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Hyperconnected Diasporas

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Abstract

This article argues that, since the COVID-19 outbreak, ‘digital diasporas’ worldwide may have been shaped through stringent postpandemic societal pressing patterns by increasingly further exposing diasporic citizens’ digital rights unwittingly towards unprecedented technopolitical risks. Against this backdrop, this article poses a novel term entitled *Hyperconnected Diasporas* by suggesting (i) a technopolitical wake up call for regional governments worldwide when dealing with paradiplomacy and diaspora engagement initiatives and (ii) a necessary critical standpoint on the understanding and use of extractivist and pervasively hegemonic social media platforms that clearly alter diasporic citizens’ data privacy, ethics, and ownership.

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Introduction: What Are We Talking About When We Talk About *Hyperconnected Diasporas*?³

Over the last decades, globalisation has led so far to a new class of *world citizens* (Arendt, 1958; Calzada, 2020; Žižek, 2020). However, this cosmopolitan globalisation rhetoric of a borderless world has been drastically slowed down by COVID-19 alongside with the end of multilateralism as a result of Ukrainian invasion, by particularly affecting the understanding of diasporas and how much they rely on the potential of hyperconnected societies driven by Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data, Machine Learning, among other emerging digital and biometric technologies, tools, and devices (Arshad-Ayaz and Naseem, 2021; Dumbrava, 2017; Fourcade, 2021; Carter, 2001; Zhang et al., 2022). This scenario has been particularly characterised by being extremely reliant on the so-called hegemonic *dataism*, the religion of Big Data (Lohr, 2015), stemming from extractivist practices of commercial social media Big Tech platforms such as Facebook and Google (Srivastava, 2021; Forestal, 2020; McElroy, 2019; Kim et al., 2018; Taplin, 2017; Verdegem, 2022). For instance, on 4th October 2021, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp were down creating a vulnerable sense of apparent hyperconnectivity what showed a highly brittle and fragile *datafied* broken coverage for diasporic citizens (The Guardian, 2021).

Furthermore, COVID-19 has also hit citizens dramatically, not only creating a general risk-driven environment encompassing a wide array of migration uncertainties and economic vulnerabilities but also exposing them to pervasive digital risks, such as biosurveillance, misinformation, and e-democracy algorithmic threats (Aradau, 2015). Countries implemented restrictions to curb the spread of the virus, affecting mobility around the world. A United Nations Population report estimates that, with an assumption of zero growth in the number of migrants between 1 March and 1 July 2020, the number of international migrants may have decreased by nearly 2 million against the initial expectations. Consequently, digitalisation has been heightened by the impact of COVID-19 by creating new diasporic-related patterns such as digital diasporas (Ponzanesi, 2020), digital borders (Amoore, 2016), or even digital nomads (Cook, 2020; Moravec, 2013) that this article revolves around in the section Discussion.

Seemingly, digital communication is portrayed as the key factor to bridge the postpandemic restriction and communication gap in effective diaspora engagement. But what is not said is that COVID-19 has pervasively spread massive datafication processes with no or little regulations. How can global diasporas take advantage of these digital platforms but without falling into a fraudulent and unreliable peer-to-peer interactions? Surprisingly leading

diaspora engagement organisations and initiatives such as *Diaspora Digital News*, the *Global Irish Diaspora Directory*, *Chinese diaspora YouTube Vloggers*, *EU Global Diaspora Facility*, or *Migration & Diaspora podcast* recommend only creating targeted communication channels and content for and by the diaspora; yet nothing is said about the datafication processes that these channels involve for diasporic citizens.

Therefore, as soon as countries have started lifting pandemic restrictions, the debate about reopening borders by allowing international travelling has introduced a set of technological issues related to the ethical dimensions of *vaccine passports* and biometric components insofar as they might be fostering in a way a sort of unethical *vaccine nationalism* (Ada Lovelace Institute, 2021; Amoore, 2006; Shachar, 2020). In the meantime, diaspora engagement and governance initiatives, projects, and platforms may have overlooked several datafication-related side-effects of the postpandemic technopolitics amid contemporary democracies as this article attempts to point out.

As such, and this is the key message of this article, so far, academic, civil, and governmental agencies (as well as gurus) around diaspora studies and management respectively, have uncritically referred to social media platforms when dealing with diaspora engagement. Moreover, they assume no harm around the *tsunami* of data and the extractivism of algorithms through code (Echeverría, 2000). When Big Tech *data-opolies*, oligopolies of data, and super-state control of data have become the norm rather than the exception (Bria, 2021), many experts and historians in diaspora studies might have bypassed the negative aftermath to refer to the lack of privacy of diasporic citizens' digital rights (Calzada, Pérez-Batlle, and Batlle-Montserrat, 2021).

