Cameroonians in Oslo, Diaspora, and Uses of the Media

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Abstract

In this study a series of in-depth interviews were conducted with Cameroonians living in Oslo in order to analyze the role of media in the way they constructed their identities. The article showed how through the use of email and Cameroonian websites transnational social networks were strengthened, and ethnic identities were maintained. It examined the role of public discourse in the host country's mass media in the way Cameroonians negotiated their relationship with the host country. It also showed how the popularity of Anglo-American audiovisual products indicated a willingness to embrace global popular culture. This article's main argument was that the construction of diasporic identities involved a multi-directional gaze; looking inward to the local context of the host country, backwards to the home country, and all around to the global context, and that the media played a major role in all these processes.

Keywords: diaspora, media, technology, Cameroonians, identity

Introduction

In recent years, especially with the advent of newer communications and information technologies, transnational media have become central to the media practices of immigrant populations. The possibilities for sustaining immediate contact are increasing as new technologies provide new spaces for communication flows that transcend geographical borders (Castells, 2001).

This is true in countries such as Norway, where new technologies like the Internet and mobile phones are easily accessible to immigrants, and where refugees have access to a relatively wider range of media and communications opportunities today than they have ever had in the past. Many diasporic communities in Western countries today benefit from relatively good access to different forms of diasporic media. Turks, Indians, Arabs, among others, living in Europe and North America, currently have access to newspapers, films, and television channels from their countries of origin. Cameroonians, however, have relatively limited exposure to the mass media of their homeland, as they have virtually no access to print and broadcast media from their country of origin. The only means of access to homeland media content is through the Internet.

It has been claimed that, for immigrant populations, the Internet and other new media technologies expand spaces for community communication and provide new opportunities for self-expression and self-representation (Georgiou, 2002). However, despite

the utopic visions that developed during the early days of the Internet, the relationship between online interaction and offline life still remains unclear in many contexts.

The present paper is based on an interview study among 14 Cameroonian immigrants in Oslo, which focused on consumption practices related to television, radio, newspapers, and the Internet. Here, I will examine the everyday media habits of Cameroonians with a particular focus on how the media are implicated in the process of negotiating a borderline existence between the homeland and the new host country.

Key Concepts Explored: Diaspora, Identity, and Media

The word Diaspora is originally an old Greek word, whose meaning was associated with the "scattering" and "maturing" of seeds. To humans, it has been employed as a metaphor for dispersal and settlement originally referring to the exile of the Jews from their historical homeland (Cohen, 1997). However, the concept of Diaspora in contemporary times has been applied metaphorically in reference to several other categories of people: expatriates, alien residents, refugees, immigrants, ethnic/racial minorities (Safran, 1991). What principally defines the diverse groups of people designated as diasporas is a shared experience of living through cultural difference (Hall, 1994). They also share similar spatial characteristics of living on cultural borderlands with permeable boundaries (Ma, 2003).

Stuart Hall has played an influential role in defining the concept of diaspora. His main focus has been on building a notion of cultural identity and race that avoids the pitfalls of essentialist discourse. In his conceptualization, he stresses the metaphorical, rather than literal meaning of the notion of diaspora.

> The diaspora experience as I intend it here, is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of `identity` which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference. (Hall 1990: 235)

He also provides a useful way of thinking about identity as a process that involves constant transformation, that is increasingly fragmented, and that is 'multiply constructed across different, often antagonistic, discourses, practices, and positions' (Hall, 1996). Hall further points out that identity ought to be seen as a production that is never complete, always in process, always constituted within, not outside, representation (1990, p. 222).

Such a conceptualization makes the term more dynamic, as it reflects the multiple identifications and `third spaces` (Bhabha, 1990) of cultural practice and identification. It supports a shift from understanding identity as an "either/or" process, to a more inclusive "and/and" (Melucci, 1996, cited in Sreberny, 2002).

