5. Affective geographies on YouTube

From time to time I watch videos, self-made ones, showing different Moroccan scenes. I kind of enjoy watching those. They make me go back in my mind to Morocco, and every once in a while I like that.

– Nevra, a sixteen-year-old girl

Me at the Zoo is the first file ever uploaded on YouTube. In this nineteen-second video set in the San Diego Zoo in the United States, we see Jawed Karim – one of YouTube's founders – in front of an elephant enclosure stating, “Alright, so here we are in front of the elephants. The cool thing about these guys is that they have really, really, really long trunks, and that's cool. And that's pretty much all there is to say” (Jawed, 2005). By viewing such videos on their screens, users may affectively presence themselves at a distant location. In this chapter I map out what emotions may be evoked in the bodies of Moroccan-Dutch youth as they watch YouTube videos. The interviewees mostly watched two genres: user-generated videos shot in Morocco that may sustain feelings of transnational diaspora belonging, and commercial music videos that may produce feelings of attachment to local, national and global youth culture. In particular, I will argue that YouTube video-viewing practices of migrant youth provide insights into how affective belongings across transnational geographies are audiovisually sustained.

Nevra, a sixteen-year-old girl, stated she travels back to Morocco in her mind when watching YouTube videos shot in Morocco. She feels moved when watching these videos. Nevra and other informants use YouTube as a way to emotionally reconnect to their childhood histories and recent holiday visits. Nevra was born in the Netherlands and thus imaginings of her Moroccan home are mainly virtual and are sustained through holiday travel, stories and pictures, music and videos (Stock, 2014; Turan Hoffman, 2014; Alinejad, 2013). Besides watching Moroccan-themed videos, informants turned to YouTube to access music videos from artists from various parts of the world. When asked why informants used YouTube, they commonly stated watching videos shot in Morocco made them feel “nostalgic” and “emotional,” while music videos made them feel “happy.”

YouTube played two roles in the lives of the majority of the informants. Thirteen-year-old Ilham explained: “You can watch anything you want there, by searching for a key word. You will find video clips of songs, and real videos.” She juxtaposed “video clips” and “real videos.” With “video
“clips” she referred to professional music videos from American, Moroccan and Middle-Eastern artists she enjoys listening to. With “real videos” she referred to amateur, user-generated content such as travel videos shot in Morocco. The distinguishing of the informants between the two genres echoes scholarly divisions made between mainstream materials uploaded by commercial corporate and/or institutional players, and user-generated video content (Burgess & Green, 2009; Jean Christian, 2009). From the forty-three interviewees, thirty-eight young people turn to YouTube to watch music video clips, while eighteen look up user-generated videos about Islam and twelve informants watch diasporic videos taken in Morocco.

Cultural theorists are increasingly taking affective bodily sensations seriously in recent years, a development that has been described to constitute an “affective turn” (Clough & Halley, 2007). A substantial amount of critical scholarship has emerged that probes the cultural politics of affectivity (Ahmed 2004, 2010; Brennan 2004; Fortunati & Vincent, 2009; Jones, Jackson & Rhys-Taylor, 2014; Leurs, 2014a; Sedgwick, 2003; Turan Hoffman, 2014). However, affectivity remains understudied in migration and media studies: most previous research “on migration rarely captures the affective and emotional dimensions of global processes” (Boehm & Swank, 2011, p. 1). Others have lamented the scarce attention for affectivity in studies on digital technologies: “We are at the infancy of studies on emotion and ICTs” (Fortunati & Vincent, 2009, p. 15). Migration and media scholars have previously focused more on issues of representation such as framing and identity construction (Madianou, 2014, p. 324). This chapter contributes to filling the gaps in the literature by taking YouTube video-viewing practices as an entry point to address the intersection between affectivity and media use experiences across transnational and local spaces (Leurs, De Haan & Leander, 2015). The affective encounter of bodies with media objects shifts attention from understanding viewing as processes of symbolic meaning making, toward apprehending them as sparking emotions, feelings and experiences that matter. I posit, in particular, that by charting second-generation Moroccan-Dutch youth’s affective geographies of belonging that may arise from watching YouTube videos, the generational-specific experiences of second-generation migrant youth can be highlighted.

Below, I first introduce the use of YouTube among Moroccan-Dutch youth in the wider context of the Netherlands. Second, I reflect on the politics of YouTube. Third, I review prior scholarship on affectivity, belonging and digital practices. Fourth, YouTube video-viewing practices that spark affective senses of nostalgic and home-making “rooted” diaspora belonging (Gilroy, 1993a) are scrutinized. In the final section viewing practices that affectively shape feelings of belonging to “routed” (Gilroy, 1993a) international/local orientations are analyzed.
5.1 Moroccan-Dutch youth using YouTube

Globally, YouTube is the third most frequented site on the web (Alexa, 2014). At the time of the interviews, the informants considered YouTube the second most valuable platform online after MSN, based on the number of times YouTube was included in the Internet maps. The Wired Up survey data also showed that among the Moroccan-Dutch respondents YouTube was the second most frequented space online. Together with MSN they valued YouTube the highest (see Diagram 3 and Diagram 4, pp. 68-69). Of the Moroccan-Dutch survey takers, 77% reported going on YouTube four days per week or more. Additionally, over half of the respondents noted they would miss the platform when they would not be able to use it anymore. Two-thirds of Moroccan-Dutch girls and over half of boys reported they would miss using YouTube very much (see Table 8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Would you miss YouTube if you could not use it any longer?</th>
<th>Completely not</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very much</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young women</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young men</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Illustrative for her fellow informants, thirteen-year-old Ilham perceived YouTube as platform with a global reach, where a wide variety of videos can be accessed. During the interview that took place in 2010 she also explained that videos that do not meet YouTube’s moderation policy can be deleted.

*It is a site, very much global. It has been a great success. It has existed for five years, I recently read about it. You can upload all sorts of videos there. They can be about many different things. Some will be deleted when they are really dirty or when they hurt people.*

Informants made use of YouTube for a variety of reasons. Seventeen-year-old Sadik saw YouTube as a good place to learn new guitar tricks: “The advantage with YouTube is that you don’t have to take guitar lessons, because they are given for free there” (see Lange, 2014, p. 189). Using a website such as Keepvid.com, fourteen-year-old Mehmet Ali downloaded Moroccan-Arabic and Berber songs from YouTube to his mobile phone, a Nokia N95.
Besides the actual videos, the informants also related to the comment section where discussions take place. Flaming and other forms of antisocial behavior are not uncommon there: “insulting, swearing or using otherwise offensive language... appears to be very common on YouTube” (Moor, Heuvelman & Verleur, 2010, p. 1536). Like most informants, sixteen-year-old Inzaf shared she has accepted that comments can hurt: “Yes, they can post [whatever they want], as freedom of speech applies there.” Comments affect her only when the videos are dear to her heart, as is the case when videos are about things “or people I know.” She mentioned in such cases “I do have a look at what people have to say about it.” One of sixteen-year-old Naoul’s statements reminds us that Moroccan-Dutch youth are space invaders on YouTube. Naoul said that the comment sections below videos about Morocco fill up with verbal abuse and hostility: “When you watch a video on YouTube, they shout ‘Moroccan cunts’ and this and that about Moroccans.”

