Francesco Bachis
Department of Literature, Languages and Cultural Heritage, University of Cagliari, Italy

What (my) people think I do: New Italians and Transnational Imaginaries of Migrations in a TikTok Ethnography

Abstract

Social media, particularly TikTok, has become a key platform for the "New Italians" (the so-called "second generation"), young people of migrant descent who have achieved national and sometimes international success. They navigate the neoliberal economy, engaging in the "attention economy" and "visibility labor" (Abidin 2020). Despite their diverse video styles, these young people utilize social media to challenge migration stereotypes and critique exclusionary policies and the rhetoric of multiculturalism (Bachis 2023). While their content is rarely explicitly political, it reveals a "memetic dimension" of political expression (Literat and Kligler-Vilenchik 2019) and a "memefication" of intergenerational politics (Zeng and Abidin, 2021). The article focuses on a specific TikTok trend: the "What-people-think-I-do/What-I-really-do" video meme, juxtaposing stereotypical expectations with personal realities. These videos, aimed at relatives in migrants' countries of origin or the "homeland," reflect intergenerational relationships and cultural expectations in Italy. These videos create an irreverent discourse around social norms regarding migration through the use of irony, exaggeration, and the subversion of stereotypes. By crafting inside jokes that bridge generations, the meme reshapes imaginaries about migration and mobility in transnational social spaces.

Keywords

TikTok; New Italians; Memefication; Mobility; Transnational Imaginaries

The author

Francesco Bachis (Ph.D., University of Siena) is Associate professor in Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Cagliari. His research focused on migration, racialization, and islamophobia in Italy, post-mining heritage in Sardinia, and, more recently, subalternity and self-representation among New Italians on TikTok. Among his recent publications: *Transcultural Voices and Subalternity in a TikTok Ethnography. Some provisional remarks* (Paris Nanterre, 2023); *Appartenenze virali. Nuovi italiani e italianità su TikTok* ("Antropologia pubblica", 2024); *'Something I Cannot Look at': Ruins and Dialectic of Temporalities in Southwest Post-Mining Sardinia (Italy)* ("Journal of Modern Italian Studies", 2025).

e-mail: francesco.bachis@unica.it

ORCID: 0000-0002-3299-8026

In the last decades[1], one of the most significant ways of expression for the 'New Italians,' the so-called 'second generation of migrants'[2], has been social media, especially social networks such as TikTok. These young people, who have grown up within transnational families, increasingly use social media to navigate and reshape their identities in the digital sphere. Many young people have built successful personal brands on platforms like TikTok, attracting national and even international followers. Their engagement with the platform exemplifies a novel form of 'integration,' not into traditional social structures but into the more complex and highly competitive neoliberal economy. Specifically, they participate in what has been defined, also in an anthropological way, as the "attention economy" (Pedersen, Albris, and Seaver 2021) and "visibility labor" (Abidin 2020), where personal branding, content creation, and digital visibility are the key currencies.

The New Italians, despite the wide stylistic diversity which only partially reflects their cultural origins and the multiple trajectories of migration and mobility, in the videos, create content that often carries deeply significant implications for how they construct and negotiate their identities. Their posts become places of "subjectivization," where they express themselves and reshape how society perceives their space within it. Many social media creators actively challenge and overturn prevalent stereotypes surrounding migration while critiquing broader political issues, such as exclusionary immigration policies and the limitations of multicultural rhetoric (Bachis Forthcoming). These video creators often question the political and cultural structures that perpetuate marginalization, though this critique rarely takes an overtly political form (Bachis 2023). Instead, their content reveals a "memetic dimension" of political expression, where humor, irony, and visual metaphors implicitly convey meanings (Literat and Kligler-Vilenchik 2019). This process, as some scholars argue (Zeng and Abidin, 2021), can be viewed as a form of "memefication" in intergenerational politics, where younger generations, particularly those with migrant backgrounds, use humor and online memes to reflect on and reframe their relationships with older generations and society at large.