This article is structured as follows: (i) after this introduction, (ii) a rationale of the article is introduced, which essentially refers to a high cost for an uncritical hyperconnectivity argument in diaspora engagement. Then, (iii) the article slightly focuses on the Basque e-diaspora case to illustrate the ongoing action research project called *HanHemen* (2022) led by the Basque Government (Bennett and Brunner, 2020). Then, (iv) it introduces the three research questions that lead this article. (v) And subsequently, it addresses the implications of *hyperconnected diasporas*. (vi) The article lastly discusses about three main research avenues and policy pathways including three main terms: (vi.a) digital diaspora, (vi.b) digital borders, and (vi.c) digital nomads. Ultimately, (vii) the article concludes by responding to the three research questions.

Rationale: The High Cost of Relying on Uncritical *Hyperconnected Diasporas*

Hyperconnectivity always seems to resonate with the efficiency and the speed allowing interaction and networking, yet with no attribution to the extractive nature of digital interactions that the commercial social media produce. Cambridge Analytica affair demonstrated the way in which citizens' data were sucked and used in an unfair and unethical manner. Many diaspora sites became masters at harnessing Facebook's newsfeed with feel-good articles, videos, and stories. However, Facebook wanted the diaspora engagement portals to respect them and get their actual news there. Although several diaspora portals acknowledged at the time there were not any real alternatives to Facebook. Actually, these diaspora portals were never able to grow the alternative channels big enough to balance out the insanely large amount of Facebook was sending. These diaspora sites were addicted to the Facebook volume of traffic and no other source could move the needle. The lesson learned for all of them seem to be simple: You get the benefit of instant access to millions, and fast growth. Although can you ever fully sleep well at night knowing at any time it can all be taken away with just a simple algorithm change like Facebook does in a regular basis? The cautionary tale for every diaspora management platform is as follows: To choose the social media platform wisely, and always remember if Facebook can give it, it can take it as well. It goes without saying that the recent European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade (2022) is clearly contributing to enhance an alternative policy cycle in which diasporic citizens must observe their digital rights are protected (European Commission, 2022; Calzada and Almirall, 2022; Calzada, Pérez-Batlle, and Batlle-Montserrat, 2021). Alongside the EU, similar policy discussions are happening in Australia, India, and in the US. The latter are currently working on a Digital Bill of Rights, with lot of convergence between the US and EU approach. In the meantime, China has started regulating AI, with no clear clues about the potential outcome of this development (Wired, 2022). Nonetheless, there is widespread worldwide the high cost associated to the uncritical reliance on social media (Oiarzabal, 2012; Rodima-Taylor and Grimes, 2019).

Against this backdrop, this article situates hyperconnectivity at the centre of the diasporic analysis by claiming for an alternative vision in the way (digital) citizens use technologies in diaspora practices (Hintz, Denck, and Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019; Isin and Ruppert, 2015; McCosker, Vivienne, and Johns, 2016; Mossberger, Tolbert, and McNeal, 2007; Moraes and Andrade, 2015; Ohler, 2010; Hintz and Brown, 2017; Ratto and Boler, 2014). Besides, it seems remarkably significant that diaspora engagement is being clearly affected by the hyperconnected and highly viralised societal patterns (Calzada, 2021d). Emerging digital citizenship regimes are byproducts of such digital revolution that affects the

way in which we could interpret and contextualise diasporas (Calzada, 2022a). Consequently, diaspora engagement deserves not only a historical view but also a prospective standpoint to anticipate forthcoming trends on new migrations, digitalization, datafication, mobility, and return movements moving from the cohesive territorially-rooted communities towards globally-scattered postpandemic, digital, and global citizens that might or might not remain ties with their home countries (Calzada, 2011). Probably global citizenship as we have known it so far is fading away being replaced by several forms of digital citizenship regimes (Calzada, 2022b; Hintz, Dencik, and Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019; Isin and Ruppert, 2015; McCosker, Vivienne, and Johns, 2016; Mossberger, Tolbert, and McNeal, 2007; Moraes and Andrade, 2015; Ohler, 2010; Hintz and Brown, 2017; Ratto and Boler, 2014).

The Case Study of the Basque e-Diaspora: The Transition from the *Basque Global Network* to *HanHemen* Action Research-Driven Public Innovation

Specifically, this article slightly illustrates its main rationale with a preliminary action research-driven public innovation project called *HanHemen* (*ThereHere* in Basque language) being currently undertaken by the Basque Government to show the way regional governments can publicly innovate and experiment in the globalized context of *Hyperconnected Diasporas* without falling into their digital risks and maximizing the potential of digital technologies. *HanHemen* is driven by three principles: (i) digital co-operativism, (ii) democratic governance, and (iii) social innovation (Calzada, 2021c). The case of the Basque e-diaspora, in light of the foundational strategy of the Basque Government entitled *Internationalisation Framework Strategy – Euskadi Basque Country: 2025 External Action Plan*, could inspire other regional governments, paradiplomatic/protodiplomatic activities (Cornago, 2017), and diaspora projects worldwide in tackling negative and hidden side-effects of *hyperconnected diasporas* (Calzada, 2011; Eusko Jaurlaritza, 2022) by experimenting with alternative prototypes based on data privacy and driven by blockchain (De Filippi et al., 2020).

