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The Chilean Digital Diaspora

A case study of transnational political and electoral practices
on social media since 2017

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Extended abstract

Questo lavoro discute le pratiche politiche ed elettorali della diaspora digitale cilena residente fuori dai confini del Cile, prendendo in esame le modalità virtuali di interazione e partecipazione a cui hanno preso parte gli individui appartenenti a tale comunità. Si è inoltre visto come questi, grazie all'utilizzo dei social media e di nuove tecniche informatiche, hanno instaurato e promosso uno speciale senso di comunità all'interno di un gruppo seppur così dispersivo. In questo contesto, particolare attenzione è rivolta alla pratica della partecipazione elettorale e del coinvolgimento nei processi democratici del paese, concessa ufficialmente solo a partire dalle elezioni presidenziali del 2017.

L'obiettivo della tesi è dunque quello di delineare le principali caratteristiche della diaspora cilena, con un focus specifico sulla parte di essa che è costruita e si regge sul web: la cosiddetta *diaspora* digitale, o *e-diaspora.*, L'intenzione, pertanto, è stata quella di analizzare l'effetto della digitalizzazione e dei social media sui processi elettorali del Cile, attraverso uno studio sulla sua diaspora digitale che utilizza un approccio misto di etnografia dei media e analisi del discorso critico. In particolare, vengono esaminati i comportamenti, i temi ricorrenti e le modalità di interazione e partecipazione della diaspora cilena su Twitter e Facebook.

Quando si parla di diaspora digitale, si fa uso di un'espressione generica che abbraccia tutte una serie di configurazioni che emergono, da un lato, dall'ambito degli studi sulla migrazione, e dall'altro, dagli ambiti dell'*ICT* (tecnologie informatiche) e degli studi sui social media. Da questi, risulta un nuovo campo interdisciplinare noto come *digital migration studies*. Di fatto, è stato osservato come la proliferazione dei social media e dei nuovi media ha dato spazio all'insorgenza di nuove dinamiche sociali, specialmente, ma non soltanto, nella sfera politica. Ci si riferisce quindi a quei cittadini cileni che vivono all'estero e che si impegnano e si interessano di politica sul web,

attraverso i social media. Questa è stata la premessa che mi ha guidata nell'analisi del modo in cui la diaspora digitale cilena ha partecipato ai processi elettorali del paese, a partire dalle elezioni presidenziali del 2017. Considero queste elezioni un evento cruciale nella storia del Cile, essendo concretamente la prima opportunità che i cileni residenti all'estero hanno avuto per esercitare il loro diritto di voto al di fuori dei confini nazionali.

La tesi è suddivisa in tre capitoli principali: i primi due descrivono l'aspetto teorico e storico-relazionale della diaspora digitale – e di quella cilena nello specifico – mentre l'ultimo si concentra sull'analisi dei comportamenti degli utenti sui social media in riferimento ai processi elettorali svoltisi dal 2017 ad oggi, con particolare attenzione a Facebook e Twitter. Di seguito verranno descritte la struttura della tesi ed i metodi di ricerca utilizzati così da fornire una panoramica completa degli argomenti trattati.

Il primo capitolo definisce, ripercorrendo la letteratura in questo campo, i fondamenti teorici che elaborano i concetti di diaspora e *digital diaspora* alla base di questa tesi, ponendo particolare attenzione sui loro aspetti di interconnettività transnazionale e mobilitazione politica, evidenziando infine come i membri di una diaspora possono partecipare attivamente alla vita politica del proprio paese d'origine attraverso l'uso delle nuove tecnologie. Il capitolo offre una panoramica sulla diaspora, discutendone il suo significato storico e contemporaneo: un concetto multidimensionale caratterizzato da emozioni condivise, identità, senso di dislocazione e desiderio di mantenere i legami con il proprio paese di origine. La diaspora è definita come un fenomeno che non si esaurisce nel tempo, ma si sviluppa, si evolve e si adatta a nuove sfide e opportunità. Il capitolo si concentra poi sul concetto chiave di diaspora digitale, che si riferisce all'uso delle tecnologie digitali per mantenere vive le connessioni e partecipare ad attività politiche e sociali oltre i confini domestici.

Si è osservato che le diaspore digitali sono spesso caratterizzate da un alto grado di interconnettività transnazionale: i membri utilizzano le piattaforme dei social media per condividere informazioni, organizzare eventi e mobilitarsi su questioni politiche, aspetti per i quali la tecnologia gioca di conseguenza un ruolo fondamentale. Poiché il voto digitale è un fenomeno senza confini geografici e spazio-temporali, dato dall'utilizzo di nuovi sistemi telematici, per i membri delle diaspore digitali interessate alla mobilitazione politica, i social media sono diventati strumenti importanti per promuovere

l'impegno alla partecipazione e la difesa dei propri diritti, tra questi, il diritto di voto. La campagna *Haz Tu Voto Volar* è infatti menzionata come esempio di campagna digitale di successo condotta da una comunità diasporica, che incentivò il conseguimento del diritto di voto all'estero. Nel complesso, questo capitolo evidenzia il modo in cui una diaspora può acquisire importanza nella società, diventando politicamente attiva attraverso l'uso della tecnologia, e sviluppando quindi il proprio potenziale per modellare i risultati politici e le politiche sociali, anche tramite la partecipazione elettorale, le petizioni online e i dibattiti sui social media. La digitalizzazione, perciò, sta trasformando il potere e la visibilità della diaspora, dandole una maggiore incidenza nella politica nazionale.

