradition, monarchy, pub culture, or cuisine as aspects of London they appreciate or can identify with. This especially becomes apparent in a prolonged contact that has enabled me to analyse fieldwork and interview data in context. I was invited to Nick’s (50, first-wave) place to have dinner with him and his wife. We talked about different topics for hours. “The problem you have when you live in London is that every other place becomes boring,” he exclaimed, but soon afterwards, he also said, “whenever I go to Serbia, I eat eggs with bacon and beans, what most people there don’t understand”. This was followed

by comments that he supported “Brexit”. “I voted for Britain to leave the EU. This mess has to stop. This city has changed so much in the last two decades”. Norman (40, second wave, ‘urban youth’) similarly explains his vote for Leave in the 2016 EU referendum, “When I arrived here there was almost no place where you could find espresso, there were only pubs. Now you have too many cultures here that have changed London. I like British tradition, but it’s been fading away”. Not all participants who appreciate the ‘Britishness’ of London share these views of other cultures in the city, or not in all contexts. Importantly, most people oscillate between openness and closure (Madianou, 2006). This means that some participants can often express banal cosmopolitanism, while they may also support England’s national football team, as the next chapter further demonstrates.

## **5.4 Conclusion**

This study has found that the Serbian diaspora in London is remarkably heterogeneous and, like Sreberny’s (2000) findings of Iranians living in London, that there are in fact several Serbian communities in London. Some participants do not necessarily come from Serbia. Some come from different republics of the former Yugoslavia, or are serial migrants, and others were born in the UK. The main point of difference among these participants is the period of their migration to Britain and London. There were several major events in Serbia and the region that underpinned different motives for migration. On this basis, three major waves of migration have been identified: the first triggered by communism in Yugoslavia at the end of WWII (1945-1990); the second was triggered by the civil war and its aftermath (1990-2003); and the third wave (2003-2013) took place at the time of democratic transition in Serbia. The participants who belong to the first wave have been categorised as royalists, ‘young adventure seekers’ and UK-born; the participants in the second wave as ‘urban youth’, refugees and the self-proclaimed ‘atypical Serbs’; and the participants in the third wave as students and young professionals, and a few married to UK citizens.

There are no official statistics of how many people migrated in each period, but unofficial numbers suggest that the 1990s saw the largest influx of people from the former Yugoslavia

to the UK (Serbian Council of Great Britain). Hence, this second wave is the most heterogeneous. Democratic transition after 2000 resulted in a process of social, political and economic stabilisation, but it also meant that democracy was not yet fully consolidated and that the country was tormented by the baggage of its recent past. At the same time, Serbia is not an EU member state at the time of writing, and its citizens are required to have a visa to travel to the UK. Thus, it is relatively hard for Serbs to come and stay in Britain. Given this context, the third wave is not large in scope compared to the other two, yet quite distinctive. The first Serbian community in London was formed in parts of West London, primarily around Shepard's Bush and Ealing, but today Serbian Londoners are scattered all around the city. While congregations were first mainly strategic, with the third wave a choice of area to live has become based more on professional and lifestyle reasons. This change is symbolic as much as geographic and may also contribute to the overall picture of how London has been changing over time (cf. Bajic-Hajdukovic, 2008, p.37).

I have also argued in this chapter that the class backgrounds of my participants are rather complex. While most could be loosely defined as middle class, there are discrepancies between different types of capital (Bourdieu, 1987), particularly among the first and second wave. I have also shown that there was a mix of interrelated motives for migration, which is why categories such as economic and lifestyle migrants do not apply to my participants. In contrast to some other migration studies (Bajic-Hajdukovic, 2008; Colic-Peisker, 2008; Mavra, 2010), it has been shown that more affluent and better-educated participants do not necessarily have loose ethnic identities. Finally, I have concluded that most participants are drawn to London either for its cosmopolitan or British character and identified a sense of glocalisation among some participants who identify both as cosmopolitans and Londoners (global and local), bypassing the national.

The distinction between these three waves of migration will help with understanding the performances of identities in polymedia environments in subsequent chapters. While there are many differences between my participants, particularly between the three waves, what they all have in common is an orientation to Serbian identity – even though what it means to be Serbian and their expressions of Serbian identity may be different. As subsequent



chapters will show, some participants ‘do nation’ by supporting national sports teams and engaging in Christmas celebrations at the Serbian church in London, others ‘do nation’ through regular family FaceTime calls and WhatsApp or Viber chats and sharing pictures of ‘*cevapi*’ and other Serbian food. There are also a few themes that bring together all participants, such as Novak Djokovic (and other famous Serbian figures), food and references to mentality or a way of life. Given that identities are relational (Hall, 1990), the next chapter explores how what being Serbian means has been negotiated in relation to dominant discourses in the UK.

## Chapter 6: Destigmatisation Strategies of Serbian Londoners in Polymedia

It was not only in 1999, but before that time, when I moved in, *coverage was horrendous* about us [Serbia and the Serbs]. I have to say that at one point I started telling people that I am Russian, especially when I worked at a restaurant, because I could not take questions any longer “are you a war criminal”, “are all Serbians killers”. *Whatever news was in the early 1990s, it was the negative news.* I know it was so stupid to pretend to be somebody else, but *it was not only because news was so horrendous that I felt ashamed, but also because I was losing a country and identity,* I did not know who I was any more. I have a very mixed background, my parents three religions, three languages, four countries, completely, you know [...] It was very hard and I had problems personally with my identity and the portrayal of identity in newspapers, I could not relate my friends, family, people I knew to the headlines and stories written here. [...] For me at 22 it was very hard. *I was having an identity crisis.* I have never been the same since then. It has influenced the way I read news. Now I am reading between the lines everywhere and keep being very cautious. [...] But now... they write about Exit festival, or good nightlife. *It is really lovely that is now seen as a place that can be interesting and where people are normal.* There has been an interesting shift. *We were labelled in the early 1990s, it was like I would scream.*

(Tanya, 43, second wave)

This quote is very revealing because it seemingly contradicts ordinary and banal practices observed in fieldwork, such as pictures or status updates on social media from a vacation or dining out. Thus it may explain *why* in many cases these participants want to *blend in* by making their practices appear as ordinary and unremarkable as possible. In Chapter 5 I identified three waves of migration of Serbs to London and the UK, and delineated differences between them. I have argued that what my participants have in common is an

orientation to Serbian identity, even though what it means to be Serbian and the expressions of Serbian identity may differ among them.

Most participants, regardless of the wave, perceive Serbian identity as stigmatised due to the legacy of the civil war of the 1990s (cf. Procter, 2000), and this is most evident among the self-described ‘atypical Serbs’ from the second wave. This group of respondents mainly associates themselves with the so-called ‘Other’ Serbia or civic Serbia. ‘Other’ Serbia consisted of Belgrade’s liberal (Western-oriented) intelligentsia and a liberal part of the public, who stood against Milosevic’s regime and were opposed to nationalist rhetoric and state-controlled media (see Colovic & Mimica, 1992; Gordy, 2013; Masic, 2006; Mimica, 2002; Spasic & Petrovic, 2013; Russell-Omaljev, 2016). They started giving speeches and organising protests on the streets of Belgrade, creating the discourse of responsibility, as soon as the war began. Mainly initiated by a small group of intellectuals within Belgrade Circle of Independent Intellectuals, it was later supported by Belgrade Centre for Human Rights and the Fund for Humanitarian Law (Gordy, 2013, p.21). These speeches were collected in a book called *Druga Srbija* (Other Serbia) in 1992 (see Colovic & Mimica, 1992).

‘First’ Serbia, whose father was considered to be Dobrica Cosic (Serbian writer and academic), on the other hand, was represented by the nationalistic anti-West Eurosceptic intelligentsia that drew on the discourse of victimisation (versus responsibility). They were supporting the narratives of Serbs as victims throughout history, as well as “proud and honorable warriors” (Russell-Omaljev, 2016, p.92). Even though ‘First’ and ‘Other’ Serbia held different views of the civil war and what it means to be Serbian, it can be argued that these terms are not entirely clear-cut because their actors perceived themselves differently at different times. For instance, Vuk Draskovic, the founder of the Serbian Renewal Movement political party was a nationalist and monarchist like the post-1945 Serbian diaspora in London, initially seen as a representative of ‘First’ Serbia. However, he was later one of the leaders of the liberal opposition in Serbia who was running protest rallies

against Milosevic's regime, and in the 2012 general elections he joined the coalition with the Liberal Democratic Party (Russell-Omaljev, 2016, pp.86-87).<sup>19</sup>

The attribute 'atypical' among some of my participants from the second wave and their reluctance to take part in this research primarily come from the feelings of shame for the wrongdoings of the Yugoslav government in the 1990s and an attempt to distance themselves from other Serbs supporters of this regime and the so-called 'First' Serbia. Eric Gordy calls this "responsibility as self-accusation" and notes, "In its mildest version it calls for a 'catharsis', while stronger versions seem to call for a collective acknowledgement for guilt and some effort to bring a sense of guilt into part of a national consciousness" (2013, p.118). As explained in Chapter 5, this group of participants mainly arrived in London between the late 1990s and 2003, coinciding with a major shift in political regime in Serbia (Yugoslavia at that time). On 5<sup>th</sup> October 2000, Milosevic's regime was overthrown and a democratic coalition came into power with Dr Zoran Djindjic as the Prime Minister (see RTS, 2012). Gordy also observes this perceived stigma among some intellectuals, he writes:

Mileta Prodanovic [a Serbian writer] tells of meeting an old and prominent East European writer at a conference. 'I shook hands with the old man..., told him where I was from, and at once noticed a change in his blue Slavic eyes.' Discomfited by the writer's gaze: 'I understood. The old man was disappointed. The questions which he really, undoubtedly, wanted to ask me could be, for example: 'And how many unfortunate Bosnian children did you slaughter with your own hands? Did you participate in mass rapes? Are you a relative of one of the leaders of the paramilitary formations?'

(Gordy, 2013, p.39)

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<sup>19</sup> It is important to note that 'First' Serbia has never self-identified as such, as Ivana Spasic and Tamara Petrovic point out, "it was the Other Serbia which, creating itself, created the First one" (2013, p.240).

This quote resonates with Tanya's account, cited above. Similarly, Nicholas Procter's study of Serbs in Australia during the war in the 1990s shows that some Serbs received death threats and their community properties were vandalised, and they also characterised media coverage as hostile and demonising (2000, p.135). According to Procter, this resulted in withdrawal from social life among many Serbian Australians (2000, p.134) and reinforced their national identity (2000, p.136). Although most of my participants perceive Serbian national identity as being stigmatised by the hostile media coverage, they do not all think this stigma is justified – not all feel shame.

In early July 2015, the time of the Srebrenica memorial, I was recruiting participants for my doctoral research. One Sunday morning I went to the church at Ladbrooke Grove and attempted to ask some people to take part in my research. I encountered two men there, one in his late 50s, and the other in his 70s. The Srebrenica memorial was a hot topic in the media and certainly the one that attracted attention of Serbs in London, or at least the community around the church. They were grumbling about what they perceived to be a misrepresentation of the event on BBC News and were trying to 'convince' me to support their point of view in my thesis, that is 'to take a Serbian side'. As I tried to explain that I was not examining media representation of Serbs and that I could only speak about this subject through their experiences, I was faced with the question "why are you ashamed?", and was subsequently abruptly and decisively rebuffed.

In a similar vein, some people decided to participate in this research as they hoped it could reveal 'the truth' about the Yugoslav war and correct the perceived bias in the international – and British – media. When I was leaving Ivana's (54, second wave) house, in December 2015, and thanking her for her time and for generously sharing intimate details of her life with me, she told me she participated in good faith, hoping I could point out the injustices done to the Serbs in the conflict. As mentioned in Chapter 5, Ivana came to London in 1994, after having been imprisoned in her hometown in Croatia as an ethnic Serb. Her life story was very poignant. She was speaking openly about the hardship she had gone through as an ethnic Serb in war-torn Croatia and later as an asylum-seeker in Britain, which could explain the way she felt about the media coverage of the civil war. However, some

participants who associate themselves with ‘Other’ Serbia and have a pronounced cosmopolitan identity (or ‘glocalised’, as explained in Chapter 5) also perceived media representations of the Serbs during the conflict as biased. Helena, a highly educated second wave upper-middle class woman in her early 50s who identifies as European (introduced in Chapter 5), noted that: “Media about Serbia in the 1990s was terrible everywhere, you could not escape it. I also read German and French media. Everywhere it was very biased and superficial”.

About 16 years later, Serbia has joined the process of EU integration and it seldom makes headlines in the international news, and when it does they are rarely negative ones. However, the effects of the 1990s are “lasting and profound”. As Rebecca Adler-Nissen explains “sanctions” imposed on Austria by other EU member states when this country elected a far right government “did little material damage to Austria, but their psychological effect was lasting and profound” (2014, p.164). Likewise, Hutchinson also claims: “these periods of nationalist mobilization, sometimes prolonged, in turn deposit further layers of ‘experience’ into collective memory” (2006, p.303).

Serbia’s historical position on the ‘semi-periphery’ – the periphery of the Core (the West), yet distant from the ‘global South’ (Spasic, 2017, p.37; Blagojevic, 2009) has enabled stigmatisation because this is contingent upon power asymmetry (see Link & Phelan, 2001, p.366). As Maria Todorova points out, “the Balkans... have always evoked the image of a bridge or a crossroad”: “the bridge between the East and West” or “the bridge between stages of growth”, which is what invokes labels such as ‘semi-developed’ or ‘semi-civilised’ (1997, pp.15-16). Todorova (1997) develops the concept of balkanism to address this position of the Balkans that have been perceived since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as the barbaric, primitive, and uncivilised other to Europe, or even as showing non-European character. At the same time, the Balkans have lacked a utopian image of the Orient – such as Orient’s association with wealth and forbidden and an escape for the romantics such as Lord Byron and Victor Hugo. The Balkans, unlike the Orient, have geographical and historical concreteness and have completely been devoid of exoticism (Todorova, 1997, pp.13-14). While orientalism is about opposition, balkanism is about ambiguity (Todorova,

1997, p.17). Stigmatisation has also been enabled by the Balkans's self-perception. As Todorova notes, the Balkans have internalised this image of 'an incomplete other' and has thereby come to perceive itself as "an incomplete self", showing characteristics of "lowermost case", i.e. "despised alter-ego" (1997, p.17).

While Serbia had a more powerful position in relation to other former Yugoslav republics in the 1990s, its position in international relations vis-à-vis the world's superpowers has been much weaker, and the country has suffered the consequences for the wrongdoings, including international sanctions, negative media coverage, and NATO bombing. In this sense, it can be argued that the case of Serbia is much more similar to the case of Germany after the Second World War (WWII) (see Adler-Nissen, 2014) than to the case of Australia in relation to the treatment of its indigenous populations, or Europe and the United States in relation to slavery and colonialism (see Ahmed, 2004). Although Germany also belongs to the Western powers, Germany's position after WWII was much different than today – the country also suffered major consequences (unlike Australia, for example, for its treatment of indigenous populations). Furthermore, the discourse of shame has not become, as explained earlier in this chapter, as widely accepted in Serbia (see Gordy, 2013) as has been in the case with Australia, according to Sarah Ahmed (2004). There is still no consensus in Serbia about what happened in the 1990s in the territory of the former Yugoslavia and how it should be defined (Gordy, 2013). As Gordy notes, "beginning with factual dispute over basic elements such as the character of the violence that took place and the number of victims, disagreement is very much still alive and very passionately engaged over questions of responsibility" (2013, p.ix). Hence, rather than offering an alternative to stigma discourse, the concepts of shame and guilt (Ahmed, 2004) inform the debate and deepen our understanding of identity performances of Serbian Londoners in polymedia environments. In the wake of the British vote to leave the EU in June 2016, there has been evidence that Eastern European migrants in Britain have been discriminated against and viewed negatively by Leave voters (see Fox et al., 2016; Morley, 2017; Munro, 2017; YouGov, 2017). Even though this form of discrimination is more sporadic and much milder in manifestations and consequences, it arguably creates a new, tense environment to which people may respond either by trying to blend in or by essentialising their identity.

Today, when online and offline are seamlessly integrated (Murthy, 2008), as argued in Chapters 3 and 4, and when people inhabit different online spaces (cf. Madianou & Miller, 2012), this chapter is primarily concerned with what strategies Serbian Londoners employ in polymedia environments in coping with the perceived stigma and negotiating their sense of belonging in relation to the context of Britain today. The chapter traces discursive shifts among these participants from openness to closure (Madianou, 2005) on different digital media platforms. It aims to investigate whether affordances of social media have any influence in these discursive shifts. In so doing, the chapter will look at the role of social surveillance, as an inherent characteristic of social media (Andrejevic, 2004; Marwick, 2012; Tokunaga, 2010), in the ways in which people perform their identities on different platforms.

The chapter identifies *two dominant discursive strategies* that these participants adopt to reconstruct their national identities. By following Goffman's (1963) sociological analysis of stigma and Adler-Nissen's (2014) understanding of international relations, this chapter argues that these strategies can be termed *destigmatisation strategies*. It then examines how these strategies differ between those who identify themselves with 'First' and 'Other' Serbia, and the emergent phenomenon of 'Third' Serbia (cf. Spasic & Petrovic, 2013). The discourses of 'First' and 'Other' Serbia, drawing on Baumann (1996), can also be analysed as dominant and demotic discourse, the former that reifies cultures and the latter that challenges the reifications. Madianou (2005, 2007), following Baumann (1996), finds that these discourses are not cast in stone, and that most people oscillate between the two depending on context. The discourse of 'Third' Serbia has emerged in the public sphere in Serbia from the mid-2000s, and its meanings vary, but a common thread is an attempt to bridge divisions between 'First' and 'Other' Serbia that offers something positive and better and "is turned toward the future" (Spasic & Petrovic, 2013, pp.220-223). For some, 'Third' Serbia means *both* 'Serbias', and for others it means *neither* (the middle ground between Eurosceptics and Euroenthusiasts, or neither black nor white reality) (Spasic & Petrovic, 2013, pp.222-224). In this research, I have identified the discourse of 'Third' Serbia that has emerged from a need to remove this perceived stigma and boost national self-esteem by



reconciling the national and cosmopolitan (cf. Spasic & Petrovic, 2013, p.224), perhaps best described by the common saying among the Serbs: *'Svetsko, a naše'*, which means 'Global, and ours' (someone who belongs to the world and is ours too). Based on my findings, I offer somewhat different interpretations and analysis of the discourse of 'Third' Serbia from Spasic and Petrovic (2013). 'Third' Serbia can, in the context of these research findings, be conceptualised as "negotiated discourse" (Hall, 2003).

This thesis is not concerned with discussing the Yugoslav war in any detail or how the media portrayed these events and whether the media were indeed biased, as reported by many of my participants. This would be a whole new project, which would require a considerably different research design. Rather at issue is how people's perceptions of these events have shaped their identities and what it means for the ways they navigate digital media environments, as well as whether and how the architecture of these environments enables different 'identity practices' that 'do nation'. As argued in Chapter 2, national identities come into being through everyday communication practices (Deutsch, 1966 [1953]) and exist only as long as they are performed (Baumann, 1996). Importantly, the topic of stigma and shame was data-led: it emerged from the responses and online interactions of my informants. The chapter first theorises the concepts of stigma and shame and introduces the two identified strategies, and then moves on to discuss how these strategies differ on different social media platforms. It argues that these strategies can be explained by the affordances, intended publics and social contexts of these media platforms. Consequently, the chapter looks at banal expressions of nationalism and cosmopolitanism and introduces a new concept of 'globalised difference' as some manifestations of the destigmatisation strategies.

## **6.1 Stigma and Shame**

As Goffman explains, stigma essentially refers to "an attribute that is deeply discrediting" (Goffman, 1963, p.13), or "an undesired differentness" (1963, p.15). Even though it

originally exclusively referred to a physical mark<sup>20</sup>, today the term “is applied more to the disgrace itself than to the bodily evidence of it” (1963, p.13). Goffman identifies three types of stigma: one that maintains original meanings and refers to body; another regarding individual character, such as radical political behaviour; and finally *tribal stigma* that includes belonging to a certain race, nation and religion. Stigma is constructed through “rationalising an animosity” based on differences, such as social class (Goffman, 1963, p.15), or being unemployed, a stepparent, a debtor, or a gay parent (Link & Phelan 2001, p.364); and these attributes, deemed shameful, have been changing over time (Goffman, 1963, pp.13-14).

Even where widely attained norms are involved, their multiplicity has the effect of disqualifying many persons. For example, in an important sense there is only one complete unblushing male in America: a young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual Protestant father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight and height and a recent record in sports. Every American male tends to look out upon the world from this perspective, this constituting one sense in which one can speak of a common value system in America. Any male who fails to qualify in any of these ways is likely to view himself – during moments at least – as unworthy, incomplete and inferior; at times he is likely to pass and at times he is likely to find himself being apologetic or aggressive concerning known-about aspects of himself he knows are probably seen undesirable.

(Goffman, 1963, p.153)

This quote from Goffman’s study on stigma further shows the historicity and contextuality of stigma, which may help understand how the participants from different waves and groups negotiate their identities on different digital media platforms and with what consequences. The relational character of stigma also suggests the importance of intended audiences on social media. The quote may elucidate why some people in this group embrace cosmopolitanism on publicly oriented platforms such as Facebook and Instagram,

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<sup>20</sup> Stigma is a Greek work and originally referred to a mark that was cut or burned into the skin of animals, and then with Christianity, referred to physical marks or scars (Adler-Nissen, 2014, p.145).

while at the same they often tend to express national identity on more private platforms such as WhatsApp and Viber.

Adler-Nissen (2014) posits that Goffman's (1963) stigma theory helps us understand how international order and consequently international society are sustained, which is the key concern of international relations. She argues that international society is constructed and maintained through the stigmatisation of "transgressive" and "norm-violating states". Shaming has especially become a prominent method in promoting international norms in the past two decades (Adler-Nissen, 2014, p.147), because these norms enable cohesion and help "the world hang together" (2014, p.171). The labelling of a country primarily serves to reinforce "the identity of the 'audience of normals'", to prevent similar scenarios from happening in other countries (2014, p.163). Goffman observes that "A necessary condition for social life is the sharing of a single set of normative expectations by all participants... When a rule is broken restorative measures will occur; the damaging is terminated and the damage repaired, whether by control agencies or by the culprit himself" (1963, p.152).

Stigmatised states then adopt certain strategies to cope with their stigma, and these strategies can be categorised as: *stigma recognition*, *stigma rejection* and *counter-stigmatisation* (Adler-Nissen, 2014). Stigma recognition, what Goffman (1963) calls "out-group alignment", refers to a situation where the stigmatised identifies with the "audience of normals" and the wider society, internalises their values and judgements, and apologises for breaking the norm. "Successful stigma recognition implies that the deviant state works to become normal and eventually succeeds in becoming accepted by international society" and the German case epitomises this strategy. Counter-stigmatisation, as an "in-group alignment" (Goffman, 1963) strategy means that the stigmatised accepts the stigma and turns it into an emblem of pride. Stigma rejection strategy implies that "the stigmatised accepts the categories of deviance, but deny being different from the norm abiders" (Adler-Nissen, 2014, pp.153-154).

I apply this theory from the field of international relations to the context of media audiences and everyday life to discuss everyday performances of identities in polymedia among

Serbian Londoners. I argue that most of the third wave participants as well as the self-proclaimed ‘atypical Serbs’, a group within the second wave, predominantly take the strategy defined as *stigma recognition*, while most first wave participants as well as some refugees and ‘urban youth’ from the second wave adopt *counter-stigmatisation strategy*. It can further be argued that counter-stigmatisation is a strategy of the representatives of ‘First’ Serbia in my sample, whose main rhetoric is oriented to *ridiculing* others and presenting oneself as *superior*, whereas stigma recognition strategy is mainly adopted by ‘Other’ Serbia and the emerging discourse of ‘Third’ Serbia. As will be illustrated by examples from my fieldwork, ‘Third’ Serbia represents an effort mainly by third wave participants, but also some within the second wave and first wave, to rehabilitate the national identity by reconciling national and cosmopolitan identities and thereby giving positive attributes to what being Serbian means (see Figure 10). This understanding of ‘Third’ Serbia is thus different from Spasic and Petrovic’s who argue that “Third Serbia can be interpreted as the First that can now finally accept itself” (2013, p.240), or that it “plays into the hands of those who would like to keep aloof from the First but to retain from it everything that is dear to them” (2013, p.239).

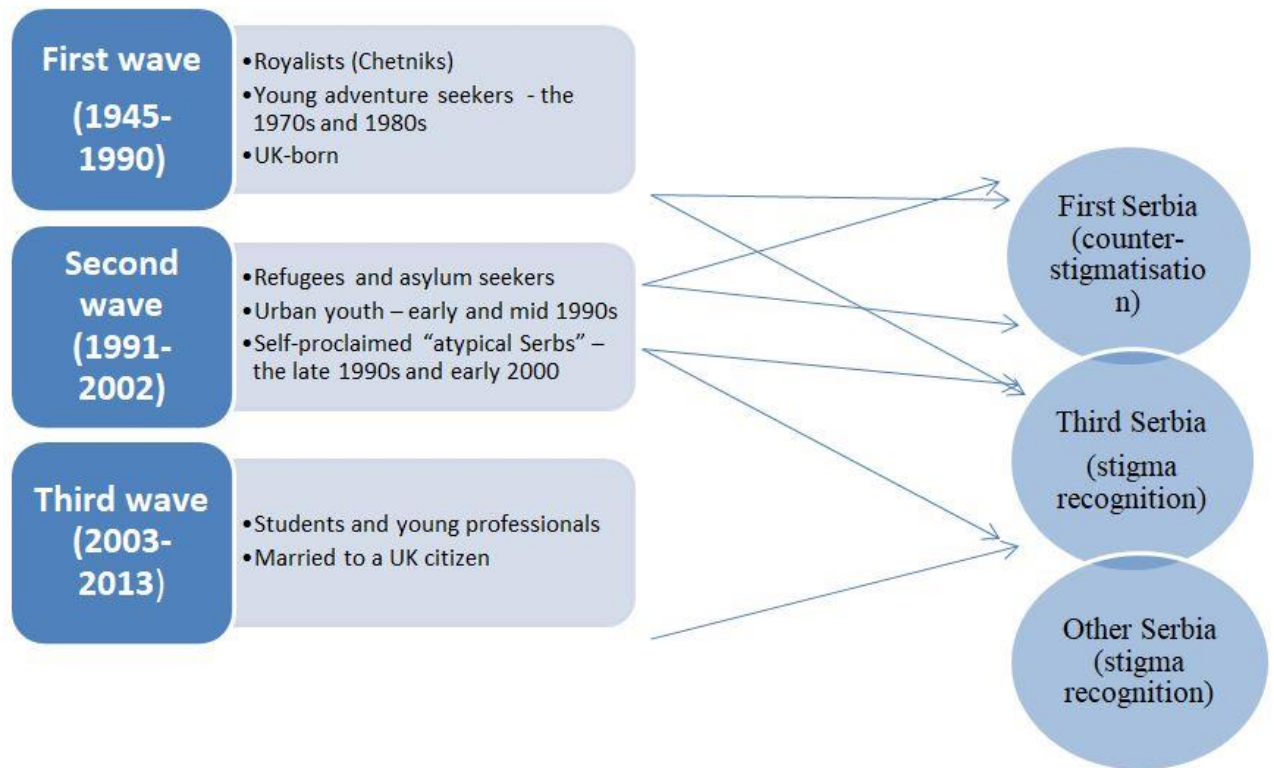


Figure 10: Destigmatisation strategies according to the waves of migration and affiliations with 'First', 'Other', and 'Third' Serbia.

As Adler-Nissen points out, “for transgressive states, stigmatisation can be a traumatic process that plays out in a reshaping of national self-esteem” (2014, p.171), and recognition may help “restore the nation or reconcile the nation to itself” (Ahmed, 2004, p.102). Novak Djokovic, themes of food and landscapes are some of the dominant emblems of ‘Third’ Serbia, as shall further be illustrated. However, it is also the *framing* of these themes that matters. Some of these themes may appear in feeds and interviews with representatives of ‘First’ Serbia and those who adopt counter-stigmatisation strategy, but the framing will be different in a way that, as explained, presents the Serbian identity as superior in contrast to the cosmopolitan framing of ‘Third’ Serbia. For instance, Amelia (41, second wave) posted her excitement on Instagram when *Time Out* magazine dedicated its pages to Serbian places in London and some eminent Serbs. She wrote “it is the first article about Serbia in a while that doesn’t talk about the war, but instead mentions our Royal Family, Novak Djokovic, Marina Abramovic and Roksanda Ilinic, to name a few” (see Figure 11).

The distinctions between the two discursive strategies are not set in stone, as explained in the introduction to this chapter. For instance, Norman (40, second wave, ‘urban youth’) ridicules Serbia’s negotiations towards EU integrations by drawing on an anecdote about a pack of chocolate: “First it used to be 100gr, then 90gr, and now it is 80gr. As we are getting closer to the EU, the size of chocolate pack is getting smaller while their price remains the same. Only people are bigger... sheep [used as derogatory colloquial attribute referred to a stupid person]” (see Figure 6.3). In this post he criticises Serbia’s leadership for their pro-EU policies and politics, declaring the EU a doomed project, which is a common narrative of ‘First’ Serbia.