Heterogeneity and diversity are keywords in defining diasporic identities. On the one hand, diasporic identities are constantly being produced and reproduced along itineraries of migration, but on the other hand, diasporic identities are also re-creating an endless desire to return to 'lost origins' (Hall, 1994). Diasporic populations constantly live on cultural borderlands, and in host nations, they cluster around memories of 'homelands', striving to reproduce 'authentic home cultures'. They form communities, in order to re-root their floating lives, and by their struggle to make sense of their constantly changing lives, they achieve closure (Shi, 2005).

Sreberny (ibid.) argues that the kind of identity that a specific diasporic population constructs, and its varying conceptions of itself, depends on the significant activity at hand that channels its energy. She identifies three types of gazes through which diasporic populations can negotiate identity positions. The *inward* gaze implies a group looking to its new national host context, in which case the focus is on ethnicity. When the focus is on exile it often means a nostalgic gaze *backward* to the old homeland. Third, when the focus is transnational, it implies a construction of cross-border networks and a global gaze that involves *looking all around*. Sreberny suggests that these different gazes, namely local community, exile, and transnational networks, should not be seen as mutually exclusive, but rather as concurrent processes of group formation and re-formation through which migrant populations fluidly navigate.

Global media have helped constitute a new cultural geography that offers diasporas a new kind of experience. For displaced subjects, media provide points of identification by marking symbolic boundaries, re-linking cultures to place, and by fulfilling the desire for memory, myth, search, and rediscovery (Shi, ibid.). They provide 'an imaginary coherence around the experience of dispersal and fragmentation, which is the history of diasporas' (Hall, 1994, p.394). All the processes of location and dislocation that constitute the diasporic experience 'are mediated in one way or another by media technologies, ranging from the epistolary technology of letters, telephone, fax, and email to the audiovisual media of photos, cassettes, films, and videos, to print, electronic, and cyberspace journalism' (Naficy, 1999, p.4). In the case of Cameroonians, one can assume that cultural flows between the homeland and the diaspora spread all around the globe are reinforced by technologies such as the Internet. These media, in Meyrowitz's words (1986), offer diasporas, like that of Cameroonians in Norway, new resources and new disciplines for the construction of imagined selves and communities.

Drawing from these theoretical concepts, the present paper tries to give an account of the media space of the Cameroonian diaspora in Norway. Through the lens of the everyday media habits of Cameroonians, it explores the shifting and fragmented character of diasporic identities, and reveals the influence media have in shaping the experiences of Cameroonians in Norway.

The Community

The Cameroonian community in Norway is one of the smallest of the Cameroonian diaspora. According to Statistics Norway (Statistiske Sentralbyrå – SSB), the number of people living in Norway of Cameroonian origin in 2005 was 463 (259 male and 204 female), with 111 residing in Oslo. Cameroonians in Norway have one of the smallest immigrant communities in the country. The history of Cameroonian any significant immigration to Norway effectively began as recently as the late 90s. This means the majority of Cameroonians in Norway in 2007 have lived in the country for less than ten years. So the majority of Cameroonians are in a sense still engaged in the process of getting settled in a new society.

In 2003, a group of Cameroonians in Oslo formed an association called the Cameroon Association in Norway (CAMASSON). This association is a forum in which all the Cameroonians in Oslo meet, socialize, and address their common problems, not only in relation to their living situation in Norway, but also in relation to Cameroon.

Cameroonian immigrants are somewhat restricted in their social interactions in the local context. Most of their social networks are built around the West African community

in Norway, which consists mostly of Nigerians, Congolese, and Ivorians. However, they are equally connected to mainstream Norwegian society and possess a certain amount of cultural capital outside the African community. A high proportion of Cameroonians already possess a university education or are in the process of acquiring one. Being educated and socialized in the Norwegian system provides new possibilities for cultivating friendships and creating social networks that reach far beyond the diasporic community.