The Ummah

Eighteen interviewees (seven boys and eleven girls) discussed watching videos pertaining to Islam. Eighteen-year-old Mustafa, for instance, reflected on how he turned to YouTube during the fasting month of Ramadan to look up videos of people reciting suras “Of course, for me it can get very emotional when hearing someone state these words in a beautiful voice.” Similarly, fifteen-year-old Meryam – the informant who showed her *Handbook for Muslim Women* during fieldwork – praises the platform as she feels able to find exalting material there: “There are children that have learned the whole Quran by heart; I think they are very bright, that they can do it. And yes, I have a look at those.” She added: “It gives me inspiration to better commit myself to my religion.” Fifteen-year-old Oussema discussed turning to YouTube together with his father before his parents embarked on their hajj pilgrimage to Mecca: “I’m not a practicing Muslim, but for my dad it was useful. He wanted to learn more before he went on his pilgrimage.” Oussema acted as a knowledge broker, assisting his father to view pilgrimage videos.

Some of the younger informants, for example, twelve-year-old Soufian, thirteen-year-old Hanan and fourteen-year-old Sahar, look up “anasheed” movies. *Anasheed* are songs typically performed in Arabic but increasingly also in Dutch that offer young people an accessible way to incorporate a sense of Islam in their everyday life (Razzaqi, 2011, p. 272):’ Hanan argues that she listens
to such “songs that deal with the peacefulness of Islam. For instance, [songs] by Maher Zain. He has a very pretty voice. I don’t know, his songs have a soothing effect on me.” Videos are thus experienced as affective objects, informants note feeling touched by them, providing an inspirational boost, a sense of authority vis-à-vis their parents, guidance or moving them to the brink of tears.

Videos are taken up to learn more about Islam. Fourteen-year-old Ziham shared: “Say, when I did not know how to pray yet, I turned to YouTube to learn about the steps to take and later I turned to books, and now I just pray every day.” YouTube for her was a fun way to follow instructions on Islamic devotion. Sixteen-year-old Nevra learns more about what is halal or haram, “what you are supposed and not supposed to do according to Islam.” Seventeen-year-old Sadik, too, shared he learns more about Islam and his role as a Muslim through YouTube: “For example, they talk about Islam in English, which I understood better, because Arabic I don’t understand that well. They, for instance, discuss the state of the world, and how Islam is seen across the world and how it started.” He gave the example of watching a series called The Arrivals, “about the dangers that go around the world.” (Islamic authorities have dismissed this series as deceitful conspiracy theories.)

In the introduction and Chapter 2 I argued that digital media are taken up as “a missing middle” between the textual studies of Islam by elite intellectuals and Islam as a socio-cultural force among the mass of followers (Leurs, Midden & Ponzanesi, 2012, p. 162). In YouTube, alternative conventions of religious authority arise, being partly shaped by prior user behavior and algorithms that translate prior viewer and search practices in key word search rankings (Bunt, 2009, p. 31). Online performances of Islam decentralize religious authority and provide interpretative opportunities to a wider range of actors, but this democratization may also result in the circulation of problematic content, as is evident from the videos Sadik watched. Some insist that when religious education and the credibility of Imams and Muslim scholars are undermined the dangers of extremism, offensive jihad and legitimating violence may grow. This issue is especially pertinent given the recent attention paid to online recruitment by extremist groups including Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (IS), which aim to attract European Muslims to join their fight (Leurs & Ponzanesi, 2014c). Therefore, there is an urgency to provide young people with the tools of media literacy to balance, contextualize and judge the materials they encounter online (Ryan, 2007; Lange, 2014).

can be compared to nursery rhymes, and they can also be understood to be analogous to psalms and hymns sung in Christian contexts (Razzaqi, 2011, p. 272).
Overall, consuming Islamic sermons, lectures and anasheed provide informants with an affective sense of belonging to the “Ummah” (the worldwide Muslim community). Instead of being passive members, searching out the Islamic videos they feel personally moved by, they affectively enact and claim belonging to this community (Roy, 2004, p. 183). Especially during the Islamic month of Ramadan, the Internet can be seen to offers a space for identity-formation and cohesion as information, rituals and norms are easily shared among like-minded users (Bunt, 2009, p. 97). During the fast, believers abstain from eating, drinking, smoking and sexual intercourse but not from browsing the Internet. For Mustafa YouTube sermons offered emotional support during Ramadan, and Bunt contextualizes that more broadly “the Net helps bring iMuslims together during this sacred month, especially those living outside of established Muslim communities” (2009, p. 97). Imagining an audience of fellow Muslim video viewers, informants sense a shared frame of reference that goes beyond the borders of the Netherlands.

**Fitna**

One video in particular, *Fitna* – and the video responses it provoked – has dominated recent Dutch public and scholarly debates over digital video, Muslims and YouTube (Leurs, Hirzalla & Van Zoonen, 2012). The anti-Islamic visual pamphlet *Fitna* was made by Dutch right-wing Member of Parliament Geert Wilders. *Fitna* is a 17-minute cut-n-mix collage that includes excerpts from the Quran, crosscut with suras,2 blurry video segments and newspaper clippings portraying acts of violence carried out by Muslims across the globe. The video opens with a cartoon by Kurt Westergaard depicting Prophet Muhammad wearing a turban in the shape of a lighted bomb, which was a central image in the *Jyllands-Posten* Muhammad cartoons controversy (Blaagaard, 2010; Kuipers, 2008). Centering on perceived negative influences of Islam in the Netherlands, the film implies that Islam promotes terrorism, anti-Semitism, and violence against women, homosexuals and nonbelievers. *Fitna* is an example of how those in positions of power in the Netherlands – Wilders was a member of the Dutch parliament at the time the video was released – hail Muslim identities in negative terms. Ryan, a fifteen-year-old interviewee, shared his frustration with Geert Wilders and *Fitna*:

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2 A sura refers to one of the 114 particular sections or chapters of the Quran.
He had just made Fitna, and I got very angry with him. I really did not like that. He combined all sorts of outrageous stuff. He included strange things, I found it outrageous. He says that many [Muslim] people wear a burqa, but in my family no one wears a burqa, I never see a burqa in the streets. Why does he make such a fuss about it, that Geert Wilders? I believe he also has some good ideas. Like, that we should have to pay lower taxes. But he has a lot of nonsensical ideas, such as about Islam.