On the other hand, Norman also often posts favourably about London, such as by sharing his excitement when he came across an old book by William Faulkner in a vintage shop. He wrote on Facebook: “One of the best little things about London is that, while strolling the streets, you can notice out of the blue a small vintage shop with real gems of books. And then you get lost in those 20 square meters, and lose a sense of time and space” (see Figure 12). However, this does not necessarily contradict the former example because it can link to, as seen in Chapter 5, a shared fascination with London among these participants. Importantly, these distinctions cannot be explained by their class backgrounds, as argued in Chapter 5, that often seems to have often been used as an explanatory variable in analysing

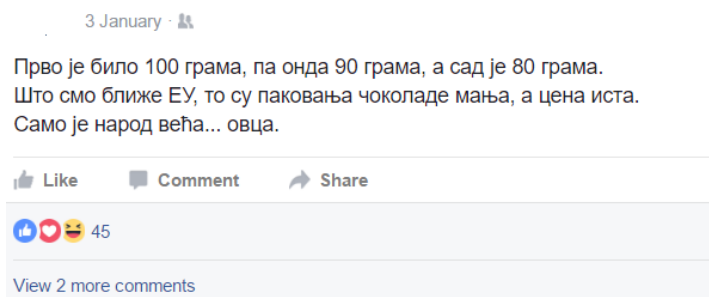


Figure 12: Facebook status of a second wave participant.



Figure 11: Instagram post of a second wave participant.

migrants’ identities (see Colic-Peisker, 2008; Mavra, 2010). Rather these distinctions can be linked to their family histories and social ties (see Pryke, 2003). Diana (26, UK-born), is a keen fan of Djokovic, which she

adopted from her mother, whom I had a chance to meet. In fact, the first time I met her at home it was actually her mother who was more euphoric when there was news mentioning Djokovic on the TV. Later, over time, Diana's social media feeds and statuses became saturated with tennis and Djokovic-related pictures and comments.

While stigmatisation has a role in promoting cohesion and international order, “shame becomes not only a mode of *recognition* of injustices committed against others, but also a *form of nation building*,” because “shame can bring ‘the nation’ into existence as a *felt community*” (Ahmed, 2004, pp.101-102, emphasis added). This is crucial for understanding why both *stigma recognition* and *counter-stigmatisation* are essentially manifestations of national belonging – because both strategies relate to the

past events, in this case the civil war. Moreover, as Goffman points out, paradoxically both strategies legitimise the stigma because every response to certain representation legitimises that representation (1963, p.27). Unlike Link and Phelan (2001, p.366), Adler-Nissen argues that stigmatisation does not necessarily require a status loss or exclusion. It can actually lead to *empowerment*, whereby the *negative attribute becomes a matter of pride* (Adler-Nissen, 2014, p.165; for further discussion on shame and pride see Ahmed, 2004, pp.108-112). This is fundamental to the strategy of counter-stigmatisation that is embodied in the example of Cuba. According to Adler-Nissen, the example of Cuba shows that if counter-stigmatisation succeeds it may challenge the norm to the extent that the stigmatiser becomes perceived as the transgressor (2014, p.165), in this case the United States. As evidence of this, she mentions that Canada and the countries of the European Union

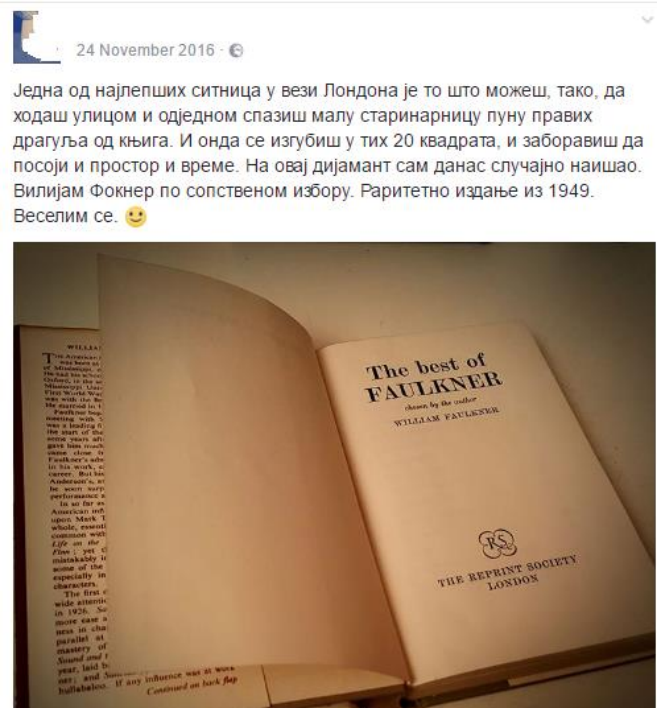


Figure 13: Fascination with London, Facebook status by a second wave participant.

maintained close relations with Cuba and did not comply with the embargo imposed on Cuba, despite the pressures from the US (2014, p.197).



Counter-stigmatisation strategy, according to Adler-Nissen (2017), depends on the support of a powerful country, because, as already mentioned, stigma is always contingent on social, economic and political power (Link & Phelan, 2001, p.366). Hence, Adler-Nissen concludes, Cuba created a parallel system of values and norms based on its relations with other powerful countries, such as the Soviet Union (2014, pp.168-172). Following this thought, it can be argued that the counter-stigmatisation strategy among Serbian Londoners was made possible by Serbia's relationship with Russia, which gives the country enough power to turn the stigma of a 'norm-violating' state into a symbol of pride.

The wider anti-immigrant discourses in the UK that led to and were reinforced by the June 2016 EU referendum result have evoked these already existing sensitivities among my participants. This is particularly the case for the more recent arrivals, the third wave. As the following sections show, pro-EU participants, often associated with 'Other' or 'Third' Serbia, who experience *stigma recognition* strategy often express banal cosmopolitanism as a tactic in coping with the perceived stigma and the wider anti-immigrant discourses in the wake of Brexit. On the other hand, those participants who associate themselves with 'First' Serbia, and who adopt the strategy of counter-stigmatisation were in fact more in favour of Brexit, as the next section discusses.

## **6.2 Brexit and South-Eastern European migrants in the UK**

Fox, Moroşanu and Szilassy (2015) argue that there is evidence that Eastern European migrants in the UK in particular have been victims of discrimination since the early 2000s. In their study of Hungarians and Romanians in Bristol, the authors find that such people deny they have experienced discrimination, instead embracing meritocratic values of a higher social class than their own and emphasising their higher racial status as being White Europeans. Fox et al. explain this strategy is employed to "reposition themselves more favourably in Britain's racialised status hierarchies" (2015, p.730). In addition to this picture, YouGov (2017) finds that only 18% of the general UK public in March 2017 thought that Romanians made positive contribution to the UK, compared to an earlier

finding of 15% in 2015; in 2017 38% thought they made a negative contribution to the UK, compared with 46% who thought so in 2015. This data is quite different for other migrant groups such as Germans and North Americans in the UK (YouGov, 2017).

In her study of Serbian Londoners, Mavra notes that some of her participants reported they were discriminated against because they were grouped into the generic ‘Eastern European’ category, and because of their Slavic accent some thought they were Polish while they were talking on the phone in the street (2013, p.29). This resonates with my experience at a business Christmas party in 2015. A gentleman in his 70s approached me with a question if I was a Pole or Romanian because of my accent. He then continued to complain about how the London underground got very crowded because of Eastern European migrants pouring into the city, with concluding remarks that I should go back “because my country needs me”. Several months later, at Wimbledon 2016, I was waiting for a match to start, and an older couple from continental Montenegro were sitting next to me. They later said they had immigrated to Britain in the 1980s, but despite having migration histories themselves, they did not look at me favourably when I said I was not just in London for a short visit. In fact, they followed up with a comment that I might have to leave the country.

In early July 2016, shortly after the EU referendum result, I had a similar experience at Gatwick airport. I was chatting with an English couple, both in their 60s, who were queuing behind me for the check-in. He was a retired banker from the City of London. We had a very pleasant casual conversation about travelling until they realised I *actually* lived in London and was going to my hometown only for a short summer holiday and would be *back* afterwards. Out of the blue, they changed their tone and started interrogating me about what I was doing in London, albeit in a polite manner. This experience of constantly being questioned about the *purpose* of staying in a host country echoes the words of Constable (2014) in relation to temporary migrant workers, in that these people are expected to be only workers and nothing else, thus completely dehumanising the phenomena of migration all together: “But they are not and never can be *only* workers. As in the quip attributed to Swiss writer Max Frisch following the post-World War II guest-worker program in Germany, ‘We asked for workers; we got people’” (Constable, 2014, p.xii).

These experiences made me think about hidden discrimination and prejudice about certain populations that have become more prominent in the wake of Brexit. Even though my research participants have not reported discrimination in relation to Brexit and based on their South-Eastern European origin (rather than specifically Serbian origin), it can still be argued that some participants, particularly more recent arrivals, have been affected. The reasons why they either deny discrimination or do not recognise are potentially multiple. Some of them also voted to Leave the EU, as briefly mentioned in Chapter 5. One of my arguments in this regard, following Bonikowski (2017), is that there are shared repertoires of dispositions towards the nation that transcend national boundaries, which means that a similarly disposed Serbian and British voter have more in common than different members of the British public. Another argument is that this may be understood as a strategy of coping with difference, by reaffirming one's position as insiders into British society (for more on the voting motives and perceptions of Brexit among Serbs in London see Vico, 2019, forthcoming). These strategies often depend on a choice of platform, more specifically the affordances, intended audiences and social norms of digital media platforms, as the next section elaborates.

### **6.3 Enacting and deconstructing identities through social media platforms**

For most of my respondents, being online has become a default position. Most have several different social media platforms installed on their smartphones, which they often use for different types of interactions with different people. A Facebook or Twitter tab would often be opened in a browser on their computer at work or at home. All of this enabled perpetual contact (Katz & Aakhus, 2002) and created an 'always-on' culture (boyd, 2011). As argued in Chapter 3, social surveillance is inherent to social media (Andrejevic, 2004; Marwick, 2012; Tokunaga, 2010). These media are designed for people to both broadcast themselves and look at other people's content. While both traditional and social surveillance have consequently changed behaviour, traditional surveillance is aimed at controlling and influencing other people's behaviour, whereas social surveillance leads to "*self-*

management” (Marwick, 2012, p.381). This behaviour is not new, but the affordances of social media have significantly changed the context, because digital information can be easily searched, retrieved and shared (Marwick, 2012, p.381). As a result, the performances of identities online are more *strategic* (Marwick, 2012). Hence, it can be argued that destigmatisation strategies have been brought about due to both the particular historical and cultural background of my participants and the social surveillance and affordances of social media, which is in line with a socio-technical approach to digital media, and differs in relation to different intended audiences.

Polymedia environments (Madianou & Miller, 2012) have arguably created new possibilities for negotiating identities. As the concept suggests, people shift between a variety of platforms to manage different types of relationships and identities. My findings show that expressions of banal nationalism and banal cosmopolitanism on publicly oriented platforms (such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) are mainly aimed at *correcting national identity*, whereas interactions on privately oriented platforms (such as WhatsApp, Viber, Facebook Messenger and Facetime) often *reproduce and reinforce their national identity* (see Figure 5.5). Hence, banal expressions of nationalism and cosmopolitanism are present on both publicly and privately oriented platform, but with different intensions and consequences. Moreover, ‘correcting national identity’ may have different meanings for the participants who adopt a counter-stigmatisation strategy and stigma recognition strategy. A counter-stigmatisation strategy typically tries to present Serbian identity as superior, whereas a stigma recognition strategy strives to present it as cosmopolitan. While expressions of banal cosmopolitanism are most common among the third wave and some participants in the second wave, expressions of banal nationalism are common across all three waves. This chapter only considers manifestations of banal nationalism and banal cosmopolitanism on publicly oriented platforms, whereas Chapter 8 examines more closely the identity performances on privately oriented platforms. Chapter 7 shows how my participants navigate polymedia environments, focusing on the nuances between each platform such as Instagram and Facebook, or WhatsApp and Viber. Hence, communication practices and identity performances described by the lower image in Figure 14 will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

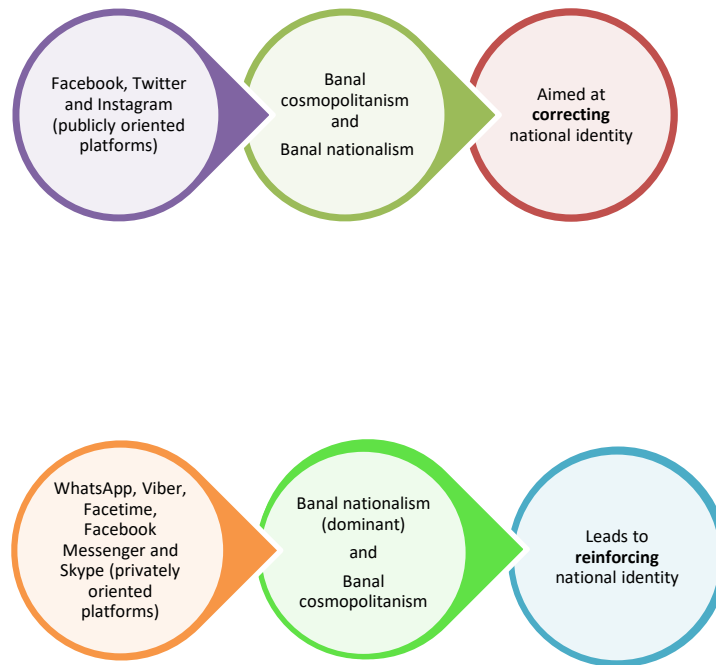


Figure 14: Enacting and deconstructing identities in polymedia environments.

### 6.3.1 Banal cosmopolitanism

Banal cosmopolitanism is often embraced by third wave and, to some extent, second wave participants, especially on publicly-oriented platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, as a strategy of redefining their national identity. These expressions often evoke a sense of ordinariness or distinction (Bourdieu, 1984). Other ethnographic studies have shown that this is a strategy of blending in. Daniel Miller and Sophie Woodward (2011) show how jeans, a global garment, are appropriated differently in different local contexts to blend in and to denote ordinariness. Saskia Witteborn’s (2014) study on forced migrants and refugees in Germany shows that cosmopolitanism is often used as a tactic among this group to blend in and consequently enhance their self-esteem as a means of coping with grim realities of lives in camps. While Serbian Londoners may be driven by the same desire to assimilate, their underlying motives may not entirely be the same. As discussed in Chapter 5, most of my participants do not live in precarious conditions – in fact, some have

quite comfortable lifestyles. I argue that while performances of cosmopolitanism indeed represent, in many cases, a tactic, in the context of Serbian Londoners it is employed as a *destigmatisation strategy* – to rehabilitate Serbian identity and remove perceived stigma. In this sense, I use the terms ‘strategy’ and ‘tactics’ as synonyms to refer to what de Certeau (1984) means by ‘tactics’, which people who lack power employ to subvert the dominant structure of power and system of representation. Goffman’s analysis of stigma may reveal why Serbian Londoners in particular deploy cosmopolitanism as their strategy.



**Figure 15: Banal cosmopolitanism in Instagram post of a third wave participant.**

The stigmatised individual can also attempt to correct his condition indirectly by *devoting much private effort to the mastery of areas of activity ordinarily felt to be closed* on incidental and physical ground to one with his shortcoming. [...] Finally, the person with a shameful differentness can... attempt to employ an *unconventional interpretation of the character of his social identity*.

(Goffman, 1963, pp.20-21, emphasis added)

Given that Serbian national identity, as shown earlier in the chapter, has been perceived as insular and at odds with cosmopolitan values, embracing cosmopolitanism can then be interpreted as employing ‘an unconventional interpretation’ of the character of their identity. However, in order to fully understand why these strategies take place we also need to take into account diasporic context and the affordances of social media, acknowledging that “the Internet positions people on the global stage in relation to the world and themselves” (see Miller & Slater, 2000, p.10). These various media provide a platform on which they can enact their identities in relation to others (Miller, 2011, p.3). These media



Figure 16: Chinese karaoke night. Instagram story post by a third wave participant.

facilitate an *encounter* between the *stigmatised* and the *stigmatiser* that is crucial for the actual *realisation of stigma* (Goffman, 1963, p.24). Likewise, to feel shame presupposes a witness, that is, a gaze, as Sartre notes, “I am ashamed of myself as I appear to the Other” (1996, p.222, quoted in Ahmed, 2004, pp.104-105). The word ‘shame’ originates from an Indo-European verb ‘to cover’, but in fact it assumes “the failure of cover” (Ahmed, 2004, p.104). This is particularly relevant for the case of Serbia, because, as Spasic and Petrovic argue, like “many other peripheral European nations, the way Others see Serbs influences quite strongly the way they see themselves”, particularly the powerful West (2013, p.224; see also Volcic, 2005).



Figure 17: Banal cosmopolitanism in Facebook post of a third wave participants.

As with Tamara and Marina (both third wave), mentioned in Chapter 5, on one occasion when I met Angela (31, third wave) in late August 2016 for a visit to the National Gallery and lunch, she told me she did not “really connect” with Serbian people, except for just two Serbian friends. “I left long time ago and our experiences are very

different,” she explained. At her birthday party, there was an international crowd, mainly people she knew through work or Masters studies in London, and friends of friends. One of the most common expressions of banal cosmopolitanism among these participants included emphasising their international circles of friends, as Figures 15 and 16 illustrate. In Figure 15, Angela posted a picture on Instagram after having Sunday lunch with friends who left a

tip in pounds sterling, Euros and US dollars, symbolising the regions and countries they came from. Angela's posts on Instagram and Facebook are mainly about the places she visits, time out with her work colleagues and some personal updates (see Figure 17). Gordy also observes that people who felt shame often sought refuge in various aspects of individuality, such as by expressing the same interest in music as someone from a different ethnic background, for instance (2013, p.44).



**Figure 18: Showing distinction. Instagram post of a third wave participant.**

Some of the manifestations of banal cosmopolitanism such as posts of lavish lifestyles are actually the performance of social status – aimed at showing distinction (Bourdieu, 1984). Tamara's (34, third wave) Instagram story of joining her friends at Chinese karaoke night at Plum Valley restaurant in London shows a willingness to engage with other cultures (Hannerz, 2004), at the same time 'checking-in' at an upmarket Cantonese restaurant signals social status (see Figure 16). Figure 18 shows an Instagram post of a third wave participant enjoying leisure time in The House of St. Barnabas, a private members club in Soho, central London. Kristina (30, second wave) often posts photos of her luxurious holidays, some sophisticated places and occasions, such as from Henley Regatta (see Figure 19). Henley Royal Regatta also symbolises class status in British society. Claiming higher class status in relation to British society seems to be a dominant tactic in coping with difference, as observed in Fox et al.'s (2015) study.

Some other banal expressions of cosmopolitanism are closely related to accentuated professional identities among the participants. When I asked Angela what news



**Figure 19: Henley Regatta. Instagram post of a second wave participant.**



she followed, she replied mainly business news on technology, design, related to her career:

So I think having partial ownership of a culture *let you pick and choose things*, I don't need a 100% experience, right. I just need things that touch my life, that are now part of me, so political stuff usually falls to the bottom of the list because you are there temporarily, you don't need to care about who is in office and who is not and stole funds or didn't, you know...

(Angela, 33, third wave)

Ana (26, third wave) explains that her Instagram feed reflects her professional interests; because she works in marketing she tends to extensively post about hip and upmarket places in London. She says that in this way she creates an informal portfolio. Hence, in some contexts, banal expressions of cosmopolitanism do not necessarily represent a strategy and can be rather interpreted by these participants' professional identities and identity as Londoners – a desire to blend in with the city and its culture. In this sense, Robins and Aksoy's (2000) argument that diasporic identity is sometimes overstated may apply. Also, banal cosmopolitanism should be distinguished from 'being globalised', that is the "neoliberal celebration of difference" (Georgiou, 2013, p.6) that actually shows very little understanding of other cultures. Although boundaries between the two may sometimes become blurred, there is one key distinguishing criterion, as the next section explains. Banal cosmopolitanism can also be intertwined with banal nationalism, creating what I term as 'globalised difference', further elaborated in the next section.

### **6.3.2 Between globalised difference and being globalised**

The emergence of Third Serbia is linked to identity practices that I term *globalised difference*, most common among third wave and to some extent second wave participants, particularly those who also express banal cosmopolitanism. *Globalised difference* is a new identity politics that refers to everyday, subtle and spontaneous practices that aim to assert difference to which are assigned positive attributes by stating that one is at the same time different and belongs to the world. Therefore difference is constructed as exotic and

desirable. The emphasis on distinctiveness is a strategy of changing the dominant meanings and subverting dominant systems of representation and structures of power (Young, 2011 [1990], pp.159-160). This particular emphasis on exoticism can be understood as a response to the prevailing representation of the Balkans as totally deprived from exoticism (Todorova, 1997, p.17), as earlier mentioned. ‘Globalised difference’ also derives from the understanding that everyone is just *as specific as* anyone else, as explained in Chapter 2. This means that the norms and standards that may appear as universal and neutral are actually specific and created by the dominant group to serve their interests (see Young, 2011 [1990], pp.164-171).

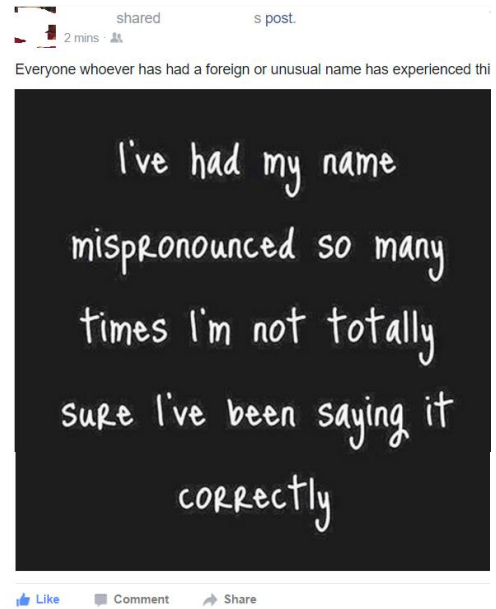


Figure 20: Meme shared by a participant on Facebook.



Figure 21: Facebook post by a second wave participant.

*Globalised difference* emerges thanks to multicultural urban settings, such as London, where people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds live cheek by jowl, but it is also enabled by social surveillance on social media. It differs from Young’s (2011 [1990]) concept of *the politics of difference* and Spivak’s (1987) concept of *strategic essentialism* in four

main aspects. First, *globalised difference* does not necessarily come from oppression or discrimination, it can merely be driven by an awareness that one does not entirely fit the standards of the dominant group, such as by foreign sounding names, accents, or their parents’ origins and customs, as a meme shared on Facebook by Tara (40, first wave) shows (see Figure 20). Helena (50, second wave), for example, married to an Italian, said her London-born daughter identified as a Serbian-Italian, even though she had never been

to Serbia and that she did not speak Serbian or Italian, with a passing remark: “she probably just wants to be different”. In a similar vein, Tamara (33, third wave) told her friends she did not care much about her national identity in Serbia, but she started feeling proud of it when she moved abroad. This is not particular to Serbian Londoners: other studies of media, migration and identities also demonstrate that migrants “often develop a stronger attachment to their nation of origin than they had prior to migration” (Fujits, 2016, p.3; see also Drakulic et al., 2016, p.218).

Serbian born in Austria, raised in Moscow, living in London. ❤️  
family, friends, work, travel, fashion, music

Figure 22: ‘Globalised difference’ expressed in Instagram biography by a third wave participant.

London | 🇷🇺 | Lawyer  
Followed by



Figure 23: ‘Globalised difference’ expressed in Instagram biography by a second wave participant.

Importantly, participants who express *globalised difference* do not try to present themselves as belonging to a subculture. Instead they present themselves as global, as they belong to the world. This is often expressed in the common saying among Serbs ‘*Svetski, a naš*’, meaning “Global, but ours”, as Natalia’s (45, second wave) Facebook post demonstrates (Figure 21). This is

often evident in juxtaposing the national identity to other identities – such as professional, or to the experience of serial migration or tastes and interests, such as in music and fashion. As mentioned in the previous section on banal cosmopolitanism, Ana’s Instagram feed can be interpreted as mainly reflecting her professional identity – she explains that she posts extensively about hip and lavish places to dine out because she works in marketing – but also, her short biography on Instagram, describes her as a Serbian born in Austria, raised in Moscow and living in London, alongside a few interests (Figure 22). By this, she shows that one can have a pronounced national identity and be a cosmopolitan with a pronounced professional identity at the same time. Likewise, Kristina (30, second wave) wrote in her Instagram biography that she was Serbian, marked with the national flag, a Londoner and a lawyer, making a statement that one can be Serbian and global (Figure 23). This juxtaposition is also achieved by emphasising nationality (symbolised by the emoji of the Serbian national flag) in pictures of holidays abroad (symbolised by the emoji of the

Spanish national flag), as Figure 24 shows, thus also claiming one's status in the world. These manifestations are arguably aimed at changing the negative meanings of Serbian identity.

Third, Young's (2011 [1990]) politics of difference is mainly brought about through social movements, whereas *globalised difference* represents everyday, spontaneous and subtle forms of identity politics. Finally, at the heart of the politics of difference and strategic essentialism is the call to create separate organisations that would exclude non-members (Young, 2011 [1990]; Spivak, 1987). This is what Ulrich Beck (2002) referred to as "enemies of cosmopolitan society", as mentioned in Chapter 2.

*Globalised difference* is opposite to the assimilation strategy that assumes "coming into the game after it is already begun", by "ignoring the group specificities of the privileged enables norms of the privileged to appear as normal, neutral and universal" (Young, 2011 [1990], pp.164-165). Consequently "this denigration of groups that deviate from an allegedly neutral standard often produces an *internalised devaluation by members of those groups themselves*" (Young, 2011 [1990], pp.164-165, emphasis added). For instance, Andrei (23, first wave, UK-born) notes his content with having an English accent so that people cannot distinguish him from the rest of the British. 'Being globalised', as opposed to 'globalised difference', often assumes this assimilationist approach. Most third wave participants tend to constantly shift between *globalised difference* and *being globalised* discourses, mainly based on their different intended audiences on social media.

By being globalised I refer to interconnectedness and awareness of different cultures, but with no or little understanding of others and/or willingness to engage, as key prerequisites of cosmopolitanism (Hannerz, 2004). During one of my encounters with Angela (31, third wave), we met for brunch in Portobello Road at Notting Hill, and while talking about the food, she told me that, having lived in several different countries, her mother would always mix different cuisines and would experiment with flavours from different regions. Then she condemned a British family she met in Turkey who "would only have British dishes and do British stuff. I really can't stand that attitude," she said. Even though this stance was

intended to show open-mindedness and appreciation of diversity, it failed to do so. What it shows is rather the “*neoliberal celebration of difference* reduced to ‘ethnic cuisines’ and urban fashion” (Georgiou, 2013, p.6; emphasis added) and which seeks to commodify difference in order to benefit from it (see Georgiou, 2013, p.145). In an interview with Werbner, Hall notes, “the word [cosmopolitan] sometimes... invokes a kind of cultureless, rootless image of a person who is free-floating, sampling all the cultures, you know, like my global entrepreneurs in the first-class waiting room of some airport, who loves Japanese cooking, a bit Indian cooking here, French cuisine there”, but he concludes, “It is not possible to be a cosmopolitan without a rootedness somewhere” (2008, p.353). However, in a different context, Angela expressed ‘globalised difference’, as the following quote illustrates:

I felt at home everywhere I lived. I went to the States in May for a few days for a friend’s wedding and I thought ‘this was my home, I don’t want to go back to London, I need to be here for a while’. Same thing when I set foot in Belgrade, the city I have been coming back to my whole life, it is immediately... you know... I don’t have a problem, it’s like ‘let’s go to a kafana and have some proper Serbian food for lunch’. I change depending on people and situation I am in. When I was in the US in May I found myself switching back to my American speaking so quickly, because the way I speak and sound has changed since I moved to the UK, but as soon as I get there it’s done.

(Angela, 31, third wave)

This quote not only shows her global identity – that she can comfortably call several different places home – but also draws attention to her Serbian identity, which is yet again juxtaposed to all different experiences that are not at odds. It can be argued that globalised difference is normatively ambivalent. On one hand, it is an expression of rebellion and a source of empowerment, but in some contexts it also seems to share the neoliberal foundation of ‘being globalised’ which aims to commodify difference. Globalised difference is perhaps most vigorously expressed on social media platforms, particularly publicly oriented ones, through the figure of Serbian tennis player Novak Djokovic.

Djokovic has become the most prominent symbol of national pride and ‘Third’ Serbia among my participants, the one that bridges the two antipodes – nationalistic and civic Serbia – as a Serbian patriot and a member of the world jet-set (Spasic & Petrovic, 2013; Petrovic-Trifunovic & Spasic, 2014; Spasic, 2017, p.38). Marina (26, third wave) emphasised on one occasion how “proud” she was of Djokovic, noting “he is showing the better face of Serbia” and thereby helping to change negative perceptions of Serbian national identity “after all negative influences and events from the recent past.” He is a common theme for all three waves. The image of Djokovic is both an expression of globalised difference and banal nationalism – it is a matter of framing and will be discussed further in the subsequent section on banal nationalism.