The Basque e-diaspora case is remarkable at present given the strategic change that is occurring regarding the way this regional government is learning from past projects such as www.basqueglobalnetwork.eus in order to experiment with new social media platforms about digital and social innovation in setting up a new diaspora mechanism from the bottom-up and suggesting an alternative to extractivist global models through blockchain (www.hanhemen.eus). This emerging governmental initiative, which resonates with social and digital innovation from the public sector, aims to connect 2,000 Basque diasporic, digital, and global citizens worldwide through a reliable, own, and hybrid platform. This new

platform is being tested at present with the participation of Basque citizens worldwide through blockchain technology by setting up an experimental manner to approach ethically and democratically to the challenges that *hyperconnected diasporas* pose. In the past, www.basqueglobalnetwork.eus (Basque Global Network, 2022) attempted to build and structure a Global Basque Community that could interconnect the different profiles of Basque citizens abroad. However, this attempt was unsuccessful given it was built in a static and institutionally driven rationale without considering social innovations at all that such institutional-social dynamics required. At present, www.hanhemen.eus is attempting to revert this rationale by accurately characterizing the Basque community abroad, along with interaction that is reinforced thanks to reliable peer-to-peer digital tools that *HanHemen* should own. At present, www.hanhemen.eus is defining, experimenting, co-producing, and disseminating the initiative in close collaboration with diasporic citizens by aiming to gather 2,000 citizens worldwide by the end of the mandate in 3 years' time (Eusko Jaurlaritza, 2022: 378).

This initiative responds to two main transitions occurring around the Basque e-diaspore in the digital age (Calzada, 2011; probably extensive to other diasporas worldwide):

- (i) The first transition refers to the pervasive and ongoing transition occurring from the geographically rooted cohesive ethnicist community-driven diaspora notion towards a scattered and detached 'liquid' and digital global citizenship already shaping diaspora experience in the USA.
- (ii) And consequently, this first transition results in another (second) transition that shapes new practices, meanings, and exchanges from the folkloric and traditional revival-liked approach towards the construction of a new Basque cultural remixed-identity in real-time.

This article poses several questions around hyperconnected societies and digital globalized citizenship in relation to the contemporary postpandemic Basque diaspore, by paying special attention in the way technology is used and should be used by diasporic citizens (Totoricagüena, 2006). Against the backdrop of the pandemic, the term *hyperconnected diasporas* blends two digital emerging citizenship regimes that are likely to influence the academic literature and governmental policy implementations around digital engagement and diasporas in postpandemic times (Ponzanesi, 2020): Pandemic citizenship (Calzada, 2021a, 2021b; Calzada et al., 2022) and Algorithmic Citizenship (Calzada, 2018a). *Pandemic citizens* are digital citizens on permanent alert, with reduced mobility patterns, hyper-connected 24/7, and affected consciously or unconsciously by a globalized

interdependence (Calzada, 2022). Whereas *algorithmic citizenship* refers to the mode of identification that governments use to determine users' citizenship status when no documentation is available (Cheney-Lippold, 2017). *Hyperconnected diasporas* therefore combines the side-effects of the pandemics and the way the pandemic has established a new algorithmic beginning that should not be overlooked insofar as the pandemic may be eventually evolving towards uncertain scenarios rather than simply being vanished or removed (Milan, Treré, and Masiero, 2021).

Three Research Questions around *Hyperconnected Diasporas*

Consequently, this article presents three open research questions to spark a discussion around *Hyperconnected Diasporas*:

- (i) What does diaspora mean in the postpandemic hyperconnected societies? And how hyperconnected societies are affecting diaspora experiences and engagement?
- (ii) How diaspora is shaped when the hegemonic model of surveillance capitalism in the US is based on extractivist data governance models such as Facebook and Google? Consequently, can we trust this model for diaspora engagement by inviting Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple, and Microsoft (the so-called GAFAM; *Trojan Horses* of the digital disruption) handling with diasporic citizens data and therefore trust? Can we easily have given our data away from us for nothing?
- (iii) How regional and local governments implementing paradiplomacy or protodiplomacy should deal in engaging diasporas (Aguirre, 2013; Aldecoa and Keating, 2013; Cornago, 2017; Lecours, 2022; Nye, 2008) by (i) acknowledging the side-effects and risk-associated in terms of the lack of privacy, ethics, ownership, and cybersecurity and (ii) experimenting with data sovereignty-led platforms through decentralised digital architectures driven by blockchain and distributed ledgers (Atzori, 2017; Amore, 2016; Calzada, 2018a; Dupont, 2017; Gstrein and Kochenov, 2020; Orgad and Bauböck, 2018).