The public expression of ethnicity in the emerging Cameroonian diaspora in Norway still has limited cultural, political and social outlets. At the time of the present study, the most recognizable public expression of diasporic existence in the Cameroonian community is the national day celebrations. The Cameroonian community in Oslo also united to mark occasions like births, deaths, and christenings. On occasions like the marking of the national day, other African communities, as well as the general public, were invited to sample the array of Cameroonian dishes, music, and dancing usually on display.

Methodology

The main data for the present study were gathered using the open-ended interview method. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) characterize the ethnographic interview as one of the most common and powerful ways to grasp the meaning that people ascribe to their daily lives. The open-ended style of interviewing usually provides a high level of flexibility, and makes it easy for the interviewer to follow new leads. This allows the researcher to obtain sometimes unintended but valuable information and to make observations (Shi, 2005). The interview guide used here was designed to not only focus on the meaning of media practices, but also to gather narratives about personal histories, experiences of migration, identity, and belonging. Because of the open-ended nature of the interviews, the questions served merely as topical entry points rather than as a rigid format that had to be followed slavishly.

The fourteen participants in the present study all resided in Oslo at the time of the study. Each of the fourteen participants was considered to be an expert interlocutor in his/her everyday media world, and a credible source of insight into how media practices relate to the process of negotiating identity. The interactive dimension of the interview is central in the sense that the interviewer and the interviewee both participate in the process of meaning production (Dalen, 2004). The number of interviewees was small enough to allow for the main issues to be explored in greater depth.

The participants were recruited mainly through CAMASSON (Cameroon Association in Norway). The group of informants consisted of six university students, a bio-engineer, two construction workers, a cleaning lady, a canteen assistant, and two nurses. The duration of each interview ranged between 40-90 minutes.

Negotiating Multiple Identities

According to Gillespie (2002), the complexities of negotiating a sense of belonging, community, was an essential part of the migrant youth experience. Moving between and across multiple identities was a daily ritual that migrant youth performed without much reflection. This complex process of positioning was evident in the informants' narratives. The first sign of this process of navigation between different subject positions could be

discerned in the manner in which the informants employed notions of a discursive "us" or "we" during the interview.

The participants were particularly concerned about the way in which the media had a tendency to place all black people under the umbrella of a certain homogenous "Africanness" that ignored ethnic and national differences.

> ...for example I read an article where they talk about how Africans are, when it comes to lies telling, how immigrants are. It happens that one police officer was doing research on Africans. You cannot go to one country to do research and come and make a generalized statement that Africans are like that. (Eyong)

> I think that to an extent the Africans are generally stigmatized in the media. First Africans are just referred to as Africans, meanwhile it is very difficult to understand that Africa is a continent. It is not a country... you should be able to distinguish between somebody who comes from Cameroon and somebody who comes from Morocco, rather than grouping them together because they hardly share anything in common... (Ngwa)

However, while they contested the designation of all Africans as a single homogenous group, they still used the same stereotypical designations when referring to themselves. In many instances, they made statements such as "You know with us Africans" or referred to home as "back in Africa" when they in essence meant "back in Cameroon". At other times the interviewees evoked the discursive "us" to define themselves as foreigners or immigrants. Throughout the interviews, sentences such as "us foreigners living in Norway" were pronounced repeatedly. The interviewees' accounts revealed their shifting speaking positions and a certain ambivalence in the way they defined their collective identities. Faced with the constantly changing subject positions in the local context, the interviewees either consciously or unconsciously kept navigating across different imagined boundaries in their discourse on identity. Although when defining their collective selves the informants moved between being Cameroonian, being African, or being immigrants, it was obvious that they basically understood themselves as the constitutive "other" against which Norwegian identity is constructed.