### 6.3.3 Banal nationalism

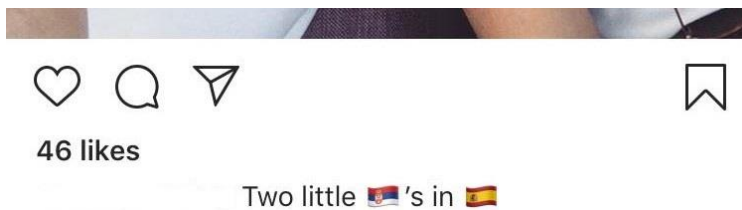


Figure 25: ‘Globalised difference’ in an Instagram post by a second wave participant.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Ivana Spasic (2017) argues that the concept of banal nationalism is not applicable to the Serbian context. She posits that due to Serbia’s turbulent

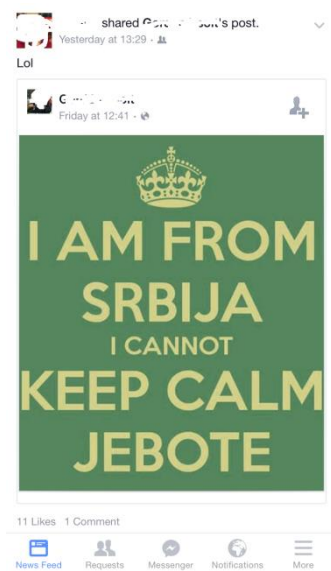


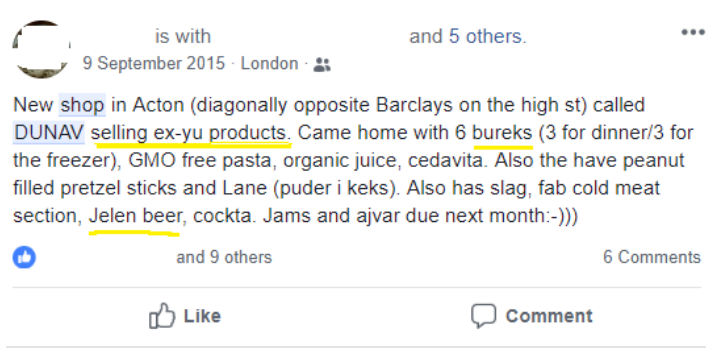
Figure 24: Banal nationalism in Facebook post by a first wave participant.

recent history and the position of the semi-periphery, Serbian national identity is deeply divisive and contested, which is why expressions of nationalism can hardly be unnoticed and unconscious, for example this is why the national flag cannot hang limply on public buildings (cf. Billig, 1995). However, my findings show that the concept is relevant for the study of Serbian Londoners and challenges the ‘unnoticed’ and ‘subconscious’ premise of banal nationalism. While Spasic rightly points out historical discontinuities and a lack of consensus about Serbian identity and the flag, her critique has several limitations.





**Figure 26: Dunav shop Facebook page liked by first and second wave participants.**



**Figure 27: Banal nationalism in a Facebook post by a first wave participant.**



**Figure 28: Banal nationalism in a Twitter post by a third wave participant.**

First, she devotes considerable attention to the flag which is only one manifestation of banal nationalism, as she also acknowledges. It is not enough to look at one single aspect and draw such a broad conclusion. My findings show that Serbian Londoners draw on a variety of national symbols in their everyday communication practices, such as food, knowledge of

popular culture, history, landscapes and mentality, language and alphabet (whether it is Serbian or English, Latin or Cyrillic), or given names (see Wallem, 2017). Tara shared a meme (Figure 25) about Serbian mentality set against a backdrop of British symbols, thus reversing

the meanings to emphasise the contrast. She also sent me an invitation on Facebook to like the page for ‘Dunav shop’, a grocery store in Ealing where one can buy products from Serbia and the former Yugoslavia (Figures 27 and 28). Food is an especially prominent example. It features in all kinds of contexts and across social media, and, importantly, it is a common theme for all three waves. Angela talked with me about her experience when she came back to Europe from the US where she





**Figure 29: ‘Sarma’ Facebook by a first wave participant.**



**Figure 30: ‘Sarma’ Instagram post by a second wave participant.**

did her BA degree, observing: “This biscuit<sup>21</sup> is so simple but it was in a way like *coming back*, rediscovering all those things I knew but forgot because we lived in America”. When Ana (25, third wave) tweeted that she was annoyed that her cookie dipped into a cup of coffee, she replied to my enquiry by saying it was Plazma – the most famous and loved brand among Serbian food products. This is also an effective example of how, through an act of scalable sociality created within a single platform (see Miller et al., 2016; Miller, 2016), one message that was quite ordinary when addressed to a wide audience on a platform (Twitter) commonly used among the third wave for expressing banal cosmopolitanism can suddenly shift to an expression of banal nationalism when addressed to one specific person (in this instance me) who is assumed to share these references to national culture and cuisine (Figure 29). Scalable sociality refers to efforts of social media users to differentiate their audiences to control their level of privacy and manage their self-presentation online. To this end, these users will either employ different platforms for socialising with different people, or create content within one single platform that is unintelligible to everyone except the person or the group the message was intended for (Miller et al., 2016; Miller, 2016).

*Sarma*, cabbage rolls filled with minced meat and rice, a Serbian dish with Turkish origins, is an especially dominant emblem of national identity (Figures 30 and 31).

<sup>21</sup> She did not specify which biscuit exactly, but referred to a European brand of biscuits that could not be found in the United States.

For example, when I had a follow up discussion with Marko (38, UK-born, first wave) in early 2017, he told me that he was going to visit his parents in an English town for the



Figure 31: Slava celebration, Facebook post by a first wave participant.

weekend and highlighted that he was going to have *sarma* for lunch, with clear excitement on his face. The discourses on food are often closely related to the discourses on mentality among my participants, as Figure 31 shows. In her Facebook status, Tara posted a picture of a Pret a Manger salad, writing that the size does not meet Serbian standards, alluding to the food culture in Serbia.

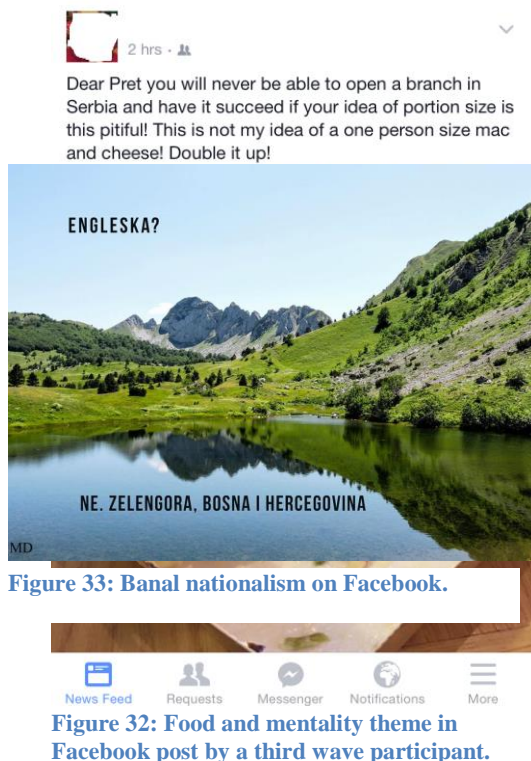


Figure 33: Banal nationalism on Facebook.

Figure 32: Food and mentality theme in Facebook post by a third wave participant.

Other manifestations of banal nationalism, particularly among the first and second wave, are represented in their Facebook and Twitter posts aimed at informing their foreign friends and followers about Serbia’s landscapes and tradition (Figures 31-33). This is similar to Trinidadians’ practices on Facebook, who, according to Miller (2010) also aim to educate people around the world about their culture and country, but also to his earlier study with Slater (2000) of how Trinidadians use the Internet. The authors showed that their participants often used chatrooms to change misconceptions about Trinidad. Another dominant strategy among the first wave and some participants within the second wave, ‘urban youth’, is to draw on historically close ties between the British royal family and the former Serbian royal family, as well as the close relationship between the Serbs and the British in WWI – as seen in the role of Scottish doctors and nurses and soldiers (Figures 35-37), as noted in Chapter 5. Figures 35 and 37 also show re-shares – and all of them are from my participants from the first and second wave. By contrast, the participants who adopt counter-stigmatisation strategy read this story in oppositional code (cf. Hall, 2003)

and draw on it not as an example of Serbia and Britain as World Wars allies, but as a misrepresentation of history by the British that suits British interests (Figure 38).

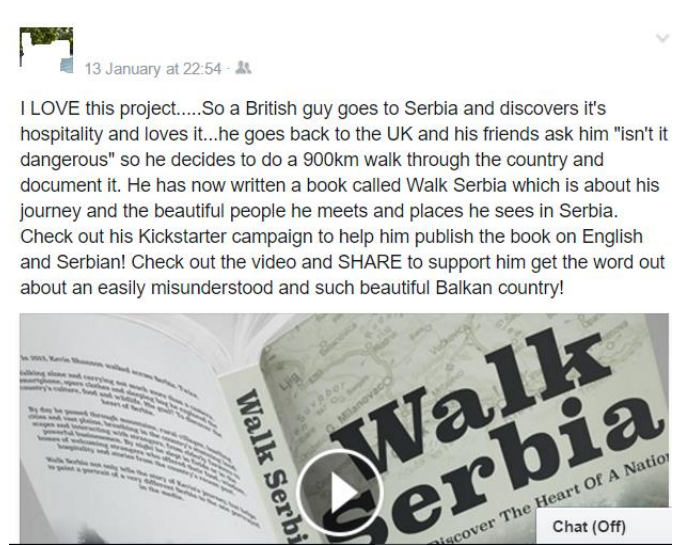


Figure 34: Banal nationalism on Facebook of a second wave participant.

“carefully watched by the rest of the world and by its own population. Upholding credibility requires continuous effort because the state must live up to the highest moral standards and even outperform the ‘normals,’ convincing them that they are ‘better-than-normal’” (2014, p.160). This demonstrates “the transformative potential” of the destigmatisation strategies (2014, p.160).



Figure 35: Banal nationalism on Facebook.

The flag that Spasic refers to as controversial, as discussed in Chapter 2, did not turn out to be a matter of dispute among my participants. It can also be argued that the flag is not contested as much for its features, as Spasic asserts, as for its nationalist connotations. As Adler-Nissen points out, given that Germany was stigmatised after WWII and then adopted a strategy of recognition to cope with the stigma, its leaders were

Nevertheless, given the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Spasic rightly emphasises geographical ambiguities and asks: “where does the homeland begin and end?” (2017, p.41). Alexander’s family went to the US when the war started, and he grew up there. His family was Yugoslav before the war and then

“suddenly you had to choose sides,” he explained:

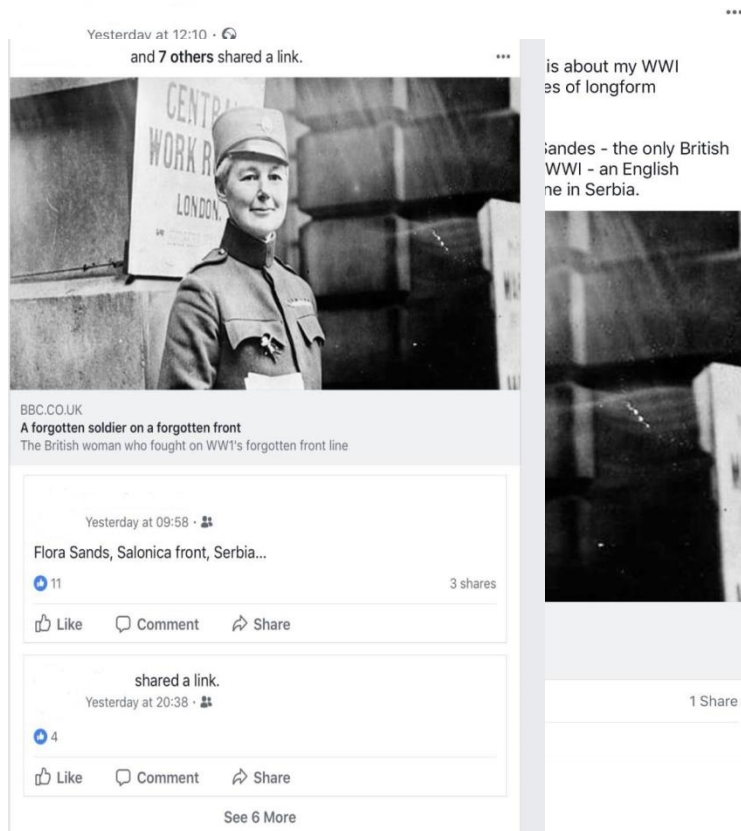


Figure 37: Banal nationalism on Facebook.

My parents never really raised me to be a Serb [accented] specifically. It was basically once everything happened, no one anymore said they were from Yugoslavia, no one associated themselves as Yugoslav anymore [accented]. So you kind of have to pick one. You just kind of do it. I would spend summer in some areas of Croatia. Nobody there says I am both Serbian and Croatian when you first talk to them. But then most people

when you start talking to them you realize they are mixed of some kind. I think the simple answer to your question is *because you have to pick one, you simply pick one that is most logical*. But in my case I don't consider any more inclusive of the others because there is a part of my family that came from Croatia many, many, many centuries ago. My parents married there I took my first steps there. So that place is very close to me.

(Alexander, 33, third wave)

Finally, although Spasic does recognise the prominent and powerful image of Novak Djokovic in national consciousness, she dismisses this as a manifestation of banal nationalism and argues that this is in fact an example of Skey's (2011) concept of *ecstatic nationalism* (2017, p.39). Given that Djokovic's tennis matches are media events – “peaks” in time, as Billig (1996) would put it – they stand out from the mundane and banal. Spasic further claims that “beyond such high visibility occasions he does not trigger strong national(ist) passions all the time” (2017, p.44). In contrast, my findings demonstrate that fascination with Djokovic persist and transcend into the domain of the everyday through



**Figure 38: Second wave participant writes in his post: “It is VERY important not to let the British to write the history. ... Miserable, narcissistic, hypocritical, mean, false...”**

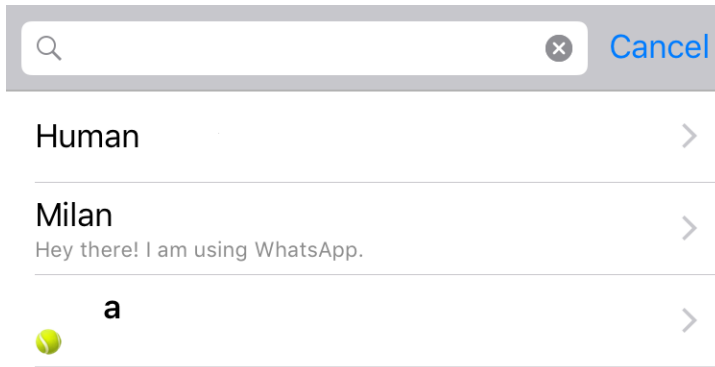


Figure 39: Banal nationalism in WhatsApp status by a first wave participant.



Figure 40: A third wave participant wrote “Well done, girls” with an emoji of the Serbian national flag in her Instagram story to show her excitement after Serbian volleyball women’s team won world championship in 2018.

various creative forms of rituals and representations. For example, Diana (25, first wave, UK-born) keeps a tennis ball on her WhatsApp status (see Figure 39) that clearly connotes her fascination with Novak Djokovic (and her support for him).

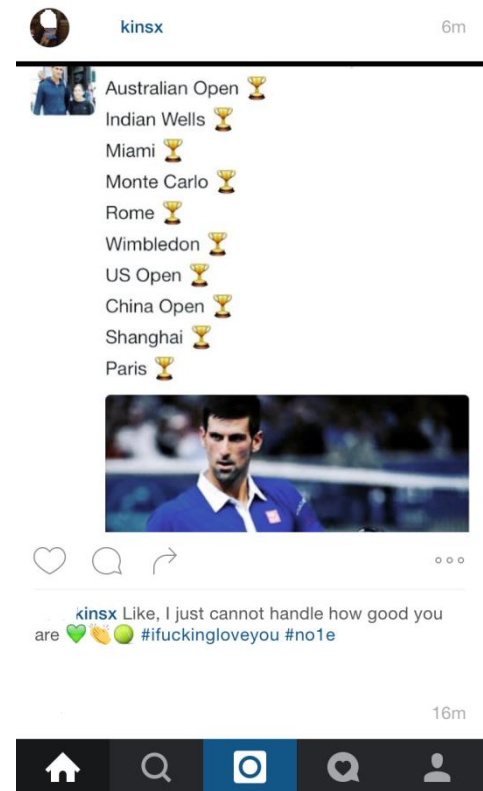
Likewise, Boris (50, second

wave) posted a photo on Facebook of his daughter in front of a plane of Air Serbia named ‘Novak’ after the tennis player. These examples are not mere expressions of fandom, because Djokovic is not just one of the world’s best tennis players, he is also a Serbian player and one who often emphasises his Serbian identity as well as his Orthodox Christian identity. This is seen in many of his public appearances, also in the cross pendant he wears around his neck during each tennis match, and he always crosses himself after every win. Marina’s (26, third wave) comment and Amelia’s Instagram post, as already mentioned, explicitly show that they perceive Djokovic as a source of ‘national pride’. As Spasic points out, “in the Serbian media and public opinion, Djokovic

is framed primarily as ‘ours’ rather than his own... he is felt to be a sort of ‘delegate’ of the collective” (2017, p.38). He is often perceived in the public discourse in Serbia as “the man who made it possible to say with pride where they are from” (Spasic & Petrovic, 2013, p.21).

As argued in Chapter 2 and shown in this chapter, banal does not necessarily mean unnoticed even though this was one of the main attributes of banal nationalism in its original meaning devised by Billig (1996). As several empirical studies have demonstrated,

these ordinary and banal practices of national identity are often conscious and sometimes even a matter of strategic attempts to cope with difference (Wallem, 2017; Goode, 2017). It can be argued that tournaments are examples of ecstatic nationalism, but, as Billig acknowledges, “no times – indeed no places – can be called wholly *ordinary*” (1995, p.110). There are many sporting occasions throughout a year where Serbian national sports teams win medals, such as in volleyball, long jump, water polo and basketball, which makes it harder to distinguish a ‘perfectly’ ordinary day. Most of my participants share their excitement and support of their national team through social media platforms, as Figures 40 and 41 demonstrate. In this regard, Madianou argues that the case of an airspace incident between Greece and Turkey in her study was rather routine because it takes place regularly (2007, p.99). Likewise, Yumul and Ozkirimli also acknowledge that a week before the day they selected for analysis there were news reports concerning intensified tensions in Turkish international relations due to allegations that Greek Cypriots would buy missiles from Russia (2000, p.801). Both examples illustrate what Madianou succinctly explains: “elements of banal and overt nationalism are part of the same continuum...” (2007, p.101-102).



**Figure 41: Novak Djokovic theme. Banal Nationalism in Instagram post by a first wave participant.**

## 6.4. Conclusion: Legitimizing or challenging the status quo?

My findings have demonstrated that most participants perceive Serbian identity to be stigmatised. Hence, these participants deploy different strategies to cope with this perceived stigma. By drawing on Goffman’s (1963) understanding of stigma and Adler-Nissen’s (2014) theory of stigma management in international relations, I have identified two main strategies among my participants: stigma recognition and counter-stigmatisation. Stigma



recognition can be associated with the so-called ‘Other’ Serbia, whereas counter-stigmatisation can be related to ‘First’ Serbia. I have also identified the emergence of ‘Third’ Serbia discourse as an attempt to reconcile the national and cosmopolitan, and it is also predicated on stigma recognition strategy.

Digital media enable the encounter between the stigmatised and “the normal” (Goffman, 1963), which allows *materialisation of stigma*. Thus, social surveillance on social media plays a vital role in this process. Polymedia environments also make possible and shape destigmatisation strategies because they provide a menu of *communicative opportunities* for people to *enact identities* (Madianou & Miller, 2012). Different platforms have different intended audiences, affordances and social norms, therefore destigmatisation strategies depend on choice of platform. My participants perform banal cosmopolitanism and banal nationalism on publicly oriented platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, aimed at *correcting national identity*; whereas they predominantly perform banal nationalism and occasionally banal cosmopolitanism on privately oriented platforms, such as Viber and WhatsApp, which leads to *reproducing and reinforcing national identity*. This chapter has discussed banal expressions of nationalism and cosmopolitanism on publicly oriented platforms and demonstrated various practices that these participants engage in, aimed at redefining what it means to be Serbian.

These strategies differ across different waves. Banal cosmopolitanism is an expression of stigma recognition strategy mainly adopted by third wave and some second wave participants as a means of rehabilitating their national identities. Banal nationalism is an expression of both stigma recognition and counter-stigmatisation strategies, but there is a different framing. The former mainly aims to inform their foreign friends about food, landscape, history and popular culture, and show pride in the achievements of Serbian sports persons and teams, whereas the latter aims to ridicule or discredit the West and show Serbian identity as superior. Banal nationalism is common for all three waves, but particularly dominant among the first and second wave. I have also identified a new identity politics, that I have termed ‘globalised difference’, especially evident among third wave and to some extent second wave participants, that is succinctly captured in the

common saying among the Serbs, “Global, but ours”. Novak Djokovic is as an example of this identity politics and the emergent phenomenon of ‘Third’ Serbia – that bridges the gap between the national and cosmopolitan.

Most studies on migration and banal nationalism have argued that these various strategies merely serve to maintain the status quo or legitimise the existing structure of power. Witterborn (2014) concludes that none of the tactics refugees in German camps use, as mentioned above, actually led to structural changes of the status quo. Her conclusion is in line with the argument by Fox et al. (2015) that various strategies employed by migrants to cope with prejudice and discrimination ultimately legitimise this discrimination. In contrast, and by challenging Billig’s (1995) and Skey’s (2011) argument that the everyday is only a realm where identities are maintained and reproduced, I argue that these ordinary everyday strategies may eventually transform the system from within, without leaving it, as de Certeau (1984) posits. Following de Certeau, Campbell argues that various tactics and strategies that people employ in their everyday life may actually “subtly but surely modify the structures of domination themselves” (1990, p.227). Hence, the everyday is also a realm where identities can be repositioned and challenged, not just maintained and perpetuated. Successful strategies in the context of this chapter, I would contend, are banal cosmopolitanism and ‘globalised difference’ – unlike these, counter-stigmatisation strategy is less likely to have a more significant impact; because of the unequal power relations it only appeals to the already-positioned like-minded (a circle of other Serbs) and thereby results in an echo chamber.

The following chapter will consider the nuances between different platforms that have been grouped in this chapter as publicly and privately oriented to obtain a more detailed picture of how Serbian Londoners navigate polymedia environments. This chapter has recognised the importance of intended audiences in the ways in which people use different media and perform their identities. Chapter 7 then considers this issue more closely by distinguishing strong, weak and latent ties and how participants navigate polymedia environment to manage these relationships and ultimately their own identities.

## **Chapter 7: Polymedia Environments of Serbian Londoners: Privately and Publicly Oriented Platforms**

In Chapter 6, I demonstrated that, as a consequence of social surveillance on social media (Andrejevic, 2004; Marwick, 2012; Tokunaga, 2010) and the legacy of the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, the ways in which my participants navigate polymedia environments are often strategic, and I have argued that these strategies often represent destigmatisation strategies. Their strategies depend on intended publics on social media. On this basis, I have distinguished between *publicly oriented platforms*, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and *privately oriented*, such as WhatsApp and Viber, to explain the strategies they are more likely to invite. It has then been shown that strategies on publicly oriented platforms aim to redefine national identity, whereas on privately oriented platforms they often lead to reinforcing national identity. While Chapter 6 only examined identity performances on publicly oriented platforms, this chapter aims to look more closely at how Serbian Londoners navigate polymedia environments, by considering nuances between all different digital media platforms defined as publicly or privately oriented.

This chapter further investigates the role of social surveillance and affordances of social media in the ways in which my participants perform their identities in polymedia environments. In a world of proliferating social media and smartphones, most people use several different digital platforms daily to manage their relationships, as argued in Chapter 3. Each medium is usually used for different purposes, to convey a different message or emotion to different people – taken together these platforms provide a menu of communicative opportunities. In this integrated environment of communicative opportunities, every platform is defined in relation to all the other platforms available (Madianou & Miller, 2012). In this context, even non-participation is meaningful (Madianou & Miller, 2012), as this chapter also addresses.

In the analysis of how my participants navigate polymedia environments, this chapter strives to answer whether, to what extent and in which contexts Anderson's (1992) concept

of long-distance nationalism and Robins and Aksoy's (2002) argument about diasporic media as "an agent of cultural de-mythologisation" may apply to polymedia environments and the context of the everyday lives of Serbian Londoners. The chapter starts with two portraits for each wave to describe polymedia environments of my participants. The chapter then discusses what we learn from them and answers the question of how Serbian Londoners navigate polymedia environments to negotiate their relationships and identities. Finally, the chapter focuses on the roles of Facebook and Viber, because, as has emerged from the fieldwork, these two platforms play particular roles among my participants.

## 7.1 Portraits

### 7.1.1 The First Wave

#### Mark

##### *An ordinary day*

Radio alarm is on. Switch that off. Put the kettle on first. *TV* goes on. *BBC One Breakfast*, just to see what happens, to see headlines. Then, I take a shower. Turn off the TV, go to work. I turn my *phone* off silent. On my bus to work, I would check *emails* and *WhatsApp* on my phone, to see if Peps and Lily [his brother and sister-in-law] send something, if there is a picture or video of Mat [his nephew]. Then, at work, I check emails again. At 7pm, on a bus home, I check *Instagram*. I use Instagram because I am quite a visual person and interested in design. I follow stuff on football, fashion, glasses... I want to find new glasses and Instagram is a good place to see what styles are coming up... I also follow one or two celebrities – comedians and sportsmen, such as David Beckman. *I guess that is my Facebook equivalent*. I also use *Pinterest*, but only for work. We have a group business account. In the evenings, I would usually put the TV on and use *LinkedIn* on my *iPad*. *It is my corporate Facebook*. I also use iPad for browsing some websites, such as the BBC.

This vignette of Mark's ordinary day illustrates several important points that this chapter addresses. First, it shows – as argued in Chapter 3, drawing on the domestication approach to technology (Silverstone et al., 1992; Silverstone, 1994; Silverstone & Haddon, 1996; Spigel, 1992) – how different social and mobile media have become deeply ingrained into his everyday life. It further shows how these different media create an integrated environment of communicative opportunities that is polymedia (Madianou & Miller, 2012; Madianou, 2014b). As Mark explains, he uses WhatsApp to talk with his brother and sister-in-law, emails to talk with his friends while at work, Instagram for following mainly updates in design, and LinkedIn for keeping in touch with 'weak ties' from business circles. He says Instagram is his "Facebook equivalent" (or 'lifestyle Facebook') and LinkedIn is his "corporate Facebook". This leads us to the third finding, which shows the prominent role of Facebook that was observed among all participants from all three waves. Only three out of 40 participants do not have a Facebook account. Even in the case of non-adoption or non-participation, as Mark's example shows, Facebook is still talked about without questions being raised, and other platforms are often used as a substitute.

Mark is a 38-year-old second generation (UK-born) British Serb whose parents were royalists and immigrated to the UK shortly after the Second World War as asylum seekers fleeing communism in the former Yugoslavia. The family settled in a town in England. Mark moved to London when he started a university about 20 years ago. As such, he is representative of the first wave. As explained in Chapter 5, most of my participants in this wave are royalists, "young adventure seekers" and the second generation born to a parent or parents from these two groups. Communication practices described in the vignette are identified as common patterns among first-wave participants, but some practices are common for all three waves. As Mark's example highlights, most participants have accentuated professional identities, which means many would follow profiles and pages based on their professional interests. His Instagram following greatly reflects his professional identity, such as his interest in design. As he was showing me his Instagram feed, I asked him who he followed on Instagram and whether he was following his brother (who he mentions in the vignette):

My brother is not on here [on Instagram]. *He is on Facebook*, but he doesn't really use it. So everybody contacts his wife, to contact him through Facebook. She is also not on Instagram, but her brother is. *I don't want to join Facebook*, it is too much hustle. Someone whom you haven't seen for years, because you follow them on Facebook you know everything they are doing. In 2008, everyone was talking about Facebook and everyone at work was asking me 'oh why you are not on Facebook'. But, at work you had to play a political game. If you are a friend [on Facebook] with one of them because you are actually friends, what would other work colleagues think if you do not have them as well?

As this quote further reveals, in polymedia environments non-participation is meaningful (Madianou & Miller, 2012). Mark deliberately chooses not to create a Facebook account to avoid potential conflicts and better manage his relationships with people at work. Similarly, Andrei deleted his Skype account to avoid calls from his grandfather. Instead he uses his brother's Skype to talk with him, which enables Andrei to maintain control over their relationship. This example provides a methodological justification for why it is significant to study non-participation (see Fominaya, 2016; Tufekci, 2014), as well as to study media as environments rather than discrete platforms (Madianou & Miller, 2012). Mark belongs to only a tiny minority of 'non-Facebook' users. However, these participants are not a homogenous group (Pinch & Bijker, 1984, p.414). Mark's reasons are somewhat different from the other two participants who avoid Facebook. Deyan (42, second wave) does not have a Facebook account because he wants to avoid what he perceives to be the trivial details that people share about their daily lives on Facebook. Filip (37, third wave), meanwhile, opted out of Facebook because he thinks people use it only for showing off. These three examples also reveal the importance of social norms in the ways in which my participants engage with social media in some contexts, rather than the design, which is why, as argued in Chapter 3, the understanding of affordances of social media should include social norms and users' agency. Finally, Mark's account signals a general trend among all participants that privately oriented platforms such as WhatsApp are primarily used for strong ties, whereas publicly oriented platforms are used mainly for weak ties (Haythornthwaite, 2002), as will be further discussed in the next portrait.

## Tara

### *An ordinary day*

When I wake up, I use my phone. Instantly! [I] Check emails get rid of the junk. Then, *Facebook* and *Life Journal*. TV is a first thing in the morning, *BBC Breakfast*. I mostly watch channels one to five [on a remote controller]: BBC one, two etc. On a bus, I would use *Twitter*. I don't tweet, I just like reading news and cultural things, on *The Guardian*, for example, and some Russian outlets. At night, I use iPad to read full articles, to watch sitcoms and crime dramas on Sky TV, iPlayer and Radio 4 Extra, and [to access] Facebook too. Phone is my main go-to gadget during the day. It is also handy for finding my way around the city through applications such as tube and bus map, or Citymapper.