Fitna was followed up by an intensive video battle that has not gone unnoticed by scholars. Thousands of users from across the globe posted their own videos to critique or show their support of the film. For example: people recorded video messages offering their personal apologies for Wilders’s making of Fitna; satirical and parodying cut-n-mix videos were uploaded, and finally, as a form of activism and culture jamming, users tagged unrelated videos with keywords pertaining to Fitna to make Wilders’s video more difficult to find online. These acts have been recognized as performances of dispersed citizenship (Van Zoonen, Vis & Mihelj, 2010, p. 260). Young Muslim women from Egypt, in particular, were found to be active in uploading videos that critiqued Wilders for speaking for them and presenting Islam as an oppressive religion (Vis, Van Zoonen & Mihelj, 2011, pp. 123-127). The Fitna video battle has also been analyzed in terms of humor, however some comedians defending their Islamic faith through vlogs have been critiqued for being excluding instead of fostering constructive and uniting dialogue (Hirzalla, Van Zoonen & Müller, 2011). The battle is still going on, and Geert Wilders is rumored to be working on a sequel to Fitna.

The video Kop of Munt (Heads or Tails), mentioned by the informants, is one example of a comical response to Fitna. Kop of Munt is a film that can be positioned in the video debate that unfolded after Wilders released Fitna. The video was made in October 2009 by MUNT, a collective of Moroccan-Dutch young professionals, and by November 2014 it had attracted 235,000 views (MUNT, 2009). This short, 9-minute movie is accompanied by the following tagline on YouTube: “Kop of Munt depicts the day the Moroccans have deserted the Netherlands en masse” (my translation). In the video some of the stereotypical consequences of what the Netherlands would look like without Moroccan-Dutch inhabitants are visualized: newspaper delivery stagnates, Moroccan-Dutch shows in the theaters are canceled, barbershops close down, newspaper commentary and opinion sections are left empty, taxis become scarce, social housing projects are abandoned, prisons are put up for sale because they are untenanted, requests for social services decline and there are major traffic jams in Belgium, France and Spain in
the direction of Morocco. The film counters Islamophobia by exaggerating what the Netherlands would look like without Moroccan-Dutch inhabitants, exposing the absurdities in the debates on Moroccan-Dutch people. Videos that similarly satirically showcased what would happen if a particular ethnic-minority group would leave a country include *The City without Jews*, a prophetic expressionist film about what would happen if all Jews left Vienna (Breslauer, 1924) and *A Day without a Mexican* depicting what would happen if all the Mexicans abandoned the US state of California (Arau, 2004). Dialoguing with these previous films, MUNT subverts normative ideas about race relations, migration, multiculturalism and Islam and promotes greater intercultural understanding (Leurs & Ponzanesi, 2014a, p. 632).

After he first saw *Kop of Munt* Oussema wrote to me in a Facebook Chat conversation. He reflected on the video from two perspectives: “as a [video] editor I think it is well composed and I think the color balance (magic bullet looks) is well done,”3 and “as a Moroccan I find it quite funny and I believe they are so right” in addressing these topics. He admired the satire: “I love how you see the hairdresser taking off, taking the dish with him.” The satellite dish Oussema mentioned has become a symbol of alterity. Because migrants can tune in to channels from their country of origins, satellite television is increasingly seen as a reason why ethnic minorities fail to integrate in Dutch society (Scheffer, 2007, p. 40). On YouTube, a flood of verbal abuse is visible in the comment

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3 Magic Bullet is a video-editing software plug-in which enables filmmakers to edit digital video to make it look like a professional film.
section below. Oussema was quite offended by the amount of negative responses and reactions left by other viewers, as he wrote to me “172 dislikes: 😞,” adding a shocked and sad face emoticon. A large number of people had clicked the YouTube “Dislike” button, while 231 users pressed the “Like” button. He dismisses the many negative, discriminating and painful comments; he felt such hateful views were coming from the margins of Dutch society.

In the worldview set forward by Wilders in *Fitna* the religion of Islam is equated with violence and oppression, and Muslim believers are framed as violent, backward and frightening. This way, at the mercy of being hailed by those in power, Muslim people from around the globe and the Netherlands, in particular, are denied their status as full human subjects; they are not seen as equal. Rather, Muslims become dehumanized objects deviating from the norm, and are allocated positions as inferior citizens, being somehow less than fully human. As a form of humorous agency, *Kop of Munt*, displays how such injurious hailing acts can begin to be subverted and resignified by returning a gaze through video parody. *Kop of Munt* received major exposure in mainstream news coverage (such as on NOS op 3, a Dutch public broadcaster, and in major national newspapers, including *De Volkskrant* and *NRC Next*). The video shows how humor may “transcend cultural boundaries” as specific *Kop of Munt* elements address audiences inside and outside the ethnic-specific normative community it arose from (Kuipers, 2008, pp. 7-8).

The *Fitna* video battle is a significant feature of digital video culture among Muslim and Moroccan-Dutch youth, however in this chapter I focus, in particular, on those videos that informants mentioned more often. When informants discussed their uses of YouTube during the in-depth interview, they were asked to write down the titles of videos they frequently looked up, and did so by variously listing one to six videos. Interviewees were also asked to provide background information on the videos they listed. For example, when discussing music videos, informants were prompted to situate the artists in terms of genre, gender, language use and geographical location. Thus, the informants explicitly mentioned the videos discussed in this chapter. Before analyzing the affective attachments interviewees reported having of particular videos, I describe the politics of YouTube and position myself in theories on affectivity below.

5.2 Theorizing the politics of YouTube

Before elaborating affectivity on YouTube, in this section I focus first on the politics of the platform itself. YouTube users search and select the videos
they want to watch: people “no longer watch films or TV; we watch databases” (Lovink, 2007, p. 11). Watching databases has its downsides, as user behavior on the platform is monitored and made into a valuable economic asset that is exploited by YouTube’s owner, Google. User behavior such as viewing, uploading, tagging, sharing and commenting enables YouTube to grow as these practices stimulate YouTube’s audience to grow (Kessler & Schäfer, 2009, pp. 278-285). Such profit-oriented motives increasingly coshape user behavior, because with the advent of social media the previously private sphere of emotions is increasingly intertwined with public monetization. Although commodified through the culture of capitalism, the communication of emotions fosters “sociability” between people as well as selfhood (Illouz, 2007, p. 21). Affective user practices are quantified and remain subject to profit-oriented motives of measurement and control.

Personal viewing preferences, for instance, provide unique personally targeted advertising opportunities that Google can sell to corporations. YouTube viewing practices have been noted to mirror those of television audiences, with the difference that they do leave “material traces on the YouTube network, and this evidence of an attentive audience is essential to demonstrating the value of YouTube to advertisers” (Burgess, 2011, p. 327). Every user’s interaction with the site leaves a trace in the YouTube database; this is an act of “implicit participation,” as the tracing of users is built into the software design (Kessler & Schäfer, 2009, p. 285). Corporations pay to tap into YouTube’s database of user profiles; this way they are able to individually target users with advertisement banners and commercial videos.