Il secondo capitolo fornisce una discussione approfondita della diaspora cilena, includendo il suo contesto storico, le sue principali caratteristiche e le misure politiche che la riguardano e la influenzano. In primo luogo, viene presentata la storia della diaspora cilena, le cui origini sono ricondotte al colpo di stato del 1973 avvenuto sotto la guida del generale Augusto Pinochet, il cui regime costrinse centinaia di migliaia di cileni all'esilio ed alla fuga. Le attuali stime del censimento nazionale mostrano che più di un milione di cileni risiede fuori dai confini del paese, e si è osservato che le motivazioni alla base della loro migrazione sono diverse, ma principalmente di natura economica, politica e sociale. Questo capitolo, dunque, descrive le caratteristiche storiche e culturali della diaspora cilena, nonché ne presenta le caratteristiche generiche, in termini di distribuzione geografica e identità culturale. Viene spiegato come la diaspora cilena sia stata in grado di adattarsi e resistere alle pressioni del paese d'origine e delle società ospitanti, creando così un mondo culturale unico e dinamico, ed in qualche modo distinto dal resto dei compatrioti. Questo è suggerito dalle teorie sull'identificazione diasporica, secondo le quali le diaspore costruiscano identità culturali basate su memoria collettiva, tradizioni orali e reti sociali. La seconda parte del capitolo esplora inoltre il processo che ha portato al riconoscimento del diritto di voto per i cittadini cileni all'estero, evidenziando l'importanza di tali movimenti politico-sociali per la transizione democratica del Paese. La campagna per il voto all'estero fu infatti uno dei punti di svolta nel movimento di opposizione a Pinochet e garantì la partecipazione della diaspora alla vita politica cilena.

Il terzo capitolo si occupa dell'analisi degli atteggiamenti, dei comportamenti e delle percezioni della politica cilena tra i membri della rispettiva diaspora digitale. concentrandosi specificamente sull'uso di Facebook e Twitter. Il capitolo si apre discutendo il contesto e la metodologia del caso di studio, precisando che i dati raccolti per analizzare la prospettiva della diaspora ed il relativo dibattito sulle nuove opportunità politiche derivano da Facebook e Twitter. Si distinguono quindi le due piattaforme e ne vengono individuate le principali caratteristiche: Twitter è considerata una piattaforma che privilegia gli aspetti informativi e comunicativi dell'attività politica, mentre Facebook è vista come una piattaforma più *social*, che promuove la discussione e predispone alla partecipazione politica attraverso gruppi e pagine tematiche. L'approccio metodologico che viene utilizzato consiste in una combinazione di etnografia dei media e analisi del discorso critico, che permette la raccolta e l'interpretazione delle informazioni sul comportamento degli utenti su entrambe le piattaforme. Di fatto, si tratta di un approccio misto che prevede l'osservazione online degli utenti e l'analisi statistica dei dati di registri e sondaggi elettorali, per studiare l'effetto che i nuovi cittadini cileni aventi diritto al voto hanno sui risultati elettorali, l'interconnessione che esiste tra la sfera online e offline, nonché il senso di comunità creatosi all'interno del gruppo. Il capitolo passa poi a discutere i risultati dello studio, evidenziando l'impegno della diaspora digitale nel processo elettorale e la sua mobilitazione intorno alle questioni politiche. Dal lavoro di analisi si è visto che la diaspora digitale ha svolto un ruolo importante nel promuovere la partecipazione politica e nell'influenzare l'agenda politica cilena. Inoltre, è emerso che diversi fattori hanno influenzato la mobilitazione e la partecipazione della diaspora digitale al processo elettorale, tra cui un senso di solidarietà e comprensione reciproca, un'intensa interazione tra i membri e un forte interesse per le politiche e la qualità della vita in Cile. Questi fattori sono stati cruciali nel definire il ruolo della diaspora digitale nel plasmare il panorama politico cileno.

Un ulteriore aspetto di rilievo che viene osservato è la natura della partecipazione politica online tra i cileni all'estero, per i quali i social media forniscono nuove modalità di partecipazione politica a distanza. Grazie ai social network, i membri della diaspora partecipano alla vita politica in modo diverso rispetto alla realtà dei loro paesi d'origine: si è visto dunque come Facebook e Twitter offrano la possibilità di una partecipazione

attiva e immediata alla politica cilena. Inoltre, attraverso le piattaforme social, i cileni all'estero possono condividere informazioni, esperienze, emozioni e opinioni sulla situazione politica del loro paese. In questo modo, la partecipazione online non solo offre ai migranti l'opportunità di rimanere in contatto con le loro comunità e paesi di origine, ma consente anche loro di influenzare i processi decisionali in linea con le trasformazioni politiche nazionali. Queste premesse vengono riscontrate nelle pratiche digitali e nelle effettive discussioni online che vengono riportate nel terzo capitolo: si sono analizzate contestualmente le esperienze personali dei cileni all'estero durante un momento memorabile della storia del loro Paese, nelle quali emergono contemporaneamente la frustrazione nel sentirsi impotenti ma tuttavia in grado di influenzare il futuro della propria patria. Nel complesso, il capitolo fornisce un'analisi dettagliata del coinvolgimento della diaspora digitale cilena nei quattro processi elettorali avvenuti a partire dal 2017 (ovvero le elezioni presidenziali del 2017 e del 2021, ed i referendum costituzionali del 2020 e del 2022), evidenziando il ruolo che questa ha avuto nel promuovere la partecipazione politica e nell'influenzare l'agenda politica in Cile. Il capitolo discute anche le sfide affrontate dalla diaspora digitale, sottolineando la necessità di politiche e programmi che promuovano l'inclusione, la giustizia sociale e la transizione digitale.