Facebook is one of the main platforms Tara (40) accesses as soon as she wakes up. As the fieldwork findings reveal, this social networking sites (SNS) plays a big part of her daily life and routine. I was introduced to Tara on Facebook in autumn 2015 through common friends and acquaintances in London. Tara is another second generation (UK-born) Serbian Londoner, born to parents who came to the UK in the years following the Second World War. Her parents first settled in a small English town, before moving to Shepherd's Bush in West London in the 1970s, where she grew up. Tara is one of the most active Facebook users among my participants, and is well connected with other Serbian Londoners from the first and the second wave. She mainly accesses Facebook through her phone and iPad.

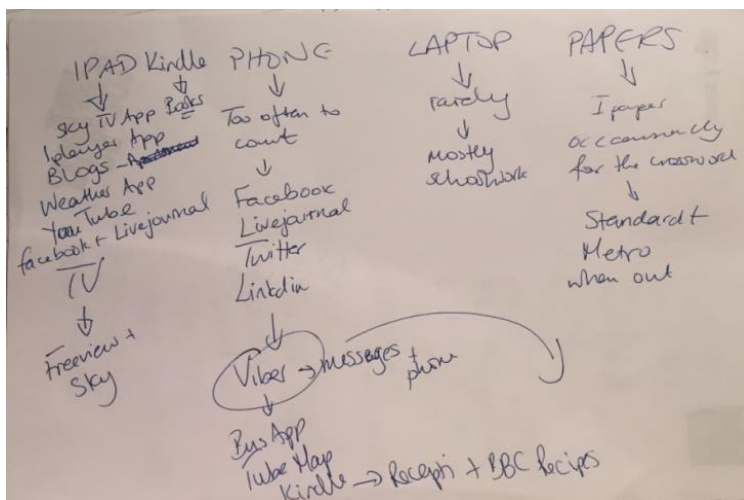


Figure 42: Media map of a first wave participant.

While drawing her media map (Figure 42), she placed Facebook on the top of her media landscape and in an annoyed and hopeless tone she exclaimed that she used her smartphone, including Facebook, “too often to count”. I inquired more about her practices on Facebook:

*I use Facebook a hundred times a day to catch up with friends. I would repost things that interest me because I know it may interest my friends on Facebook, I would also send them on their wall. At Facebook, there are about 50 or 60 friends, the rest are acquaintances, some that I met through Serbian Society because Facebook is a quick way to send a message. A friend of mine, Valentina, is in America, and to see her kids growing up. Monica is a girl I was a bridesmaid to 30 years ago and we reconnected through Facebook a couple of years ago. Even though she lives in London, you don't have time to socialise so much, so this is a way of keeping in touch with those people.*

This quote draws attention to the role of social surveillance (Marwick, 2012) on Facebook in creating layers of neighbourhoods. Looking at what others are up to, including friends and acquaintances from different social contexts, creates a sense of awareness of others without active engagement. As explained in Chapters 4 and 5, there is no one geographically bounded Serbian 'community' in London. My participants are spread all around the city. However, all but three are on Facebook, and most participants in the first wave are likely to have each other as friends on Facebook – the case is similar for the other two waves. In this sense, I argue that Facebook facilitates reimagining diasporic identity through social surveillances that re-establishes to some degree a sense of community, albeit often divided along the lines of the three identified waves, as will be explored more in subsequent sections of this chapter.

Tara's media map also emphasises the prominence of Viber, an instant messaging (IM) application, in her everyday communication practices. In contrast to Mark, she uses Viber instead of WhatsApp. When we met in November 2015, she showed me her Viber group called "Balkan's women", where she is having daily chats with another three Serbian women who live in London – her cousin's wife, her *kuma* (Godmother) and a friend. Two of them started the group to offer each other emotional support when one lost a sibling and to cheer her up, and then the other two joined. Now, they occasionally share memes and jokes, gossip about their husbands and parents, and arrange meetups once a month. Tara



has several other chat groups and close friends and relatives on Viber. As scrolled down her screen, she explained who was who:

*Kum* [Godfather] Stefan, whom I avoid because he keeps talking about nothing; Lana, my *kuma* [Godmother], she sends me some photos of what boys are doing. She lives in London. I use it a lot as a phone to call my cousins, aunt and uncle in Serbia. Especially because my father's been ill, so to update them on treatments. *I communicate with Serbia a lot more, because of Viber.*

Viber is the most popular instant messaging platform in Serbia by far (Ipsos Serbia, 2016). While some younger audiences in Serbia are also likely to use WhatsApp, Viber nevertheless remains the main go-to IM platform. As this quote demonstrates and as will be explained further in what follows, the use of Viber indicates the type of connection my participants have with Serbia – frequent uses of Viber may signal strong ties with people in Serbia. Likewise, the fact that Mark does not have a Viber account but instead uses WhatsApp to talk with his “UK family” or “Comrades”, may reveal his loose bonds with his relatives in Serbia, which he also acknowledged by saying he does not speak with them as often as he probably should. Viber is not exclusive to the first wave participants; in fact, many in the second wave use it regularly or even exclusively among other IM platforms. One of these cases is Norman, who is introduced in the next section.

### **7.1.2. The Second Wave**

#### **Norman**

##### *An ordinary day*

In the morning, I use *Viber, emails and Facebook* on my phone. Every second day, I also check news apps – *Vecernje Novosti* [a Serbian right-leaning daily], *Politika* [the oldest Serbian broadsheet] and *the BBC News*. I don't use that many apps on my phone, because it drains my battery. I wanted to open Instagram account, but I have not yet. It would be useful for my work. Also, some of my friends use it. But because I work from home, I use laptop and PC a lot during the day. So I also check

Facebook and emails several times on my laptop and PC. Then, I would go to *B92* portal [a commercial national TV and radio station in Serbia], *Politika*, *the BBC*, and would watch some series on *YouTube*, such as '*Drzavni posao*'. In the evenings, I occasionally watch some series, films and TV shows on a TV.

Norman is one of most well connected on Facebook among my participants, having many participants from all three waves in his friends list. We met when he added me on Facebook in winter 2016. However, his name had been appearing several times in my news feed on Facebook even before he befriended me, because he had been commenting on posts of our mutual friends, mainly other Serbs in London from all three waves. Participants in the second wave are overall most well connected, but this is often intertwined with professional motives. When he agreed to participate in my research and we arranged an interview, I asked why he had added me and how he knew the people who were our mutual friends on Facebook. He explained it was mainly for professional reasons – because he runs his own business and these people are his target groups. He said he did not necessarily meet all of them in person. He did not usually initiate a meeting, but it happened sometimes that they “bumped into each other at some parties and events”. Nevertheless, he regularly interacts with me and others in conversations about mundane fragments of life, or about politics. For example, when I posted about my experience of London one Friday evening on Facebook, he was the first to comment.

Norman (42) belongs to the second wave of Serbian Londoners, one of the participants I call ‘urban youth’. Born and raised in Belgrade, he came to the UK in 1991 when he was 16 for one school year, but then decided to stay longer. He moved to London in 1993 to do his BA and then pursued an MSc degree. He is married to a Serbian woman and goes to Belgrade every second month to visit his parents, siblings and some close friends. The fieldwork findings show his close links with Serbia, and as the quote above shows, he uses Viber extensively, which validates my argument about the correlation between Viber practices and Serbia. He is also one of the participants who adopted a counter-stigmatisation strategy (see Chapter 6). While he follows *BBC News*, as reported in the quote, he remains highly critical, as seen in Chapter 6. He also follows the right-leaning

daily *Vecernje Novosti* and *B92*, once a critical liberal pro-Western media outlet that has become close to the political parties in power, and since then many leading journalists have left or not had their contracts renewed.

While he uses emails mostly for work, Viber is his main platform for staying in touch with his Serbian friends and family. Emails can occasionally be used among my participants for ‘organisation purposes’ or the purposes of micro-coordinating events or travels. For example, Kristina, who I introduce next, often uses emails to organise travel trips with her family because her father is more likely to see it as she spends long hours at work. WhatsApp is also used for micro-coordination. But unlike emails, it also serves other purposes. Moreover, chat groups, once formed for micro-coordination purposes, are more likely to evolve over time into emotional support-based groups for nurturing relationships (Ling & Lai, 2016, p.835), whereas group emails often cease to exist once they have served their purpose. The multifaceted role of IM platforms, as the following portrait demonstrates, makes them much more important as a site of analysis for how my participants ‘do nation’ through mediated interpersonal communication (the topic is further explored in Chapter 8).

## **Kristina**

### *An ordinary day*

In the morning, when I wake up I go to *WhatsApp*. My mum usually messages me first, just saying ‘good morning, have a nice day’. Then, I go to *Instagram* to catch up with everything. I would go to *Facebook* only if I get notifications. I would have chat with mum and sister while walking [to work]. Also at work, I would get messages from friends on WhatsApp. With friends who live far away, I use it [WhatsApp] to see what they are doing, whereas with people in London I use it to arrange to meet. With one of my best friends who lives in the States I ‘whatsapp’ [she used it as a verb] and ‘*facetime*’ constantly. Initially, it started with Facebook. That is why I have Facebook, even though I don’t like it much – for all my foreign friends, to see what they are doing, but you are not in touch every day. And *Twitter*, I stopped using it [actively] two or three years ago. Now, I use it if I want to see

what is in the news because it is updated immediately, or if I am watching a TV show and I want to know what people are saying. For example, if I watch *Made in Chelsea*. I started watching *Love Island* on ITV, a horrible reality show but I am addicted to it. So, I will go on Twitter to see if I am the only one who dislikes them. Or, I would check news on, for example, Orlando [the 2016 mass shooting in a gay nightclub in Orlando]. In my lunch break, I would go to Daily Mail to read 'showbiz' stuff.

A glimpse at Kristina's ordinary day provides us with further insight into the role of social surveillance on social media in how my participants navigate polymedia environments. She is very close to her family, they often travel together and chat several times a day via WhatsApp, FaceTime and calls. WhatsApp has become a vital part of her daily routine, helping her maintain and strengthen bonds with family and close friends; in some instances the content of what has been said may be secondary to the act of calling or texting, such as reflected in the simple message 'have a nice day'. This example of phatic communication (Jakobson, 1960) will be more thoroughly explored in Chapter 8 in the context of the role of mediated interpersonal communication in 'doing nation'. Kristina's example further shows how a "mobile phone gives one a sense of 'homeliness' order orientation and a 'constant everyone-in-your-life-is-more-or-less-OK monitor vs anomie'" (Morley, 2017, p.160), at the same time providing an emotional reassurance. Facebook, on the other hand, serves her as a 'repository of contacts of people from different walks of life that she does not hear from often, unlike her WhatsApp friends. On Instagram, as fieldwork findings further reveal, she follows a range of accounts: some of them are her sibling and good friends, others are celebrities such as models, singers, social media influencers and bloggers (both Serbian and international), and fashion brands, and she often posts pictures from holidays abroad.

In 1993, at the age of 6, Kristina (29) moved with her parents and a sibling from Serbia to South Africa, because of political turmoil in the former. Even though they were not directly affected by the civil war, the early 1990s indicated hard times to come for the whole country. Her father is a doctor and he found a job in South Africa. After about five years, as

President Mandela stepped down, the political situation also seemed to be going ‘downhill’, so her parents decided to leave again, and applied for jobs everywhere, including Australia and Canada. In 1999, when Kristina was 12 years old, her parents got a job offer in a town in England and they settled there. This was fortunate because her parents also wanted to come to Europe to be closer to home. The notion that *Europe is home* has a strong resonance among “serial migrants” (Ossman, 2013) among my participants, particularly those who had lived on other continents, as the following portraits of the third wave will show. In a similar vein, Angela (31, third wave), after having spent most of her teens and early adulthood in Latin America and the US, decided to come back to Europe to pursue an MSc degree because her parents wanted her to be *closer to home*. These emphases on ‘Europeanness’ can also be understood as a destigmatisation strategy because, as explained in Chapter 6, the Balkans, including Serbia, have often been perceived as non-European, other to Europe (cf. Todorova, 1997, p.43-46). Even though Kristina shares some characteristics with other “serial migrants” from the third wave, such as expressions of banal cosmopolitanism and class status (see Chapter 6), she has more in common with other participants from the second wave, particularly some ‘urban youth’, such as more conservative political views and an emphasis on tradition (either Serbian or British).

Kristina came to stay in London in 2009 when she found a job here. Since she left Serbia as a child, she has not maintained very strong bonds with people there, which may explain why she does not use Viber. The only people she has been in touch with in Serbia are her grandparents, whom she ‘skypes’ about once a month, her uncle and aunt, and a cousin with whom she regularly chats on WhatsApp. Having lived in other places before coming to London and travelled around the world for a gap year, she has gained friends all over the globe; hence Facebook and WhatsApp are her main platforms to keep in touch with these people. Kristina’s described practices are similar to the following portraits of the third wave. While Marina also uses Viber, Alexander uses only WhatsApp. Even though both are “serial migrants”, the difference is that Marina’s mother lives in Serbia and Alexander’s parents are in the US, which again reaffirms the relationship between the uses of Viber and the type of social ties with people in Serbia.

### 7.1.3. The Third Wave

#### Marina

##### *An ordinary day*

When I wake up I speak to my mum on *Viber*. She actually wakes me up; she calls me around 8am. Then, I check notifications on my phone, *Gmail* and *WhatsApp*. I told you that my best friend lives in the States. Most of my American friends use *WhatsApp*. I mainly use my phone [throughout the day]. The computer is also a big part of my life when I write a dissertation. *When my laptop broke down it was like a losing a child, it was that severe. It's like a feeling of emptiness when I am without it.* Then I check *Instagram*. I have a friend *who tags me on Instagram on random funny stuff*. Then, I listen to music on *YouTube* while getting dressed. But throughout [the day], I am always checking my phone and *Facebook*. I feel technology is a big part of my life, I feel my *phone is an extension of me*.

As this example shows, the proliferation of smartphones has particularly underpinned the observed process of domestication of technology – when technology becomes deeply incorporated into a daily life (Silverstone et al., 1992; Silverstone, 1994; Silverstone & Haddon, 1996; Spigel, 1992), and when online and offline constitute a seamless web of one's everyday life (Murthy, 2008, p.849). Smartphones represent polymedia environments in their own right because of their affordance of portability, fast internet connections, and ability to support many third-party software applications such as social networking sites (Madianou, 2014b, pp.667-668). A domestication approach explains this observed dependency on technologies, such as a laptop or smartphone in Marina's case: "once people have adjusted their behavior over time to assume the availability of certain ICTs, these technologies can become sufficiently integrated in people's lives that it is difficult for them to imagine going back to a stage without them. The people are 'locked in'" (Haddon, 2006, p.198).

I met Marina (24) at an event organised by one Serbian organisation in London in June 2015. She was completing an MA at the time, having previously graduated from a London-based university, and had been living in London for four years prior to our encounter. She was very lively and immediately agreed to take part in my research, adding that she was a “social media enthusiast”. As such, she is representative of the third wave participant, most of whom, as explained in Chapter 5, tend to be younger than 40, students and young professionals, often from privileged backgrounds and “serial migrants” (Ossman, 2013). Before moving to London, Marina had lived in Nigeria for a while, where she attended an international high school, because her father worked there. She was born in Belgrade and most of her childhood was spent there. Her mother and brother still live in Belgrade, whereas her father travels quite often for work. Soon after we first met, we arranged to have a coffee in the area where she was doing an internship. She told me she was very close with her parents.

We talk ten times a day via *Viber* and *Skype*. The distance has made us closer in a way; we developed a good relationship because of distance. But when we are always together we argue more. Also, my mum nags more via *Skype* because obviously she misses me, so she is nicer. My dad used to live all over the world because of his work. So, *I feel Skype is a big part in our life*. I would also occasionally use *Snapchat* to call my friends here in London, it is not popular in Serbia. It is so good, I like stories they have, you can follow what is going on in London, because people share their stories, if you do something fun you share, it is very interactive, every big event that happens people are keeping it alive. Your picture disappears in 10 seconds, people like it is instant.

This counter-intuitive remark that the distance has made Marina closer to her family has arguably been made possible thanks to the availability of various social and mobile media and their affordances that enable her to regularly speak with her family and create a sense of co-presence, but at the same time enables her to maintain the right distance. This example also shows that online communication does not necessarily lead to the impoverishment of relationships, as Turkle (2011, 2015) argues. On the contrary, managing

the relationships and keeping ‘the right distance’ by a means of mediated interpersonal communication can make the relationships stronger, as seen in Marina’s case. Her account also reaffirms the prominent role of Facebook among the participants in the third wave:

My Twitter timeline is so clogged, so I miss some really important stuff there. I don’t like the layout of Twitter, you get lost in all the information. *Facebook* is actually my main go-to platform, where I read the news, because I follow there several media channels, such as The Guardian and BBC World. I also use Facebook to keep in touch; it is easy to keep up with people you care about. Sometimes, I don’t talk that much but I still keep up with their stuff, and they with mine. It doesn’t take much effort, which is bad, but it’s good because we live in a fast pace world you don’t have time to keep in touch with everyone. Also to stay in touch with people you’ve just met.

Given the diverse audiences Marina has on Facebook, it is one of her main ‘go-to’ platforms and the one on which she is very selective about what she posts. She explains that she has become more active on Instagram because her account is private and has a smaller number of followers, whereas her Facebook has become ‘overcrowded’. This demonstrates the important role that social surveillance plays in the ways in which people navigate polymedia environments. Similar practices are observed in Alexander’s case, introduced next.

## **Alexander**

### *An ordinary day*

I would check *email first* on my phone. I use my phone most often because it is with me all the time. *Then, probably Facebook. Google map is very useful.* I also have some news apps: *Blic* and *B92. I am interested in what is going on in Serbia, and these are the most serious outlets there.* Then, also *Wall Street Journal, Washington Post and the BBC.* I would use them every once or twice a day, when I go to work and maybe during the day, mainly to catch up with political news and sometimes sports. But I also follow a few pages on Facebook, like *WSJ* or *Business Insider.* I



like news feed, your selected articles. I think it does a good job. It gives you links to websites and topics you may find interesting and that you did not know about previously. Or, seeing what's going on in my friends' lives, or sometimes it is a silly voyeurism, someone you are not close with and you are bored at work and want to kill some time. It is completely brainless. I use Facebook way too often [dramatic pause]. I feel addicted to it. On my laptop, on my browser there is always a link to it. When I am not doing anything my mind will just take the browser and click up. It is awful. I know I should uninstall it. There is one problem that I communicate with some people only through Facebook Messenger, so I am afraid that my ability to stay in touch with those people would worsen if I uninstalled Facebook. And also I am logged in to dating apps through Facebook. Then I usually chat via Whatsapp, I don't have Viber. I chat with my brother via WhatsApp, some friends, and uncle and aunt too. I have several group messages with my flatmates and friends where we organise hang-outs. With my parents, we only do texts and Skype once or twice a week. We have a TV as well. But I don't watch it very often.

Alexander's remark on "silly voyeurism" as the main characteristic of his Facebook practices perhaps most plainly illustrates how social surveillance is inherent to social media. Subsequent sections of this chapter look more closely at what this may mean for the identities of my participants from each wave. His account elucidates some patterns of communication practices common for all three waves, such as Facebook's role in maintaining weak ties and IM platforms for strong ties. The choice of WhatsApp and the absence of Viber may signal who his close contacts are and the nature of his relationship with people in Serbia.

I met Alexander (32) at a gathering of students from the former Yugoslav republics a few years prior to starting my PhD research in July 2015. He was born in Belgrade, but at a young age, in the wake of civil war, his family moved to the United States. He came back to Europe just a few years ago, for similar strategic and sentimental reasons as Kristina, above. During his BA studies in the US, Alexander used to often take summer trips to Europe, describing them as "the best time of the year". Also, he added, his parents

encouraged him to spend some time in Europe too, because they thought he was becoming ‘too American’, echoing a common motive among “serial migrants” who have moved to London. Before coming to London in 2012, he worked in Belgrade for a few years. His parents still live in the US, while his brother is in London too. Most of his relatives are in Serbia, and his friends are in the US, London and a few in France.

Similarities among these portraits from the three waves may leave the reader wondering whether the waves of migration offer any explanatory potential in this context. However, while the ways in which participants from all three waves navigate polymedia environments may be similar, what divides them are the layers of neighbourhoods on Facebook that are often created along the lines of different periods of migration. This means that participants from the first wave will be best connected with other Serbian Londoners who came in the same period. This has several consequences for their identities. While Facebook, I argue, facilitates diasporic imaginary through the social surveillance (Marwick, 2012) described in these portraits, it also reproduces differences among the diaspora, because there is no or very little sharing of experiences between some participants from the third wave and the first wave (cf. Deutsch, 1966), for instance. Before moving on to consider this issue further, I discuss what we learn from these portraits that reflects general findings.

## **7.2 Everyday Communication Practices**

These portraits are representative of the overall findings of ethnographic fieldwork, media maps and in-depth interviews with 40 participants. As the portraits have shown, my respondents use the Internet daily, and the majority use a wide array of social media platforms. As the portraits reveal, there are some gender and age differences in how my participants navigate polymedia environments. Women and those under 40 are more like to have an Instagram account and use it actively, compared to men and the participants over 40, and the three participants who do not have a Facebook account are men. Participants under 40 also use a wider range of platforms daily and are more avid users of smartphones, unlike over 40s, who often prefer to use a laptop or PC. On the other hand, tablets are

mainly popular in families with small children and grandparents who live at a distance. TV viewing is more common among families and participants in the first and second wave. Most participants often employ several different platforms simultaneously for different purposes. When I visited Ivana (54, second-wave) for the first time at her house, a TV was often turned on in the background, the BBC News at 6pm, a laptop was also switched on with a link to Facebook and her emails to catch up on the latest news and see updates of her friends and acquaintances. Facebook is the most popular SNS, closely followed by WhatsApp and Viber, then Facebook Messenger. But if WhatsApp and Viber were taken together as instant messaging (IM) platforms, they would be slightly more prominent than Facebook. LinkedIn is also popular among my participants, but only a few use it actively. Skype is used for long, infrequent calls with significant others and for business purposes, as my conversation with Ana (25, third wave) shows:

Q: With whom did you use Skype the other day?

Ana: With Karin. She is from Berlin, but I don't know why because we always use WhatsApp for both calls and texts.

Q: So why then Skype?

Ana: I think because we knew we would Skype for a *long time*, so instead of being on my phone and talking to her on WhatsApp, I used laptop. *Also I expected a call from an interviewer for a job.*

Q: So you don't actually use Skype often?

Ana: For my grandparents yes, because they don't have Viber or WhatsApp or Facebook. Last year we taught them how to switch it on and off. I also use it with my dad.

Twitter has a rather small group of users among my participants, and most are not actively engaged, with a few notable exceptions for whom Twitter plays a major role in 'doing nation' and facilitates long-distance nationalism (Anderson, 1992). Boris (51, second wave) is one of the participants who defined themselves as an 'atypical Serb'. He is an avid Twitter user. His Twitter account is always open in his browser on a laptop or PC throughout the day, and he also receives notifications on his phone. Twitter has helped him

connect and reconnect with like-minded people in Serbia, London and the world. When he was travelling abroad, he met with a few Serbs who lived in these countries and who he had previously met through Twitter. Being constantly surrounded on Twitter mainly by people with whom he shares what it means to be Serbian has helped him renegotiate his national identity, which has led to reinforcing his identity. Having a space where he can engage in daily discussions with like-minded people on current affairs, politics and social problems that are tormenting the country helped him redefine his identity and not see himself as ‘atypical’ so much. During the general elections in Serbia in 2016, he keenly shared information on how to register to vote and encouraging others to turn out to vote.

Voted for the first time in my life today! I may have spent precious little time in Serbia, but it is important regardless to secure a better future for the coming generations. With such a worrying trend globally, we all have to do our part to fight for a better world. This is my contribution. 🇷🇸 #brighterdaysahead



Figure 43: Serbian general elections. Facebook post by a third wave participant.

Through Twitter he tries to influence the public sphere in Serbia by initiating or actively supporting several events with political objectives. Meanwhile, he is completely disengaged from UK politics, and does not vote in elections, only voting in the 2016 EU referendum. Hence, rather than being “an agent of cultural demythologisation” (Robin & Aksoy, 2002, p.10), Twitter in Boris’s case

facilitates long-distance nationalism (Anderson, 1992) and ‘doing nation’. Some examples are better explained as long-distance nationalism (Anderson, 1992), such as organised attempts to influence the public sphere in Serbia, while most of Boris’s other activities on Twitter are rather ordinary spontaneous commentary and interpersonal communication, and as such represent practices of ‘doing nation’. General elections in Serbia were also a hot topic among other participants who were eagerly sharing information, commenting on political parties and their campaigns, engaging in discussion, and calling their friends to turn out to vote. After a friend tagged Angela in a Facebook post to urge her to register to vote in the 2017 general elections in Serbia with a passionate tone seeking change in politics in Serbia, she turned out and voted in an election for the first time in her life and

shared a status update on Facebook. As Figure 43 shows, her Facebook post features a photo of the Serbian national flag hanging on the Embassy of the Republic of Serbia in London and the coat of arms with the crown. These manifestations of nationalism stand out from the ordinary and banal, representing organised, albeit micro, political efforts of the diaspora directed to the country of origin. As such they could be interpreted as long-distance nationalism (Anderson, 1992). When this concept is applied to the perspective of everyday life it can stretch to include different forms of political engagement that does not exclusively refer to the large-scale organised attempts of diasporas to subvert politics in their country of origin.

Some communication practices of my participants are consistent with the general UK adult population – for instance, Facebook is the most popular SNS for the majority of the British public (Ipsos MORI, 2015-2018) – but there are also some notable differences. For instance, IM platforms do not seem to play such an important role in everyday life for UK adults (Ofcom, 2015, p.30) as they do among my participants. For instance, Ofcom reports IM apps are less popular than Twitter (2015, p.96), which is not the case for Serbian Londoners. Moreover, Viber falls at the bottom of social media use in the UK (The Economist, 2015). I argue that it is important to also recognise ordinary practices among my participants that may be consistent with the general UK population, because, as Eriksen points out, “unless one keeps an eye on everything which is not ethnic... scholars, usually against their own intentions, end up confirming a view of the world as effectively made up of competing ethnic groups” (2001, p.19; cf. Pratsinakis, 2017). In other words, an orientation that exclusively focuses on differences in practices of a certain people may lead to methodological nationalism (Beck, 2016) or methodological ethnicism (or tribalism) (Glick-Schiller, 2008; Wimmer & Glick-Schiller 2002), and ultimately may reify identities.

It would be wrong to assume that Serbs in London are unaffected by general trends in this populous and multinational metropolis, and that they always behave in accordance with their national and ethnic identities. Identities are contextual (Hall, 1990). People do not always act as members of a certain nation, as Mihelj’s (2011) critique of Andersons’ (1983) concept of “imagined community” demonstrates. Mihelj concludes that an imagined

community is not always and necessarily a national one. In this sense, this study somewhat reaffirms Robins and Aksoy's (2002) conclusion that diasporic identities may often be overemphasised. However, if we closely observe what Serbian Londoners do on Facebook and what it means for their sociality and identities (rather than simply counting how many times a day or week they visit SNSs), then we can observe some particular practices. Likewise, as seen in the portraits above, Viber has taken on symbolic as much as functional meanings – it is not only a matter of staying in touch with families and close friends, but it also signals one's relationship with Serbia.

On 7<sup>th</sup> December 2017 – Christmas time according to the Julian calendar – I was invited for lunch at Maria's (40, third wave) house along with her husband and two close Serbian friends and neighbours with their teenage daughter. Maria's husband and the couple arrived in London in the 1980s (the first wave) from central Serbia as 'young adventure seekers'. Sitting at a dining table, with satellite TV on in the background near a chest of drawers with a laptop playing a compilation of old Serbian folk songs on YouTube, discussion turned to customs and traditions in central Serbia and the Bay of Kotor in Montenegro, their family relationships and their daily lives in London. Very little attention was paid to what was on the TV and laptop, except for a passing remarks when there was a song they particularly liked or that evoked some memorable events from their past. At one point, a friend took his phone out of his pocket to show us a meme he had received from someone for Christmas on Viber. It was a joke about the former Crown Prince Aleksandar Karadjordjevic with a reference to his broken Serbian. Everyone laughed, then Maria's husband teased her that she had spent the whole day before exchanging recipes with her mother over Viber on her phone.

Media and diaspora studies have emphasised the role of satellite television as a powerful marker of belonging to transnational communities (Madianou, 2005; Georgiou, 2012). Madianou (2005) vividly describes how satellite dishes demarcate the areas in Athens inhabited by the Turkish diaspora, objectifying the community and its boundaries: "Satellite television has become conceived as 'umbilical cord' that connects (in a natural way) a minority group to what is considered by 'homeland' – such a thinking is present as

much as among conservative politicians in Europe, as among minority leaders and communities themselves” (Madianou, 2005, p.55). As seen in Chapter 5, there is no one geographically bounded Serbian ‘community’ in London. My participants have become spread across London, especially since 2000. Today, it can be argued that Facebook and particularly Viber play a similar role to that of the satellite dishes before the era of smartphones and the proliferation of social media, as the following sections explain.

### **7.2.1 Facebook as New Neighbourhoods**

Rainie and Wellman point out that “the new media is the new neighbourhood” to argue that people’s important others are not primarily their neighbours anymore, but rather broad networks of distant others that are maintained through different online platforms, replacing these tight-knit groups (2012, p.9). I draw on this notion of “neighbourhood” to argue that in the case of Serbian Londoners *Facebook represents new neighbourhoods*, but with somewhat different meanings and consequences. First, Rainie and Wellman’s (2012) notion of neighbourhood is primarily interest-driven – they focus on the role of new media and networks in providing support. What is apparent in the context of this study is that Facebook re-establishes social surveillance that has been undermined by the geographical dispersion of this group in London, particularly after 2000. Therefore, what is evident here is more “an orientation to groups” (Miller et al., 2016, p.182) than “networked individualism” (Rainie & Wellman, 2011).