Drawing on a netnography of New Italians on TikTok conducted online (Kozinets 2010), this paper analyzes these social media practices as a form of identity building and a means of claiming a 'subaltern voice' within public debate. It focuses on a specific pattern of video memes that have become popular on TikTok: the 'What-people-think-I-do/What-I-really-do' format. This meme initially started as a simple visual chart comparing popular assumptions about a particular activity. On TikTok, this pattern has evolved,

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[1] This article builds from the research project *IM-Mobilities – Imagined Mediterranean Mobilities: An Inventory of Narratives in a Multimodal Perspective* (University of Cagliari), funded by the Fondazione di Sardegna, Call for Biennial Projects 2022.

[2] I use the expression "New Italians" in a provocative way to describe young people from migrant backgrounds. Rather than being viewed as a condition of denial (due to legal or political exclusion), the term highlights the tensions and challenges faced by this group regarding their "second generation condition" (Grimaldi 2022) and *italianità* (Bachis 2024), which are often subject to misrecognition and exclusion. Politically, this concept can contribute to challenging the national order of things (Malkki 1995) and promote the "de-migrantization" (Dahinden 2016) of the new generation, thereby separating them from the automatic inclusion into categories of difference based on ethnicity or migration background (Hui 2016). For a more extensive discussion, see (Bachis 2024)

moving beyond static images to dynamic video sequences, where a combination of video and text creates a more nuanced and often funny comparison. The new Italians sometimes use this video meme to challenge an exceptionalist approach to migratíon that is widespread in Italy and typically promoted by populist politicians. At other times – and this is what we will address in this article – they turn their gaze to relatives who have remained in their countries of origin and to the imaginaries they have developed about migrants (and families) in Europe.

Like "folklore": taking seriously TikTok

Bucarest, Romania, 6 December 2024. Romania's Constitutional Court has invalidated the results of the first round of the presidential election just days before the scheduled second round. The decision follows the declassification of intelligence documents indicating foreign influence, possibly from Russia, which may have swayed the outcome. Calin Georgescu, who had primarily campaigned on TikTok, was accused of benefiting from this interference (Rainsford 2024). A few days later, the European Commission launched formal proceedings against TikTok over potential breaches of the Digital Services Act (Armangau 2024). These disputes have already been brought against TikTok also in Italy (EDPB 2022).

These disputes appear to be the latest case of a sort of 'TikTok-phobia': a persistent concern surrounding TikTok, encompassing potential political manipulation, concerns about data collection, and its ownership by a Chinese company. At the same time, analysts and academics accused TikTok of producing anxiety and depression (Sha and Dong 2021), generating an "excessive trivialization of political content" (Sapag M. et al. 2023:13), and, like social media in general (Engesser et al. 2017; Sandvoss 2019), to increasing political polarization and aiding the "strateg[ies] to down-play the most controversial issues of populist right" (González-Aguilar et al. 2023:237).

However, other studies consider the relationship between populism and TikTok more nuanced. Some scholars underline the use of TikTok as a tool for digital activism among young generations, for example, in Palestine (Abbas et al. 2022; Cervi and Marín-Lladó 2022). Scholarships highlight how populist politicians, such as Matteo Salvini, who frequently appear in the mass media as a "skilled manipulator" of social media platforms (mainly TikTok), are "definitely not welcomed on TikTok" (Cervi and Tejedor 2023: 142). However, in this context, even the failure – or the structuring of a robust "anti-fandom" (Click 2019) – can contribute to making the communication of some politicians on social media more "penetrating." In short, despite the presence of "elective affinities" between social media and populism, the link between populism and TikTok appears to be more a consequence of the spread of this social network in an era of crisis than a result of structural reasons in communication (Gerbaudo 2018).