> Yes you will always be an outsider so long as you are not a Norwegian. It doesn't matter where you come from. Whether you come from the US or from Africa, wherever you will always be an outsider. (Minouche)

Ethnic Media and Life in the Diaspora

There was a certain sentiment discerned among some of the interviewees that indicated a *backward* gaze. This backward gaze could be associated with a feeling of longing, homesickness and a desire to stay connected with the past. This sentiment was evoked at such instances as this:

> What I basically have here is friends...but there is nowhere like home, where you were brought up there are so many memories you can't replace...but I have only lived in Norway for 5 years. (Minouche)

The participant cited above felt a sense of loss over an irreplaceable past, but at the same time is implicitly hopeful that with the passage of time she will feel settled in her new place of residence.

Diasporic media in this case played a central role in this process of looking backward and bringing to light memories of the past.

> When I was in Cameroon three years ago, I listened to the radio all the time. It was so sweet. They speak Pidgin, they give advice, the way they talk to the layman…it is so nice. It is so sweet. That I really miss. (Edith)

> I do love listening to music…I listen to music from Africa, because I grew up with this music…When I listen to this music, at least I feel closer to my past, to the time when I was in Cameroon…sometimes when I listen to music from the past from my home country I get flashback memories about how life was in those days when things were really fine… When I am lying down listening to Africa No.1 I feel as if I am in Africa (Max)

The media facilitate the preservation of events and experiences across time and place. In so doing, the media become, for people living in a diaspora, catalysts for reminiscing about other times and places (Drotner, 1998). For many of the participants, listening to Cameroonian music brought back memories of home and accentuated feelings of nostalgia and loss. In their recollections of past life in Cameroon, what they often remembered most were the good times. In their research undertaken in London, Aksoy and Robins (2000) show how Turks were in the habit of seeking out television programmes and films that conveyed an ideal image of Turkey and of Turkishness. Turks in London wanted to see an image of a Turkey – whether it was natural landscapes or childhood memories of the old days – that revived a glorious past. What especially appealed to them was the sense of purity and harmony of a world that existed in the past. According to Aksoy and Robins, these idealizations are a significant feature of the migrant experience. For deterritorialized subjects, ethnic media provide points of cultural identification through which they can imagine continuous identities and hence create desirable meanings of their ruptured and shifting identities (Shi, 2005).

The participants expressed great interest in news about Cameroon. They appreciated the importance of staying connected to their homeland. When the participants turned to the media of their host country, what they found made them feel a sense of invisibility and lack of recognition in public space.

> I would like to have access to news, political news for example, since I have been in Norway, I have never seen on Norwegian television. I would have liked to get some political news about Cameroon from time to time. (Kontchou)

> They never ever show anything about Cameroon for five years since I have been in Norway. So I think if they could go to Cameroon I would appreciate that, just a documentary, whatever it is… about Cameroon. (Minouche)

They all expressed a desire for more representation in the Norwegian media. These frustrations were caused by the fact that they felt entitled to more visibility and recognition. The Norwegian public service broadcaster (NRK) makes some provision for ethnic minority programming. However, these provisions are mostly reserved for the larger immigrant groups. Unfortunately, since Cameroonians form one of the smallest immigrant communities in Norway, they are not taken into consideration.

None of the cable and satellite channel packages on offer in the Norwegian market provides television channels from Cameroon, or indeed anywhere else in Africa. Contrary to other immigrant groups from Asia and the Middle East living in Norway that can

receive television from their countries of origin, most immigrants from Africa cannot. Thus, the participants in my study did not watch any homeland television of any sort. The Internet was the only means through which Cameroonians in Norway could receive news from their homeland. One of the most common uses of the Internet reported by the participants was reading news from websites dedicated to Cameroon.

In Cameroon, all the major actors in the newspaper sector are quickly adapting themselves to the realities of the digital era. The biggest newspapers all have online versions (*Cameroon Tribune, Le Messager, Quotidien Mutations, The Herald, Nouvelle Expression,* and *The Post*). Bilingualism is a central feature of the Cameroonian identity. This is also reflected in Cameroon-related content on the Internet. Cameroonian websites are thus both in French and in English, although the websites in French predominate.