YouTube’s orientation toward attracting a particular, more profitable, segment of users from around the globe also has its consequences. Infrastructure decisions and user preferences result in “hegemonic masculinity” (Hendrick & Lindgren, 2011, p. 165), and the cultural traits embedded in the platform reveal a distinct “Anglo-Western stance” (Pauwels & Hellriegel, 2009). Illustratively, Melissa Wall researched YouTube videos featuring the countries of Ghana and Kenya, exploring whether these videos might circulate alternative representations of African countries. She found several issues impact on the potential to subvert dominant Western gazes. Most of the content about Ghana and Kenya is posted by Western tourists, international aid agencies and Kenyans and Ghanaians who posted entertainment content. She found that historical inequalities are perpetuated on YouTube and those from the West remain dominant:

YouTube enables the average westerner in particular to become a chronicler of other peoples in faraway lands just as travelers and missionaries
“discovered” Africa in previous centuries. Most of these westerners, although not the official voices of the past, do not offer a remedy to the Othering of Africa. Indeed, many of their contributions to YouTube reinforce and naturalize stereotypes. (Wall, 2009, p. 405)

The YouTube structure and search algorithms also make user-generated videos more difficult to find in comparison with corporate, government or institutional videos that appear higher in search results rankings. This becomes apparent when considering the videos YouTube suggests to users as related with Morocco. After carrying out a search in the YouTube interface using the keyword “Morocco,” the vast majority of videos coming up on the first page of results are not user-generated but videos uploaded by Western-oriented travel agencies, retail exporters, Western corporate news outlets, government institutions, and Western artists. Although user-generated content is provided on the subsequent pages of search results, the order of results hurts the chances of user-generated views on Morocco being located by a wider audience, as “80 percent to 90 percent of browsers do not look beyond the first page of results after a search” (Levinson, 2007, p. 250). The promotion of nonuser-generated content is also the result of the search algorithm, which lists high-definition videos higher in the list of search results. However, beneath the surface of the profit-driven Anglo-Western stance, a heterogeneous user base exists that appropriate YouTube in ways that they seem fit (Pauwels & Hellriegel, 2009, p. 395).

User preferences do coshape YouTube, which is already clear when considering the platform started out as an online dating site. When the makers observed different than expected user behavior they repositioned the platform as a video repository. With this change, YouTube of course also sought to expand its market. Other examples of tactical behavior through which power exercised from the top down is resisted include circumventing

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4 Illustratively, at the top and bottom of the first YouTube search results page, I was presented with “promoted videos” about “Group Tours and Tailor Made Trips” in Morocco by the company On the Go Tours. This company makes use of YouTube’s “Promoted Video Ads,” a service YouTube offers to boost user viewing counts making use of “keyword-based targeting” for video promotion to enable advertisers to reach more customers, “drive community engagement” and “engage with an audience” (Google, 2011, p. 1). To contextualize this result, I carried out an exploratory search using the YouTube search engine. I carried out a search with the keyword “Morocco,” and this returned 26,800 results. The first page displayed twenty-six results, containing five corporate transportation-oriented videos, five non-Moroccan corporate news videos, five corporate videos by music artists, three travel organizations videos, two tourism board videos uploaded by the Moroccan government, one retail importer video, and one international festival video. This left four videos (or 15.4% of the total) on the first page of results that were possibly user-generated.
YouTube’s policy that forbids hyperlinks outside of the site and providing mock descriptions and false information to resist direct-marketing techniques, to protest against its content as was the case in response to the publication of *Fitna* as described in the section above and to maintain one’s individual privacy (Pauwels & Hellriegel, 2009, p. 389). The media-sharing practices of migrants show how they creatively work around standards and restrictions of the platform. For example, in 2009, the time limit for uploading videos was 10 minutes, and Turkish and Filipino migrants innovatively circumvented this restriction: “the uploading of Philippino or Turkish soap opera episodes, divided into pieces to get around YouTube’s content limits, can be seen as acts of cultural citizenship” (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 81). In the next section, I develop affect theory further to improve our understandings of the cultural politics of multilocalional flows of migrants, digital media and feelings.

### 5.3 Theorizing affective geographies and YouTube use

Mediation is the common way in which second or third generation diaspora tourists form attachment to their ancestral homeland. Their bond to that particular land is based on stories they had heard and photographs they had seen as opposed to first-hand experiences of the actual landscape.

– Turan Hoffman (2014, p. 144)

In her analysis of Armenians touring eastern Turkey, Turan Hoffman argues that second- and third-generation Armenians who were born in the diaspora develop an affective sense of attachment to their homeland through mediation. Besides other axes of identification including gender, ethnicity and religion, she argues that “place attachment,” provides a distinct window into diaspora identification: “group diaspora identity is usually based on their one enduring commonality – their homeland” (Turan Hoffman, 2014, p. 154). Affectivity is used here to address the ways in which YouTube videos showing places, people or objects on a computer screen may trigger certain responses in the body of a user. By being affected by watching a video, the emotional state of the user may change.

Most YouTube research has focused on video production (Burgess, 2011; Burgess & Green, 2009; Lange, 2014), I address a gap in the literature by focusing on how informants feel when viewing videos as members of an audience:
While much popular and scholarly discourse imagines casual viewing of content as the lowest level of engagement, with creation as the highest level, perhaps it is time we took more seriously once again the question of the audience – asking what is involved in being an audience for user-created and user-distributed content, in media ecologies that also include television content, as in YouTube. (Burgess, 2011, p. 328)

Approaching YouTube viewers as audience members that actively engage with content, a focus on affectivity generates insights on what happens in between online content and user signification practices, a process that cannot be reduced solely to either meanings or bytes. Affectivity broadens the scope to consider how meaning making also involves embodied affective responses. Bringing into focus affectivity in the study of mediated communication is urgent, as prior scholarship in the field has too often relied on “sociological theories without heart” (Fortunati, 2009, p. 5).

The term “affect” is a translation from the Latin word “affectus,” which can be understood as “passion,” “emotion,” or “desire” (Brennan, 2004, pp. 3-4). Building on Gilles Deleuze (1988), I understand affectivity as the process where bodies, spurred by interactions on screens, attain a different emotional state. Deleuze theorized affectivity by drawing out the relationships between images, corporality and emotional passages:

These image affections or ideas form a certain state of the affected body and mind, which implies more or less perfection than the preceding state. Therefore, from one state to another, from one image or idea to another, there are transitions, passages that are experienced, durations through which we pass to a greater or a lesser perfection. (1988, p. 48)

Affectivity concerns a passage in a body’s experiential state, while emotion concerns how that passage is made meaningful through one’s biographical experiences (Jones, Jackson & Rhys-Taylor, 2014). Sara Ahmed theorized the cultural politics of affectivity, as processes that “work on and in relation to bodies” (Ahmed 2004, 194). She argued that affectivity is produced through “circulation,” “accumulation” and “endurance” (2004, pp. 45, 46, 91). The question arises, How can we understand affectivity in relation to digital practices? Affect works as an evaluative orientation, a judgment accompanied by a “physiological shift,” such as a growth of intensity, attention or attachment. Affectivity can be coded in signs that can be “transmitted” from one person to another (Brennan, 2004, pp. 5-6). As a database of coded signs, YouTube can be considered “an archive of feelings,” a repository of
mediated sensations that “are encoded not only in the content of the texts themselves but in the practices that surround their production and reception” (Cvetkovich, 2003, p. 7). Signs do not causally determine a feeling, but the affective relationship of an individual with particular signs can make them matter. Affect theory has been used to understand user experiences of online pornography: people may develop a “fondness for specific images” that result in particular sensory effects (Paasonen, 2010, p. 58). Other studies show that the affective pleasures of women’s diary blog reading may emerge from gender, age, race, and education-based “sameness” and “recognition” (Karlsson 2007, 138).