In sintesi, la tesi si presenta come uno studio sul comportamento degli utenti della diaspora digitale cilena sui social network, Facebook e Twitter nello specifico. Il lavoro rivela un quadro interessante sull'impatto che la digitalizzazione ha sulla partecipazione politica delle comunità diasporiche, e su come questa stia evolvendo il modo di partecipare alla politica, considerando che le entità della comunità diasporica digitale si stanno affermando sempre più nel mondo politico del Cile. I social media, in particolare, hanno consentito alla diaspora di partecipare e influenzare i processi politici in modo attivo e immediato, mantenendo forti legami con le loro comunità e terre d'origine, pur risiedendo fuori dai confini nazionali.

Introduction

The issue of foreign voting has gained substantial relevance in the context of globalization. One key factor underlying this assumption is undoubtedly linked to international migration. Due to globalization, there has been an increase in global migration, which has significantly extended the conventional boundaries of voting rights beyond the confines of state territory for non-resident citizens.

The Chilean emigration phenomenon, however, gained prominence in the 1970s, owing to the 16-year military dictatorship led by General Augusto C. Pinochet, which systematically forced real and perceived opponents to flee the country – also remembered as the period which witnessed the highest intensity of Chilean emigration. While there has been a gradual decline in recent years, the emigration of Chileans from their homes still persists and is significantly close to that of immigrants entering the country[1]. Since democracy was restored in 1990, the Chilean government has made various efforts to engage with Chileans living abroad, but to date, they have not implemented a comprehensive approach the nation's diaspora. According to the latest data available in the Segundo Registro de Chilenos en el Exterior (DICOEX & INE, 2017), as of 2016, approximately 1,037,346 Chilean individuals were living abroad. It was only in 2017 that this dispersed community was finally able to participate in their country's political affairs, with the enactment of Law 20.960 (7th October 2016), which governs the voting rights of expatriates. In recent decades, more countries have permitted their expatriate citizens to take part in domestic elections. Today, nearly three-quarters of nations worldwide have implemented external voting, driven in part by relatively recent electoral law changes. This trend is considered a governmental response to the growing levels of immigration

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[1] According to the data provided by the Instituto Estadísticas (INE) and the Departamento de Extranjería y Migración (DEM), the estimated number of foreign population with habitual residence in Chile as of 2018 amounted to 1.301.381. More information available at: https://www.desarrollosocialyfamilia.gob.cl

and mobility, prompting the creation of new policies to safeguard the rights and protections of citizens living abroad. Incorporating external voting adds complexity to the electoral system, requiring states to establish secure, fair, and efficient electoral mechanisms.

Indeed, technical barriers that previously impeded expats from participating in their home country's public affairs have decreased. Modern telecommunications networks enable voters residing abroad to stay informed and engaged with political issues in their country of origin. This can potentially help to bridge the gap between domestic societal issues and the accountability of citizens abroad. The increased accessibility of the internet has facilitated transnational political involvement in a distant public sphere.

The introduction of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) has greatly impacted the speed and character of interactions among transnational populations. The rise of social networking apps has also brought about the recognition of Web 2.0 and led to the widespread use of social media as a mode of personal communication. This development calls in into question the idea that strong relationships require in-person contact. These are especially significant for immigrants who are dispersed from their original locations but want to remain connected, particularly through transnational social networks. It is within this context that *digital diasporas* arise. A new concept which encompasses the intersections of migration, transnationalism, mobility, and diaspora, with information and communication technologies, new media, and social media. It is essentially described as a migrant collective that primarily operates on the web and whose practices are enhanced by digital exchange. New media has empowered and enabled diasporas to actively participate in their home country's politics, engage in political activities beyond borders and cultures, and take part in social and political activism. For those in the diaspora, certain concepts and beliefs may correspond with a certain idea of identity and liberal values. Ideally, as Brinkerhoff (2009) argues, cultivating a positive sense of self in diasporans blended identity results in support for basic human rights, psychological empowerment, and the belief that they can competently promote, preserve, and exhibit these rights both autonomously and on behalf of their ancestral homeland. This can foster a sense of empowerment based on individualism and/or the acknowledgement of individual rights potentially overlooked before migration or access

to technology (Brinkerhoff, 2009; Kozachenko, 2013; Leung et al., 2017). Moreover, the internet permits rapid communication for organizing collective efforts and advancing the political objectives of neglected communities.

In this thesis, I analyze the main features of the Chilean Diaspora during the years that led it to its rapid expansion, with a particular emphasis on the online component of the phenomenon: the Chilean *digital diaspora.* The core of this work will thus be the result of my research on the digital practices of Chilean expatriates living abroad. Specifically, will examine the role and engagement of the diaspora during Chile's electoral processes, beginning in 2017, namely the first year that diasporans were eligible to vote from abroad. The acknowledgement of the importance of mediated communication for diasporic subjects, and its influence on identity construction and community-building, is the primary focus. Compared to other forms of media, social media has particularly powerful impact on the lives of diasporic individuals. Social media thus offers immediate and affordable means to establish and sustain local and transnational social relationships. Furthermore, social media can enable individuals to participate actively in the political community, fostering democracy. By analyzing data from electoral registries and polls, as well as empirical examples of online networking and engagement among Chilean expatriates on Facebook and Twitter, this study aims to examine the impact of newly enfranchised Chilean citizens on election outcomes in terms of actual weight and figures resulting from the polls, as well as the interconnection between the online and offline spheres, and the sense of community among this group.