In other words, at both an institutional and academic level, TikTok appears 'the' social network good for thinking about the crisis that Western democracies are facing. This attitude towards TikTok cannot be reduced to political distinctions (right/left, conservative/progressive…) but seems to be transversal. Suppose we assume the well-known categories that Umberto Eco (1964) has summarized as different attitudes toward

the mass media. In that case, TikTok is an easy target for both the 'apocalyptic' intellectuals who denounce its risks (like other social networks) and the 'integrated' ones, who, in any case, seem to have little interest in it.

As noted by Abidin (2020: 20), it is no coincidence that TikTok is the least ethnographically investigated social network by far. The main ethnographic approaches to this platform seem to remain restricted to some specific interests of researchers, such as the celebrity studies of Crystal Abidin (2018, 2020), an anthropologist who has also studied Instagram and who has developed research over the years on musical challenges (Vizcaíno-Verdú and Abidin 2022) and intergenerational relationships on TikTok (Zeng and Abidin 2021). Other scholars explored the possibilities of expanding the pedagogical horizons and collaborative research of TikTok (Liber et al. 2023), highlighting its potential in reconfiguring the relationships between teaching, learning, and research beyond and against hierarchical paradigms in a digital environment shaped by algorithms.

The ethnographic study of algorithms appears to be one of the most promising areas (Cerretani 2023; Rodgers and Lloyd-Evans 2021), starting from the "stories" that are built online around their functioning (Schellewald 2022), partly taking up the first embryonic proposals of ethnographic research 'with' and 'on' algorithms, understood as "part of broad patterns of meaning and practice that can be engaged with empirically" (Seaver 2017). Still, others attempt to decode the various forms of communication generated on the social network (Schellewald 2021). In this framework, the interaction between self-representation and the shaping power of algorithms has been read as producing an "algorithmizited self" (Bhandari and Bimo 2022) in a context in which "the boundaries between user and platform are intentionally blurred; here more than ever do we see a restless machine, one with as much of a 'life' as its human user" (Bhandari and Bimo 2020). It is precisely from reflecting on the role of algorithms in content selection that a "curatorial" approach to anthropologists' work on TikTok has developed (Braun and Mateus 2024). The anthropologist becomes a visitor to an archive of the present, one that is constantly expanding and evolving. In this context, the anthropologist takes on a curatorial role, navigating and engaging with the vast array of content available" (Braun and Mateus 2024, 201).

From this point of view, the possibility for users to participate, consume, and create content makes them "proto-anthropologists":

In contrast to the practice of anthropologists asking their research participants to create videos of their personal experiences, individuals are now voluntarily making their videos and sharing them with a wider audience at a rapidly accelerating rate (Braun and Mateus 2024, 198).

Other works on TikTok study border on communication sciences and present research on political expression (Literat and Kligler-Vilenchik 2019) concerning the alt-right (Weimann and Masri 2023), on the compulsive nature of scrolling and being continuously connected in social media in general (Lupinacci 2021), or on the influence of the vertical framing mode on the visual experience of the subjects (Wang 2020). From a psychological point

of view, more than personality traits, it is the motivations of the users, especially the desire for self-representation, social interaction, and escape from everyday life, which represent elements of the orientation of the behavior (and success) of TikTok users (Omar and Dequan 2020).

In Italy, despite the growing development of digital ethnography (i.e., Biscaldi and Matera 2019, 2023; Pilotto 2023; Santanera 2022), only a few studies research on TikTok (Bachis 2023, 2024; Guerzoni and Toro Matuk 2022). In general, despite some attempts at methodology (Caliandro 2018; Beneito-Montagut 2021; Rodgers and Lloyd-Evans 2021) and ethics (Jackson 2023; Kara and Khoo 2023; Perrault and Keating 2018; Zeng et al., 2021; Zhao 2024), the ethnographic approach to TikTok still appears to lack a solid methodological debate.