Rainie and Wellman (2011) argue that we live in networks, not groups. The thesis of networked individualism draws on the universalistic premise that we are all the same. Unlike networks, social groups not only have shared interests but also a shared identity. A social group consists of people who share “a set of practices” and “a way of life” and these “cultural forms” are what distinguishes them from other groups (Young, 2011, p.186). According to Miller et al., unlike the early days of the Internet, which may have contributed to a rise of “ego-centred networks”, social media today represent an “orientation to groups” (2016, p.82). They argue that “a key property of social media is its *ability to repair the rupture* that modern life has caused to traditional groups such as the family, and to facilitate

a return to an orientation to the group” (2016, p.182, emphasis added). However, I argue that we live both in networks and groups, depending on a platform and a context (social situation). While platforms such as Twitter and Instagram foster more network type relationships, IM applications nurture group belonging. Meanwhile, Facebook supports both networks and groups. Facebook enables people, as is the case in this study, to interact with others with whom they have shared identity, as well as to be part of networks based on shared interests – such as a similar taste in music.

Second, there is usually not just one neighbourhood, but several neighbourhoods – there are usually layers of surveillance at play here. Serbian Londoners are most connected with similarly disposed Serbian Londoners with similar migrant experiences. This means people from the third wave will be most connected with other Serbs from this wave. But some participants, particularly from the second wave, have widespread connections that encompass all three waves, which comes with no surprise given that this is the most heterogeneous wave. Other layers of neighbourhoods are created around people from other cities, such as friends from Belgrade or the US, or course mates.

These neighbourhoods are made possible through the practices of “social browsing” and “social searching” (Lampe et al., 2006), but also ambient co-presence (Madianou, 2016). Lampe et al. (2006) find that Facebook enables practices of *social searching* and *social browsing*, but that students mainly use Facebook for *social searching*. *Social searching* refers to finding out more about a *specific* person “with whom they share an offline connection”, while *social browsing* signifies seeking to meet *random* new people “with whom they would want to connect offline” (Lampe et al., 2006, pp.1-2). In contrast to Lampe et al. (2006), my findings suggest that both *social searching* and *social browsing* are central to Facebook. Based on my findings of Serbian Londoners’ practices on Facebook, I also redefine these two concepts so that the former refers to learning more about one’s existing online networks regardless of whether they are offline friends as well, and the latter to refer to looking for new people to befriend regardless of whether people intend to meet them offline. As observed in the fieldwork, many of my participants from all three waves tend to add other Serbian Londoners on Facebook who they only met once or



only based on their mutual London friends. Once they became Facebook friends, they may also search to learn more about them and keep up with their updates over time. These practices have all contributed to a sense of proximity and awareness of what other Serbs in London, particularly those who arrived in the same period, are up to – it would be the same in a small, densely populated physical neighbourhood of Serbs that once existed in Shepherd’s Bush, for instance, but has become undermined with more recent arrivals and housing price rises.

Recalling Tara’s quote from Chapter 5, in which she describes what it was like growing up in Shepherd’s Bush in West London in the 1980s, when this area was still very much populated by Serbs, we can soon start to notice how Facebook recreates proximity and re-establishes this sense of neighbourhood, a Serbian ‘community’. In this quote, Tara says her grandmother would know what she bought in a supermarket even before coming home, because their Serbian neighbour saw her and reported this to her grandmother, which replicated a parochial way of life in any smaller town or village in Serbia. She even uses an archaic Serbian idiom ‘Radio Mileva’ that refers to people who are indiscreet and prone to gossiping. Today, when Serbs are scattered around London, Facebook is a place where the social surveillance is re-established and may help reconstructing the diasporic imaginary.

Other layers of neighbourhoods on Facebook include friends and relatives in Serbia. In one of our encounters, Mark mentioned that he would be attending a wedding in Serbia in the summer of 2016; when I asked about his relatives there and whether he maintained contacts with them, he replied: “Not as regularly as I probably should. *I am not on Facebook*. On



Figure 44: Facebook as new neighbourhoods.

Facebook, it is much easier”. Similarly, when Tara’s London friend was going back to Belgrade for good, she made a comment on her

wall saying: “I am sorry you are leaving London, but we will hang out in Belgrade and on Facebook” (Figure 44). In this sense Facebook represents a ‘third place’ (Baym, 2010;

Oldenburg, 1989), outside work and the home, where people ‘hang out’. But at the same time these are familiar places – with established routines, practices and faces – more like a neighbourhood than a shopping mall. Facebook’s main role is in maintaining weak and latent ties – the ones that have not yet been activated (Haythornthwaite, 2002, p.385). Latent ties are made possible through and are dependent on ambient co-presence (Madianou, 2016), or a peripheral awareness of wider social circles. As Marina’s portrait demonstrates, “Sometimes, I don’t talk that much [with my Facebook contacts], but I still keep up with their [her Facebook friends] stuff and they with mine”. Ambient co-presence also supports strong ties, but this will be discussed in-depth in the next section of this chapter and in Chapter 8. Facebook can also facilitate the transition between weak and strong ties, as Tamara’s (33) example shows. She came to London in 2007 (third wave) from Belgrade, where she was born and grew up. One of her best friends is also a third wave Serbian Londoner she knew from high school in Belgrade, but they had not actually been very close until they reconnected on Facebook.

I met Anita as we went to high school together but we were never really best friends at high school. When I came to Serbia after London [after completing her Master’s degree], I went to a party and I saw a friend from a high school and she asked me ‘what’s up, where are you now?’ and she said ‘oh, really, Anita has been living there for years now’. And I added her on Facebook and then we met when I got [back] to London and she found me a first job within two weeks.

A similar observation was made in Kristina’s portrait. She said that she initiated contact with one of her current best friends on Facebook first, and once they became good friends they moved from Facebook to using WhatsApp and FaceTime more often. By this, I am not arguing that weak ties become strong ties *because of* Facebook. As observed in the fieldwork, there was often a pre-existing intention to connect with a specific person, but this first contact was rarely initiated through, for instance, WhatsApp (at least among participants who use Facebook too). The first point of contact would be most often established through Facebook. Facebook can also reactivate latent ties so that they become weak ties (see Lampe et al., 2006, p.3), as the following example illustrates.

I use Facebook to see what's up with people... I don't like much to post stuff, but then I think it is useful, because, for example, I posted once that I was in Athens, and then a friend called me to meet her and then I also met her friend and it became really amazing. If I hadn't posted it, no one would have known that I was in Athens.

(Tamara)

Haythornwaite argues that how people engage with the media depends on the type of tie rather than on the attributes of the media (2002, pp.385-386). By drawing on a socio-technical approach to social media, as explained in Chapter 3, I argue that “technology and society are mutually constitutive” (Wajcman & MacKenzie, 1999, p.41). Tamara was able to reactivate her latent tie thanks to certain affordances of social media, that in this case made ambient co-presence possible (Madianou, 2016) and therefore enabled certain interactions (Baym, 2015; boyd, 2012). Tamara's example also demonstrates that Facebook is the main platform *to keep in touch* (Joinson, 2008, p.1030; Lampe et. al, 2006, p.3) and *a repository of contacts* akin to what an address book was before social media and smartphones. But with Facebook the norm has changed – most people in this research consider ‘calls’ to be very personal – reserved either for strong ties or for business purposes, so Facebook fills this gap and provides a space for keeping contact with people one has just met or went to school with. Marina's portrait particularly evokes this. She pointed out that “it is easier to send a Facebook message than to call someone. I don't know, it is kind of more acceptable if you send a Facebook message than a text, text is more personal”. The following examples further illustrate this.

I used to post a lot of pictures [on Facebook], it was like my Instagram back in the day... Now I use it most for some friends that I am not very close with, but still want to have some contact with. For example, people I know from school but who are not my friends, I don't mind occasionally seeing where they live, so I know that tomorrow if I move to X country, I can still contact someone, so you reconnect or find a new connection. But, for my close friends, whose phone numbers I have, I use WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger depending on a situation.

(Ana, 25, third wave)

I had friends [from a university], mostly Spanish and Italians... but I didn't maintain a close contact with them. I only have them on Facebook. See, that's the thing, I approximately know where they are when they post something, and I would like to maintain and keep that even if it is a very weak relationship. I use Facebook if I've been travelling somewhere, but I don't post much. I rather use it to see what people are doing.

(Kristina, 29, second wave)

I have some work colleagues that I am a friend with [on Facebook], people that I met from all walks of life, some people that I don't see every day, but they are *there*... I have friends all over the place: the States, South America, Europe, Asia and Australia. And that is why Facebook is good – I can 'stalk' them and see what's happening in their lives.

(Angela, 31, third wave)

Not necessarily [meet with friends from Facebook]. Sometimes I may bump into someone at those events [Serbian parties] and say 'oh, I know you from Facebook', but I do not usually initiate a meeting, because I know loads and loads of people in London, both Serbs and international crowds.

(Norman, 42, second wave)

As some of these examples show, other Facebook neighbourhoods consist of friends and acquaintances from university, travels, and cities in 'third countries' where they have lived. In this way, Facebook also supports banal cosmopolitanism among my participants, which at first sight may seem counter-intuitive given that personal profiles on Facebook are private by default and often based on existing social circles. However, given the context of migration and London as a cosmopolitan metropolis, the wider social circles of my participants tend to be remarkably diverse, which is particularly the case for third wave and some second wave participants. This surveillance is not always welcomed. Most

participants self-censor their activities on Facebook or other publicly oriented platforms and scale their audiences by using other platforms. Marina (24, third wave) explains she began using Instagram more actively because her account is private and her Facebook circle of friends became very wide.

I have only 80 followers [on Instagram], and all people I follow, follow me, I try to keep to a small circle. On Facebook, I have many people so I decided to be very selective on Instagram. That is why I tend to post more pictures on Instagram. I also don't like some people on my Facebook and it's not nice to delete some people. It's just rude, what if you end up seeing those people. It is nice to have that kind of a private base.

(Marina)

Marina's quote echoes Mark's (38, first wave) concerns, as seen in his portrait introduced earlier in this chapter. He opted out of Facebook in order to avoid potential conflicts with his co-workers and thus manage his relationships more effectively. For similar reasons Angela (31, third wave) keeps her parents out of her Facebook circles in order to avoid their unwanted scrutiny. Despite having a very close bond with her parents, she maintains a line between the posts intended for her friends and the weak ties and communication she has with family.

My dad has it [Facebook profile] and he's active, but we are not friends. I made that very clear to them, 'don't try to befriend me because you won't be accepted'. Because I know they would 'psycho-analyse' everything I would post and be like 'who is that guy standing next to you? Is he your boyfriend? What's his name? Why is he so close to you, or where did you go last night? Who's that girl on your left, we have never met her?!

On the other hand, she uses WhatsApp and FaceTime extensively to talk with her parents: they have a group chat where she regularly receives many messages from them and calls at non-prearranged times. This expected availability can also be interpreted as scrutinising but

in a different way to Facebook scrutiny. However, this kind of scrutiny is welcomed as it reaffirms Angela's family bonds and is reserved only for her strong ties, as Chapter 8 further shows. Polymedia environments, as argued, thus provide my participants with communicative opportunities to manage their identities and self-representation (see Madianou & Miller, 2012). As highlighted throughout this chapter, IM apps are crucial for managing strong ties, and the next section discusses what it means when an IM platform also becomes 'localised'.

### **7.2.2 Viber Being Localised**

On 7<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Orthodox Christmas, people flocked into Serbian Orthodox Church Saint Sava at Ladbroke Grove. The church bustled with life as women and men, young and old, nodded and smiled to each other as a way of greeting, some speaking Serbian, others English. The liturgy was about to begin when I heard a loud Viber call chiming two rows in front of me. A lady in her late 60s reached out for her handbag to pick up her phone and put it on silent before the liturgy began.

As already explained, Viber is the most popular IM application in Serbia (Ipsos Serbia, 2017). Most cities and countries have a mobile messaging app that attracts much of the population, which usually begins with a formation of a critical mass of users that then exert "soft coercion" on others to adopt the app (Ling & Lai, 2016, p.838). However, Viber is not a mere tool of communication, "by using the particular app, we are, in a sense, *signaling our embrace of our mediated social sphere*" (Ling & Lai, 2016, p.835, emphasis added). Viber has emerged as a powerful symbolic marker of belonging, like the one of the satellite dishes in Madianou's (2005) study of the Turkish neighbourhood in Athens in the early 2000, but with an important difference – Viber is a marker for the 'insider' rather than the 'outsider'. It signals the types of ties with people in Serbia or with other Serbian Londoners. But this is more visible to Serbian Londoners themselves than to others.

It is also common that participants who often use Viber to communicate with families and friends in Serbia also use Viber to communicate with other London Serbs, as seen in Tara's

example of a Viber group named “Balkan’s women”. Viber is the least popular choice among ‘serial migrants’, particularly if their parents and siblings do not live in Serbia. This is because most of them left Serbia as young children and hence have only a few connections from Serbia. There are only minor differences among the three waves in this regard. The second wave participants seem to use Viber most frequently, whereas some third wave participants only use Viber to communicate with their parents. This case of Viber versus WhatsApp also demonstrates why the affordances of social media should be understood as emerging at the intersection between technical properties, social norms and individual practices (Neff & Nagy, 2014). Viber and WhatsApp have similar affordances, so the choice of platform among my participants depends on social norms and their intended audience.

### **7.3 Conclusion**

Starting with six portraits of Serbian Londoners drawn from all three waves that have provided detailed accounts of how participants navigate polymedia environments, this chapter has made several important points. First, I have shown that the digital media have become profoundly incorporated into daily routines of my participants. The proliferation of smartphones – thanks to their affordances of portability and ability to support several social networking sites – has played a vital role in this regard. Second, most participants employ a wide array of social and mobile media in their everyday life, with the most popular platforms being Facebook, WhatsApp and Viber, followed by Instagram and LinkedIn. Facebook is mainly used for managing weak ties, whereas WhatsApp and Viber for managing strong ties. Skype is used for infrequent long calls with significant others, particularly parents and grandparents, and for business purposes. Meanwhile, Twitter has a small but avid group of users among my participants and in some cases, it has been argued, facilitates long-distance nationalism (Anderson, 1992).

Third, it has also been shown that most participants have pronounced professional identities, which that means most of their practices on SNS such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram also reflect their professional interests. Fourth, this chapter has demonstrated that

in polymedia environments non-participation is meaningful. Participants choose to opt out of Facebook or Skype to avoid people, potential conflicts, or certain type of interaction, and maintain greater control of their time and relationships. In this case, they use other platforms as a substitute. Mark, for instance, calls LinkedIn his “corporate Facebook”, which also shows that Facebook has become the norm. Some of the observed communication practices in this chapter are consistent with the general UK population. In this sense, as Aksoy and Robins (2000) argue, diasporic identities may often be overestimated. However, there are some notable differences, such as in the cases of Facebook and Viber.

Drawing on Rainie and Wellman’s (2012) notion of new media as new neighbourhood, in this chapter I have argued that Facebook represents new neighbourhoods. Unlike these authors, I have also contended that Facebook facilitates both networks (Rainie & Wellman, 2012) and groups (Miller et al., 2016). The sense of neighbourhoods has particularly been enabled through the practice of “social browsing” and “social searching” (Lampe et al., 2006), as have layers of neighbourhoods, some of which include other Serbian Londoners, while others consist of friends and relatives from Serbia, or friends, course-mates and acquaintances from London, university and travels. I have argued that social surveillance on Facebook recreates a sense of community among Serbian Londoners because it enables an awareness of each other’s existence and sharing of information, which may lead to reconstructing their diasporic identity. But this often remains divided along the lines of different periods of migration. My participants seem to be most well connected with Serbian Londoners with similar migration histories and experiences. However, some participants are also well connected with Serbs from all three waves, and this is particularly the case for the second wave participants. At the same time, Facebook neighbourhoods can also facilitate banal cosmopolitanism and transition between latent and weak ties or weak and strong ties (Hathorthwaite, 2002). Finally, the chapter has also argued that Viber is a symbolic marker of belonging that signals one’s ties with people in Serbia, but which is only visible to insiders. The case of Viber has also demonstrated why the understanding of affordances of social media should include social norms and individual practices. While



WhatsApp and Viber have similar designs and properties, the choice of a platform among my participants depends on social norms and intended audiences.

## **Chapter 8: The Role of Mediated Interpersonal Communication in ‘Doing Nation’**

In Chapters 6 and 7 I considered the implications of social or lateral surveillance as an inherent characteristic of social media (Andrejevic, 2004; Marwick, 2012; Tokunaga, 2010), and of intended publics in the ways in which Serbian Londoners engage with various platforms and perform their identities online. Given the particular historical and socio-political context of Serbia, I argued in Chapter 6 that most participants undertake destigmatisation strategies in polymedia environments in order to redefine and renegotiate their national identities. In Chapter 6, I focused particularly on publicly oriented platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Chapter 7 further showed how the ways in which my participants navigate polymedia environments is linked to social surveillance and has argued that social surveillance on Facebook facilitates a sense of neighbourhoods of Serbian Londoners that reproduces the diasporic imaginary among my participants. But I have also contended that these ‘new neighbourhoods’ also often reproduce boundaries between participants from different periods of migration.

The present chapter focuses on identity performances on privately oriented platforms, such as WhatsApp, Viber and FaceTime. While Chapters 6 and 7 provided a bigger picture view of how Serbian Londoners navigate polymedia environments to negotiate their identities, this chapter takes a closer look at the role of mediated interpersonal communication and different types of mediated co-presence in ‘doing nation’. Participants from all three waves use privately oriented platforms for communication with strong ties, as explained in Chapter 7, and engage in practices of ‘doing nation’. There are differences in the choices of platforms and discourses. As shown in Chapter 7, the choice of platform – WhatsApp or Viber – may depend on the type of relationship with people in Serbia as well as other Serbian Londoners, whereas (as observed in Chapter 6) discourses on these platforms may vary among participants who adopt counter-stigmatisation strategy and stigma recognition.

As a result of differences in discourses, these communication practices do not produce one homogenous national identity and diaspora. This chapter identifies four distinct but interrelated elements of mediated interpersonal communication to be analysed – three types of mediated co-presence: mediated co-presence, connected presence (Licoppe, 2004) and ambient co-presence (Madianou, 2016), ritual communication (Carey, 2009 [1989]), phatic communication (Jakobson, 1960) and micro-coordination (Ling & Yttri, 2002, Ling & Lai, 2016). I also assess the temporal dimension and characteristics of these interactions, such as whether it is synchronous or asynchronous, or whether it implies longer scheduled calls or frequent but shorter calls made at irregular times (cf. Licoppe, 2004, p.152).

## **8.1 ‘Doing Nation’ Discursively**

The notion of ‘doing nation’ that I proposed in Chapter 2, drawing on the philosophical tradition of doing things discursively (Austin, 1962; Back & Harnish, 1992; Searle, 1969; Strawson, 1964), invites us to look at everyday communication practices through which the nation comes into being, such as sharing experiences, habits, aesthetic norms and memories of past events. These practices enable the nation to hang together. As Deutsch argues, “the range and effectiveness of social communication... may tell us how effectively it [the community] has become integrated, and how far it has advanced, in this respect, toward becoming a nation” (Deutsch, 1966 [1953], p.99). As Deutsch notes, some people may have common experiences, for instance, British and German miners, and they may have more in common than a British miner and a mine owner, but if they do not share their experiences it’s unlikely they will develop a common (class or professional) identity (Deutsch, 1962, p.95). Although Deutsch’s observation that professional identities are therefore considerably weaker than the national (1966 [1953], p.98) may not apply in today’s context, his general arguments about the role of everyday communication practices in forging the nation are valuable. As discussed in Chapters 5 and 7, I find that professional identities are pronounced among my participants, particularly among the third wave. However, their professional identities also often appear to be intertwined with their national identity. For instance, Tamara’s closest friends work in the same industry as her and many

of them are from Belgrade as well. According to Deutsch, communicative efficiency depends on *storage, recall, transmission* and *reapplication* of a wide range of information (1966 [1953], p.96), as well as the ability to communicate *regardless of location* (1966 [1953], p.100). Accordingly, it can be argued that affordances of social media, such as *storage capacity, spreadability* and *mobility*, explained in Chapter 3, have a crucial role in sustaining a national identity. Hence, these social media affordances, as well as the ability of recall and common associations, shall particularly be assessed in what follows.

I contend that national practices are embedded in a whole range of other areas of life, such as in family practices. What are traditionally thought of as family practices are also practices that ‘do nation’. Thus this chapter is also concerned with how Serbian Londoners ‘do nation’ transnationally through everyday family practices. The everyday dimension of these practices means that they happen on a regular basis – daily or weekly – but also that they are “unremarkable, mundane, and ‘hardly worth talking about’” (Morgan, 2011, p.6). This means that practices that may appear as trivial and irrelevant are actually meaningful (Morgan, 2011, p.7), such as talking about food on WhatsApp or the weather on FaceTime. These banal manifestations of nationalism reproduce the nation on a daily basis (Billig, 1995). As Hutchinson argues, these shared *forms of life* (Wittgenstein, 1953), the *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1990), or *habits of social life* (Billig, 1996) provide people with *guidelines* for their daily practices and give meanings to these practices (2006, p.304). But, at the same time, these practices contribute to the maintenance of habitus and forms of life, which “ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action” (Bourdieu, 1990, p.54). According to Bourdieu (1977), the constitutive power of language does not lie in the language itself but in the group which legitimises it through their practices that draw on the dominant system of representations and rules of accepted behaviour. By doing this, the group is “tacitly laying down the dividing line between the thinkable and the unthinkable”, which contributes to “the maintenance of the symbolic order from which it draws its authority” (Bourdieu, 1977, p.21). Thus Bourdieu criticises Saussurian objectivism that understands practices as mere “execution” of the rule (1977, p.24). It is people, through their practices, who reproduce and legitimise, but also challenge and transform, the

dominant system of representation, and consequently identities (cf. de Certeau, 1984; Hall, 2003).

The *habitus* puts emphasis on early experiences (Bourdieu, 1990, p.54). As seen in the preceding chapters, family backgrounds are important in understanding the perceptions, identities and communication practices of my participants. Chapter 5 showed how some participants, particularly royalists within the first wave, pass Serbian traditions and customs down to their children, whereas Chapter 6 posited that identifications with ‘First’ and ‘Other’ Serbia can be best understood in relation to family histories. Therefore, we need to understand how social ties are sustained, strengthened, transformed, and extended over time thanks to social and mobile media. In the context of migration and especially in situations of prolonged separation, social and mobile media become constitutive of relationships (Madianou, 2014b, p.667), which means they have become an integral part of relationships and these relationships have become dependent on these media. In Chapter 7, I explored how Serbian Londoners navigate polymedia environments to manage their strong, weak and latent ties. This chapter particularly considers *strong ties*, such as family relationships, which are a form of “continuous conversation” consisting of many mediated interactions that “reactivate, reaffirm, and reconfigure the relationship” (Licoppe, 2004, p.138). We also need to understand the role of polymedia environments in managing and sustaining relationships to understand its role in reproducing and transforming identities. Chapter 7 provided one part of the answer to this question by considering all digital media platforms and all types of social ties, whereas this chapter considers privately oriented platforms and strong ties, and will provide further answers.

## **8.2 ‘Doing Nation’ Transnationally through Family Practices**

Vertovec (2004) notes that cheap telephone calls in the 1990s were “the social glue of migrant transnationalism”. He argues it was not the internet as much as ordinary telephone calls that facilitated global connections and relationships, which was particularly the case for non-elite migrants (Vertovec, 2004, p.219). Cheap telephone calls of the 1990s and the

early 2000s can arguably be likened to today's instant messaging platforms (cf. Ling & Lai, 2016, p.842), because these platforms also offer voice cues and enable synchronous interpersonal communication. But instant messaging platforms and smartphones offer more social cues, such as visual cues (see Baym, 2010, p.9) and therefore have much greater "expressive richness" (see Licoppe, 2004, p.137) than a simple telephone communication. People can also be members of many different messaging groups at the same time, both in the forms of dyadic and multisided interaction (see Ling & Lai, 2016, p.842).

Whereas throughout the world non-migrant families *commonly have discussions across a kitchen table* (for example, can we buy a refrigerator? What do we do about the teenager's behaviour? Who should take care of grandmother?), *now many families whose members are relocated through migration conduct the same everyday discussions in real time across oceans*. Cheap telephone calls have largely facilitated this. It is now common for a single family to be stretched across vast distances and between nation-states, yet *still retain its sense of collectivity*.

(Vertovec, 2004, p.222, emphasis added)

Two aspects of this quote particularly deserve our attention. First, Vertovec argues that the described practices of discussing mundane matters create "a sense of collectivity", and second, he shows how such practices that would traditionally happen "across a kitchen table" have largely become mediated for families at a distance. Digital media platforms such as WhatsApp, Viber and Facetime have even greater potential to replicate this sense of the family conversation at a kitchen table than phone calls of the late 1990s and early 2000s. People can now video call their family members, which complements background noises with a visual element. As in the living room setting, participants can have direct communication, continuous flow of interactions or they can simply be aware of each other's presence while carrying out their own activity without engaging in any direct form of communication. This ambient co-presence – that is, a peripheral awareness of others while they are occupied with other things – is also a dynamic practice because it can provide emotional reassurance and the confirmation of a relationship (Madianou, 2016).

This type of mediated co-presence was particularly made possible due to visual, mobile and locative affordances (Madianou, 2016, p.188).

### **8.2.1 Mediated Co-presence, Connected Presence and Ambient Co-presence**

The first time I met Angela's family was through FaceTime while we were dining at her place. Her father called, and after saying 'hello' he turned the camera to Angela's mother and brother who were insouciantly lying on a sofa in their living room. They were waving to us, asking what we were having for dinner and her brother was teasing her about her cooking skills. I had met her father on a previous occasion, again via FaceTime, when he had called while Angela and I were having brunch in her neighbourhood. The second time, however, I had a chance to get introduced to her whole family and have chat with them as if I had been at their home. In this sense, social media not only represents "third spaces" where people hang out, as Baym (2012) argues, but can also represent home. Apart from the affordance of mobility or portability, the expected availability also played a significant role in reaffirming the bonds (Ling, 2008, p.3). Similarly, Kristina keeps in touch with her grandparents in Serbia through Skype calls without a pre-arranged time. "I just call them, their laptop is always turned on, they are ready whenever and whoever calls them," she said. These examples demonstrate how frequent and spontaneous mediated interpersonal communication, thanks to the affordance of mobility, almost blurs the boundaries between presence and absence, resembling physical co-presence. The availability is, of course, negotiated depending on context, but one's responsiveness is an important reconfirmation of the relationship. It is through these ordinary family communication practices that the nation comes into being. They do not necessarily involve overt expressions of nationalism, but rather what is ordinary and unremarkable, such as the ability to speak the Serbian language daily and to be exposed to a number of cultural references, as the following account illustrates.

What is cool about these new forms of media is how quickly we can build and maintain these new identities. When I was 18 I had just a simple Motorola mobile

phone, it was cool but all I could do was to text and call, for me to stay in touch with my family I had to call and email them, and emails were only from *physical computers*. And if I want to stay in touch with my friends I had to go to my computer to email them or on Facebook again. A first few years while I was in New York I felt I was a little bit out of touch with my Serbian roots because there was just no way for me to do anything about it and I spoke Serbian so rarely, only when I picked up my phone and calls were so expensive. *It's only when I got my Blackberry that I had Facebook and email on my phone which made it all easier*, but you still didn't have Wi-Fi calling and stuff. You had a few apps and email, but you still didn't have *immediate contact with people... But now I can speak Serbian every day*, so I think *it makes it easier to maintain these little identities which you build up along way because you are kind of always surrounded by the people who support that kind of identity*. But then again it is really not tied to a nation-state. If you are not from a right place you are stuck, you are fucked, you are in an immigrant camp in Calais, trying to illegally cross to the UK, you know. So, therefore, I don't want my identity based on any nation-state, I think it is based on your life experiences, places where you grew up, where you have lived for a really long time, people... *I don't identify with the nation, I identify with the traditions I was raised with and with the food*. So yeah, I don't know how to answer where I come from, because I don't think it's about *where*, I think it's about *who*.

(Angela, 31, third wave)

In this sense the nation is not an abstract imagined community (Anderson, 1983; Robins, 2001), but it implies embodied cultural experience, which involves engagement with family and friends and sharing cultural codes for making sense of oneself and the surrounding world. To be a nation is not about declaring one's identity as such, but it involves a myriad of micro discursive practices through which the nation becomes materialised and performed. Angela's account also shows how the affordances of mobility and temporality, a sense of immediacy, play a major role in facilitating practices that 'do nation'. The ability to communicate frequently and instantly with her family, unconstrained by location, enables Angela to be constantly exposed to many cultural references through which the

nation is reproduced. Apart from FaceTime, she also has a family WhatsApp group chat where she regularly receives messages from her parents and a sibling.

Angela: Sometimes I get a message ‘*ne mogu da te stignem Z*’ [her mum addressing her father, saying I can’t reach you], then I tell her send him a private message. ‘*Maco, da li si za kafu?*’ [Dear, are you for a coffee?], then my brother, mum and dad send something ‘*može za ćevape*’ [mincemeat fingers are fine].

Q: When did you start doing this group messaging?

Angela: Maybe a year and so [2013 or early 2014], when my parents started using smartphones.

Q: And what do you usually talk about?

Angela: About everything. They ask ‘what’s happening?’, everyone sends photos. For example, if my dad has a lunch with his clients in a very nice restaurant he would send us a photo of the view.