Using these insights in combination with Ahmed’s conceptualization of affect (2004), I argue the production of affectivity arising from viewing YouTube videos can be analyzed by disentangling three interrelated processes: (1) “circulation”: sensations are encoded by people producing audiovisual texts, these texts flow through digital networks, and they are decoded and viscerally experienced by audience members, (2) “accumulation”: the affective response to certain videos may grow through repetitious viewing and (3) “endurance”: affective responses may stick with audience members. In this way, in contrast to earlier utopian beliefs on the disembodied workings of cyberspace, theories of affectivity readdress relations between phenomenology and technology, semiotics and materiality, and the body and the mind. In particular, I explore the ways in which young migrant subjects are moved by videos as they sense connections and disconnections with people and places across distances.

Media users share their audiencehood with an “imagined community” of fellow audience members, and this relation may span wide geographical distances (Anderson, 1983). The notion of “transnational affect” was developed to understand how affectivity coshapes practices of transnational belonging among migrants (Wise & Velayutham, 2006). Wise and Velayutham describe transnational affectivity as a “circulation of bodily emotive affect between transnational subjects and between subjects and symbolic fields which give qualitative intensity to vectors and routes thus reproducing belonging to, and boundaries of, transnational fields” (2006, p. 3). Their examples focus on the offline world and include moral economies of shame and pride, symbolic identification and belonging. Online, migrants are known to digitally construct “mobile networks of belonging” (Diminescu, 2008, p. 574). When migrant subjects take up technologies like YouTube to watch videos shot in their homeland and elsewhere, they can develop an attachment to multiple geographical locations.
YouTube allows for the circulation of affective diaspora attachments. For example, Matteo Vergani and Dennis Zuev observed two ways YouTube is used among the Uyghur people, a Muslim minority population in northwest China (2011). Music is shared among the group for the purpose of diaspora identification and entertainment. However, after the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States, mainstream Chinese news reporting about Uyghurs changed from “Uyghur separatists” to “Muslim terrorists.” Sharing and viewing Uyghur-themed YouTube videos became politicized. Uyghur videos were found to play two roles: they are consumed in ways that establish “spatial togetherness” as a form of “transnational loyalty” by linking together members of the community, and at the same time they insert alternative representations into the public domain, “broadcasting a positive image of the Uyghurs to a wide audience” (2011, pp. 1, pp. 227-228). The circulation of transnational loyalty through videos among Uyghurs in the diaspora can be understood as an example of transnational affectivity. Transnational affectivity generated through digital practices may be highly valued among migrants, as it potentially offers the means to regain a sense of stable self-identity and “ontological security” (Giddens, 1990). The positive feelings migrants may get by engaging with “happy objects” (Ahmed, 2010) such as diasporic videos can be recognized as a form of “transnational affective capital” (Leurs, 2014a, pp. 89-92). Good feelings, as triggered by digital practices, for example, may become one of the scarce forms of capital available to migrants to tap into to cope with difficulties of living an often precarious life.

However, singling out transnational affectivity would leave crucial additional networks of belonging untouched. Prior research on migration has demonstrated that identifications among subjects in the diaspora are not purely geared toward transnational migratory orientations. In the introduction I already drew on Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall to unpack different dimensions to belonging and expand the focus from transnational ties toward traversal imaginaries, multilocality, circulation and hybridization. Two positions of cultural identification were distinguished. On the one hand, affiliations with one’s “roots” concern those feelings of connection with people, artifacts, representations and ideas pertaining to where migrants imagine to be coming from (Gilroy, 1993a). On the other hand, the concept of “routes” acknowledges the active process of cultural identification, acknowledging ongoing dynamic positioning and active encounters with contemporary influences (Gilroy, 1993a). Oriented toward the future it sees belongings also as a “matter of ‘becoming’” (Hall 1990, p. 225). Connecting these theories with affective geographies of belonging, it
is similarly important to distinguish between the ways in which “emotions show us how histories stay alive” and how feelings “also open up futures, in the ways they involve different orientations to others” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 202). Therefore, in the empirical analysis (Sections 4 and 5 below) I report how migrant youth as YouTube audience members feel connectedness to multiple places and people. In particular, I explore the affectivity of rooted and routed belonging, respectively.

5.4 Rooted belongings: Transnational affectivity

This section focuses on the use of YouTube among the informants for continuous orientation on migratory homelands and “rootedness” (Gilroy, 1993a). The affective search for rootedness emerged as a theme when analyzing the ways in which the informants spoke about user-generated YouTube videos shot in Morocco. Moroccan-Dutch youth shared feeling “less homesick,” “emotional” and “nostalgic” from watching videos shot in Morocco. Stuart Hall described rooted cultural identification as a way to maintain membership and belonging to a community of “one people” (1990, p. 223). Identifying with a territory, “roots signify emotional bonds with the physical environment” (Gustafson, 2001, p. 670). In line with this definition, feelings of rootedness can be said to provide a sense of a cohesive collectivity, an “anchor point” (Stock, 2014, p. 175) beyond the constraints of time and space. By exploring the links between affective community and transnational affectivity, videos shot in Morocco can be said to operate in two ways: diasporic home making in response to feeling Othered and nostalgic desires for shared cultural codes and feelings.

For example, thirteen-year-old Anas brought up the video Marrakech, Morocco City Drive (see Figure 20). He spoke about watching the video before he went on holidays to Marrakech, the city where his parents were born. Marrakech, Morocco City Drive was made by the Moroccan-American adult male YouTube user eMoroccan. He shot the video with a digital hand-held camera from a moving car on Avenue Mohammed V in Marrakech. The video was shot from a first-person point of view and consists of one single take of 78 seconds. Only synchronous, diegetic sounds are audible; besides the engine of the car the filmmaker is driving in, noise of a passing motorcycle and birds chirping in the palm trees the car passes can be heard. The first-person perspective adds to Anas’s feeling of being able to immerse himself in the scene. In the video, following the single trajectory of the road, the viewer gradually approaches the city’s fortifications. Although in the
distance the Koutoubia Mosque is featured, the video mostly shows the journey of driving through the streets of Marrakech. Various elements in the video are familiar to Anas. Seeing these familiarities may “accumulate” value and “stick” a sense of transnational affection to the video (Ahmed, 2004, p. 91), which in turn may strengthen Anas’s symbolic attachment to the city.