In short, it seems that it is difficult for anthropologists to 'take TikTok seriously' compared to other social networks, and that affects not only the forms of communication but also the research fields.[3] A sort of background noise appears to detract from the interest in this digital space for anthropologists (see Bachis, 2023). Paraphrasing a well-known quotation from Antonio Gramsci's *Prison notebooks*, TikTok "must not be conceived as an oddity, a strange or picturesque thing; rather, it must be regarded as something very serious and to be taken seriously (Gramsci 2021, 132)".

One way to take TikTok seriously is to ask who laughs with whom (and about what). Drawing on a vast anthropological literature (from Frederik Barth to Mary Douglas, as well as the African American Studies scholar Werner Sollors), a review essay by John Lowe (Lowe 1986) proposes the notion of a "community of laughter," emphasizing how this produces a sense of "we-ness." Although this sense is common to all forms of laughter, Lowe argues that the function of constructing belonging is more pronounced in contexts of subalternity and among so-called minorities, as explored through Jewish-American and Afro-American literature. In a certain way, this is also effective for the laughter of migrants. Perhaps the most direct way to question this "seriously funny" nature of TikTok production is to try to understand who young migrants laugh with, who they laugh at, and whether the laughing community is limited to migrants from specific countries of origin or concerns the New Italians more generally.

Making money in Europe

In recent years, TikTok has become the fastest-growing social network among younger generations (Cervi 2021). In November 2023, content creators who publish from Italy (or primarily in the Italian language) with more than 5 million followers were 41 (Mr. Keba 2023). Between these, 6 are New Italians. This number grows if considering all TikTokers with more than one million followers. Many of these produce an explicit or implicit anti-racist discourse. They often joke about skin color as a boundary marker between 'real' Italians and those who 'are not,' employing ironic strategies and surreal *détournements* (Bachis 2024).

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[3] An example of this is the case of anthropologist Daniel Miller retracting a post on TikTok that was perceived as excessively optimistic. See Bachis 2023; Miller 2022.

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I started using TikTok in the summer of 2020. Unlike many anthropologists (Zhao 2024), the choice was not caused by the restrictions imposed in traditional field practice by COVID-19 pandemic confinement policies, but by almost random elements. Although I had already studied mobility and so-called "second generations" (Bachis 2015), I had never reflected on the role that TikTok plays in redefining the identity politics of young people experiencing the "second generation condition" (Grimaldi 2022). The interest was sparked in 2020 when, during another fieldwork, a social activist dealing with young migrants sent me a video that was circulating among his friends. The video showed a young black man explaining how he arrived in Europe by plane ("reality") and how people imagine he arrived, traveling as a boat people, having to swim in the sea, facing sharks and other hazards ("expectations") (@khabi.lame 2020). In the following years, Khabi Lame, a young man born in Dakar and raised in Italy, will become the most-followed TikToker worldwide, with 162 million followers as of December 2024. From that moment, I started using TikTok and interacting with users, letting the algorithm's rhythm guide me in selecting my contacts, commenting, and uploading short videos while keeping me away from overexposure to my content.[4]

Khaby Lame's video was not only the first one I saw but also the first of many based on the plot: "What the people think I do / What I really do." One of this pattern's most exciting aspects is describing and mocking relationships with relatives and parents. Some refer to parents' expectations (about marriage, school, and work), while others joke about the migratory expectations of relatives who stay in the country of origin. Many refer to the "easy money" in migration. However, while it is common sense to think that it is adults who push the younger ones to be thrifty, in this case, it is the younger generation that overturns this rhetoric against their older relatives in Africa. Of course, these are not videos posted only in Italy but instead produced by many other young people worldwide[5] and part of the "memetic dimension" of political voicing (Literat and Kligler-Vilenchik 2019), although often implicit.

Sadiboujr, now on TikTok as @imsadibou, is an Afro-descendant boy with 180 thousand followers. In a video, he moves along a sidewalk wearing a Lakers uniform, a baseball cap with the visor backward, sunglasses, and a mask lowered under his chin (*Figure 1*).