Angela’s account illustrates how mediated co-presence, connected presence (Licoppe, 2004) and ambient co-presence (Madianou, 2016) can all be happening at the same time – in one group chat, and all maintain and strengthen strong ties in a different manner. There is a constant flow of messages and conversation circulating in her WhatsApp group chat (Ling & Lai, 2016, p.844); some of these messages are not addressed to her but she is aware of the interaction between other members of her family and this prompts her to directly reply and intervene. Some of these interactions, as Figure 8.1 shows, may be initially perceived as a burden when the recipient is not an intended recipient of the message. One can also be added in a group message on WhatsApp and Viber non-

voluntarily, whereas leaving the message could break the normative expectations of the relationship.



Figure 45: A third wave participant describes her family WhatsApp chat group in a Facebook post.



Yet, when the pre-existing relationship is strong, this almost unavoidable exposure to some cultural references can also take “pleasurable connotations” of “the family’s ‘being together’”, as Gillespie (1995) points out in relation to her study of media consumption among youth of Punjabi origin in Southall, West London. She notes that boys are unwilling to join the family in watching Indian films, but nevertheless they do not leave the room while others are watching, and concludes that “the screen’s ability to serve social interaction in the family tends to override individual preferences” (Gillespie, 1995, p.81). This is evident in Angela’s Facebook post, where she further depicts her family chats and expresses gratitude for providing her with support and a sense of home (Figure 8.1). Strong relationships are also more likely to secure the understanding of the meanings. Unless there is a shared understanding of the meanings, communication practices fail to ‘do nation’ (see Strawson, 1964). As Austin notes, “the performance of an illocutionary act involves the securing of *uptake*” (1962, p.115).

In the same Facebook post, Angela also hashtags her surname. This ostensibly banal ‘familial’ symbol actually takes on some national meanings as the fieldwork findings show. During one of my several encounters with Angela, she said that she felt strongly about her surname because it was one of the few connections she still had with her *roots*, Serbia and the region of the former Yugoslavia. She explained that because her given name was international, and given that neither her nor her parents lived in Serbia, her family name was an important link to her origins. Hence, the frequent emphasis on the surname in her posts can be interpreted as both familial and national practices. This is important to highlight particularly in relation to the discussion on phatic and ritual forms of communication in the following sections of this chapter, whereby the presence of others can be evocative of these common roots and experiences, such as the cities where they lived, their habits, what they ate, what they listened to, their manners of speaking, and ways of perceiving and thinking.

Every year Angela spends time with her family for *slava*. She explained that *slava* was more important to her than Easter or Christmas because it is a patron saint of the family and a holiday that is particular to her culture, thus *slava* represents both family and cultural

practice at the same time. In the quote above, Angela's parents mentioned *cevapi* – pork or beef mincemeat fingers – part of the traditional cuisine of the region of the former Yugoslavia, particularly Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia. On one of many occasions when I spent time with Angela, she received pictures from her bother of traditional Serbian food in a restaurant near Belgrade. While this example of connected presence (Licoppe, 2004) is a bonding experience, it also represents 'doing nation', because, as Angela mentions in the quote, she identifies with the tradition and the food she was raised with, and the people, rather than with an abstract community as the nation-state.

Sharing photos in private chats is quite common for my participants from all three waves. Turkle also finds half of the chat on WhatsApp among teenagers and young adults in the US consists of images (2015, p.35), and criticises this practice as "the flight from conversation" (2015, p.26). My findings indicate that images are crucial for connecting with both wider social circles and important others and that the *connection* does not replace *conversation*, as argued in Chapter 7. Importantly, 'connection' is positively attributed among my participants, and it may lead to conversation particularly in the case of strong ties.

Whenever my cousin goes to Tri šešira ['Three hats', an old famous coffee house in a bohemian quarter] in Belgrade, I see it, you know. Or anywhere in Belgrade. I see where she went and obviously I ask her the next day 'how was it, did you have fun'? That really helps me a lot – seeing pictures. I have to say *that made me much more connected* than before to some extended family and friends who live far away from me. Pictures have definitely changed my world to be honest.

(Ana, 26, third wave)

I remember before the days of smartphones and Instagram, whenever we had guests at home who we had not seen for a while my mother would bring our photo albums to show them family pictures from holidays or celebrations. It would be a constitutive part of long talks with some friends and relatives at the dining table or in the living room. Hence, the role of pictures in creating bonds that Ana describes is not new, the practice has only

changed medium – it now takes place more in an online sphere, but the medium has also shaped the practice in a way that it is more instant and shared simultaneously with more people from different contexts at once. Ana’s example also shows that ambient co-presence is a dynamic practice (Madianou, 2016) because it makes one involved in the lives of others and can facilitate transition to mediated co-presence, by providing one with a topic for initiating a new direct conversation. Ana and her cousin will often tag each other on Instagram or Facebook posts that are related to some ‘internal’ jokes they share on WhatsApp.

Keeping up-to-date with lifestyles and everyday life in Belgrade through pictures of friends and relatives on Instagram in this context has the opposite role to Turkish satellite television in Britain in the study by Aksoy and Robins (2002). Rather than being “an agent of cultural de-mythologisation” (Aksoy & Robins, 2002), it can be argued that these social media are *an agent of “cultural thickening”* (Lofgren, 1995). As Lofgren writes in relation to Swedish broadcasting media, these everyday banal practices on social media can be understood as “micro-physics of learning to belong to the nation-as-home” (1995, p.12). Even though Ana (26, third wave) has never lived in Serbia, she identifies as Serbian, and she credits new means of communication for enabling her to be surrounded by people and cultural practices that support this identity, despite the distance between them.

Oh yes, absolutely, Serbia is my homeland! I have never lived in Serbia, but my mother tongue is Serbian. I speak Serbian with my parents and my brother at home. I have a lot of friends who live in Belgrade and Kragujevac, and my grandparents still live there. I really love to see everyone and to maintain relationships I have built over the years... It is easy for me to connect with people in Serbia because I consider myself Serbian, and we stay in touch via *Facebook* and *WhatsApp*. *WhatsApp is a big thing now because we communicate and call each other anytime, which was not the case before.*

In this quote Ana clearly relates her sense of belonging to the ability to frequently communicate with her family, friends and relatives in Serbia. As she explains, she was not

born in Serbia, but feels that this is her homeland. As Chapter 5 has shown, particularly in relation to the first wave, parents often strive to pass traditions down on their children, but now these practices have become increasingly mediated, and especially so for migrants. Ana showed me her WhatsApp chats, and there were many group messages. Some were with her international friends, one was with her parents and brother, and the other was with her cousin from Kragujevac and their mutual Serbian friends. They mainly shared photos and jokes. These examples demonstrate what was stated earlier in this chapter – that national practices are implicated in a range of other areas of life. They show how these participants can ‘do nation’ transnationally through family practices. For Ana, being Serbian is predicated to some extent on the Serbian Orthodox church. Even though this attitude is more common for first and second wave participants rather than third, Ana’s example also shows why insights from Colic-Peisker’s (2008) study of Croatian diaspora in Australia and Mavra’s (2010) study of Serbian Londoners do not apply to my participants. As elucidated in Chapter 5, these authors argue that ethnicity is central to the lives of working class migrants, but is much less so for middle-class migrants. Conversely, Ana is a young, affluent, highly educated “serial migrant” (Ossman, 2013) with a broad network of international friends who she knew mainly through high school, university and friends, but she also feels passionately as a Serb.

Yeah, I actually went last week [to the church]. I cannot say I am very involved in all activities organised by the church, but I go occasionally, at least once a month on Sunday, just to make sure I *have some part of homeland in me*. And I enjoyed listening to Serbian language. There are usually families with children, like last time at the community centre, they had a presentation or something for children. I associate it a lot with Serbia and *my home*.

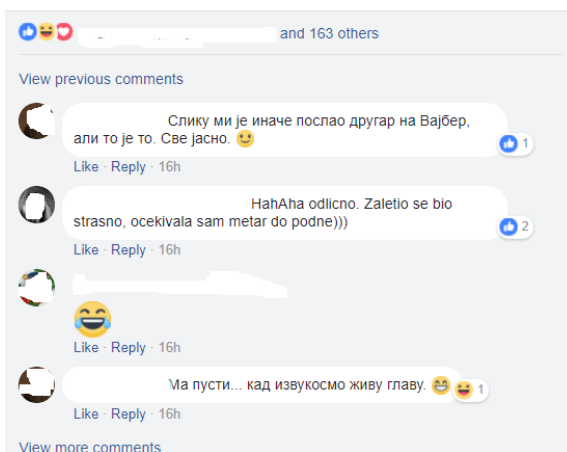
(Ana, 26, third wave)

Ana’s story provides a more sophisticated insight into what was elaborated in Chapter 6 – how privately oriented platforms such as WhatsApp and Viber reinforce national identity, while publicly oriented platform are aimed at redefining national identity. Ana is one of those participants who associates with the emerging phenomenon of ‘Third’ Serbia. She

often expresses banal cosmopolitanism on Instagram and Facebook, and fluctuates between what I termed in Chapter 6 as ‘globalised difference’ and ‘being globalised’. Her posts on Instagram and Facebook represent a cosmopolitan, urban identity with the emphasis on class status, alongside posts of Serbian culture, cuisine and famous people, in particular



**Figure 46: Facebook post of a second wave participant, saying “Today it was snowing in London. Like the snow, like the snowman”.**



**Figure 47: Second wave participant comments: “A friend sent me the photo on Viber, but that’s it. All is clear”.**

... Novak Djokovic.

While there are no significant differences among the participants from different waves in terms of how they employ privately oriented platforms, there are differences in the choice of platform and their discursive strategies. Figure 46 depicts a mockery of the first snow in London in early March 2018. There is a very small snowman in the picture posted by Norman on Facebook with the caption “Like the snow, like the snowman” with the aim to ridicule London’s weather conditions as well

as people who get excited because of very little snow. The picture attracted remarkable attention, many of his Facebook friends (mainly Serbian) were joining in with comments, laughs, hearts and likes. In the comment section below the post, Norman said that a friend had sent him the picture through Viber (Figure 47, first comment, written as “*Bajбер*”). Norman, as explained in Chapter 6, adopts the strategy of counter-stigmatisation (Adler-Nissen, 2014) on Facebook, but this Viber interaction could

also be interpreted in the code. The mockery can be understood as subtle, banal and perhaps a subconscious counter-stigmatisation strategy.

Sharing jokes is one of most common practices. Tara, as mentioned in Chapter 7, has a Viber group called “Balkan’s women” where she regularly exchanges messages with three other Serbian women in the UK – her cousin’s wife, her ‘*kuma*’ (Godmother) and a friend – where they used to send jokes, mainly those popular in the Western Balkans, such as about “Mujo and Haso”. Now they share some funny memes, gossip and occasionally organise dinner. These practices show local appropriations of Viber, specific to the Serbian or former Yugoslav cultural context, thus it can contribute to the arguments that “there is no such a thing as the internet” (Slater & Miller, 2000) and “there are only particular genres of use that have developed for different peoples and regions” (Miller, 2011, p.x). One can also notice the multifaceted purpose of this Viber group, which serves to both offer emotional support, and a place of security and comfort. It was initially started with the aim to provide emotional support, and then it drew on many familiar cultural references from the region of Serbia and other former Yugoslav countries, including its title “Balkan’s women”, and was also used for micro-coordination of meetups.

The group’s title serves to symbolically distinguish this micro online community of four in which Serbian or Yugoslav identity is performed and reproduced. This may further demonstrate how my participants exploit affordances of digital media platforms to negotiate their identities in relation to a wider British society. As observed in its title and jokes they shared, the Serbian identity becomes more inclusive of other (Western) Balkan identities when juxtaposed to other ethnic identities in the context of multinational London, similar to the Caribbean identities when juxtaposed to the West, which as Hall (1990) describes, reaffirms his argument that identities are in an unfinished conversation – always being negotiated and repositioned in relation to a specific context. This is especially striking in the case of supporters of ‘First’ (nationalistic) Serbia, or royalists (see Chapter 5), who in some contexts express a kind of Yugoslav identity – the one that encompasses all differences among peoples from the former Yugoslav republics. But the second generation may be more inclusive in this sense than their parents. Although all four women are based in London, because they live far away from one another and they do not manage to meet on a regular basis, this group primarily serves to maintain close contact. If

Facebook represents ‘new neighbourhoods’ for Serbian Londoners, then Viber (and WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger) enables scalable sociality (Miller et al., 2016) within these neighbourhoods.

Gossips, jokes and small talk that are often dismissed as “irrelevant prattle”, as Marwick notes, in fact “serve to create and maintain emotional connections between members of the community, who make up the networked audience” (2012, p.390). Through sharing regional jokes, they daily subtly reproduce the national and diasporic identity in a mundane fashion. Deutsch notes that national identity consists of similar *recall* or *associations* that people may have, even more so when it comes to connotations of words rather than denotations. He says that “a group of persons having similar characteristics of recall can foretell each other’s responses, catch each other’s allusions and private jokes; they understand each other” (Deutsch, 1966 [1953], p.110). Angela’s insight in this regard is revealing.

Well, I did spend a lot of my childhood in Europe. Here is what I mean, *I grew up with certain food and certain products* that some of my friends [from outside Europe] who moved over here [to London] say ‘oh, we feel so European’, but they don’t, because things I grew up with they didn’t and they don’t know that context. That’s just a basic one, *biscuits*. I think they are French, and [have] chocolate in the middle, I grew up with this and *it is a very European experience*. I don’t think you can find them anywhere else. But we used to eat them, I remember coming back here I am exposed to lot of things that I grew up with that I didn’t experience over ten years because I spent living in ‘two Americas’ [Latin America and the US]. Also with my European co-workers, not the British ones, but the continental ones, German, Italian and French, *we can chat for hours about little things we did as kids or ate as kids. This biscuit is so simple but it was in a way like coming back, rediscovering all those things I knew but forgot because we lived in America.*

The theme of food featured prominently in my participants’ social media feeds, as demonstrated in Chapter 6. On publicly oriented platforms, in relation to wider and more

diverse social circles, it was often employed as a symbol of pride or as a method of informing others of Serbian tradition, whereas on privately oriented platforms, through the recall and common associations the images or talks of food may evoke, it serves as a cohesive element for the ‘insiders’. However, as Angela’s and Tara’s examples demonstrate, these common associations can also have a regional character in the context of Britain. Continental European identity can appear in some contexts more homogenous when encountered with Anglo-American tradition, for instance. As some themes can evoke common associations, so can the presence of important others recall past events and shared identity. Ritual and phatic communication have a main purpose of reconfirming one’s presence, rather than conveying a certain message or content, and is another important form of communication among my participants, as the following section elaborates.

### 8.2.2 Ritual and Phatic Communication

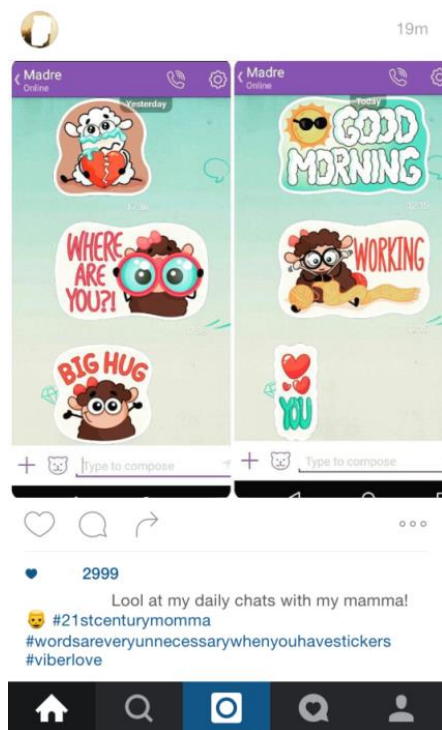


Figure 48: Third wave participant’s Viber chat with her mother.

Ritual mediated interpersonal communication is another sign of the bond that shows each person’s commitment to the relationship (Licoppe, 2004). Marina’s mum, for instance, as mentioned in Chapter 7, calls her every morning at 8am through Viber to wake her up, and sends her many stickers throughout the day. Marina shared an insert of her morning ritual chats with her mother on Instagram with the remark “words are very unnecessary when you have stickers” (Figure 48). This ritualised and phatic communication (Jakobson, 1960), as explained in Chapters 3 and 7, offers emotional reassurance and symbolically reinforces the relationship. As Carey explains, while *the transmission view of communication* focuses on *sending* information and “the extension of messages in space”, *the ritual view of communication* focuses on

*sharing and participating* and “the maintenance of society in time” (2009 [1989], p.5).



Carey further argues that this ritual communication has the role of bringing people together in “fellowship and commonality” and rather than providing information or aiming to alter attitudes, ritual communication provides *confirmation* and “an underlying order of things” (2009 [1989], p.5). Drawing on Durkheim (1954), Goffman (1971) and Collins (2004), Ling (2008) argues that ritual communication promotes *social cohesion*. Several media scholars have emphasised an important role for media rituals in bringing a national audience together (Anderson, 1983; Morley, 1992; Silverstone, 1994). Likewise, interpersonal rituals have integrative effects (Ling, 2008, p.7). *The sharing of mood* seems to be central to interpersonal ritual, according to Ling (2008, pp.45-61), while earlier research on media rituals and ritual news consumption placed more emphasis on *the regular repetition* of the practice. Kristina, whose parents live in north England, in a similar vein, always checks her WhatsApp notifications first thing in the morning because her mum always sends her a message to wish her a good day. These are mainly very simple messages with a few emojis.

In the morning, when I wake up, I go to WhatsApp. My mum usually messages me first, just saying ‘good morning, have a nice day.’ And she is obsessed with emojis. She likes Champagne a lot, like celebration, then sigh, she likes the nails if she says something sassy. She loves the dancing girl in red. Some flowers she sends a lot. Frogs! You know that old story about the frog that fell into a bowl of milk and he thought he would drown but he kept kicking until the milk turned into cheese and he could jump out of it, is story of keep pushing and persevering. When we were doing swimming she kept shouting ‘keep kicking’ and it happened through exams. Also, [she sends] sunflowers meaning ‘happy day’.

(Kristina, 30, second wave)

As Madianou and Miller argue, in some cases the fact of calling or sending a message, may be more important than their content (2012, p.290), representing “the endeavour to start and sustain communication” (Jakobson, 1960, p.5). In “phatic” communication “a presence is guaranteed by expressing a state, feeling, or emotion rather than by constructing a shared experience through relating past events and giving one’s news that the strength of the

interlocutors' mutual engagement in the relationship is guaranteed" (Licoppe, 2004, p.152). The presence of important others always evokes certain sentiments and memories and invites one to position themselves in relation to the others. Furthermore, as Kristina's example illustrates, what for a distant viewer may appear as mere phatic communication, symbols or emojis that often accompany expressions such as "Good morning, have a nice day" may reveal a meaningful story reminiscent of past events or shared experiences. As Ling argues, "the use of symbols, jargon, or totems allows the engagement generated by the event to be carried across time to other situations" and represent "reservoirs of shared energy" (2008, p.10). An emoji of a frog, as Kristina explains, refers to "A Tale of Two Frogs" with a special reference to her and her sister's childhood.

This example also indicates that her childhood was very international. As introduced in Chapter 7, Kristina moved with her family to South Africa at a very young age and came to England in her teens in the 1990s. She settled in London after completing her BA degree. She is very close with her family, and as mentioned in the previous chapter, she has a ritual to speak on the phone to her mother and sister every morning while walking to work. They also often organise trips together. While WhatsApp is their main 'family' platform, they more often use emails for coordinating travels together. This shows how strong relationships depend on a variety of modes and means by which they are maintained and strengthened, but different platforms will serve different purposes. Micro-coordination is another form of communication often observed among my participants, but as will be explained in the next section, it often has a function beyond its initial purpose.

### **8.2.3 Micro-coordination**

Micro-coordination of activities is one of the main purposes of instant messaging groups. But very often the task-oriented purpose of micro-coordination (Ling & Yttri, 2002, p.140) has become intertwined with or even replaced by its expressive and emotional purpose of fostering relationships and creating bonds (Ling & Lai, 2016, p.835). It often happens that one group that was created for the purpose of coordinating a summer holiday does not cease to exist once the holiday is over but acquires a new function or purpose, such as for

organising hang-outs or to “just talk about nothing”, as Alexander says about one of his WhatsApp groups initially created for a holiday on Korcula, Croatia. Besides this one, he has seven other WhatsApp groups: one with his brother, different family groups (his aunt, parents), two people he lives with and former work colleagues. While I was chatting with him for the first time, he received many messages from his flatmates who were coordinating a repair of a fridge in their house. Later, when we went to see an exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts, he received messages from his brother asking him how he felt after their night out together. Every time he would look at his phone instantly as the notification popped on the screen and the screen light turned on, which describes what Ling and Lai (2016) call “ambient-mediated sociation”. This means that intimate and instant forms of interactions assume one’s constant availability, as I have argued earlier in this chapter, but that this also helps us “maintain awareness of the multiple groups in which we are involved” (Ling & Lai, 2016, p.835). Similarly, Mark’s (38, first wave) WhatsApp practices further reveal multiple interactions taking place on WhatsApp, some of which are examples of banal cosmopolitanism and ‘Britishness’.

This guy [showing me on his phone], it is his stag party next week. He was born here in the UK. This is a group message, there are 20 of us; he set up a group just for the stag date. There is one more Serbian guy. We message each other *to coordinate activities*. Then, my brother, his wife and my nephew; and *ujko* and *ujna* [uncle and aunt] are here. So everyone can answer. Everything is sent to ‘UK family’ [a WhatsApp group]. My sister-in-law sent a video of my nephew. *Comrades* [also a WhatsApp group] are friends who support Liverpool, all different ages. Friends, friends [looking at his WhatsApp chats] ... ok, you don’t want to see these pictures, some bizarre wedding pictures... So yeah, WhatsApp is good. But also 90% of my friends would send me an email, because they know I will see it faster. Because I spend a lot of time at work.

This shows that ethnicity is not always central to how my participants use digital media platforms, and this refers to all participants regardless of their class background or the period of migration, which contrasts with the arguments by Mavra (2010) in her study of

Serbian Londoners. Some of these communication practices can also facilitate banal cosmopolitanism (cf. Beck, 2016; Glick-Schiller, 2008; Pratsinakis, 2017). However, most of the practices on privately oriented platforms observed in the fieldwork actually represent banal nationalism. However, they could not be understood as long-distance nationalism (Anderson, 1992) in the way that Boris's (51, second wave) uses of Twitter can be interpreted as such. As discussed in Chapter 7, Boris uses Twitter to engage in political and current affairs in Serbia and occasionally to mobilise national support for certain causes or to encourage people to vote in general elections in Serbia. Nevertheless, the following account provides an example of both long-distance nationalism and 'doing nation' through mediated interpersonal communication and micro-coordination was one of its main functions. In the event of devastating floods that engulfed Serbia and Bosnia in spring 2014, Ana joined the other two women at her university in organising fundraising to help the country. Facebook Messenger, which had just been introduced at this time, was the key platform they used to coordinate activities.

*But when floods happened she [a Serbian friend whom she met at university] sent me a message through Facebook. She helped us to get a stand in front of the main building. They [her friend and another girl from the same university] baked some gibanica [a Serbian dish mentioned in Chapter 5], cakes and stuff. Some people bought cakes, some just gave us money. We really connected. Two of us went with the third girl with her car to buy food and hygienic products that could be useful to send them – blankets, pillows... we were advised not to send money because of the corruption. We bonded in the car, we listened to the Serbian music and it was really hilarious. Then I went away, but when I came back I invited her to my New Year's Eve party, she came and brought gibanica. She stayed the whole night, and posted a nice status on Facebook about that '7 days in 2016, I managed to do this [and] one point was to reconnect with an old friend but on a much deeper level'.*

The role of diaspora during times of crisis in their country of origin – such as in helping with the relief recovery following natural disasters or alleviating poverty in the forms of sending remittances or donating money to schools and hospitals – has been widely

researched (see Bernardi, 2016; Esnard & Sapat, 2016; Hawkins & Mauer, 2010). Some of my participants (first and second wave) were also very involved in fundraising and organising various types of aid to help hospitals and rebuild schools in Serbia in the 1990s and following the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia. Most of my participants who belong to Serbian organisations in London also often engage in fundraising aimed at alleviating poverty or improving health care in Serbia. For instance, Tara organised a fundraiser for a hospital in Belgrade and circulated messages through LinkedIn and Facebook Messenger to all her Serbian contacts, and many replied positively. Some of these participants, mainly in the first and second wave, were also involved in fundraising to help residents affected by the Grenfell Tower fire, as mentioned in Chapter 5. Thus these participants feel as much of a sense of allegiance to the host country as they do to their country of origin, perhaps to a greater degree than the third wave participants. For most studies on the role of diaspora during the crisis in their country of origin, fundraising was of primary concern and the research has thus focused on the subsequent social and economic aspects. By contrast, in this thesis, I draw on the example of fundraising to focus on how identities are enacted and reproduced through mediated interpersonal communication practices. These forms of organised action at the moments of crisis, as Billig (1996) originally argued in *Banal nationalism*, are made possible precisely thanks to banal symbols of nationalism that reproduce the nation on a daily basis. Everyday interpersonal communications that ‘do nation’ through the media described in this chapter reproduce national identity and thus enable this sense of national solidarity and unity.

Most of the communication practices discussed in this chapter have not necessarily been intended as national practices. Indeed, as Bourdieu notes, “the explanation agents may provide of their own practice... conceals, even from their own eyes, the true nature of their practical mastery, i.e. *learned ignorance*, a mode of practical knowledge not comprising knowledge of its own principles” (1977, p.19). Moreover, most people do not routinely use the word ‘practices’ to describe their activities, they will rather use terms such as talking to mother (Morgan, 1996, p.189), as Morgan observes: “the very word, unqualified, stands for a theoretical project which is different from the projects engaged upon by the social actors concerned” (1996, p.191). Some of these examples can be interpreted as family practices,

such as ‘talking to parents’, but they are also examples of ‘doing nation’, because through these discursive practices nation is made alive and a set of disposition towards the nation is being reproduced. As Bourdieu argues, cultural capital (often) “remains marked by its early acquisition” (1986, p. 49), that is the cultural milieu and family one has been brought up in. As has been shown in this chapter, the ability to regularly speak the Serbian language, or share experiences and talks about food, provides a social cohesion and fosters a sense of belonging. Even the awareness of the presence of others can invoke certain sentiments and memories that can be national as much as familial.

### **8.3 Conclusion**

Starting with the question about who Serbian Londoners are, Chapter 5 has found that there is no one single Serbian ‘community’ in London and that there is a remarkable diversity among Serbian Londoners in terms of their personal backgrounds and migration histories. It has been argued that the period of migration offers greatest explanatory potential for understanding the differences among my participants in the ways in which they identify and use digital media, because each period was marked by certain events in Serbia and the former Yugoslavia that underpinned emigration, such as communism, civil war, and democratic transition. Accordingly, three waves of migration were identified (1945-1990, 1991-2003, and 2004-2013), and each wave is also internally diverse in terms of age, gender, class, and experiences of my participants. The described differences between the three waves do not always refer to the digital media platforms they use, but more importantly to their identity performances and discourses. What all participants have in common, nonetheless, is an orientation to Serbian identity – although what it means to be Serbian may take on quite different meanings among them.

Moving from there, Chapter 6 considered how Serbian Londoners from the three waves negotiate their identities in polymedia environments in relation to the dominant discourses in the UK. It has found most participants perceive the Serbian identity as stigmatised, and social surveillance on social media plays a major role in the ways in which they navigate

polymedia environments. On this basis, Chapter 6 distinguished between how these participants perform their identities on publicly and privately oriented platforms, arguing that strategies taken on publicly oriented platforms aim to redefine the identity, whereas on the privately oriented platforms they lead to reinforcing the identity. It has then focused on examining the identity performances on publicly oriented platforms. Chapter 7 considered the nuances between different platforms defined as publicly or privately oriented, such as between Viber and WhatsApp, or Facebook and Instagram, and how they are employed to manage strong, weak and latent ties (Haythornthwaite, 2002). It has found that these participants mainly use Facebook for weak ties, whereas platforms such as WhatsApp and Viber are used for strong ties. It particularly discussed how Facebook facilitates ‘new neighbourhoods’ of Serbian Londoners, often divided along the lines of the period of migration, at the same time fostering a diasporic imaginary and often reproducing differences among the three waves. It has also discussed the role of Viber as a symbolic marker of belonging because it can signal the type of the relationship my participants have with people in Serbia.

The present chapter has focused on to examine communication practices on privately oriented platforms and how these practices maintain and strengthen strong ties, as argued in Chapter 7, and consequently reinforce national identities, but also reproduce banal cosmopolitanism, as argued in Chapter 6. The chapter has argued that national practices are embedded in many spheres of life, including family practices, and considered the role of mediated interpersonal communication in ‘doing nation’. Four elements of mediated interpersonal communication in particular have been examined: three types of mediated co-presence – mediated co-presence, connected presence (Licoppe, 2004) and ambient co-presence (Madianou, 2016), ritual (Carey, 2009 [1989]) and phatic (Jakobson, 1960) function of communication, and micro-coordination (Madianou & Miller, 2012; Ling & Lai, 2016). Some main themes and purposes of group chats on WhatsApp and Viber are sharing jokes, experiences and gossip, seeking advice, micro-coordinating activities, or simply providing emotional support and gestures of care. However, discourses and content vary between participants from different waves. Most of these interactions may seem to be irrelevant trivia to a disengaged observer, but in fact they all serve to strengthen identities

in subtle ways, because the nation comes into being through discursive practices of sharing experiences, memories, and habits (Deutsch, 1966 [1953]), and exists only as long as it is performed (Baumann, 1996).