*I looked up the YouTube video Marrakech, Morocco City Drive. A while back I was really looking forward to the holidays and by coincidence I spotted that clip on YouTube. I had not been to Morocco for some time back then. That’s why I looked up some videos. With the two of them they are in a car, and they film the city. I recognized many things; I saw all the famous things in my city.* (Anas, thirteen years old)

Nostalgia and homeland are central notions in migration studies. In migrant literature, the “poetics of home” operate as symbols for stability, belonging and safety (Buikema, 2005, p. 168). Home-making practices are organized around patterns of inclusion and exclusion. Homelands are exclusive, and therefore they establish difference. Home, next to axes such as gender, sexuality and class, “acts as an ideological determinant of the subject”
Home-making concerns the human desires all humans share: boundedness, stability and belonging. People long to belong. Another participant, fifteen-year-old Meryam, expresses how she imagines Morocco: “You think of the country like I would want to stay there forever, because, yeah, my parents are from there, and a piece of it is in you.” For members of diasporic communities, longing for home concerns feelings of having a safe place elsewhere in the world. Feeling able to occupy a welcoming location, in the presence of significant likeminded others, it concerns an individual as well as collective idea based on ideas of origins. “As an idea it [a home] stands for shelter, stability, security and comfort” (McLeod, 2000, p. 210). And for the informants, this idea may be based on feelings of connectedness with the house and areas where they or their parents grew up. Watching YouTube videos, second-generation migrant youth, born in the diaspora, heavily rely on such mediations to affectively construct a sense of homeland.

Diasporic videos can be consumed as symbolic anchors of migratory affiliations. For Moroccan-Dutch youth, apart from stories told by their parents and their holidays, YouTube is one of the few other ways to experience Morocco. Abdelsammad, a fifteen-year-old boy, who migrated to the Netherlands at young age, explained this dynamic as follows:

I watch movies about where we come from. On YouTube there are movies about where we lived, that is nice to see. There is much to find about Nador. Many, many movies. For instance, clips that show the roads, the shopping malls, the boulevard. Lots of things that you are familiar with. I was born there and lived there until I was three years old, but I know it better from holidays. [Moroccan-Dutch] people from the Netherlands, who go there on holidays, when they get back they put the video they took there online.

eMoroccon, a Moroccan-American adult male, is a major producer of the genre of videos that Abdelsammad and other informants takes pleasure in. With over 400,000 people having viewed one of his thirty-nine movies, eMoroccon plays a key role in producing videos and “circulating” transnational affectivity (Ahmed, 2004, p. 60) for Moroccans in the diaspora. His videos include *Athan (Call to Prayer) in Morocco; Autoroutes du Maroc; Casablanca Street View; Agadir Morocco: Entering City; Hassan II Mosque; Landing in Morocco onboard Royal Air Maroc; Marina Agadir; Traditional Berber Folklore Music*. His main aim is welcoming YouTube users to “virtual Morocco.” In an interview conducted via YouTube’s personal messaging system, I invited eMoroccon to describe his motivations for sharing videos shot in Morocco:
A common theme among Moroccans living abroad is their continual attachment to their country (l’blad) and their hometowns. Some have been living abroad for years and haven’t been able to return to Morocco due to several reasons. I wanted to create a virtual outlet for these individuals so that they may experience Morocco visually and hopefully fill some void. But I also enjoy making videos in general and have a keen interest in Morocco. By using the Internet a Moroccan individual becomes an “eMoroccan” who can experience “virtual Morocco.”

The video producer eMoroccan touches upon the issue of user-generated video being consumed by people in the Moroccan diaspora as a way to connect to their homeland, literally “visually experiencing” the country when physical travel is unattainable. YouTube allows Moroccans living abroad the means to become “eMoroccans.” Watching videos such Landing in Morocco onboard Royal Air Maroc provide Moroccans living in the diaspora an opportunity to relive prior experiences they had traveling to their homeland. “Accumulating” value in the body of viewers (Ahmed, 2014, p. 91), these videos may prompt affective transnational belongings; making digital visits to Morocco users can become “electronic Moroccans.” Such diasporic videos can be recognized as a separate YouTube video genre, with their particular subject and aesthetic choices. The topical preference and aesthetics most likely appeal to those in the diaspora more than Western tourists, for example. eMoroccan’s videos do not conform to the mainstream tourist imagery of beaches, handicraft markets, camels and exotic desert oases, and people who do not share the habitus of migration will thus experience these videos very differently.

Moroccan diasporic videos, mostly filmed with camera-phones and hand-held digital cameras, generally include low resolution, unedited shots taken while flying, in the train or driving around the country in cars showing the roads, traffic in all its variety, cities and towns and seemingly random living areas and structures. Usually, no sound is added; viewers overhear people speaking in the taxi or airplane interspersed with the noises of traffic and car engines. Videos generally include scenes taken from everyday life that can have an important social meaning for migrants. The main tourist highlights of sandy beaches, palm trees, museums, luxury and splendor are not necessarily the main focus points in these pieces.

During the interviews, informants explicitly mentioned turning to YouTube when they felt “heimwee” – the Dutch word for homesickness or nostalgia. Videos shot in Morocco helped them to combat feelings of homesickness. Fourteen-year-old Kenza shared that she highly values YouTube
in order to look up videos that make her think about Morocco “because sometimes I do get quite strongly filled with a feeling of nostalgia, because I’m missing Morocco.” Watching videos such as Marrakech, Morocco City Drive has affective nostalgic workings, as physiological shifts take place in the bodies of the viewers – the videos make these migrant youth feel better.

Johannes Hofer coined the word “nostalgia” in a medical dissertation to describe sad moods that can arise from desires to go back to one’s native land. The word “nostalgia” combines two words with Greek roots, “nostos,” meaning “homesickness” or “returning home” and “algia,” meaning “longing” or “pain.” Nostalgia now stands for “a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy” (Boym, 2001; pp. xiii, 3). Feelings of nostalgia can become especially pertinent among descendants of those who have migrated who were born in the diaspora: “first-wave immigrants are often notoriously unsentimental, leaving the search for roots to their children and grandchildren” (ibid., p. xv). Looking up videos shot in Morocco evoke feelings of happiness in second-generation informants, and this practice illustrates how this particular form of transnational affectivity shapes a generationally specific “transnational habitus” (Nedelcu, 2012).

The specific materialities of the videos are valued among diasporic youth as they encode and circulate nostalgia. Similarly, Hamid Naficy found that Iranian migrants living in exile enjoy Iranian music videos that show everyday life on the streets and bazaars because of their “live ontology” that create an alluring “reality effect” (1998, p. 58). Consisting of low-resolution, unedited, single camera position shots, without the addition of nondiegetic sounds and music, the videos construct a sense of authenticity. The viewer can follow the footsteps of the video producer who has been present in the filmed location. These features serve as reminders that filmmaker and camera were actually present in Morocco and bestow these videos with authenticity, trustworthiness and power as emotionally touching, transnational diaspora objects carrying a sense of subjectivity-in-place.