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[4] As has been noted, "in today's more complex context of freely shared digital content " […] the act of using user-generated content […] without explicit permission may inadvertently infringe upon a creator's rights and autonomy over their creations" (Braun and Mateus 2024, 202). However, the exposure of content creators' videos in the dissemination of research results interacts with one of the main reasons for the use of the social network TikTok itself: to make their content as widespread as possible in a logic of "political economy of attention" (Pedersen, Albris, and Seaver 2021). This situation leads to a necessary redefinition, more fluid and relative, of ethical deliberations and "respect for creators."For these reasons, in this article, I limit the use of content not originating from "professional" TikTokers as much as possible, using exclusively public comments and content.

[5] Among the many: in one video, @ltsdovine (2022), he gets money from a cutting board; in another one @legendarymood (2024), who comes from the Ivory Coast, dances and sings in lip sync on *Mavin* by Dorobucci, a popular song used on TikTok to point up a (wannabe) excellent economic and social condition: The caption reads "How African family sees when you study abroad."

Figure 1 "The way the family thinks we make money in Europe." Screenshot from @sadiboujr 2020.

While *Jerusalema* by the South African singer Nomcebo Zikode plays in the background, he collects 20-euro bills from the plants in a flowerpot. The caption reads, "The way the family thinks we make money in Europe." He openly quotes the expression, "Money doesn't grow on trees." This phrase is said to warn someone to be careful about how much money they spend, as there is only a limited amount (McIntosh 2013). Usually refers to the relationship between parents and children. Generally, it is an idiomatic expression that adults use, with an ironic register, to refuse requests to purchase goods from children or young people. A user comments below: "When moms say 'but does money grow on trees'?" Typically, the parents address this issue to the younger generation. In this video, Sadiboujr overturns the roles: a young man makes fun of his relatives who stay in their home country because they believe that in Europe, 'money grows on trees' (@sadiboujr 2020).

"Money doesn't grow on trees" is a standard plot on TikTok, also spread by music stars like Jason Derulo (@jasonderulo 2020) and wrestling champions like Ahawi Amal Imani (@imani_amal 2020). Sometimes, new Italians propose it in the "original" version, in which they joke about situations in which parents refuse to give money (@Ouz_the_best 2023). In other cases, the plot is the same, and the content creator collects money from plants, like @itsmaddalena, who, on the same music as Sadiboujr, collects 20 Euro bills from a plant. The caption reads, "How our families in Africa think we find money once we arrive in Europe" (@itsmaddalena74 2020, *Figure 2*). The comments agree and bring experiences from other countries: @Ariadnavega writes: "Even the family in Cuba thinks like this."

Similarly, @eriksson_prince, who comes from Benin, posted a video of himself in a square picking money from trees, with Bepi Philip's song *Comment ne pas te louer* playing in the background. The caption reads, "Here is what they think in Africa of us Africans living in Europe" (@eriksson_prince 2023, *Figure 3*).

Figure 2 "How our families in Africa think we find money once we arrive in Europe." Screenshot from @itsmaddalena74 2020.

Figure 3 "Here is what they think in Africa of us Africans living in Europe." Screenshot from @eriksson_prince 2023.

In other cases, some content creators associate the idea that money grows on trees with a generic African stereotype. Jalayahxoxo, a Nigerian girl, posts a video taken with a selfie stick. She touches her hair and lip-syncs to the song in the background. The caption reads: "One bad thing about being black is that our relatives in Africa call our parents to ask us to send money as if money grows on trees."(@jakayahxoxo 2024)

Content creators often describe the idea of making big money in Europe in a stereotypical way. Some settings are persistent and increase the comic charge of the videos, exaggerating the distance between a 'real' condition and the idea that relatives in the homeland have. Luxury objects, sumptuous homes, or dream holiday spots are common.