For most of my participants who left Serbia at a young age and have lived in several other places before moving to London, all experience of and relation to Serbia they have is through their family practices, such as cooking Serbian dishes, discussing history, or the ‘compulsory’ celebration of *slava*. Thus this chapter has argued that even the presence of important others can be evocative of these common experiences and memories. As the fieldwork findings have shown, ambient co-presence and phatic communication are no less significant than direct mediated communication. They all play an important role in reaffirming the bonds, particularly when the pre-existing relationship is strong (see Madianou and Miller, 2012, Madianou, 2016). When the relationship is strong, even unwitting exposure to some cultural references can take “pleasurable connotations” as “family being together” (Gillepsie, 1995). Angela would have arguably been much less welcoming of unintended messages on WhatsApp from her parents about *cevapi* unless they already had a strong relationship. In this sense, understanding the role of media in managing and supporting relationships can help us understand how identities are shaped and sustained. As Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrated, family histories have a significant bearing on the ways in which these participants identify. This chapter has argued that the nation is not necessarily an abstract community, but actually represents embodied cultural practices such as engaging with family and friends.

The chapter has also emphasised the role of *recall* – common associations, especially in terms of connotative meanings of words and jokes – as a powerful tool for reproducing a national identity (Deutsch, 1966 [1953]). The chapter has also pointed out that some affordances of social media, such as mobility, storage capacity, spreadability, scalability, and temporality (Baym, 2015; boyd, 2011), have particularly contributed to the effectiveness of communication and consequently to the maintenance of nation identity (cf. Deutsch, 1966 [1953]). The chapter has also shown that visual cues particularly contribute to the expressive richness of mediated communication, where sharing pictures of everyday



life and popular culture in Serbia among close friends and relatives through WhatsApp or Instagram are agents of “cultural thickening” (Lofgren, 1995) among my participants rather than “an agent of cultural de-mythologisation” (Robins & Aksoy, 2000).

The chapter has finally contributed to the central arguments of this thesis, which shifts focus to mediated interpersonal communication for understanding how national identities are maintained among diasporas. These practices, however, do not preclude banal cosmopolitanism and the latter is often implicated in practices of ‘doing nation’, as shown in Chapters 6 and 7. Furthermore, the practices of ‘doing nation’ do not produce one homogenous diaspora and therefore these findings reiterate the arguments developed in earlier chapters that there are no core values concerning what being Serbian is (cf. Bonikowski, 2017, p.148), and that the communicative success of ‘doing nation’ depends on a type of relationship (who speaks and who their audiences are) and social context (defined by the affordances of platforms).

## Chapter 9: Conclusion

In this thesis, I have explored how Serbian Londoners navigate polymedia environments and negotiate their identities on different digital media platforms, particularly focusing on their ordinary or banal expressions of nationalism and cosmopolitanism. In so doing, I have also attempted to investigate whether different platforms invite different identities and whether there is anything culturally specific in the ways in which these participants engage with these various media. I have also argued that nations come into being and are sustained through everyday interpersonal communication that has increasingly become mediated, particularly for Serbian Londoners. I have also considered the role of mediated interpersonal communication and different types of mediated co-presence in shaping national and cosmopolitan identities.

Chapter 1 set the scene for the research by exploring the historical complexities of the region of the former Yugoslavia and the ongoing divisiveness of the Serbian national identity. As explained, the Serbian community in Britain and in London has been under researched, and existing literature on British Serbs or Serbian Londoners has not considered the role of media in shaping and reproducing national and cosmopolitan identities among such people. In Chapter 1, I also briefly reflected on the context of Britain today in the wake the June 2016 vote to leave the EU, and Britain's relationships with Serbia since the early twentieth century. In the present chapter, I aim to synthesise all key arguments and findings of this research, and to reflect on new concepts introduced in this thesis. I seek to explain how this analysis may deepen our understanding of the relationship between (national and cosmopolitan) identities and digital media, and how it may contribute to the fields of media and communications, media and diaspora, and media and nationalism.

I start this chapter by summarising the key concepts and perspectives that I drew upon in Chapters 2 and 3, where I also reconsidered some existing concepts and proposed new concepts. I then briefly outline how the research was conducted, as well as some of the methodological issues that arose. This is followed by discussion on how the findings in

Chapters 5-8 answer the research questions, and what can be learned that could inform the more general debate of the symbiosis of digital media environments and society. Finally, I suggest avenues for further research of the questions that have been raised in this thesis but not fully answered due to the scope of this thesis.

## **9.1 Review of the Theoretical Framework**

### **9.1.1 National and Cosmopolitan Identities as *Performative and Relational***

Following Deutsch (1953), I have posited that national identities come into being through everyday communication practices and exist only as long as they are performed (cf. Baumann, 1996). Drawing on work in philosophy and sociology about doing things discursively (see Austin, 1962), I proposed to consider practices that ‘do nation’, and have argued that we should think of national identities not in static terms as ‘the nation’, but as a verb: ‘doing nation’. This approach then invites us to consider how these research participants ‘do nation’ through different platforms. I considered whether Anderson’s (1992) concept of long-distance nationalism can be applied to studying ordinary communication practices. If so, I considered which platforms facilitate long-distance nationalism among Serbian Londoners, if any, and whether any platforms have the role of “an agent of cultural de-mythologisation”, as Turkish satellite television does, according to Robins and Aksoy (2000). In line with this analytical framework, I have taken the modernist-constructivist approach to nationalism that understands nations not as predicated on a common ethnic origin, as perennialists would argue, but as “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1983) brought about by certain *socio-economic changes* (Heywood, 1992, p.177), that can be thought of as common means of communication. This perspective urges us to analyse national identities from below in terms of the everyday practices of ordinary people (Hobsbawm, 1992 [1990], p.10).

Accordingly, I have also drawn on the understanding of ethnicity as a relational difference rather than a fixed set of attributes that only some segments of one population have (see Giddens, 2001; Young, 2011 [1990]). Ethnicity has often been used just to demarcate

diasporic groups that do not adhere to the standards of the dominant population. Hence, the concepts of ethnicity and diaspora have been closely associated. I challenged this position particularly in Chapters 5 and 7, where I highlighted the remarkable diversity of Serbian Londoners, showing that their everyday communication practices and identifications can also go beyond diasporic and national boundaries, and can be perceived as unremarkable, ‘globalised’, and cosmopolitan. In Chapter 2, I have proposed a definition of *diaspora as a relational stance*. I followed Brubaker’s definition of *diaspora as a stance* – “a category of practice” (2005, p.12) – because it implies nuance, process and change, but argued that Brubaker’s position is still limited because he favours an “active” stance, whereas diasporic identity should be understood as contextual and relational, drawing on Hall (1990).

Following Hall’s (1990) understanding of identity as relational and a *positioning*, I have taken a bottom-up approach to studying cosmopolitanism and nationalism as identities that are lived and performed in everyday life, constituted of *a set of practices and dispositions*. I have drawn upon the concepts of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) and ordinary cosmopolitanism (Woodward & Skribis, 2007; Ong, 2009). Billig (1995) argues that the nation is reproduced daily through banal, unnoticed and taken-for-granted practices and symbols, such as the use of deictic words or flags on public buildings. According to Billig, it is these daily banal reproductions of nation that enable the mobilisation of national sentiments at moments of crisis. Billig’s emphasis on the importance of daily reproductions of the nation also highlights one of two main aspects of ‘doing nation’ which is nation’s performative character: identity is relational and performative. I have also made the distinction between my concept of ‘doing nation’, Billig’s (1995) concept of banal nationalism, and Anderson’s (1992) concept of long-distance nationalism, explaining that the notion of ‘doing nation’ primarily refers to micro-working of discursive practices through which the nation comes into being and is performed. On the other hand, Anderson’s concept of long-distance nationalism is more concerned with organised forms of expressions of nationalism among diasporas, such as those aimed at subverting political systems in the homeland, while Billig’s concept of banal nationalism does not focus on interpersonal communication and has not been developed in relation to a diasporic context.

Moreover, ‘doing nation’ not only refers to a set of practices and disposition, but also to the condition of national identities.

In this thesis, I have sought to examine whether the concept of banal nationalism is applicable to the case of Serbian Londoners given Serbia’s turbulent recent history and deep-rooted dividedness on their national identity. Spasic (2017) points out that expressions of Serbian national identity are always fraught with tensions, and thus the national flag cannot hang limply and unnoticed on public buildings – it always evokes tense sentiments due to the war of the 1990s, and its emblem is also linked to the monarchist era. She rightly asks which banal nationalism led to the hot nationalism of the 1990s, given so many discontinuities in the flag and Serbian recent history, as the nationalism before this time could be termed as “Yugoslav banal nationalism”. Drawing on insights from media audience studies, I have argued that every symbol is polyvalent, which means that people do not necessarily interpret media texts and symbols in a dominant code (see Madianou, 2007). I have thus challenged one of Billig’s key premises – that banal nationalism is largely unnoticed and subconscious – and argued that banal manifestations of nationalism can also be a matter of strategic efforts in some contexts. Although there has been empirical evidence that banal does not mean unnoticed in all contexts and for all people (see Goodge, 2017; Wallem, 2017), this attribute of banal nationalism has not so far been explicitly enough challenged by other scholars. In this regard, I have also emphasised that nations should not be thought of as a coherent and homogenous whole that possess some core values. In fact, following Bonikowski (2017), I have suggested that there may be more in common among similarly disposed British and Serbian Londoners than among Serbian Londoners themselves. Accordingly, in reply to Spasic’s (2017) question about which banal nationalism in Serbia led to the hot nationalism of the 1990s, it can be argued that there is not necessarily one banal nationalism. As my findings show, banal expressions of nationalism among Serbian Londoners are often differently framed among those who undertake ‘stigma recognition’ and ‘counter-stigmatisation strategy’, as will be explained later in this chapter.

To date, there has also been a lack of empirical investigation of cosmopolitanism from a bottom-up perspective. Cosmopolitan identity is also a matter of the ordinary as much as of the extraordinary. It is performed and reproduced through mundane everyday practices such as “habits of eating, manners of speaking, ways of seeing” (Ong, 2009, p.458). Thus, I have followed Skrbis and Woodward’s understanding of cosmopolitanism as *a set of practices and dispositions* (2007, p.734) and that no one is fully and always cosmopolitan, because cosmopolitan identity is also negotiated in relation to a particular context (Woodward & Skribis, 2007, p.735). I have argued that banal cosmopolitan orientation includes awareness of other cultures, cross-cultural competencies, and, crucially, willingness to engage with other cultures and the understanding of the other that does not employ a referential system of one’s own culture. In this sense, I have differentiated banal cosmopolitanism from globalism and what I have called ‘being globalised’, following what Georgiou (2013) terms the “neoliberal celebration of difference”, which aims to commodify difference to benefit from it. As Beck contends, globalism does not have an “inspirational force” that mobilises and stimulates people (2002, p.40). I have also argued that cosmopolitanism should not be perceived as an elitist ideal, referring to empirical studies that have demonstrated that the ability to travel and encounters with different cultures do not necessarily lead to a greater understanding of the other. Finally, I have contended that cosmopolitanism and nationalism in its original form and meanings (i.e. liberal nationalism) are not antagonistic; in fact, they are compatible because both share the core values of difference, freedom and civil rights (see Cheah, 2006; Delanty 2006). I then discussed the role of digital media in the context of migration to understand what role such media might play in discursive shifts among Serbian Londoners, from banal nationalism to banal cosmopolitanism (cf. Madianou, 2005), in relation to different audiences and social contexts facilitated by different platforms.

### **9.1.2 From Digital Media to Media Environments**

I have taken the socio-technical approach to understanding the relationship between digital media and society which considers both the architecture of digital media and how people in a particular location and from particular socio-cultural backgrounds appropriate such

media. The socio-technical approach posits that there is mutual shaping between technology and society, and views technology and society not as separate spheres influencing each other, but as mutually constitutive (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999, p.41). This approach argues there is “no single dominant shaping force” (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999, p.28), but it depends on a range of social, political, economic and cultural factors. This approach recognises a certain degree of “interpretative flexibility” in the ways in which people engage with technology (Pinch & Bijker, 1984). Social media are not neutral spaces; they have certain affordances that *enable* and *constrain* interactions among users, and create certain dynamics (Baym, 2010; boyd, 2010; Hutchby, 2014; McVeigh-Schultz & Baym, 2015; Neff & Nagy, 2014; Papacharissi, 2010). Several definitions of affordances were provided in Chapter 3, but following the work of boyd (2014), Madianou and Miller (2012), and Marwick and boyd (2014), this thesis has drawn on definitions that understand affordances to represent the interplay of platforms’ properties and design, on the one hand, and individual users’ practices as well as social norms, on the other.

In line with this approach, I have drawn on Madianou and Miller’s (2012) concept of polymedia to refer to proliferating new media as an integrated environment of communicative opportunities where every platform is defined in relation to all other available platforms (Madianou, 2014a, p.330; Madianou, 2014b, p.670). In contrast to other concepts that also refer to media as environments, which implies interdependency between various platforms, the distinctive characteristic of the concept of polymedia, as Madianou (2014a, 2014b) emphasises, is that it focuses on micro-workings of mediated communication and considers why people use one platform over another. It starts from the premise that different platforms have different affordances, social norms and intended publics and then considers how people exploit these affordances of social media to manage their relationships. Hence, polymedia also concerns an *emotional intent* in how people use different platforms (Madianou, 2014a; Madianou, 2014b). In polymedia environments even non-participation becomes meaningful. The choice not to use a certain platform can mean that an individual wants to avoid a certain type of interaction with certain people (Madianou, 2014b, pp.676-771). I have employed this concept to study how Serbian

Londoners navigate digital media environments to manage their identities, with a focus on their banal expressions of nationalism and cosmopolitanism.

I also examined whether and how affordances and intended audiences of different platforms may shape the ways in which Serbian Londoners ‘do nation’ through everyday mediated communication. People try to imagine who their audiences are on social networking sites to manage their self-presentation online (boyd, 2010, p.44), and as Goffman (1959) also argued, a person’s audience has a formative role in their self-presentation. Hence, I have considered the consequences of social surveillance as an inherent characteristic of social media (Andrejevic, 2004; Marwick, 2012; Tokunaga, 2010). As explained in Chapter 3, social surveillance is different to traditional surveillance because the former leads to *self-management*: it represents “the internalisation of the surveilled gaze” (Marwick, 2012, p.381). Social networking sites are designed for people to look at and be looked at – to both broadcast themselves but also to see what others are up to (Joinson, 2008; Lampe et al., 2006; Marwick, 2012). Consequently, online performances of identities are in most cases *strategic*. People create their content with a particular audience in mind; they view their own content through the eyes of other people (Marwick, 2012, p.378).

As part of a socio-technical approach, this thesis has also taken a domestication of technology approach, arguing that social media have become so deeply *incorporated* in our daily lives and routines, and that people *appropriate* these media and also *ascribe new meanings* according to their culture and individual needs (Silverstone, Hirsch & Morley 1992; Silverstone, 1994; Silverstone & Haddon, 1996). Slater and Miller (2000) and Miller (2010) argue that the Internet and Facebook do not have universal meanings, but we need to consider how people within one culture and in a particular location appropriate such media. Following these arguments, I have considered whether any social media platforms have become ‘Serbianised’ in the way that Facebook is being “Trinidadianised,” according to Miller (2010), and if so, how. To understand how these cultural codes are reproduced I have argued we need to consider the role of mediated interpersonal communication. By following the work of Austin (1962) and Bourdieu (1992), as argued in Chapter 2, the communicative success of ‘doing nation’ depends on three factors: the authority of the one



who speaks; their audience; and the social context. Therefore, it is important to consider social ties and relationships.

The chapter finally discusses three types of mediated co-presence – mediated co-presence, connected presence (Licoppe, 2004) and ambient co-presence (Madianou, 2016) – to analyse how social ties and relationships are managed and maintained. The concept of polymedia enables us to look at micro discursive practices on various platforms through how Serbian Londoners manage their relationships and perform identities. The thesis then considers how Serbian Londoners negotiate their national and cosmopolitan identities on different platforms, trying to understand what the role of social surveillance on social media is and the affordances are in this sense, and whether there is anything distinctive in their practices. Finally, this thesis also considers the role of mediated interpersonal communication in ‘doing nation’.

To explore the outlined research problems, I conducted ethnographic research, including traditional participant observation, online ethnography and auto-ethnography, as well as in-depth interviews with 40 participants in the period between July 2015 and November 2018. The choice of approach was driven by my theoretical framework. Equal numbers of men and women were recruited based on their Serbian origin through a snowball technique. All participants were adults and had lived in London for at least two years prior to July 2015 when this research commenced. Thematic and discourse analysis were applied to interpret and analyse the collected data.

## **9.2 Overview of the Findings**

The results of this study have shown that there is no one single Serbian diaspora in London. Three waves of migration have been identified: 1945-1990, 1990-2003, and 2003-2013. Each wave is diverse in terms of class, age and experiences of these participants, while the second wave is the most heterogeneous. While most literature on migration has focused on generational differences (see Gillespie, 1995), this study has shown that the period of migration has a greater explanatory potential because each wave was triggered by certain

events in the former Yugoslavia, which could be broadly defined as communism, the civil war, and democratic changes and prosperity. Participants within these three waves tend to show different characteristic and communication practices. Within the first wave, I identified three groups of people: royalists or Chetniks who mostly arrived shortly after the Second World War; ‘young adventure seekers’ who arrived in the 1970s and 1980s – mainly people in their 20s from working class backgrounds who were seeking an adventure; and the UK-born (the second generation). The second generation of Serbian Londoners belongs to the first wave in terms of their characteristics and communication practices, with the two exceptions of the participants who were born in the UK while their parents were temporarily working or studying in the UK and shortly after moved back to Serbia where they grew up, later returning to the UK as adults. In these two instances, the participants showed more in common with other participants who arrived in London and the UK in the same period, hence one UK-born participant was categorised within the second wave and the other within the third wave.

The greatest influx of people from the region of the former Yugoslavia took place in the 1990s, which is why the second wave is the most diverse. This wave not only consists of refugees fleeing war-affected areas of Yugoslavia, but also ‘urban youth’ who came in the early 1990s, and self-proclaimed ‘atypical Serbs’ who arrived in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The motives of the ‘urban youth’ were either escaping conscription or those who came to the UK shortly before the war began and became ‘stuck’ there when the war started. The decision to migrate among the self-proclaimed ‘atypical Serbs’ was mainly made in relation to overall economic, social, political and cultural ruin. These participants were reluctant to identify as Serbs mainly because they wanted to disassociate themselves with what they perceived to be the negative connotations of the Serbian identity – linked to the nationalism of the 1990s. Some also wanted to disassociate themselves with other Serbian Londoners, while others were media professionals, such as journalists, media managers, and marketing experts. The third wave mainly represents young professionals (‘transferees’ within international companies) and students, as well as a few participants who married UK citizens.

However, motives for migration and the class background of these participants were actually very complex. There was often a mix of interrelated motives and a discrepancy between different types of capital that constitute a social class, for example some participants were relatively well off but did not have a university degree and vice versa. Thus I argued in Chapter 5 that established sociological categories of migrants, such as economic and lifestyle migrants, are not applicable to the case of Serbian Londoners. Due to these reasons, my findings are also in contrast to some other migration studies, such as Mavra's (2010) study of Serbian Londoners or Colic-Peisker's (2008) study of Croatians in Australia and America. Mavra, for instance, contends that more affluent Serbian Londoners show looser ethnic affiliations (2013, p.15). Similarly, Colic-Peisker distinguishes between working class Australian Croats, for whom ethnicity is central to their lives, and middle class Australian Croats, whose lives revolve around their career and professional ties (2006, p.220).

I have not argued that class is unimportant but that there are no clear patterns and correlations between class background and the lifestyles these participants have in Britain and the ways in which they identify. I have found that family histories are more important. Serbian Londoners are also very diverse in terms of where they live in London. Many Serbs in the first wave, and to some degree in the second wave, live in areas of West London, such as Ealing Broadway, Shepherd's Bush, Holland Park, and Acton. However, there was no single geographically bounded place or field where my research took place, because most Serbian Londoners have become spread across London, as other studies have documented (see Bajic-Hajdukovic, 2008), particularly in relation to migrations after 2003. I have also reflected on the role of London as the site of my study and concluded that most participants are drawn to London either for its cosmopolitan character or 'Britishness'. What these participants have appreciated about London depends on where they stand, for those who express a more cosmopolitan outlook, London is perceived as cosmopolitan, while those who have a pronounced Serbian identity and identify less in cosmopolitan terms emphasised their admiration for British traditions. I first described who Serbian Londoners are to contextualise the findings on communication practices and identities, and to gain a deeper understanding of the analysis that followed.

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The findings showed that most participants perceive Serbian national identity as stigmatised due to the legacy of the civil war and the 1990s, regardless of whether they feel shame for the events or not. Most participants employ different strategies on different platforms in coping with the perceived stigma and in redefining what it means to be Serbian. I identified two dominant discursive strategies that, by drawing on Goffman (1963) and Adler-Nissen (2014), I called *destigmatisation strategies*, and these can be divided into *stigma recognition* and *counter-stigmatisation*. These strategies depend on the period of migration and the choice of platform and can be related to the division between the so-called ‘First’ and ‘Other’ Serbia, as explained in Chapter 6. Participants who employ counter-stigmatisation strategy are usually associated with ‘First’ or nationalistic Serbia, mainly within first and some among the second wave – the ‘urban youth’. This strategy mainly consists of an anti-West and Eurosceptic stance oriented to mocking and ridiculing their policies and politics. This includes ridiculing Serbian pro-West and pro-EU oriented politics as well. On the other hand, people who employ a stigma recognition strategy are mainly associated with ‘Other’ or civic Serbia. I have also identified the emerging phenomenon of ‘Third’ Serbia, which is also predicated on the stigma recognition strategy, and which aims to reconcile national and cosmopolitan identities. However, the distinctions between these discursive strategies and their manifestations are not cast in stone. In some contexts, some people may oscillate between different positions.

My findings have reconfirmed that social surveillance on social media does shape identity performances and self-presentation among my participants. Accordingly, I have distinguished between publicly oriented platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, and privately oriented platforms such as WhatsApp, Viber and FaceTime. Banal nationalism and banal cosmopolitanism are often expressed on publicly oriented platforms with an aim of *correcting* the national identity, whereas banal nationalism on privately oriented platforms often leads to *reinforcing* national identities. Banal cosmopolitanism is often embraced as part of stigma recognition strategy among third wave participants and some within the second to redefine Serbian identity and remove the perceived stigma. Meanwhile, banal nationalism is part of both stigma recognition and counter-stigmatisation

strategies. But there are differences in the framing of banal nationalism between the two strategies, whereby banal nationalism as a manifestation of stigma recognition aims to inform others of the positive aspects of Serbian identity and culture, while banal nationalism as an expression of counter-stigmatisation strategy aims to present Serbian identity as superior. Some themes, such as food and landscapes, are common for all participants, but it is their framing that distinguishes the strategies employed.

I have also identified a *new identity politics*, which I call '*globalised difference*', and it is closely associated with 'Third' Serbia, mainly expressed among third and some second wave participants. The key to this strategy is a common saying among the Serbs, '*Svetsko, a nase*', meaning 'Global, but ours', and the key emblem of this strategy is the figure of tennis player Novak Djokovic. I have defined *globalised difference* as the everyday, subtle and spontaneous practices that attempt to reassert difference, to assign positive attributes to it by stating that one is at the same time different and belongs to the world. This strategy was made possible both by London's metropolitan character where different cultures live in close proximity as well as by social surveillance of social media. I have argued that this new identity politics differs from other identity politics such as Spivak's (1987) concept of strategic essentialism and Young's (2011 [1990]) discussion of the politics of difference in four main aspects. First, *globalised difference* does not necessarily come from oppression or discrimination; it can merely come from the awareness that one does not fit the standards of the dominant group, such as by having a 'foreign-sounding' name. Second, globalised difference does not attempt to make a subculture; on the contrary, it attempts to present a difference as it has global appeal and cosmopolitan character. This becomes most evident when my participants juxtapose their national identity to other identities – such as professional, or interests and hobbies in short biographies on social media, such as Instagram. They might include a Serbian national flag alongside descriptions like 'lawyer' and 'Londoner'. Third, globalised difference does not refer to organised forms of identity politics, but to spontaneous, subtle and ordinary forms of identity politics that belong to the realm of the everyday. Accordingly, the goal is not to create separate organisations. Hence, I have concluded that not every new instance of identity politics is necessarily an "enemy of cosmopolitan society", as Beck (2002) fears.

I have also differentiated between banal cosmopolitanism and ‘being globalised’, also discussed in Chapter 3, whereby the former assumes an understanding of the other, while the latter refers to the “neoliberal celebration of difference” (Georgiou, 2013). I have challenged Spasic’s (2017) position and shown that banal nationalism is applicable to the context of Serbian Londoners. First, the national flag does not seem to cause as much controversy among Serbian Londoners as Spasic suspects. More importantly, there are myriad manifestations of banal nationalism – most prominent are food, history and tourist attractions. For instance, a prominent strategy among the first wave and some second wave participants is that they aim to inform their foreign friends and followers on social media about Serbia’s landscapes and traditions, practices similar to Trinidadians’ uses on Facebook, according to Miller (2010). Also very prominent among first and second wave is an emphasis on the historically close ties between the British and Serbian royal families, and during WWI, as Chapter 5 explained. Furthermore, the theme of Novak Djokovic is not just an example of *ecstatic nationalism* (Skey, 2011), as Spasic (2017) claims. My findings have demonstrated that the fascination with Djokovic persists and transcends into the domain of the everyday through various creative practices on social media platforms, such as use of a tennis ball emoji on WhatsApp statuses.

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In Chapter 7 I explored the nuances between different digital media platforms that were grouped and defined as publicly and privately oriented in Chapter 6. By doing so, I have considered the further consequences of social surveillance of social media, and have also attempted to examine whether, to what extent and in which contexts Anderson’s (1992) concept of long-distance nationalism, and Robins and Aksoy’s (2000) argument about diasporic media as “an agent of cultural de-mythologisation” could apply to the ways in which Serbian Londoners navigate the polymedia environment and negotiate their identities on different platforms. I introduced two portraits for each of the three waves to reflect on the communication practices of my participants in their everyday lives. Overall findings have shown some similarities in communication practices and media use between participants from the three waves, as well as similarities with the general UK adult population (Ofcom, 2015-2017; Ipsos MORI, 2015-2017), but also notable differences

between the three waves in terms of their uses of Facebook and Viber, thus reconfirming arguments about the shifting boundaries of identities – from banal cosmopolitanism to banal nationalism – depending on the platform and in relation to different others (see Madianou, 2005).

All participants use the Internet daily and most use a variety of social media platforms. With the proliferation of smartphones, social and mobile media have become profoundly *incorporated* into everyday lives – this reconfirms the thesis of the domestication of technology approach (Silverstone, Hirsch & Morley, 1992; Silverstone, 1994; Silverstone & Haddon, 1996; Spigel, 1992), as explained in Chapter 2. There have been some differences in terms of the age and gender of participants, whereby women and those under 40 were more likely to use Instagram – younger participants also often use a wider range of SNSs and are keener users of smartphones, while tablets are prominent in households with children and grandparents at a distance. Women and those under 40 are also more likely to express banal cosmopolitanism, whereas the practices of ‘doing nation’ vary according to waves of migration rather than age or gender. The most prominent digital media platforms are Facebook, WhatsApp and Viber. Facebook is mainly used for maintaining weak and latent ties (cf. Haythornthwaite, 2002), with WhatsApp and Viber for strong ties. Only three participants did not have a Facebook account, but even in these instances, Facebook was most talked about in the interviews even without a specific question about it. For instance, Mark called LinkedIn his “corporate Facebook” and his Instagram his “lifestyle Facebook”. He made a conscious choice not to participate on Facebook to avoid contact with some co-workers, and LinkedIn and Instagram are his ‘substitutes’. In this sense, as polymedia theory and concept has it, even non-participation is meaningful. Similarly, in some cases Skype accounts have been deleted to have a greater control over relationships with grandparents.

Understanding what may be ordinary and unremarkable about the communication practices of my participants was important to avoid methodological nationalism (Beck, 2016) or methodological ethnicism (Glick Schiller, 2008; Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002), and ultimately any reification of identity. It would be wrong to assume that Serbs in London are

a closed group (a tribe) unaffected by some general trends in this populous and multinational metropolis, who always behave in accordance with their national and ethnic identities (cf. Pratsinakis, 2017). In this sense, this study has also reaffirmed to some extent Robins and Aksoy's (2000) conclusion that diasporic identities may sometimes be overemphasised in migration studies.

On the other hand, I have identified manifestations of long-distance nationalism (Anderson, 1992) among my participants on Twitter and to some lesser degree on Facebook, such as sharing information on how to register to vote at the Embassy of the Republic in Serbia in London and encouraging people to turn out by tagging them in posts. In this context, my findings contrast Robins and Aksoy's (2000) arguments about media's role as "an agent of cultural de-mythologisation" which means that the ability of diasporas to keep up to date with current affairs and cultural changes in their country of origin can weaken the diasporic identity because people can have a more realistic picture and will thereby be less prone to idealise and romanticise their homeland. I have found that the opposite may be true for some participants, particularly the self-proclaimed 'atypical' Serbs within the second wave. The ability to connect with like-minded people in Serbia and around the world via Twitter (and Facebook) has helped them renegotiate their identities in such a way that they do not see themselves as 'atypical' as much, therefore it has reinforced their diasporic and national identity.