In the case of the Basque diaspora, there is a remarkable documentary called 'Amerikanuak' about Basque immigrants who went to USA looking for work as shepherds and looking for a better future (Amerikanuak, 2010). It takes place in Elko, Nevada. In this little western town, the documentary shows what difficulties they had when they arrived at the USA. Basically, 'Amerikanuak' talks about feeling homesick, about struggling in a different country to make a decent living and about being part of a community. This documentary thus shows an analogic-driven community encompassing Basque immigrants with strong social

capital and face-to-face interaction. As such, as Hoeg argued, “there is only one way to understand another culture; living it” (2005). Homesick and memories are part of the emotional connections of diasporas. Amelia Earhart clearly expressed this view as follows: “The more one does, sees, and feels...the more genuine may be one’s appreciation of fundamental things like home”. Thus, diaspora engagement either analogic or digital should be manifest and understood by implementing a mutual understanding between here and there, there and here. A mutual understanding that requires a profound sense of translocality. Translocality, therefore, consists of a multi-scalar repertoire of connections between here and there that span across imaginations, practices, and affects (Brickell and Datta, 2011).

Yet, how does hyperconnectivity effectively link diasporic global citizens by protecting their digital rights and explicitly ensuring their privacy when connecting with other peers? At the end of the day everything boils down to trust and social capital when enabling diasporic translocal connections (Geraci, Nardotto, Reggiani, and Sabatini, 2022; Calzada and Cobo, 2015). And it seems obvious that despite the fact that several diaspora gurus including Aikins tend to advocate the mantra of networking and connecting (2021), it is not less true that “being digitally connected is no guarantee of being smart” (Evans, 2002: 34), even considering the instrumental value of networking and connecting. Furthermore, as Harari rightly argues, “we are already becoming tiny chips inside and algorithmic giant system that nobody really understands” (2018: 1). Essentially, technology and digital networking is not free of charge, and has never been presented without shortcomings. When Raymond Williams defined technology, he did it with clear indications about the prospect by which we could experience it in either one way or another: “Technology is never neutral, and it has the potential and capacity to be used socially and politically for quite different purpose” (1983: 128).

Beyond dystopia and techno-skepticism though, there are niche experiments that can be launched and tested accordingly. Pentland from the MIT went a bit further when he argued that a New Deal on Data was necessary, and this is essentially applicable to the term that this article coins: *Hyperconnected Diasporas*. Pentland explicitly indicates: “We need a “New Deal on Data” putting citizens in control of data that is about them and also creating a data commons to improve both government and private industry” (2014: 1). As such, Barcelona has shown the way this “New Deal on Data” is possible (Calzada, 2018b; Monge, Barns, Kattel, and Bria, 2022). The question here remains as is: How regional governments dealing with paradiplomacy and diaspora engagement platforms should deal with data (Keating,

2013)? Which is the *correct* data governance model to respect the privacy, ownership, and ethics of diasporic citizens' data and digital rights?

It seems rather pertinent to think that is not just about disrupting, connecting, and interacting from institutions to diasporic citizens and among peer diasporic citizens between themselves. As such, an entire universe of algorithms and data are floating around diasporic relationships; and it remains to be seen how networking and interaction will be feasible if not reliable and not based on trustworthy and privacy-keeper platforms. The social media platforms embodied by Big Tech multinationals, known as GAFAM, were built on the ethos of subverting sanctity as lean, scrappy, and innovative underdogs taking on the powerful, entrenched status quo, freeing the consumer from the shackles of history. But disruption and networking through social media platforms does not just happen through them; instead through the diasporic citizens as users who build apps atop WhatsApp and Facebook for their needs to be connected. There is a line now created between disruption and fraud, disruption, destruction, and illegality in which GAFAM are becoming arbiters of that line. The absent of this debate in diaspora engagement and transnational citizenship studies has a high cost subject to be highly prized if not directly tackled as such (Haugen, 2022; Ho and McConnell, 2017).

Implications of *Hyperconnected Diasporas* for Citizenship: Pandemic and Algorithmic Citizenships

Diaspora refers to a postnational space that problematizes the relationship between nation, soil, and identity (Ponzanesi, 2020). Besides, this article defines *Hyperconnected Diasporas* as postpandemic, globalised, and highly generalisable diaspora patterns eminently managed, and led by corporate-driven Big Tech platforms that directly, consciously or unwittingly though, affect diasporic citizens' digital rights, privacy and intimacy—yet not necessarily all diaspora communities with the same level of exposure—by extracting their data and exacerbating their digital vulnerability and associated risks. *Hyperconnected diasporas* stem from and are embedded in “hyperconnected societies that enthusiastically embrace Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as a key component of the infrastructure of modern cities” (Calzada and Cobo, 2015:24). Moreover, *hyperconnected diasporas* resonates with the extreme condition of highly hyperconnected geographies as Khanna referred to them as “connectographies” (2016).

The end of the *world citizens* and the advent of other forms of further pervasive emerging digital citizenship forms such as pandemic and algorithmic citizenship, both

constitute the current trend that we call *hyperconnected diasporas* by acknowledging two main notions: First, the existence (yet not showing fully awareness) of side-effects and risks associated with digital technologies in terms of data sovereignty, privacy, ethics, ownership, and cybersecurity (Calzada, 2021c). Second, the potential opportunity for regional and subnational governments to experiment with data sovereignty-led platforms through decentralised digital architectures driven by blockchain (Diaspora, 2021; Al-Saqaf and Seilder, 2017; Atzori, 2017; De Filippi, Mannan, and Reijers, 2020; De Filippi and Lavayssi re, 2020; Gstrein and Kochenov, 2020; Dupont, 2017; Sonnino et al., 2020).