@matychon, an Afro-descendant girl who produces beauty content, posts a green screen video in which, behind her half-length image, in a selfie mode, images scroll by to the music of *A la Floie* by Francky Vincent. The caption reads, "Our relatives in Africa think that's how we live in Europe." In the background, images scroll by of a luxury suite, mountains of banknotes, swimming pools, and resorts. @faiza comments: "They always think that; they think we are billionaires." A 'real white Italian' remarks: "It's not that Europe is rich; you must work to get things in life." The reply of @aicha, a young Afro-descendant, is sarcastic: "Thanks, without you I would never have thought that to keep a house and have food you have to work...but hahaha" (@matychon 2020a). As we will see in other cases, users who reply with stereotypes about the 'privileged condition of migrants in Europe' are often dismissed with irony or ignored.

While some videos joke about the communication infrastructures of transnational migration and their impact on the daily lives of adolescents (i.e., the 'video-call obligation'), many others focus on the financial aspects and the expectations they generate in countries of origin. Mocking relationships connected to the circulation of money in the transnational field of different mobilities is one of the favorite targets of young TikTokers, particularly the Afro-descendants. Thus, it is always @matychon who makes fun of relationships that 'fade away' once money has been sent (@matychon, 2020b). She films herself in close-up while trying to make a phone call, and on the other end, the phone rings unanswered. The caption reads: "When you call your family in Africa after you have sent them money." Below is a second caption: "Maybe they will call you back next month when the money has run out. " Someone replies, "Don't worry, they will call you back when they have run out of money so you can send more." Another girl writes, "It's beautiful that when you send the code, they reply in two seconds then disappear. The whole world is the same. It's true".

Phone calls from relatives are often the object of scorn, even when they are more directly related to the request for money. Finding a job for a young New Italian seems ironically to expose oneself to the entry into the circulation of money from Europe to the countries of origin.

@Coveredinlayers [Sumi] is a young, veiled woman. She introduces herself on the TikTok profile with the words "Arab name and Italian accent." She frames herself as she answers the phone. She lip-syncs an English audio that is very popular on TikTok (50,000 videos use it). You can hear the ringtone, an annoyed sigh, and a voice in English: "Yes

Robert, what do you want? Money? Check? Card? My Soul?". The caption reads: "POV. When your family in Africa finds out that you also work now" (@coveredinlayers 2023). The video pokes fun at the economic gaps between countries. If the stereotypical idea of an Africa where everyone is poor is often the subject of ironic videos about Europeans, in this case, videos and comments make fun of the claim that it is relatives in Africa who pass themselves off" as poor. A young woman coming from Morocco comments: "Alhhahaha, thank God I have a rich family in Morocco 😂." Sumi replies: "In theory, mine too, but you know free things attract everyone 😂." Another Afro-descendant girl, sarcastic, comments a little further on: "Or those richer than you and who live a thousand times better who think that just because you live in Europe, you are a millionaire 😭😭😭." Sumi replies, "Those are the worst."

In other cases, which seem less widespread, the New Italians' journey to Africa represents the moment at which they test the relatives' imaginaries about migration. @Andyfaye is a Senegalese girl. She takes a half-length picture and lip-syncs *Nei giardini che nessuno sa* ("In the gardens that nobody knows") by the Italian singer Renato Zero, specifically the lines, "I would give you my eyes to see what you don't see." The caption reads: "When in Senegal, my aunts ask me to give them everything I have in my suitcase because "you can repurchase it, you Europeans have so much money" (@andyfaye 2023).