Nostalgia may be conceived of as a return to one’s origins or as an escape from the multicultural tensions of one’s host country. For those migrants disenchanted with aspects of their surroundings, many find in nostalgia an escape to a temporary secure place of oppositional belonging: “nostalgic communication provides individuals with a means of symbolically escaping cultural conditions that they find depressing and/or disorienting.” In this way nostalgia can be experienced as “a sanctuary of meaning,” as migrants may sense being “safe from oppressive cultural conditions” (Aden, 1995, 35). Nostalgic diasporic affinity provides informants with a temporary escape
to the sanctuary of an affective, imagined community. When she misses Morocco and feels “nostalgic,” Kenza explained, she looks up amateur videos shot in Morocco, music videos of Moroccan artists, and also sometimes watches highlights of the national Moroccan football. After feeling down, she adds viewing such videos make her feel “happy” again (see Ahmed, 2010). Fourteen-year-old Ayoub mentions he lifts his mood by looking up videos in which his Moroccan dialect is spoken: “Most often I watch funny videos in Berber, my own language.” Similarly, Sixteen-year-old Nevra noted user-generated videos make her “go back” to Morocco in her mind. As members of an imagined wider audience, interviewees experience a sense of belonging and feelings of reassurance they are not left on their own.

Holiday travel and thinking back about the good times spent on the Moroccan beaches or in the mountains may work as a coping mechanism to deal with the polarizing tensions in Dutch society. Traveling to Morocco entails going about daily life without being constantly singled out as someone who is Moroccan-Dutch or Muslim (Meijerink, 2009, pp. 64-68). Fifteen-year-old Ryan describes that his parents were born in the low-profile coastal city of Kenitra, however he adds that “we do not often go there [to Kenitra]. When we go on holidays we go to other places [in Morocco], where the nature is beautiful, in the mountain areas and so on.” In this case holiday travel is adjusted to meet a desired exoticized imagination of one’s homeland, rather than an actual, historical homeland. Fourteen-year-old Badr shared that he enjoys visiting Morocco, “but only for two or three weeks. After that I want to go back, because I’m more used to being here” in the Netherlands. Back in the Netherlands, Badr shared that he wants to hold on to the images of his holiday experiences, for instance, by posting pictures on his personal social networking site profile page. In the utopian fantasies of their homeland, informants can imagine commonality with inhabitants of Morocco and their everyday life, however, once they are traveling there, nostalgic imaginings of their Moroccan “home” may prove to differ greatly from the everyday realities on the ground.

Imagined dreamscapes serve to construct many different “Moroccos of the mind,” using eMoroccans terminology. Fourteen-year-old Mehmet Ali, who was born in Nador but migrated to the Netherlands at the age of four, reveals the double-sidedness of nostalgic affectivity. On the one hand he emphasizes that while in the Netherlands he misses being in Morocco: “You miss everything that’s there.” Watching YouTube videos with images of the homeland helps him alleviate such feelings. While the experience of visiting Morocco and being in Nador during the holidays differs from his fantasy of home that may have been sustained through watching videos: “It is really,
really hot most of the time, and busy, very, very busy in the city." Everyday realities can differ from the affective nostalgic sanctuary. Nostalgic longings may continue to “haunt” diasporic subjects (Naficy, 1998, p. 58). Among the second-generation, the location of one’s roots becomes “a home to refer to rather than a place to live” (Stock, 2014, p. 175).

Finally, ethnic outsiders can also perceive virtual tourism to Morocco on YouTube as a threat. The sanctuary of transnational affectivity is not safe from disruption from outsiders who might feel excluded by material they perceive as different. Upon encountering vernacular diaspora video, outsiders might not understand the content or aim of the video. As Wise and Velayutham noted, transnational affectivity may produce boundaries (2006, p. 3) and videos shot in Morocco can operate as inclusionary and exclusionary mechanisms. Interviewees share how flaming and trolling, as acts of hostility, can abruptly punctuate nostalgic feelings. Sixteen-year-old Naoul reports, “They shout ‘Moroccan cunts’” in the YouTube comment sections while fourteen-year-old Ayoub notes that “similar to how some people give me a dirty look outdoors, under videos dealing with Morocco, they write ‘Get out of the country’ and so on. It does not really bother me; there is not much I can do.” Notwithstanding, as the informants are being touched by vernacular videos of nostalgia, transnational affectivity enables them to renew and reimagine bonds with their diasporic identities. In the next section, I shift my attention from videos shot in Morocco toward music videos.

5.5 Routed affective belongings across geographies

Next to watching videos spurring affective “rooted” geographical referentialities, informants engaged in viewing practices that indicate affective connections with global youth cultural orientations or “routes.” The concept of “routes” acknowledges dynamic positioning and active encounter (Gilroy, 1993a). YouTube is a preferred space to access music for the majority of the informants. From the forty-three interviewees, twenty-five young people mentioned they visit the platform mainly to watch and listen to music videos. With the advent of YouTube, and its growing database of (often pirated) music videos that can be played on demand, music videos have become easily accessible. YouTube music videos become affective “landing points” of youth cultural texts. These may be a source of agency for young people, allowing them to redefine who they are and with whom they want to affectively affiliate. These landing points allow young people to individually attribute value and position themselves in affective relations with others.
by grounding YouTube videos as resources for the negotiation of “identi-
ties and relationships” (Androutsopoulos, 2010, pp. 204-206). YouTube,
as a repository of “circulating” sensations (Ahmed, 2004, p. 60), becomes
politically meaningful when considering young migrants’ cosmopolitan
viewer practices that span across nations.

Interviewees usually employed language-specific and geographic labels
when asked to describe their music video-viewing practices. For example,
they used categories such as “American,” “Moroccan,” “Dutch” and “Turkish”
when describing the music videos of their favorite artists.

Diagram 11 provides an overview of all the geographic locations of the
music artists the interviewees mentioned. More than half of the informants – in
particular, two-thirds of the young women – watch videos of Moroccan
artists. These videos may also spur feelings of nostalgia. Fourteen-year-old
Ziham explains “Most of the time I listen to Moroccan music. I prefer that sort,
especially Mohamed Sami, Morad Salam, Laila Chakir and Amazrine. They
sing about love stories.” Fourteen-year-old Mehmet Ali discusses his inclina-
tion toward looking up Moroccan videos: “Most often I look up Moroccan

Diagram 11: Geographical locations of music artists interviewees look up on YouTube (percent-
ages, multiple answers possible, n = 43)
songs." The artists sing “about love, about the country Morocco itself, about its cities and its history, by artists that are famous in Morocco.” CDs of these artists are difficult to find in shops in the Netherlands.