In light of these considerations the research question that guided my thesis was: "What is the relationship between social media, Chilean diasporic communities worldwide, and political participation from abroad? And in what ways do these three elements impact one another?". With this in mind, I attempt to analyze the effects of digital diasporas that interact on the internet, on Chile's political landscape. These impacts may include the potential to promote democratic values, facilitate integration in the host societies and contribute to socio-political development in the homeland. I will argue that the political activism of diasporas is likely to expand as they both benefit from and contribute to democratization. The internet, social media in particular, plays and increasingly

important role in diaspora's ability to establish online communities and pursue purposive objectives related to their homeland identity.

Methodologically, I will draw on different levels of analysis and methodological approaches, resulting in a mixed-methods approach consisting of online participant observation and contextual research to examine internet connections and online media activities. The thesis thus employs media ethnography and Critical Discourse Analysis to investigate diasporic communication practices and their impact on Chilean politics. Media ethnography works by comparing communicative practices from the participants' perspective to reveal the underlying significance of social interactions, behaviors, and lifestyles of diasporic groups. This is evident through their social media consumption and production. The latter is premised on combining sociological and linguistic tools, namely discourse and society. Discourse analysis moves beyond the surface-level meanings of language and instead employs the language as a body of data to analyze its use within a specific social context, as well as its impact on that context and vice versa. In practical methodological terms, I aimed to merge qualitative and quantitative data by combining multi-sited and multi-temporal ethnographic research with online research. The information presented is drawn from the two most prominent social media platforms Facebook and Twitter, on which I conducted extensive research from March to May 2023. The research, which consisted in the observation of groups, pages and personal accounts respectively, provided empirical evidence of the Chilean diasporic practices online (for more detailed information on the methodology of research employed, see chapter 3.1). This set of information instrumental in understanding how the Chilean diaspora have been engaging in media reception and cultural practices across various temporal and spatial interaction contexts during the four electoral processes taken into analysis. Namely, the two presidential elections in 2017 and 2021, and the two constitutional plebiscites in 2020 and 2022. It is noteworthy, however, that the two platforms being compared provide distinct tools and purposes, which allowed for differing approaches to research. Accordingly, my study primarily concentrated on Facebook's groups and pages, as well as on Twitter's most popular hashtags and individual user accounts, to select only the sources that I deemed pertinent and most relevant to the scope of this research. I selected said sources based on their relevance to the covered topics, the number of participants,

and an appropriate level of engagement. It was discovered that, despite similar expressions of sentiments and consistent discussions concerning expatriate voting, there was a notable distinction between the two websites examined. Namely, Twitter saw greater prominence for newspapers and information platforms, while Facebook tended to be the more favored option for informal groups and pages due to its more 'narrative' nature.

With these premises as a starting point, I will now describe the content of each chapter of this dissertation. I will begin with the theoretical and contextualization chapters, followed by the presentation of my case study. Chapter 1 establishes the theoretical foundation of my research: in this chapter my primary objective is to define and clearly conceptualize the concepts of diaspora and, most crucially, of digital diaspora. The final section of the chapter concentrates on the emergence of diasporas as political actors with both local and transnational agendas that span state borders. These groups are now able to actively participate in their homeland's political activities utilizing ICTs. The second chapter of this thesis delves into the history and the characterization of the Chilean diaspora. Particular emphasis is placed onto the political and enfranchisement aspects of the phenomenon. It traces the process leading to the enactment of the right to vote from abroad, analyzes the political climate, and examines the effective participation of the diaspora in the selected electoral processes. Lastly, the third chapter provides the case study that is the subject of the thesis. The first two sections outline the methodological approach that underpins this work and distinguish between the two social media platforms investigated. For the final section, I will examine the Chilean digital diaspora's engagement on Facebook and Twitter, by analyzing their behaviors, recurring themes and patterns that emerge from the empirical evidence gathered. This approach eventually aims to comprehend the phenomena which involve the diaspora and its online practices, and to draw the conclusions that answer to my research question.

Chapter 1. Conceptualization of Diasporas and Digital Diasporas

'*Where once were dispersions, there now is diaspora*'.
– Khachig Tölölyan in 'Rethinking diaspora(s):
stateless power in the transnational moment' (1996)