Transnational Connections

Transnational networks of media and communication contribute to the strengthening of communication between Norway, Cameroon, and other parts of the world. Interpersonal communication through electronic mail ranked among the participants' top uses of the Internet. This form of communication had an added significance for these Cameroonians living so far away from home because was the most accessible means for them to maintain contact with friends and family in Cameroon and abroad.

Being able to exchange messages with individuals on the other side of the planet and having access to community information transform the dynamics of diaspora, providing qualitatively and quantitatively enhanced links. Cyberspace has provided the context in which users electronically reconstitute the relationships that existed before migration (Karim 1998). For Dieudonné, one of the informants, it was particularly important to be in contact with friends and family still living in Cameroon. He was conscious of the role the media played in maintaining social networks.

> I live here but I still have my family there, my mother, my brothers… You know with us Africans; our family is usually big… Always...no matter what...when you are out of your country you will always try to know what is happening there because you still have family and relatives there. It is important to know what is going on there. (Dieudonné)

For many diasporic subjects, email is a quick, efficient and cost-effective way to keep in touch with relatives and friends back home. All the participants communicated regularly by telephone with their families in Cameroon. Some of the informants mentioned the fact that they had regular conversations on the phone in which they exchanged news, family matters and gossip:

> Q: What kind of news from Cameroon are you interested in?
> Minouche: What is going on…who is getting married, who has passed away…who is doing what, basically.
> Q: How do you get this information?
> Minouche: I get it through the phone; hours on the phone.
> Q: Who do you talk to?
> Minouche: My mother, my sisters…basically. They gossip a lot

Besides helping them stay connected with Cameroon, they were able, through the use of e-mail, to maintain links with other Cameroonians living in different parts of the world.

For some of my interviewees with friends and former classmates living in the diaspora, email was an important means to stay in touch.

> Q: Who do you usually send e-mails to?
> Edith: All over the world. America, Cameroon, London, Nigeria, Ghana…
> Q: To whom do you send these e-mails?
> Edith: My friends. A lot of mails I get from Nigeria because I have my friends there.

Chatting is one of the most popular Internet activities among young Internet users. Many websites targeted at Cameroonian communities at home and abroad had chat rooms in which users could carry on discussions by posting messages. In addition to the major newspaper websites, there were a number of other regional and hometown websites that published Cameroonian news selected from different news sources. These included websites such as *cameroon-info.net*, *wagne.net*, *bonaberi.com*, and *bamileke. com*. Cameroonian websites have many interactive possibilities where surfers can post comments and letters. Many of these websites also have chat rooms and dating services. Many Internet users utilize this form of communication to discuss interests and to come in contact with new people. Contrary to the mainstream hype, the present interview subjects rarely or at most occasionally used the Net in this way.

The *backward* gaze is a significant element of Internet use for my interviewees. The Internet also helped connect my interviewees to the emerging transnational Cameroonian communities spread all over the globe. The desire for virtual contact with the homeland and the transnational community could either be a mechanism of adjustment to a new place or be indicative of a desire to remain in the past.

Digital Divides

It is important to point out that even if the Internet is seen as an effective tool for bridging gaps in time and space, it is only the diasporic populations located in Europe and North America that benefit from it. The level of connectivity in Norway is high. Educational centres as well as other societal sectors are all connected. For those without access to these places, Internet cafes are everywhere and only a small amount of money allows one to go online for an hour or two. Computer equipment is generally modern and accessible.

However, transnational linkages between Cameroonians in Norway and their home country are still greatly limited, because Cameroon does not enjoy the same level of access to such technologies. Many of my interviewees brought up the access problem in Cameroon.