Amir shared that consuming music videos of two Moroccan rap groups gives him a feeling of being unique, as it is an original way to stand out from others: “I listen to H-Kayne and Fnaïre, these are two Moroccan rap groups. They only have shows in Morocco, and they rap in Arabic. They are famous in Morocco. I haven’t heard anything about them here” in the Netherlands. H-Kayne and Fnaïre are rap crews who create music that is not part of the mainstream global circuits of youth culture (yet), and these groups have not been embraced by most fellow Moroccan-Dutch youth. Knowing these groups gives Amir a sense of being special. Providing status and admiration, this knowledge is a form of “subcultural capital” (Jensen, 2006, p. 263) that allows him to mark out his individuality as he discovered their music while on holidays in Marrakech, the city where his parents were born. These connections are suggestive of the ways in which the affective practices of music video and “real video” consumption are interwoven.

Showing his affinity with American forms of youth culture, Sixteen-year-old Ryan prefers to listen to international, English-language music: “Dutch music, for instance, I find it so boring, I always fall asleep listening to it. Moroccan music I also don’t really like – as a matter of fact I like only English, international music.” Ryan’s self-positioning and musical preference is indicative for a belonging that goes beyond the nation and diaspora. Thirteen-year-old Inas is a devout Muslim, and during our interview she highlighted she’s also a “Belieber.” She shared her attachment to international youth icon Justin Bieber, while beginning to giggle she said, “Justin Bieber, I like him. Just to watch videos of him, yes him especially.” To download his songs from YouTube to her Samsung Wave mobile phone she uses the website YoutubeConverter.org. Engaging with Justin Bieber music videos she becomes part of the global affective youth cultural community of fellow Justin Bieber fans (‘Beliebers’), a fan-base that consists mostly of young women. Next to artists from Morocco, and the United States, Inas and other young women prefer videos from artists hailing from countries in the Middle East and the Netherlands. Next to artists from the United States, young men preferred music videos that feature artists from the Netherlands, from Morocco and to a small extent other countries in Europe. However, singling out emotional attachment to artists from one of these geographical locations does not do justice to the multigeographical complexity of the informants’ favorite music videos. Affective belongings are both transnationally rooted as well as routed across global youth cultures.
As Diagram 12 shows, the affective belonging to singular geographical locations is observable among one-fourth of the interviewees who reported looking up music videos from recording artists coming mainly from one geographical location. This includes looking up videos by artists from either Morocco or the US that were considered in the prior section. However, the viewing preferences of the majority of the informants surpass the singular. The group that views only music by artists from one of the above-mentioned geographical locations is smaller than the group of informants who turn to YouTube to listen to music by artists from at least two different geographical locations. Moreover, almost one out of every four interviewees reported listening to artists from three or more areas across the world. For instance, fifteen-year-old Hajar told me, “I listen to all sorts of things, Moroccan and English. Just a mix of all these things.”

Sixteen-year-old Bibi mentions her favorite artists are from four different locations across the world. Her description is indicative for attachments to a multiplicity of geographical affinities:

_I’m addicted to the new song by Rihanna, “What’s My Name” or something like that. I’m fully hooked on Drake, I listen to him 24 hours [a day]. Other artists are [Moroccan], such as Daoudi or Douzi or Sabah and Rola, you know, from “Yana yana,” from Mourad Salam, from Laila Chakir. Just those really famous artists._
A variety of affiliations are combined. Rihanna is an American R&B artist from Barbados, while Drake is a Canadian rapper of mixed African-American and Jewish descent. Both sing in English. Daoudi is a shaabi musician singing in Darija (Moroccan-Arabic). The genre shaabi (Arabic for “of the people”) concerns popular Moroccan folk music that may give rise to feelings of nostalgia. Douzi is a Moroccan rapper singing in English and Darija, and he collaborates with the Moroccan-Dutch rapper Appa. Sabah and Rola are Lebanese singers singing in Arabic, while Mourad Salam and Laila Chakir sing in Berber. Bibi thus signaled affective relations with different geographies and groups of people. She combines Berber, North American, Middle-Eastern and Dutch artists, English, Darija, Arabic and Dutch languages, genres of R&B, shaabi and rap. Bibi moves beyond singular affective attachments to either nationalism or diaspora affiliation, her preferences bring together different geographies, languages and genres. Watching these videos and negotiating multilocational landing points can be understood as a form of banal cosmopolitanism demonstrating how migrant youth make the cosmopolitan “passage from place-monogamous to place-polygamous ways of living” (Beck, 2000, pp. 74-75).

Illustratively, sixteen-year-old Amir argued that his attachments go beyond singular notions of affective group belonging:

_I just have my own style, I think. I don’t belong to any group. Everyone is different. [People say] one person is Turkish, another is Moroccan and yet another is Dutch, but for me it’s not like that. It’s not really like I [fit] into one particular group. It’s more multiculti, I think._

Multilocational engagements across geographies provide a glimpse at the layered affective identity construction beyond expectations of narrowly defined, stereotypical Moroccan-Dutch identities. Consider Inas, for example, a thirteen-year-old young woman who feels strongly about covering her hair in public and also strongly values Justin Bieber music videos. In contrast to dominant stereotypes, these two affiliations are not mutually exclusive. Her affective engagement with global girl culture does not meet the expectations of dominant stereotypical Orientalist discourses of headscarf-wearing Muslim women as backward and/or oppressed (Said, 1979; Piela, 2012). Furthermore, YouTube music video consumption may counter ethnic absolutism, as it is in the consumption of music from different youth cultural scenes that young people of various backgrounds – as geographically dispersed members of a global cosmopolitan imagined audience – can convivially connect (Gilroy, 2005).
5.6 Conclusions

In this chapter, an affective optic on digital videos was developed to shed light on how digital practices implicate an active reembodiment of the user across online and offline geographies. YouTube videos were analyzed to “circulate,” “accumulate” and “stick” affective value (Ahmed, 2004). Understanding affectivity as the potential of digital media artifacts to alter the emotional states of user bodies, I focused on how video viewing by Moroccan-Dutch youth enables affective belongings across geographies. In particular, I explored how these second-generation migrant youth dialogically negotiate the horizons of homeland, host country and youth culture as audience members watching YouTube videos. Videos may provide an alternative but contested location of familiarity for Moroccan-Dutch young people to work through their feelings.

The focus was on transnational “rooted” and the multilocational geographies of “routed” belongings (Gilroy, 1993a). As most informants were born in the diaspora, Morocco is mostly a virtual entity; second-generation migrant youth experience their homeland mostly through mediation. Viewing diasporic user-generated content shot in Morocco was understood to produce transnational affectivity, these sensations were argued to foster mediated home-making and nostalgic belonging. Watching music videos of recording artists coming from cross-national locations, informants land youth cultural material as a source for hybridity and multiplicity. As a form of micro-politics, the affective belongings of Moroccan-Dutch youth in their viewing of wide-ranging music videos are multilocational and show cosmopolitan sensibilities. Sustaining abstract theories on the ordinariness of multiculture and “vernacular cosmopolitanism” (Werbner, 2006), engaging with these videos implies the informants show an open disposition toward cultural difference. They counter ethnic absolutism and nationalism by affectively belonging across different geographies.