In the New Italian production, the centrality of money in establishing the difference between what "their people" think they do and what they actually do appears much more widespread. The horizon in which they joke about this difference between expectations and reality is not drawn only by the country of arrival. It is no coincidence that, in almost all the videos examined, the "rich" pole of the game of mirrors between expectation and reality is Europe, rather than a single country where young people were born, grew up, or immigrated. This results from the multi-layered biographical trajectories of young people, who are rarely fixed "between here and there." @willymcflash, for example, is a young man of Ivorian origin, living in France, born in Naples and raised in Bologna. At the end of June 2020, he published a video that was quite successful (66 thousand likes), but above all, it triggered a significant number of comments (@willymcflash 2020). He was filmed from the waist up, in green screen mode (*Figure 4*). The caption reads: "How my relatives in Africa think it's like to live in Europe." In the background, images of villas, luxury resorts, custom cars, planes, and the inevitable tree on which money grows scroll by. Willy makes a series of gestures to indicate his condition of wealth and happiness. In the background play *Soldi* ("Money") by the Italian singer Mahmood: "Tell me if you only thought about money, as if you had money." Willy lifts the collar of his shirt, smiles winkingly looking at the camera, and makes the gesture of taking money from the tree. Many young New Italians comment below: " I live in an apartment in Italy, but my relatives in Tunisia have villas with gardens and swimming pools, and they think I have much money: 🤡." "Moroccans too😭😂"; "it is true, Albanian also thinks the same thing"; "My Polish relatives be like"; "So, my parents in Brazil? 🤣🤣🤣 I'm a billionaire"; "it's what my cousin in Morocco thinks 👁️👄👁️."

Come i miei parenti in africa, pensano sia vivere in europa

Figure 4 "How my relatives in Africa think it's like to live in Europe." Screenshot from @willymcflash 2020.

A 'real Italian' writes: "In Italy, there is no work for us Italians, imagine for you." A flame war breaks out. Someone comments sarcastically: "Yes, yes, in fact, I see so many foreign doctors, engineers, or lawyers." Someone comments that foreigners find work because they are more available. "Available? But if they fired my father several times to make room for a black man", replies @kristian. The New Italians almost do not participate in the heated discussion. It is perhaps an awareness of one of the most enduring unwritten rules of the internet since its inception: "Don't feed the trolls." But it is probably also a reaction generated by another level of communication, a way of drawing boundaries between a community of laughers and others.

Conclusion

The brief review we have taken into account allows us to draw some conclusive notes on the three questions we examined: who young migrants laugh with, who they laugh at, and whether the laughing community is limited to migrants from specific countries of origin or concerns the New Italians more generally. The (prevalent) use of the Italian language creates a "community of laughers" that excludes relatives who stay in their home country. At the same time, this choice encompasses a broad spectrum of users who share (often, but not always) not only language skills but also the "second generation condition." This process outlines a transnational community of laughers excluded as 'not properly Italian' by anti-migrant rhetoric who identify themselves, beyond their origin, in the situations that are joked about. However, the discourse carried out by the New Italians is not addressed against those who refuse the deep transformations brought about by international mobility in Italy. In short, it is not explicitly an anti-racist discourse.

Nevertheless, the videos build one of the tools for constructing transnational meaning among young people in second generation condition and seem to have two primary

goals: joking about relatives living in their home country, and exploring forms of intergenerational memefication using humor and irony to address intergenerational tensions and expectations about life in Italy. The use of the Italian language, in this case, excludes relatives in the country of origin and includes those who are in the condition of second generation. In short, it operates within the context of migration and mobility rather than focusing on the opposition between migrants and natives. This video creates an inside joke that allows New Italians to negotiate their sense of belonging in a society that is often ambivalent toward them. Through their circulation, these media practices – particularly the use of irony, exaggeration, and subversion of stereotypes – produce an irreverent discourse around and inside mobility. New Italians producing these videos challenge social expectations about being a migrant or a 'New Italian. 'At the same time, by crafting shared cultural references that reverberate across generations, these video memes become a tool for reimagining mobility and immobility in transnational spaces.

The centrality of money and success, reversed in the mockery of relatives, signals an ironic ability to navigate the neoliberal economy by engaging in the attention economy and visibility labor. This ability occurs both for those who have been successful on the social network and have made their activity as content creators a job and for those who cultivate, in a (more or less) hinted way, this hope.

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