> We communicate through the phone and through letters because very few of them have access to the Internet. The communication with Africa is mostly one way. If they call you it is mostly for an important reason. They are not yet used to the idea of going online because they have to go and pay in order to go online. For them it is a problem to do that. (Ayissi)

An article in *The Economist* recently stated that the gap between Africa and the broadband world is as wide as the Grand Canyon. Only 4% of Africans have access to the Internet. African countries have one of the highest Internet subscription costs in the world, around $250-300 a month. The selected few with Internet access are also

faced with problems of obsolete systems and irregular electricity (*The Economist* 18/10, 2007).

However, while access to the Internet is poor, the use of mobile phones is growing at an explosive rate. According to the International Telecommunications Union's (ITU's) figures, the number of mobile subscribers increased from 16 million to 136 million between 2000 and 2005, which is twice the growth rate of the global market (International Communications Union, 2007).

Mainstream Media: Looking Inward

In recent years, as satellite television has become increasingly popular and easily accessible, studies have reported that contemporary migrants in Europe generally seem to watch more television news from their countries of origin than the national television channels of their host countries (Christiansen, 2004). This media practice among migrants has received some attention and has been cited as a contributing factor to the lack of integration. However, as this study shows, it is clear that not all immigrants watch satellite television, let alone the television channels of their home country. As Christiansen (ibid.) points out, the media practices of immigrants, largely similar to those of the majority population, are taken for granted or regarded as natural.

Host-country mass media can serve as a source of social and cultural information. This was portrayed in the way the informants, all of whom were relative newcomers to Norwegian society, reflected on the relationship between the host-country media and the process of adaptation.

> I think the breakthrough came when I was able to read and understand what was going on. Then I began to understand how the Norwegians live their lives and how they look at people and that has made me be prepared for what to expect whenever I meet a Norwegian…I live where I live because I have been able to understand the language and I have tried to find out things, because it is not easy for a foreigner to settle in the Norwegian society without help, first by understanding what is going on around you, and by being able to read what is going on in the media… (Ngwa)

> Norwegian news is very important for me because it is also important to know what is happening locally so that I am aware of what is around me. (Ayissi)

The interviewees felt the consumption of Norwegian media was an important factor in helping them adjust to Norwegian society. The majority of the media they were exposed to was mainstream Norwegian media. For Dieudonné, the consumption of local television channels was explained by the fact that they had limited choice. He considered this as a positive thing:

> We can say we are forced to do it because every channel here, I think we can say 70% of the channels are Norwegian, so we are forced to do it. I think for me it is a good thing because it is better to know their culture and everything, than just to use time to watch some other channels from other countries, because you learn about the country. It is better that when you are living in Norway, you have to know these things. (Dieudonné)

Many of the informants watched Norwegian news daily. They also expressed a high level of interest in media content dealing with all major political, social, cultural, and

economic issues of the day. *Hotel Caesar*, a long-running Norwegian soap opera, was enjoyed in an almost ritual manner by the interviewees. I will argue that their interest in these types of programmes is similar to the tendency discerned by Gillespie (1995) in relation to British-Asian teenagers' fondness for the Australian soap *Neighbours*. Viewing TV programmes such as *Hotel Cæsar*, and thereby participating in a shared media culture, might create a certain sense of attachment to the host country. There was a sense of realization apparent among my interviewees that the present was equally important as the past and that they needed to build a new life in their host country.

The question to ask in this case is whether there was any link between my informant's media practices and a positive experience of integration.

The media have been traditionally viewed as instrumental in the building of a sense of national unity, coherence, and belonging. However, as this study shows, the everyday media representation of immigrants might in fact lead to feelings of exclusion and marginalization. My informants were generally dissatisfied with the media provision for their community. They expressed frustration over the difficulty of getting access to news about Cameroon in particular, and Africa in general. They disputed the stereotypical images in the media that portrayed the African continent as a single homogenous unity, and its peoples as uncivilized and uncultured. They were angered by how non-Western immigrants in general, and Africans in particular, were constantly associated with crime, disease, and conflict. The informants felt that stereotypical representations and generalized characterizations in the Norwegian media helped to reduce their identities to a set of exaggerated, and most often negative, character traits. This contributed to a feeling of being excluded from the society they live in. They felt that the Norwegian media principally issued an invitation to participate in an "imagined community" that by designation ostracized them.