Globalization has led to a new class of *global citizenship* characterized by the widespread notion of world citizens, exemplified by the sense of belonging to everywhere worldwide – without any particular preference of attachment, a rootless global identity. While access to this global citizenship remains uneven, many diasporic citizens have enjoyed unlimited freedom to move, work, and travel. However, COVID-19 has drastically slowed the expansion of this global citizenship regime and introduced a ubiquitous new vulnerability in global affairs by giving rise to an ongoing pandemic citizenship regime in which citizens – regardless of their locations – share fears, uncertainties, and risks. Furthermore, COVID-19 is deeply and pervasively related to “data and AI governance issues, which expose citizens’ vulnerabilities under potential surveillance states and markets” (Calzada, 2022a: 10).

Against the backdrop of this uncertain scenario, this paper shed light on the way COVID-19 may end up with the notion of *world citizens* by initiating a new and endless era characterised by *pandemic citizenship*, meaning (i) a permanent state of uncertainty in terms of migration for diasporic citizens (Levitt and de la Dehesa, 2003), (ii) who thereby are highly dependent on their specific overseas location and country, and (iii) are extremely reliant on hyperconnectivity.

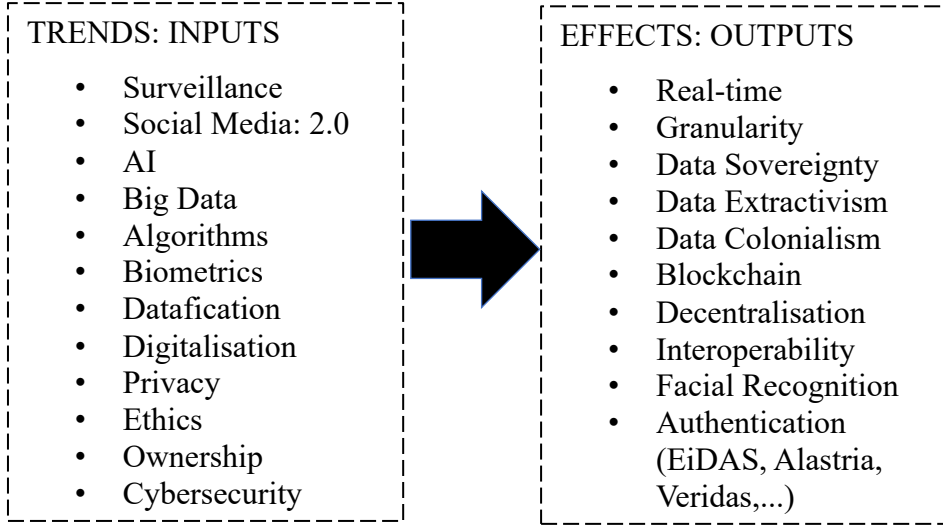
Ironically, yet dramatically, this rationale behind *pandemic citizenship* may resonate with the popular quote made by the former UK Prime Minister, Theresa May, when she argued that “if you believe you are a citizen of the world, you are a citizen of nowhere”. Amidst the post-COVID-19 in the UK (further exacerbated now by post-Brexit current momentum), this article acknowledges that this quotation makes total sense at present.

This article therefore pays attention to the notion of *pandemic citizenship* as a transitional phase of the former *world citizenship* living overseas and being part of a diaspora while being exposed (consciously or unwittingly) to such techno-political consequences of the pandemic in their daily life regarding privacy, surveillance, ethics, and ownership of data.

Discussion: Three Research Avenues and Policy Pathways to Curb the Narrow Techno-Deterministic Vision of *Hyperconnected Diasporas*

Diaspora engagement has been portrayed as the effective results of a decalogue of -INGS: (i) Networking, (ii) connecting, (iii) cross-bordering/travelling, (iv) lobbying, (v) paradiplomacying, (vi) matchmaking, (vii) philanthropying, (viii) professional emigrating/returning, (ix) transnational entrepreneuring, and (x) even, nomading.

Furthermore, according to Aikins, the big wheel of diaspora capital encompasses (i) flow of people, (ii) flow of ideas, and (iii) flow of financial capital in order to gain the triple win: (i) for the home country, (ii) for the host country, and (iii) for the diasporic citizen. Consequently, at present, *Hyperconnected Diasporas* are exposed to several trends as inputs and might be subverted through several outputs as effects:



But how these trends and effects may determine the evolution of *Hyperconnected Diasporas* as we know them at present? The article attempted to suggest a wakeup call on the nexus digital technologies and diaspora. Despite it is rather early to be conclusive with such debate, this article articulates three main topics to contribute to fertilize a fruitful conversation.