Diasporas, often referred to as expatriates or transnational communities, have a significant role in using the advantages of migration for development purposes. Measuring problems concerning diaspora groups is a challenging task, as there is no universally accepted definition of the term "diasporas" (IOM's GMDAC, n.d.). Interest in diasporas has significantly increased since the late 1980s, not coincidentally, as it they related to important social phenomena that began after World War II, including the process of decolonization, the fall of the Iron Curtain, and mass migration from former colonies and the ex-Soviet bloc (Minchilli, 2021). However, the term's meaning has been expanded to fit different intellectual, cultural, and political ideologies it serves (Brubaker, 2005). In this chapter I will first introduce the term 'diaspora' as it is generally conceived in the literature – which understands it both as a social process and a theoretical concept: a phenomenon that belongs to and transgresses at the same time its nation, due to its transnational border-crossing nature, and that refers to a group of people who share the same origin or 'homeland' and are characterized by a condition of displacement (Minchilli, 2021). Secondly, I will reach the core of the chapter by entering the field of *digital diaspora*, namely the study of diasporic sociality through social media means. As a matter of fact, the diasporas that spread at the end of the 20th century will be experienced differently today due to the advent of modern technologies and rapid communication. In the past it used to take months to travel or communicate across seas, now, with new forms of communication once unimaginable, that is possible due to what Brah (1996) described as electronic information 'super-highways' existing today. The advancements have significant implications for constructing new, diverse transnational 'imagined communities', which happen online, and which may be used to achieve specific objectives

related to a community's identity with its homeland (Brah, 1996; Brinkerhoff, 2009; Diminescu, 2012; Ponzanesi, 2020). Thus, the traditional concept of diaspora is now interpreted through modern forms of 'diasporic digitality.' These modern forms enable people to remain in contact with their home country and establish new connections across different diasporas through multiple affiliations and intersections provided by cross-media platforms (Ponzanesi, 2020). Recent research has emphasized the significant role of digital media in the daily lives of migrants and diasporic communities, by providing opportunities that were previously unimaginable before the advent of the Internet. Digital media have made transnational communication easy, cheap, and immediate, hence facilitating the long-distance maintenance of relationships. Additionally, digital media have enabled migrants to create transnational digital networks for purposes of politics, socialization, and religion (Minchilli, 2021; Werbner, 2002). Finally, the last part of the chapter will address diasporas' potential to make constructive contributions in terms of policy influence, promoting liberal values, easing integration and conflict prevention, and enhancing socio-economic development. The internet can aid in these efforts by empowering diasporic political practices and playing a vital role in creating new public spheres, forms of protest, social groupings, and imagination spaces (Brinkerhoff, 2009; Candidatu & Ponzanesi, 2022; Werbner, 2002). Considering this, it will be possible to describe also how the development of global digital media and communication technologies has greatly enhanced the ability of diasporas to participate actively in homeland politics.

1.1. What is a Diaspora?

The notion of diaspora is a subject of debate and being applied in numerous ways, defining it appears to be a daunting task due to the diverse historical experiences, trajectories, and agendas (Sideri, 2008). The term has become widespread, and its definition has been expanded to include various intellectual, cultural, and political agendas that it has been used to promote (Brubaker, 2005; Candidatu et al., 2019). Diaspora is a "travelling term" (Brubaker, 2005) as it originally indicated the collective

trauma caused by the exile and banishment of Jewish communities. The etymology of the term diaspora, of Greek origin, reflects how ambiguous the concept can be: *dia-* (a preposition that, when used in compound words, means division and dispersion) and -*spiro* (literally, to sow). Thus, this suggests both the idea of dispersion and the idea of stasis and stability (sowing seeds, suggesting new life and new roots (Brah, 1996; Ember et al., 2005; Shuval, 2000; Sideri, 2008). Merriam Webster's Dictionary defines diaspora as 'dispersion from' (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), therefore, the word implies a sense of a center, a location, a 'home' from which the dispersion occurs, recalling the idea of multiple journeys (Brah, 1996; Brubaker, 2005). Originally, the term referred to the dispersal and settlement of Jews outside of Palestine following the Babylonian exile in 586 BCE. Later, the term became associated with the catastrophic history of the Jews, including their multiple expulsions from different European countries over the centuries, culminating in the Holocaust during World War II. Invoking homeland and return have become key components in the diasporic imagination, along with memories of the original dispersal (Ember et al., 2005). Today, the term diaspora is also used to refer to other major historical dispersions, many of which were involuntary, encompassing not only the classic groups such as Jews, Greeks, and Armenians, but also broader categories that reflect politically motivated forced displacement and relocation of people, voluntary migration, global communication, and transportation (Brubaker, 2005; Ember et al., 2005; Shuval, 2000). For these reasons, the concept of diaspora incorporates several elements, such as a history of dispersal, myths or memories of the homeland, feelings of alienation in the host country, a desire for a potential return - which may have ambivalent, eschatological, or utopian connotations -, an ongoing support for the homeland, and a collective identity shaped by the aforementioned relationship (Shuval, 2000).

IOM defines diasporas as "migrants or descendants of migrants, whose identity and sense of belonging have been shaped by their migration experience and background." (International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2019). Similarly, in 1986, Sheffer ("Modern Diasporas in International Politics", p. 684) proposed a definition of modern diasporas, namely "ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin– their homelands''. Therefore, while the term 'diasporas' was initially used to refer