The Influence of Global Media

The "cross-cultural navigation" (Gillespie, 2002) that Cameroonians in Norway engaged in through media practices can be creative and have indiscernible consequences. The globalization of the media and the consequent increase in flows of internationalized media content through broadcasting and interactive media such as the Internet are playing an important role in the development of a technologically integrated media culture that largely operates beyond the nation-state. Appadurai (1996) argues that we are participating in what he terms a global *mediascape*, which involves the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information and the images of the worlds created by the media.

If we assume that media are one of the main fields within which we see globalization at work, this hypothesis is somewhat validated by the present interview material. My informants participated, as did their Norwegian counterparts, in this global youth culture. Cameroonians in Norway, as well as Norwegians, had globally shared cultural references consisting of Anglo-American talk shows, TV Reality series, films, televised sporting events, MTV etc. This global popular culture transcends traditional boundaries of "here" and "there". I will argue that through the intermediary of these different mediated cultural discourses, Cameroonians in Norway navigated between different levels and spaces of identity. They cultivated different tastes, interests, and emotional experiences by participating in popular culture. They navigated between cultural universes and cultivated their identities on several levels, in relation to the nation in which they

live, in relation to the diaspora they belong to, and in relation to the world. As Gillespie argues (1995), the coexistence of culturally diverse media is a cultural resource in itself. It produces a heightened consciousness of difference and a cosmopolitan stance. It encourages people to compare, contrast, and question the social forms portrayed in their daily lives and on screen. Global communications helps bring together cultures, encouraging users to express a range of ambivalent responses, sometimes reinforcing and sometimes breaking down boundaries.

Conclusion

As I have shown here, the position of the media in the life-worlds of diasporic communities is not as simple as it might seem at first sight. The media open up opportunities to connect the various communities of the Cameroonian diaspora with the homeland. The availability of online versions of Cameroonian newspapers, and other links to information about Cameroon on search engines, further enhances inter-continental connections. By being able to stay in touch with happenings in Cameroon through online news, Cameroonians in Norway are able to maintain an imaginary connection with the homeland. The media help bind transnational Cameroonians around an imagined community and build a global Cameroonian collective consciousness.

We need to bear in mind that although the use of online media is increasing steadily around the world, there are great differences in access and use of these technologies. We see a sharp fall in the ownership of computer hardware and subscription to Internet services when we move beyond Europe, North America and Australia. The poor state of telecommunications infrastructure and the relatively high cost involved in using Internet services in countries such Cameroon imply that maintaining diasporic connections is not as easy as some would claim.

But at the same time, media are certainly an important instrument in the process of globalization. They transmit expressions of a global culture ranging from television, to music styles, and advertising. They contribute to reinforcing a sense of belonging in a global media culture.

We saw from this study that the informants' use of local media was in many ways identical to that of the average Norwegian population. Not only did they have access to the same TV, newspapers, and radio; they also had similar patterns of use. They all acknowledged the usefulness of Norwegian media as a source of knowledge about Norwegian society. Most of the participants saw themselves as having good Norwegian language skills, and affirmed that their consumption of local media was a major contributing factor. The ritual enjoyment of popular national soaps, or the national news, could affirm, even momentarily, a sense of belonging to a shared Norwegian culture.

However, the interplay between Norwegian media's cultural construction of migrants and the nature of Cameroonians' life trajectories results in an identity formation that is consistent with a regime of differential exclusion.

In conclusion, the present article has tried to show that Cameroonian migrants in Norway engage in cultural and media practices that exemplify the three directions of gaze proposed by Sreberny: *backward*, *inward*, and *all-around*. The media practices of Cameroonian migrants also demonstrate how they navigate through these different positions in everyday life within a space that is complex and highly differentiated.

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