In the meantime, it is noteworthy that the European Strategy for Data (2020) alongside the Data Governance Act (2020) and more recently the Data Act (2022) and Digital Service Act (Haugen, 2022) could contribute to revert the *Hyperconnected Diasporas* general trend by providing an interesting policy framework. The European Strategy for Data aimed to make the EU a leader in a data-driven society. The Data Governance Act (2020) facilitates data sharing across sectors and Member States. And the Data Act (2022) clarifies who can create value from data and Digital Service Act (2022) encourages civil society to take the lead. About the latter, the benefits are cheaper prices, new opportunities, and better access.

Thus, in order to establish a research agenda and a potential policy pathway around *Hyperconnected Diasporas* and in light of recent policy advancements (at least in Europe), the article sets up three main research avenues that provide several insights and potential responses to formulate alternative initiatives such as *HanHemen* to curb the negative side-effects of extractivist data practices around diasporic citizens. This section eminently attempts to spark an academically rich and policy-driven discussion to re-formulate strategies and initiatives that may well need to acknowledge that technology is never neutral given the impact of datafication processes in diasporic interactions. These avenues for a future research and policy agenda aim to revert surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019) and its consequences in diaspora engagement and management by exploring in-depth: (i) digital diasporas, (ii) digital borders, and (iii) digital nomads.

Digital Diasporas

There is no consensus on what digital diaspora means exactly because it depends on its many disciplinary takes and media-specific variations, such as ‘e-diasporas’, ‘digital diasporas’, and ‘net-diasporas’, and ‘web-diasporas’. However, there is consensus on the profound ways in which digital connectivity has transformed privileged terms of spatiality, belonging, and self-identification (Ponzanesi, 2020). Thus, according to Ponzanesi (2020: 977) “digital diasporas provide new possible cartographies to map the self in relation to increasingly complex patterns of globalization and localization, while avoiding closures and the negative effects of identity politics”. With the notion of “digital diaspora”, it does not mean that the old (analogic or face-to-face) notion of diaspora has been superseded or replaced by new digital diasporas. Instead, digital technologies facilitate and transform the possibilities for diasporic affiliations.

As we can observe, the notion of “digital diasporas” remains valid insofar as it contributes to add the digital layer to the emotional and analogic layer. Having said that, it is equally true to spot on how absent is the no digital-related risk narrative in diaspora studies. Dataveillance or the loss of privacy for these diasporic affiliations is clearly not present when examining digital communications around diasporic exchanges and transnational networks.

The longstanding studies of diaspora probably need to put forward critical data perspective and assess accordingly the cost of this massive exposure for users (Aradau, 2015). Digital users are not only connected users; instead, social media platforms mediate between them, with no accountability and little scrutiny. It is necessary to grasp a timely postpandemic technopolitical notion that consider digital diasporas in a broader sense by including side-

effects of hyperconnectivity and extreme datafication (Calzada, 2022b). In addition to the uneven distribution of digital access, we should acknowledge the fact that there is such a further divide: data divide. Consequently, digital diasporas questions and challenges differences and asymmetries that insidiously persist within the celebratory discourses on the abolition of digital frontiers. Furthermore, *hyperconnected diasporas* goes further when it suggests that the even the potential abolition of digital frontiers might present extra complexities and asymmetries around datafication and extractivism. Databases and biometrics monitor digital diasporic citizens ensuring to link national security to migration and international terrorism (Amoore, 2006).

Thus, future research avenues on digital diaspora need to embrace the critical agenda that the term *hyperconnected diaspora* suggests given the absence of this realistic diagnosis about the increasing control and extraction of diasporic citizens' data by Big Tech platforms.

Digital Borders

Despite digital diasporas probably do not include the hyperconnected element among peers, digital borders eminently refer to the most hidden part of the cross-border data flows (Amoore, 2021). Digital borders rendered to the nation-state (Agnew, 1994), knowable as a cluster of attributes, a set of boundary lines that are also learnings, inclinations, and propensities (Wimmer and Glick, 2002). The digital border, stemming from the political geographic term “deep border”, is a machine learning border that learns representations from data, and generates meaning from its exposures to the world. As such, digital borders may exceed the strictly biometric extraction of the diasporic citizen's face and extends to the multiple features of his/her past political claims that probably have been captured from the social media extractivist feeds. Thus, digital borders precisely recombines and reorders ferocious technology and ordinary/mundane daily experiences from the apparently abstract deep neural nets that extracted these data. Learning algorithms are reordering what the border means for diaspora studies, how the boundaries of political community can be imagined, and how borderwork can function in the hyperconnected world. It increasingly more blur to distinguish digital borders in the offline and online environments, probably because context collapse is ubiquitous, also for diasporic citizens, either digitally or analogically when walking through an airport terminal (Calzada and Cobo, 2015). Hyperconnectivity is a feature that manifests and is represented with no distinction in both worlds, being channelised through a tsunami of data flows.