to the forced displacement of specific groups of people, today it is now commonly used to describe individuals who identify with a homeland but reside outside of it (IOM's GMDAC, n.d.). Following this reasoning, "a diaspora is a transnational network of dispersed political subjects" (Werbner, 2002), meaning that a key feature of diasporas is their connection through co-responsibility ties beyond the boundaries of empires, political communities, or nation-states. Werbner (2002) argues that diasporas represent the typical transnational formation as they synthetize the paradox of the "one in the many, of the place of non-place, of a global parochialism", thus challenging, with their nature of social formations, the hegemony and boundedness of the nation-state, as well as any pure conceptions of national identity (Werbner, 2002). Faist (2010), on the contrary, proposes a different understanding, claiming that transnationalism and diaspora are not coterminous nor interchangeable. Despite being both terms that concern prolonged cross-border ties and that deal with ties with the homeland and the integration of individuals who live 'abroad' into their destination regions (Faist, 2010), he considers the term 'transnationalism' to be broader than the term 'diaspora' for various reasons. One reason is that they reflect different intellectual genealogies, as the term 'diaspora' is typically used to refer to national or religious groups residing outside their homeland, while 'transnationalism' generally describes migrants' long-lasting connections across countries, including communities and social formations such as transnationally active networks, groups, and organizations (Faist, 2010). Secondly, differently from transnationalism, the term diaspora suggests a certain degree of cultural distinctiveness from other groups, due to its embedded meanings of cultural hybridity and dissemination (Faist, 2010). And, lastly, the third distinction concerns the scope of the groups to which the two terms relate: 'diaspora' typically refers to religious, ethnic, and national groups and communities, whereas 'transnational' approaches encompass a variety of social formations, as well as phenomena such as networks of businesspeople and social movements (Faist, 2010). Therefore, it is justifiable to claim that transnational communities encompass diasporas, but not all transnational communities are diasporas.

Regarding the subject of diaspora, scholarship (Brinkerhoff, 2009; Brubaker, 2005; Faist, 2010; IOM's GMDAC, n.d.; Ponzanesi, 2020; Sideri, 2008; Werbner, 2002) agree on the characterization proposed by Cohen (Cohen, 1997), according to which diasporas'

members are bound by several features that generally common to all of them, and that in turn, imply a potential for collective action. Diaspora members share a self-awareness or diasporic consciousness which allows them to recognize each other as members of an imagined dispersed identity group that has ongoing connections to their homeland (Brinkerhoff, 2009). Nonetheless, it's important to remember that every diasporic `community' is unique, historically contingent, and contextual. Thus, the key features include:

(a) Dispersion in space – or migration – whether voluntary or involuntary, from their countries of origin to find employment, engage in commerce, or flee from conflict or persecution.

(b) A collective memory and myth about the homeland.

(c) An idealization of the putative ancestral home (i.e., the *homeland*) and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety, and prosperity. Simply put, a continuing connection to the country of origin and the commitment to keeping it alive through symbolic and intentional communication, whether in the host country or in the homeland itself.

(d) The development of a return movement, though not necessarily a commitment to do so.

(e) A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, and the belief in a common fate. But also on identity hybridity, expressed, in part, through the creation of diaspora associations or organizations. [and]

(f) A sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement. (Brinkerhoff, 2009; Brubaker, 2005; IOM's GMDAC, n.d.).

From this shortlist emerges that *time* and *space* play a crucial role in the formation and representation of diasporas. These two dimensions shape the horizon where diasporas conceive themselves as specifically located deterritorialized communities, come across as alternative 'Others', and become part of people's everyday discourse while sharing a collective past and common destiny, and hence a simultaneity in time (Sideri, 2008; Werbner, 2002). At this juncture one may wonder, as Werbner (2002) rightfully posed, "What makes a diaspora community settled in a particular country

`diasporic' rather than simply `ethnic'?". The answer lies in the assumption that diasporas are *chaorders*, i.e., chaotic orders, which are inscribed materially and imaginatively at the same time in space, time, and objectifying practices (Ember et al., 2005; Werbner, 2002). The scholar (2002) thus argues that diasporas reproduce and spread themselves without any centralized command structures, with *chaorder* being their principle of organization. Diasporic groups are characterized by multiple discourses, internal dissent, and competition for members among numerous sectarian, gendered, or political groups that all identify with the same diaspora. Diasporic places, for their part, are relatively autonomous from any center, while paradoxically they continue to recognize the center and acknowledge at least some obligations and responsibilities to it and to the larger whole (Werbner, 2002).

In a similar vein, it's interesting to mention that migrants are transformed from the physical reality of dispersal into the psychological reality of diaspora through identity (Brinkerhoff, 2009). According to Safran (1999), diaspora identity is influenced by four main components: a distinct language, historical memory, a national religion, and the habitual minority status in larger societies. Diaspora identity is therefore influenced by both the homeland and the host society. The literature on cultural identity in the context of globalization acknowledges and advocates for cultural hybridization, arguing that immigrants do not completely embrace the culture of their host country nor automatically exclude all other cultural influences while holding onto their traditional ethnic culture (Brinkerhoff, 2009; Safran, 1999). Diasporans experience a process of change in their identity – namely, *acculturation* – in which their ethnicity is continually re-created as a new form of identity that is not merely a reiteration of what existed in their communities of origin, but the result of a combination of characteristics from the homeland, the host country and personal experience (Brinkerhoff, 2009). Accordingly, Brinkerhoff (2009) maintains that "Hybrid identity is not a fixed end. Diaspora identities are constantly produced and reproduced". Precisely, diaspora hybrid identities are shaped by factors such as homeland culture, host society, and personal experience. These identities, in turn, influence the behavior of individuals. It is thus crucial to focus on the interstice of cultural formations, where domains of difference overlap and are displaced, as this is where negotiations between national identity, community interest,

and cultural value truly occur (Minchilli, 2021). When diasporic subjects construct 'homeliness' – a homing desire, collective nostalgia and loss, a feeling of familiarity –, the intertwinement of memory and a shared experience of locality is integral to forming a diasporic 'we.' Simultaneously, the formation of the diasporic 'we' is based on a politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2016) , where both a shared experience of locality and memory interlace with the establishment and preservation of boundaries. Therefore, collective identity formation is based on both shared characteristics and what one differs from (Minchilli, 2021). Finally, the defining feature of diaspora people is their sustained or re-awakened connection and loyalty to their previous culture, particularly to the homeland from which they have departed (Shuval, 2000). Diaspora culture helps in creating a sense of community and belonging to a more fulfilling and welcoming social entity. This is achieved through the selective preservation and restoration of traditions, which establish and maintain ties with extensive historical, cultural, and political processes, promoting a feeling of attachment somewhere else, during a different period, along with expectations or prospects for improvement (Shuval, 2000).