The analysis has further revealed that Facebook and Viber play a prominent role in supporting the diasporic imaginary among this group. Following Rainie and Wellman's (2012) notion that "*the new media is the new neighbourhood*", I have argued that *Facebook represents new neighbourhoods* in the case of Serbian Londoners. I have found that the practices of *social searching* and *social browsing* (Lampe et al., 2006) among my participants on Facebook have led to creating several layers of neighbourhoods on this SNS, often along the lines of the period of migration. This means that third wave participants tend to be better connected among themselves, and similarly first wave participants tend to be most well connected with other first wave participants, whereas second wave participants tend to be the most well connected overall – often having links



with both the first and third wave. Facebook thus helps with reconstructing a sense of diasporic belonging through social surveillance on social media that has been undermined by the geographical dispersion of this group in London with the more recent migration, as explained in Chapter 5, but at the same time it often reproduces differences between the three waves. I have also redefined Lampe et al.'s (2006) concepts of *social searching* and *social browsing*, so that the former means learning more about one's existing online networks regardless of whether they actually meet their Facebook contacts offline, and the latter as looking for new people to befriend regardless of whether people intend to meet their Facebook friends offline. As already argued, the concept of 'doing nation' requires us to consider who the audiences are because whether the discursive practices will succeed in 'doing nation' depends on the inference of the speaker's communicative intention (Bach & Harnish, 1992, p.94), that is the audience's ability to understand the meaning (Austin, 1962, p.115; cf. Deutsch, 1966 [1953], p.110). Thus practices of 'doing nation' are best observed through mediated interpersonal communication through privately oriented platforms such as WhatsApp and Viber, used for strong ties.

In contrast to Rainie and Wellman (2011), who argue that new media supports network-type relationships, I have also shown that Facebook fosters both networks and groups. This notion of neighbourhoods suggests "an orientation to groups" (see Miller et al., 2016), because it is predicated on a sense of shared identity (see Young, 2011 [1990]). This has been described in relation to the notion of Facebook as new neighbourhoods earlier in this chapter and in Chapter 7. However, Facebook also enables my participants to build networks based on their shared interests in music or sports, thus facilitating banal cosmopolitanism or 'being globalised'. Some of these Facebook neighbourhoods include international friends from university, which again reaffirms the starting position of this thesis about identities being relational and performative, and the shifting boundaries of belonging. I have also demonstrated that Facebook can facilitate the transition between latent ties (those not yet activated) and weak ties, as well as in some cases between weak and strong ties (Hathornthwaite, 2002). But once the transition between weak and strong ties has occurred, they are more likely to rely more on privately oriented platforms for maintaining the relationship. While Viber falls at the bottom of social media use in the UK

(The Economist, 2016), it has quite an important role among Serbian Londoners. I have argued that Viber represents a symbolic marker of identity like the role satellite television has in the case of the Turkish diaspora in Athens in the early 2000s, as described by Madianou (2005), because it signals the types of ties my participants have with people in Serbia or with other Serbian Londoners.

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Finally, the thesis has shown how identities are shaped, maintained and transformed through mediated interpersonal communication and different types of mediated co-presence. While Chapter 6 has looked more closely at identity performances and strategies on publicly oriented platforms, in Chapter 8, I explored how Serbian Londoners ‘do nation’ on privately oriented platforms and was primarily concerned with strong ties such as family relationships. I have argued that national practices are implicated in a whole range of other areas of life, such as family practices, and accordingly have also demonstrated how Serbian Londoners ‘do nation’ transnationally through family practices. Following Vertovec’s (2004) arguments that cheap telephone calls of the 1990s were “the social glue of migrant transnationalism”, I have analysed several aspects of mediated interpersonal communication, such as mediated co-presence, connected presence (Licoppe, 2004) and ambient co-presence (Madianou, 2016), phatic communication (Jakobson, 1960), ritual communication (Carey, 2008), and micro-coordination (Ling & Lai, 2016; Ling & Yttri, 2002).

I have concluded that the affordances of storage capacity, temporality, mobility, spreadability (Baym, 2015) and replicability (boyd, 2011) have particularly had an important role in ‘doing nation’ through media, which echoes the affordances in the pre-Internet era discussed by Deutsch (1966 [1953], p.96). I have shown that ambient co-presence (Madianou, 2016), phatic (Jakobson, 1960) and ritual communication are no less important than direct mediated co-presence. All these types of interaction give one a sense of other people’s presence, reaffirming the bond when the pre-existing ties have already been strong (cf. Madianou & Miller, 2012). As has been argued, even the awareness of another’s presence can invoke certain sentiments and memories that can be national as much as familial, and the recall or common associations is, according to Deutsch (1966

[1953], p.110), one of the key aspects of effective social communication through which the nation comes into being.

While all participants indulge in these activities and use privately oriented platforms for communication with strong ties regardless of the period of migration, there are some differences among them in terms of shared discourses and the choice of platform – whether Viber or WhatsApp. As already mentioned, the uses of Viber signal the type of ties my participants have with people in Serbia. Although there are no clear-cut differences between the waves in terms of their uses of Viber, it can be argued this platform is most popular among the second wave, as well as the first wave participants who I describe as ‘young adventure seekers’, but also among some third wave participants. It is least popular among “serial migrants” (Ossman, 2013), who mainly constitute the third and some second wave participants. Further, I have contended that these interpersonal communication practices through which participants may express their banal nationalism rather than acting as “an agent of cultural de-mythologisation” (Aksoy & Robins, 2000) can be interpreted as an agent of “cultural thickening” (Lofgren, 1995). Some practices, particularly group chats on WhatsApp created for micro-coordinating activities, such as a holiday or night out, are also examples of banal cosmopolitanism. These practices have demonstrated that ethnicity is not always central to how migrants live their lives in host societies and how they navigate polymedia environments. As Ling and Lai (2016) point out, some of these group chats that start as task-oriented often evolve, and their main purpose becomes maintaining and fostering relationships. Lastly, I have also demonstrated how ethnicity may remain relevant for younger and more affluent migrants, in contrast to other studies of Serbian Londoners (Mavra, 2010), such as among the third wave. Some middle-class participants micro-coordinated fundraising activities through Facebook Messenger to help Serbia and Bosnia in coping with devastating floods in 2014, which was an example of “long-distance nationalism” and ‘doing nation’.

### **9.3 The Overall Argument and Contributions of the Study**

This thesis has traced discursive shifts from banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) to banal cosmopolitanism (Skrbis & Woodward, 2007; Ong, 2009) among Serbian Londoners in polymedia environments. Through the synthesis of these concepts, I have developed the concept of ‘doing nation’ to argue, following Deutsch (1966 [1953]), that national identities become alive, meaningful and reproduced through everyday discursive practices. This thesis has considered how Serbian Londoners perform their identities in relation to different audiences on a variety of platforms, trying to understand whether the different platforms invite different identities and whether there is anything distinctive about the communication practices of Serbian Londoners, and has investigated the role of mediated interpersonal communication in ‘doing nation’.

The ways in which Serbian Londoners navigate polymedia environments to negotiate their identities depends on affordances, intended publics and social norms. The affordances of portability, temporality, and spreadability have been particularly important in supporting practices of ‘doing nation’ because they have significantly intensified mediated co-presence and made possible other types of mediated co-presence, such as ambient co-presence (Madianou, 2015). Although there are nuances between practices on various platforms, most significant differences in practices have been observed between publicly and privately oriented platforms, where the former are used for weak ties in more strategic ways with the aims of reconstructing identities, and the latter for strong ties that often leads to reinforcing identities. Given that the communicative success of ‘doing nation’ depends on the authority of the one who speaks (cf. Bourdieu, 1992) and their audiences (cf. Austin, 1962; Bach & Harnish, 1992; Strawson, 1964), it has been argued that it is particularly important to study relationships and social ties in order to understand how national identities are reproduced in a diasporic context. It has been observed that it is through mediated interpersonal communication with strong ties via privately oriented platforms that national identities become reinforced. This thesis has shown how national identities are implicated in a range of areas of life of diasporas, such as in their family practices. In this sense, the nation does

not represent an abstract “imagined community” (Anderson, 1983), but rather these embodied cultural and discursive practices.

Given the fact that many of my participants are high skilled migrants and are so integrated into British society and similar to everyone else in terms of their everyday routines and preferences to the extent that they are practically invisible, it was striking to observe how they engage in reproducing national identities in their daily interactions. Thus this thesis has greatly focused on what is particular about Serbian Londoners and their practices of ‘doing nation’. However, ‘doing nation’ does not preclude banal cosmopolitanism; on the contrary, in some instances banal cosmopolitanism paradoxically reproduces banal nationalism in the sense that it is sometimes employed as a strategy of redefining national identities. Banal nationalism and banal cosmopolitanism also come together and are interwoven in a new form of identity politics that is subtle, ordinary and spontaneous – I describe this as globalised difference, which aims to reconcile differences between national and cosmopolitan identities by presenting the self as both different (framed as a desirable or exotic difference) and similar to the world (cosmopolitan), unlike other identity politics (see Spivak, 1987; Young 2011 [1990]) that aim to create subcultures. Normatively, globalised difference is ambivalent. On the one hand, it is a source of empowerment and represents rebellion against assimilationist tendencies, but on the other, in most contexts it also has a neoliberal foundation that strives to commodify difference. In this sense, this thesis confirms the findings and conclusions of other studies in media and migration (see Bauman, 2000; Beck, 1999; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Georgiou, 2013; Giddens, 1991), and media and globalisation that demonstrate the prevailing neoliberal trend. I have argued that social surveillance on social media and the particular historical context of Serbian Londoners, as well as the context of London, where different cultures live in close proximity, has given rise to globalised difference. Therefore, this thesis contributes to a socio-technical approach to digital media as it considers both technical aspects of the media and a range of social factors as well as users’ agency to understand the social consequences of polymedia environments.

The literature on media and nationalism, as well as media and diaspora, has so far little explored mediated interpersonal communication and the ways in which the interpersonal may be important for constructing and reproducing national identities among diasporas. In this thesis, I have brought together two perspectives – the role of digital media in both maintaining relationships and in reproducing identities – and have argued that they are closely interrelated. While mediated interpersonal communication in parallel also reproduces banal cosmopolitanism, these interactions are more central for some participants from particular waves than for others. This thesis has contributed to the literature that highlights the diversity of migrants' experiences of the same origin in one place and has also revised the concept of diaspora because migrants express varying degrees of diasporic identities dependent on context: never fully or at all times. These discursive practices do not construct one homogenous identity – this thesis has shown the remarkable diversity of Serbian Londoners in terms of their backgrounds, experiences and communication, particularly between participants who arrived in different periods. This study has thus contributed to the field of migration (see Sreberny, 2000) by showing that migrants with similar origins should not be thought of as a single group. Based on the differences between the three identified waves of migration, different forms of banal nationalism have also been observed, countering the presumption that there is only one banal nationalism, and showing that most people oscillate between banal nationalism and banal cosmopolitanism, or between banal cosmopolitanism and 'being globalised', or between 'being globalised' and 'globalised difference' depending on platform and intended publics.

Overall, this thesis has shown that media and communications become constitutive of national identities, particularly in the context of migration. National identities cannot be thought of outside of communication practices and media that facilitates but also shapes these practices. It has been shown how identities are constructed through words and become meaningful through embodied cultural practices, particularly mediated interpersonal communication with significant others. Although developed in the context of migration, the concept of 'doing nation' has a wider applicability, such as to other national or migration contexts. Today, when most relationships have become conducted through digital media, not just face-to-face, it is important to consider the role of mediated

interpersonal communication in managing relationships and consequently identities as well. In contrast to other similar concepts such as long-distance nationalism (Anderson, 1992), 'doing nation' refers to ordinary and spontaneous communication practices among diasporas. As opposed to banal nationalism (Billig, 1995), 'doing nation' puts emphasis on the interpersonal in relation to diasporic context. Furthermore, 'doing nation' not only refers to a set of practices, in the same way as Anderson's (1992) long-distance nationalism or Billig's (1995) banal nationalism do, but it importantly describes the character or condition of national identity – which is relational, as Hall (1990) argued, but also performative and discursively constructed. This research would have also benefited from a comparative perspective that could have included Serbs in other UK cities, and other countries, or Serbs and other ethnic groups from the former Yugoslavia. However, given the scope of this PhD, the comparative perspective would not allow me to explore in-depth some important aspects of the relationships between identities and the digital media in the context of Serbian Londoners.

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## **Appendix A: Interview guide**

Approximate duration of interviews: between 1 and 1 hour and 30 minutes

Type of Interview: face-to-face and via Skype

### **Personal history**

1. Tell me about your life.
2. Where were you born?
3. Where do your parents come from?
4. Where did you grow up and where have you lived by now?
5. When did you move to London and why?
6. How was it when you came here first time (or when you moved from Serbia first time, and can you then compare it with when you moved to London)? Can you please describe your experience? Can you please illustrate it, do you have any example?
7. Do you have any siblings? Where do they live? Are they older or younger than you? What are they names? Who gave them a name? Do they often come to London to visit you or do you live with them here?
8. Do you go to Serbia/other Western-Balkan countries? How often? Why?
9. With whom do you live here?
10. Why did you come to live in that area?
11. What do you do in your spare time? Can you give me some examples? What were you doing last weekend, for instance?
12. Can you describe me your group of friends? What do they do? Where do they come from? Where did you meet them and when?
13. Where do you go out with your friends?
14. Do you hang out with your work colleagues as well?
15. Can you describe your work colleagues?
16. Where do you work?

17. Are you a member of any organisation or community? Which one(s)? What were the motifs for joining? How often do you attend their events? Do you participate in organising these events?
18. Do you go to some “Serbian” places, such as restaurants, language schools, church etc? Are you going there with someone? Why?
19. Which holidays do you celebrate? Why?

### **Media habits**

20. Describe me your ordinary day and please create a media map showing what media you use on a daily basis, which devices you own and for what purposes you use different media.
21. What kind of media topics are you interested in most? Why?
22. Which media do you use to look up that content?
23. How often do you watch/listen to/read/follow these programmes/channels/people/etc.?
24. Do you consume these media with other people? With whom?
25. Do you use social media? For what purposes?

*Follow up/ probing question in case they do:*

1. Can you show me your Facebook/Twitter/Instagram etc. profile?
  2. Who are the people you follow? Who are your friends on Facebook?
  3. With whom do you most often communicate via social networking platforms? How often? Why?
  4. What do you often talk about?
26. Do you follow news/media from Serbia? Which programmes/web portals from Serbia do you watch? How often? Why?
  27. How often do you talk to your parents/friends in Serbia/other WB countries? (in case they already said they have family and/or relatives/ friends in Serbia)

*Follow up/ probing question in case they do:*

1. Which media do you use to talk with them? Why?
2. When did you start using these media?
3. When do you usually use each of them?

28. Can you describe me your experience with the digital media?
29. Do you produce any content? Can you show me?
30. Are you a member of any groups there? Why?
31. In which language do you usually communicate on social media platforms? Why?
32. Which language do you speak? What is your native tongue?
33. When you post and update your statuses on social networking sites, whom do you usually have in mind, who is your audience?
34. What are your motifs for participating in the digital media environments?
35. Can you show me what you are telling me about?
36. What are the reactions of your friends/followers?
37. Do you sometimes intentionally express your identities and/or preferences? Do you post some things on purpose? Which purpose specifically?

#### **Questions regarding identity**

38. Do you enjoy living in London?
39. Is there any other place where you would rather live? Why?
40. How would you describe yourself?
41. What do you think has contributed most to that?
42. Where is home?
43. Can you explain what home means for you or what makes home?
44. Have your perception of where home is changed over time? How? Why?
45. Do you plan to return to Serbia? Why, or why not?
46. Do you plan for your relatives to join you in the UK? (In case they have relatives in Serbia)
47. How close do you feel with your family /friends?
48. Where are those who closest to you based?
49. How often do you see each other/ communicate with each other? When, where, by which media do you get in touch?
50. Have those relationships changed over time? How? Why?
51. What do you think has helped maintain these relationships?

## **Appendix B: Consent Form**

### **Information sheet about my PhD project on identities among Serbian Londoners and their communication practices at Goldsmiths College, University of London**

I would like to invite you to take part in my research that looks at Identities among Serbian Londoners and their communication practices. This information sheet explains what the project is about, why you should participate, what your participation involves and how your data will be protected. Please read this information sheet before you decide to take part in my research.

#### **What is the research about?**

The research explores what kind of media Serbian Londoners, aged 18 and above, who have lived in London for at least two years, use in their everyday life and for what purposes, and it looks at their sense of belonging. The research focuses on the historical context of this group, their social life and activities on various social media platforms in order to deepen our understanding about the relationship between the digital media, the British society and identities of Serbian Londoners.

#### **Why am I doing this project and why should you participate?**

This topic is quite significant and timely because of the rapid innovations in communication technologies. There are very few accounts on Serbs who live in the UK. Unlike many other ethnic groups in the UK, this group has remained invisible in academic studies.

#### **What will your participation involve?**

I would like to obtain your consent to interview you individually about your personal history, everyday life, and the uses of different media (including social and mobile media, and TV viewing). Interviews will last about one hour and will be recorded. I would also like to ask you for your consent to spend some time with you, which would involve hanging out with you sometimes and visiting you at your home at agreed time. I would further ask for your permission to follow your activities on social media, analyse them and ask questions in relation to these activities. This does not mean that you would need to dedicate all of your time to me; you would be able to do whatever you would anyway do. You would also be able to ask questions about your engagement in the study and the data collected about yourself at any point during the research.

#### **How will I protect your data?**

All data that you produce will be stored safely. Interviews will be transcribed and anonymised. You can withdraw from the interview or the research project at any time. I am



happy to provide you with a transcript of any tape recorded interview or a copy of the thesis if you wish so.

**Many thanks,**

Sanja Vico

PhD candidate in Media and Communications

The Department of Media and Communications, Goldsmiths, University of London

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# Appendix C: Research Ethics Review Form

Department of Media & Communications

MA/PhD/Undergraduate Research Ethical Approval Form

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE University of London**

**Department of Media & Communications Research Ethics Committee**

NAME OF APPLICANT: Sanja Vico

Title of undergraduate/PhD/MA Thesis: The Digital Media, Cosmopolitanism and Identities among Serbian Londoners

This form should be completed in typescript and returned to Tim Crook, the Departmental Research Ethics officer. All students should have read the BSA guidelines on ethics (or equivalent ones, such as the AAA or ASA) and the ESRC Research Ethics Framework document. The decision of the committee regarding your application for ethical approval will be communicated to you directly.

**1. Title of proposed project:**

The Digital Media, Cosmopolitanism and Identities among Serbian Londoners

**2. Brief outline of the project, including its purpose:**

In this research, I will be exploring how Serbian Londoners navigate the digital media environments and negotiate their identities on different platforms, in order to make an argument whether different media invite different positionings and if so, in what ways. I am particularly interested in the potentials of different platforms in fostering cosmopolitanism and nationalism among my participants. To this end, I will conduct both traditional and online ethnography, as well as semi-structured in-depth interviews. This will allow me analyse discourses and practices of the participants in their everyday life, and in relation to two case studies: the floods in Serbia and Bosnia in May 2014, and the tsunami in Japan in March 2011, as well as the role of the architectures of different platform in shaping engagement and enabling positionings.

The term architectures refers to platforms' software, interface and network design. This is important element of analysis because these architectures are not neutral, they shape users'

interaction and engagement, which then create certain *dynamics* that may have impact on these users' cosmopolitan and national identities. Therefore, the concept of polymedia, employed by Madianou and Miller (2012), will be central here, as it allows us to examine how people perform their identities according to different media and whether the plurality of digital media environments can bypass limitations of a specific media in cultivating cosmopolitan stance.

Many scholars have argued that changes in communications have significantly influenced and have considerably altered the process of migration. However, this relation has been full of paradoxes and contradictions. A greater and wider interconnectedness brought about by transformations in communication and transportation systems had multifold implications. On the one hand, it has arguably underpinned long-distance nationalism (Anderson, 1992), while on the other, this has also potentials for stimulating reflexivity, important for cultivating cosmopolitanism (see Beck, 2006). Therefore, the aim of this study is to understand contexts in which people negotiate their identities, whereby I will try to avoid positions that tend to reify and essentialise identities, cultures and the role of the media.

I will draw on Hall's understanding of identity as *contextual, positioned* and always *in process* (Hall, 1990: 222). This will allow me to study ordinary cosmopolitanism, as Skrbis and Woodward suggest, as *a set of practices and dispositions* (2007: 734), and banal expressions of nationalism (Billig), to argue that both should be understood as a *strategic positioning* that are dependent on a particular context. However, I will be asking if there is such a thing as banal or ordinary cosmopolitanism, whether we can talk about banal cosmopolitanism in the same way as we do about banal nationalism, and whether the expressions of banal nationalism are in fact just a 'globalised difference'.

### 3. **Description of Methods of Data Collection:**

For this project, I will be conducting traditional and online ethnography, as well as semi-structured in-depth interviews.

Ethnography has been a popular method of studying the everyday life, identities and cultures of a specific community or society, because it provides "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973) of people's discourses and practices in their "naturally occurring settings" (Brewer, 2000: 6). Ethnography also has an advantage because of its longitudinal nature, which allows a researcher to identify changes in these practices and discourses over time and according to different contexts.

I will be using both traditional and online ethnography because I am drawing on the position that views online and offline as inseparable - digital technologies permeate our daily lives in many ways (see Murthy, 2008: 849), and we thereby bring our 'offline' lives into 'online' space, and *vice versa*. I will be participating in people's daily lives for about one year, whereby I will be observing, listening and asking questions (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 1). While doing so, I will also be creating *analytic memos* (Walsh, 2006: 235), trying to associate the findings with established theories and concepts.

Ethnography does not require an a priori hypothesis, so in this study hypotheses will be formulated from the initial findings. That is why there are not clearly defined, separate stages in this process of collecting data, unlike in the case of quantitative methods. Ethnography has rather a “funnel structure” (Walsh, 2006: 229), meaning that its focus is gradually narrowed down as the research progresses. This will allow patterns to emerge from the data, create a hypothesis and eventually to reshape the theoretical framework. The collection of data should be terminated once “theoretical saturation” has been reached.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews allow informants to “talk at length”, “with time to reflect” (Bauer & Gaskell, 200: 45), and allow the researcher to pose sub-questions, adjust wordings to each informant, and thereby stimulate “free associations” (Gorden, 1975: 72), which may enable interviewees to reveal their emotions and their “unconscious attitudes and beliefs” to emerge (Berger, 1998: 55).

In this research a topic guide will serve as a framework for conversation, containing a list of topics to be discussed. There will also be some specific probing questions for each topic, that should prevent the conversation from going “off the point” and, importantly, make responses comparable and classifiable (Gorden, 1975: 60-61).

All interviews will be recorded and later transcribed, and I expect them to be conducted face-to-face and to last approximately between one and two hours. However, in some cases Skype interviews may be required when it is not possible to meet in person.

**If the research involves human participants (whether living or recently deceased) or animal subjects, please continue. If the research involves historical, textual or aesthetic data or secondary data already in the public realm and does not directly involve the observation or direct engagement with human or animal participants, then please jump to Question 19.**

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**4. Specify the number of and type of participant(s) likely to be involved.**

About fifty people will be recruited on the basis of their self-identification as Serbians, all of whom will be adults (older than eighteen years), who have lived in London for at least four two years by the beginning of research. These people will be of different age and class background (including occupation, wealth and education).

**5. State where the data collection will be undertaken.**

Fieldwork will take place in any settings where my informants spend most of their time, such as at their home and the places where they socialise.

6. **State the potential adverse consequences to the participant(s), or particular groups of people, if any, and what precautions are to be taken.**

There should not be any.

7. **State any procedures which may cause discomfort, distress or harm to the participant(s), or particular groups of people, and the degree of discomfort or distress likely to be entailed.**

Not applicable.

8. **State how the participant(s) will be recruited. (Please attach copies of any recruiting materials if used).**

Locations to look for the participants in this research will be various: community centres, the Serbian Orthodox Church and Serbian organisations. Many Serbs in London live in the area of Shepherds Bush and Ealing Broadway, where there are many shops and restaurants owned by Serbians. Some of the participant will also be recruited by the snowball technique.

9. **State if the participant(s) will be paid, and if so, provide details and state reasons for payment.**

No.

10. **State the manner in which the participant(s) consent will be obtained (if written, please include a copy of the intended consent form).**

I will provide the participants with the statement where will be explained in appropriate detail: what the research is about, who is undertaking and financing it, why it is being undertaken, how it is to be disseminated and used, that participants can withdraw at any time without any consequences, that the data will be anonymous, and that they can request not to publish a part or the entire interview up to three months after the interview has been conducted. I will also give the participants details about myself such as my previous experiences and educational background, as well as my contact details. I will then ask for their verbal consent that will be recorded. However, participants will be able to reject the use of data-gathering devices such as tape recorders and video cameras.

- 10a. Will the participant(s) be fully informed about the nature of the project and of what they will be required to do?

Yes.

10b. Is there any deception involved?

No.

10c. Will the participant(s) be told they can withdraw from participation at any time, if they wish?

Yes. They will be informed about this in the statement I will give them before I start the research and before I ask them for their consent. They will also be able to request that some or the entire data they produced not to be published within three months since the research has been undertaken.

10d. Will data be treated confidentially regarding personal information, and what will the participant(s) be told about this?

Yes. Research participants will be informed that their data and identity will remain anonymous in the statement that I aim to provide them with before beginning the research, meaning that their names will not be revealed and information that explicitly disclose their identity. They will also be asked for permission to use information that may be sensitive and have risk to disclose their identity, if and when these cases arise. In the statement, they will be informed that they can reject the use of data-gathering devices such as tape recorders and video cameras.

10e. If the participant(s) are young persons under the age of 18 years or 'vulnerable persons' (e.g. with learning difficulties or with severe cognitive disability), how will consent be given (i.e. from the participant themselves or from a third party such as a parent or guardian) and how will assent to the research be asked for?

Not applicable.

**11. Will the data be confidential?**

11a. Will the data be anonymous?

Yes.

11b. How will the data remain confidential?

All data will be password secured on a computer. While analysing and citing, participants' names will be not be revealed, instead the terms such as 'female/male 1...', or only first name will be used. Participants will also be asked for permission for the use of their images and online texts as an illustration if necessary.

11c. How long will the data be stored? And how will it be eventually destroyed?

It will certainly be stored at least two years after the PhD thesis has been published. However, it might not be destroyed even after this period. Nevertheless, it would remain confidential and securely stored.

12. **Will the research involve the investigation of illegal conduct? If yes, give details and say how you yourself will be protected from harm or suspicion of illegal conduct?**

No.

13. **Is it possible that the research might disclose information regarding child sexual abuse or neglect? If yes, indicate how such information will be passed to the relevant authorities (e.g. social workers, police), but also indicate how participants will be informed about the handling of such information were disclosure of this kind to occur. A warning to this effect must be included in the consent form if such disclosure is likely to occur.**

No.

14. **State what kind of feedback, if any, will be offered to participants.**

During the research, participants will be able to ask questions about their engagement in my research at any time and to receive transcribed interviews, the ones in which they participated. When making notes, filming or recording for research purposes, I will make clear to research participants the purpose of the notes, filming or recording, and, as precisely as possible, to whom it will be communicated. They will be also offered a summary of findings once the research has been done and I will send them the whole thesis on their request once it has been published.

15. **State your expertise for conducting the research proposed.**

I am a first year PhD student in Media and Communications at Goldsmiths, with the previous educational background in the same field. For my MSc dissertation, I conducted fourteen in-depth interviews with Serbian Londoners, all adults, both men and women who had lived in London for at least five years, in order to explore what the role of the British television is in supporting and sustaining the sense of 'Britishness' among this group. During my Master studies, I successfully completed the course in Qualitative and Quantitative Methods of Research in Media and Communications, as well as other relevant theory courses, such as The Audience in Media and Communications, and audited the course in Media, Identity and Transnationalism. As a part of my PhD programme, I have been attending several methods courses that help me further develop my research skills. I also hold a BA in Journalism from the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade, where I had forty courses overall, most of which tackled the main questions of

my PhD thesis, such as identity, cosmopolitanism and nationalism, new communication technologies and so forth.

16. **In cases of research with young persons under the age of 18 years or ‘vulnerable persons’ (e.g. with learning difficulties or with severe cognitive disability), or with those in legal custody, will face-to-face interviews or observations or experiments be overseen by a third party (such as a teacher, care worker or prison officer)?**

Not applicable.

17. **If data is collected from an institutional location (such as a school, prison, hospital), has agreement been obtained by the relevant authority (e.g. Head Teacher, Local Education Authority, Home Office)?**

Not applicable.

18. **For those conducting research with young persons under the age of 18 years or ‘vulnerable persons’ (e.g. with learning difficulties or with severe cognitive disability), do you have Criminal Records Bureau clearance? (Ordinarily unsupervised research with minors would require such clearance. Please see *College Code of Practice on Research Ethics*, 2005). Please provide evidence of such clearance.**

Not applicable.

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19. **Will the research place you in situations of harm, injury or criminality?**  
No.

20. **Might the research cause harm to those represented in it? If so, how?**  
No.

21. **Will the research cause harm or damage to bystanders or the immediate environment?**

No.

22. **Are there any conflicts of interest regarding the investigation and dissemination of the research (e.g. with regard to compromising independence or objectivity due to financial gain)?**

No.

23. **Is the research likely to have any negative impact on the academic status or reputation of the College?**

No.



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**ALL APPLICANTS**

**Please note that the Committee should be notified of any adverse or unforeseen circumstances arising out of this study. If there are significant changes to the research design regarding research ethics, please notify the committee immediately.**

**Signature of Applicant**

**Date**

**Sanja Vico**

**19<sup>th</sup> June 2015**

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**TO BE COMPLETED BY PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR**

**Please note that the Department Research Ethics Committee should be notified of any adverse or unforeseen circumstances arising out of this study or of any emerging ethical concerns that the Supervisor may have about the research once it has commenced.**

**Has the student read the BSA guidelines on ethics (or equivalent ones, such as the AAA or ASA) and the ESRC Research Ethics Framework document? [Approval will not be granted unless the student has demonstrated to the supervisor that they have read such documents.]**

**Yes/No (Please circle)**

**Has there been appropriate discussion of the ethical implications of the research with yourself as Supervisor?**

**Yes/No (Please circle)**

**Are the ethical implications of the proposed research adequately described in this application?**

**Yes/No (Please circle)**

**Signature of Principal Supervisor**

**Date**

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