Digital Nomads

The last avenue for a research and policy agenda refers to the term *digital nomads* (Cook, 2020). The metaphor of the nomad has often been used to explain the mobile quality of contemporary social life, where deterritorialized forms of societies are constituted by fluid lines of movements rather than by fixed nodes in the space. Several authors have been rather critical when using the nomad metaphor for explaining a mobile lifestyle, since modern mobile groups are free of regulatory rules that might inhibit their movements, unlike policies that constrain traditional desert nomads.

Nomadism could be very much related to hyperconnected diásporas. Terms like *backpackers* gathering in independent leisure-oriented communities, *flashbackers* using available digital and logistic infrastructures for assuring an individualised mobile lifestyle, and *global nomads* who are interested in contacts with local communities but do their utmost to avoid the economic restrictions of national systems. Although these types of nomadisms are all characterised by a high level of physical mobility, *hyperconnected diasporas* significantly affect their lifestyle. Digital nomads, crossing digital borders and being active parts of digital diasporas, are using information and communication technologies most intensively to mix work and leisure in their highly connected lifestyles. As a result, Moravec (2013) coined *knowmads* referring to people who are independent from time and location, able to work with anybody in location independent job arrangements, and who spread knowledge and innovation across the globe.

Digital nomadism is not about changes in the spatial behaviour, but also reflects radical shifts in work character and libertarian values, enabling flexible, self-determined forms of work, through the use of digital resources, like paperless operations, as well as integrated platforms. *Hyperconnected diasporas* may effectively nurture the exponential expansion of several forms of digital nomadism that is characterised by rootless intensive digital activity. Flexible work, mobile telework, and fluid work have been used to characterise a wide range of digital nomadism. Digital nomadism is considered a form of post-identitarian mobility, where national identities are refused and identity is built around the global community. It remain to be seen how digital nomadism could be enacted within digital diasporas. Can digital nomadism imply forms of counter-hegemonic diaspora practices and lifestyles? How *digital nomadism* as a subculture affect paradiplomatic activities of regional governments? How a nomadic digital subculture can create a counter-hegemonic narrative beyond the official version of governments? Will, ultimately, digital nomadism modify the

architectures and mechanisms used in peer-to-peer diasporic communications through decentralised forms and tools such as blockchain?

In relation to digital diasporas, several studies revealed issues regarding the digital nomad paradox, like the constant contradiction between security through a sense of belonging to a diasporic community and individual freedom. Both aspects are inherent to digitally enabled virtual spaces in the context of digital diasporas. Studies about state-led enablement of digital nomadism have focused on issues of digital infrastructure in urban environments showing a digital nomad paradox: where individuals' desire to gain the freedom of mobility, both physically and virtually through digital means and the state's need to tightly control mobility in order to assure the security for the state are in tense conflict.

Diaspora studies through digital diasporas should integrate the role of digital means that contribute to the shifts in mobility experiences in those situations where cross-border mobility is only virtual and does not assume any physical resettlement. This is the case of the e-residency selective migration pattern where e-residents do not have physical residency status but could obtain instead a fiscal/digital/data citizenship status: e-residency card in Estonia is the key example on this at present (Calzada, 2022a; Masso, Calzada, and Kasapoglu, 2022). How can this new pattern of algorithmic citizenship affect digital diasporas through digital borders in light of the increasing postpandemic teleworking lifestyle?

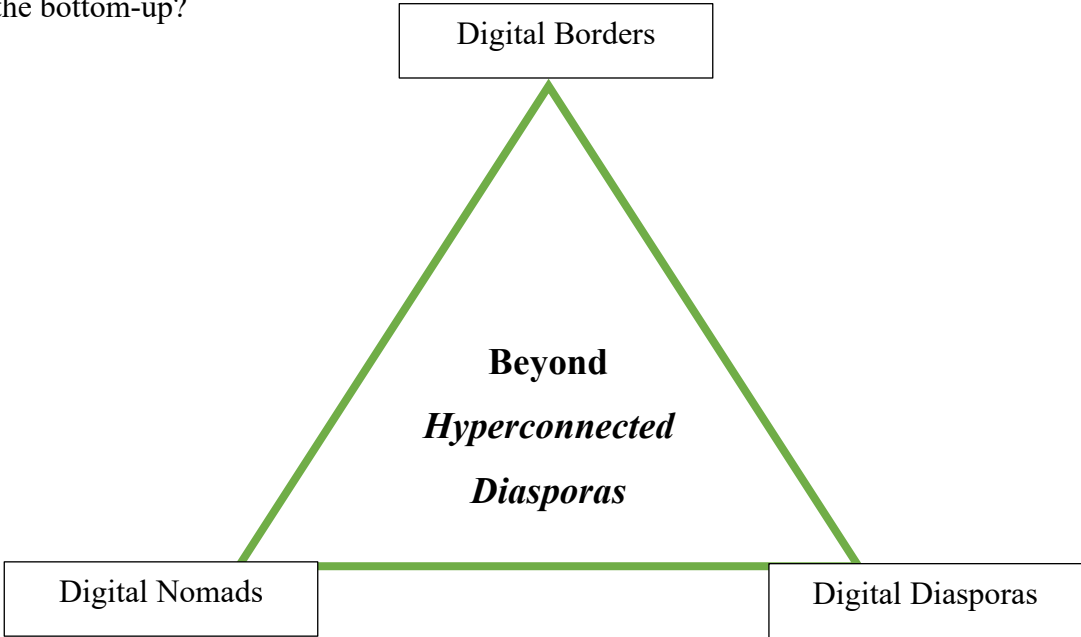
Digital nomads in diasporas are often characterised as mobile workers. Those who mostly fall under the category of highly skilled workers, like those with STEM degrees or jobs in those fields. Digital nomads tend to be the most mobile among professionals, both physically as well as digitally. The lifestyle is attributed to their high degree of individual digital literacy skills and their access to the technological resources necessary to be digitally mobile. For instance, empirical studies showed that e-residency programmes in Estonia are more accessible to applicants from countries with higher levels of e-government and economic development (Calzada, 2022a).