1.2. Digital diasporas: transnational imagined communities

The diasporas that proliferated at the end of the twentieth century are experiencing different circumstances in this era of modern technologies and rapid communications, compared to a time when it took months only to travel or communicate across the seas. The impact of electronic media, coupled with increased opportunities for fast travel, has led to new and previously unimaginable forms of communication that were non-existent just two decades ago. Already in 1996 Arjun Appadurai (Appadurai, 1996) argues that "Electronic mediation and mass migration mark the world of the present"; this observation has become more and more as throughout history, media and communication technologies have proved to be crucial in the lives of migrants (Leurs & Prabhakar, 2018). These developments have important implications for constructing new and diverse 'imagined communities' (Brah, 1996). The pace and character of interaction among transnational populations has been dramatically transformed by new information and

communication technologies (ICTs). The invention of social networking software, furthermore, identified the phenomenon of Web 2.0, and since then, social media has become one of the most popular channels of communication, beginning to challenge the idea that strong relationships require in-person interaction. These are particularly important for migrants who are dispersed from their original locations but want to remain connected precisely through transnational social networks (Kozachenko, 2013). The development of ICTs has made it possible to create communities based on personal preferences rather than just physical location, resulting in what Kozachenko (2013) refers to as the "network society". The core concept of the network approach is that information plays a crucial role in social processes and manages to circulate through social networks which are primarily composed of strong ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community membership. Modern information and communication technology (ICT) has therefore enabled distinct dispersed communities to uphold their cultural identity, strengthen group solidarity, and foster a sense of belonging over large geographical distances and beyond national borders (Borkert et al., 2018; Kozachenko, 2013; Leurs & Ponzanesi, 2011). Migrants can use ICT to follow their cultural traditions, create new social contacts with people of the same ethnicity, reinvent their religious roots, and access a wide range of material and non-material products from their country of origin (Kozachenko, 2013). This is essentially the context which has allowed transnational imagined communities to emerge.

As a consequence, the emergence of *digital diaspora* – which Dana Diminescu (2012, p.452) describes as "A migrant collective that organizes itself and is active first and foremost on the Web: its practices are those of a community whose interactions are 'enhanced' by digital exchange" – represents a new concept that describes all those new configurations at the intersection of the fields of migration, transnationalism, mobility, and diaspora, on one hand, and those of ICTs, new media, social media, and Web 2.0, on the other (Andersson, 2019). Scholars of digital diasporas (Borkert et al., 2018; Brinkerhoff, 2009; Candidatu et al., 2019; Candidatu & Ponzanesi, 2022; Diminescu, 2012; Leurs & Ponzanesi, 2018; Leurs & Prabhakar, 2018; Ponzanesi, 2020; Witteborn, 2018) aim at understanding migrants' digital practices and diasporic connectivity and describe how individuals use online tools to form social connections and personal

relationships in cyberspace. According to them, the Internet facilitates new connections and encourages the development of cultural characteristics, while also creating diverse communities. Such virtual communities construct collective diasporic imaginations that emphasize the shared features of individual identities in relation to common culture, geography, and history, thereby connecting distinct subjects into an imaginary community (Faist, 2010). As written by Naficy: "means of transportation generally take us away to other lands", while "communication media reconnect us to earlier places", but also to "new places and times", which is important to "re-imagine new possibilities" (2007, p. xiv, cited in Leurs & Prabhakar (2018), p. 262).

The internet enables geographically dispersed diasporans to connect and bond, providing a unique benefit of shared understanding that cannot be found elsewhere. Without the internet, bridging-to-bond social capital among geographically dispersed diasporans across host countries would not be possible (Brinkerhoff, 2009). Digital diaspora communities offer their members material and social benefits centered around their shared homeland identity, along with opportunities to explore and express hybrid cultural identities. Regarding material benefits, diaspora websites commonly feature news and information about the homeland, related to both homeland identity (such as historical, cultural, and current event information), and to support of adjustment in the host land (practical aids such as where to find a lawyer or how to get a driver's license), which can be beneficial. Additionally, they may provide guidance on conducting business in the homeland and supporting diaspora businesses (Brinkerhoff, 2009). Cybercommunities can offer identity and solidarity benefits that are particularly efficient, easy-access and valuable tools for diasporans. They can provide comfort and support for identity during the often-difficult experience of living far from one's homeland, additionally, the internet's anonymity can facilitate participation from diasporans, especially when sharing distressing memories, discussing sensitive issues, or experiment with new ideas, as they relate to the diaspora experience and the fate of the homeland (Brinkerhoff, 2009). This is true because communities, particularly virtual communities, develop through the expression of emotions and communication, either by discussing or eliciting them, and it is exactly by means of the internet's interactive features that the exchange of ideas, debate and mobilization of opinion are made possible, eventually

leading to the formation of strong social bonds and relationships (Brinkerhoff, 2009). Nonetheless, it is important to remember that the emerging digital diasporas – with digital media affordances being new ways of enabling, sustaining, and multiplying diasporic encounters through social media platforms, digital devices, and infrastructures – do not oppose or replace traditional diasporas. Instead, they further expand and transform their agency in the digital age (Candidatu & Ponzanesi, 2022).