The future research and policy avenues may suggest the explore the linkage between selective migration policies and digital nomads as a way to expand digital diasporas. Selective migration policies play a significant role in enabling and at the same time restricting nomads' mobilities, which inevitably may affect the interest of some paradiplomatic initiatives to allow the networking among peer diaspora citizens. What is more, these selective migration policies may legislate proactively to provide secure ID connection to these digital nomads that request be part of the country from overseas. Here the experimental role played by blockchain and Ethereum seems to be unexplored yet. A trend that we expect to increasingly happen is that

digital diasporas will be tied up with selective migration policies to attract highly skilled individuals like in the UK and Germany.

Beyond the risks and threats that this article described from the early beginning, a way to revert the extractivist nature of *hyperconnected diasporas* may be inspired through the model implemented in Estonia. Its e-residency programme may offer some critical pathway for overcoming the highlighted obstacles around privacy and security, through providing alternatives to traditional forms of migration that assume physical relocation, and via digitally enabled access to transnational services and digital authentication. The initiative by the Basque Government slightly presented beforehand, *HanHemen*, resonates with this and is directly inspired by the digital innovations stemming from e-Estonia insofar as blockchain may suggest a path to follow and to experiment with. *HanHemen* has currently identified 1385 global, diasporic, and digital citizens through an online survey carried out from 1st February to 31st March 2022. The main findings will be broadly revealed as well as the upcoming steps to revert *hyperconnected diasporas* risks and challenges.

Given that diasporic citizens unwittingly follow the lifestyle and digital patterns related to digital nomads: How can blockchain-driven paradiplomatic initiatives such as *HanHemen* –avoiding the negative side-effects of *hyperconnected diasporas* – benefit from the new digital trends crossing digital borders to safely connect among peers (with no data harm for them) and enhance the potential value of an online diasporic community created from the bottom-up?



Conclusion

This article posed three main research questions that could be responded as follows:

First, what does diaspora mean in the post-COVID-19 hyperconnected societies when they are affecting diaspora experiences and engagement more than even before (Ponzanesi, 2020)? Digital diasporas term has shown that both risks and opportunities simply rest on the fact that diasporic citizens are data subjects, meaning their interaction count as a potential risky and emancipatory data experience (Calzada, 2022b). Thus, policy actions should be taken to revert this by-default mechanism of networking.

Second, how diaspora is shaped when the hegemonic model of *Surveillance Capitalism* in the US is based on extractivist data governance models such as Facebook (Forestal, 2020; McElroy, 2019; Kim et al., 2018; Taplin, 2017; Bucher, 2012)? Digital diasporas inevitably need to acknowledge this pernicious trend and experiment with niche initiatives to set up a bottom-up network by on the one hand, benefitting from the light profile of commercial social media, but on the other hand, creating its own data sovereignty by migrating users to hard profile with e-authentication systems securely stored and managed through blockchain.

And third, how regional and subnational governments should deal with connecting diasporic citizens by; on the one hand, acknowledging the side-effects and risk-associated in terms of privacy, ethics, ownership, and cybersecurity; and on the other hand, experimenting with data sovereignty-led platforms through decentralised digital architectures driven by blockchain among others? Paradiplomacy should probably be driven by trusted networks of peer diasporic citizens rather than large scale campaigns and slogans.

The hypothesis of this article was that digital diasporas worldwide may have been shaped through stringent postpandemic societal pressing patterns by increasingly further exposing diasporic citizens' digital rights unwittingly towards unprecedented technopolitical risks. Against this backdrop, this article posed a novel description in postpandemic times through the term *Hyperconnected Diasporas* by suggesting (i) a technopolitical wake up call for regional governments worldwide dealing with diaspora engagement initiatives and (ii) a critical standpoint on the understanding and use of data and digital technologies regarding datafication processes involving data privacy, ethics, and ownership. As such, the novelty of this article relies on the articulation of the term *Hyperconnected Diasporas* insofar as in diaspora engagement the use of Big Tech platforms such as Facebook is as widespread as unknown in its negative side effects.

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