Being digital diaspora, or *e-diaspora,* a migrant collective that is self-organized and primarily operates on the web (Diminescu, 2012), to advance the study and understanding of migrant networks and influence abroad, and to contribute to more fruitful conceptions of diaspora and transnationalism, the Internet becomes the appropriate research site (Kissau & Hunger, 2010).

1.2.1. The figure of the connected migrant and the concept of co-presence

Migrants today are the creators and maintainers of a culture of bonds that they have founded, even as they move from place to place. Previously a latent and common feature among all migrating groups, this culture of bonds has become highly visible and dynamic due to the mass adoption of modern information and communication technologies (ICT) by migrants (Diminescu, 2008). Migrants are becoming more and more accustomed to maintaining long-distance relationships, mimicking intimacy, engaging in day-to-day activities, but also negotiating their identity and retaining psychological links to the cultural identity of their homelands (Brinkerhoff, 2009). The typical image of the uprooted migrant is giving way to another, as theorized by Diminescu in her "Epistemological manifesto" (2008): the *connected migrant.* It is thus possible to observe an evolution may indicate that we are nearing are nearing the end of conventionally conceptualized ethnic group identity, and the start of a new era in migration history, in which migrants – both voluntary and forced migrants – are now characterized not only by their life experiences of disruptions and antagonisms, but also by various forms of 'presence at a distance' and by interactions that are enhanced by digital exchange (Brinkerhoff, 2009; Diminescu, 2012). According to the scholar (2008), the decisive features that characterize the connected migrant are the following: multi-belonging (to

territories and to networks), hypermobility, flexibility in the labor market, and capability to transform a relational dexterity into a productive and economically valuable skill, i.e., a social form of integration from the bottom up (Diminescu, 2008). As a result, the ability to form social connections and make friends have reduced the impact of absence imposed by the transnational space, and the consequent establishment of a social continuum marks the success of the migratory process (Diminescu, 2008). Connected migrants are always engaged in a process of depicting a sense of collective identity with fellow members of a bounded diasporic community, namely "encapsulation," and bridging local intercultural differences, namely "cosmopolitanism," by engaging with various communities different from their own (Leurs & Prabhakar, 2018). This new migrant figure then uses digital means such as mobile devices and social media platforms to conduct their lives across the world while living in one place: they maintain bonding capital with members of the diaspora and at the same time, they develop bridging and cosmopolitan capital by networking with the host society, by enhancing and diversifying the role, impact and sustainability of diasporic connections (Leurs & Ponzanesi, 2018; Leurs & Prabhakar, 2018; Ponzanesi, 2020). The interactive elements of the Internet allow for the establishment of cyber-communities that connect individuals from diverse locations and promote solidarity among members. Community members use forums to share information regarding their homeland's religion and/or culture, to strengthen or reconstruct their identity in order to make it more meaningful and viable across generations in diaspora, and to connect with and take part in homeland relationships, festivals, and socio-economic advancements (Brinkerhoff, 2009). As such, forms of sharing have changed: where in the past people exchanged news and shared events, currently, communication is used more to express immediate emotions and feelings and one's current state. This is an alternative method of forming relationships (Diminescu, 2008).

Baldassar et al. (2016) argue that concepts such as that of "bounded sociality", i.e., geographic proximity and close relationships both influencing how technology is used to maintain relationships, articulate the fact that social life is no longer confined within physical and territorial boundaries but instead includes distant ties and connections. It is against this backdrop that the notion of 'ICT-based co-presence' emerges and starts to be

used to capture and explore the various ways people maintain a sense of 'being there' for each other despite the distance (Baldassar et al., 2016). Co-presence can be understood as "A degree of interactional being-with-each-other, with attention to the other, emotional involvement and behavioral cues being constitutive interactional components" (Witteborn, 2014). The increasing number of media for interpersonal communication has transformed the experience, purpose, and outcomes of such communication, generating novel opportunities for intimacy and subjectivity transformation; hence, the intensive use of internet-based communication, mobile phones, and social media can contribute to strengthening ties and increasing the exchange of various cultural, emotional, economic, and social resources within transnational families and ethnic communities. Baldassar (2016) identified four types of co-presence that transnational family members can experience. These are physical, virtual, proxy and imagined. Virtual co-presence is often established through verbal exchanges on the telephone and/or webcam which provides sight and hearing sensations, or through written communication via email or SMS. Co-presence by proxy is achieved through special transnational objects, or through people who embody the spirit of the absent person or place by being physically present. Subsequently, imagined co-presence is the sense of togetherness that people perceive and believe they share without actively communicating with each other. This dimension can arguably be included in each of the other forms mentioned earlier (Baldassar et al., 2016). In summary, social co-presence refers to the way in which mediated practices aid in building and maintaining social relationships across distances when physical presence is not possible; this has undoubtedly been further bolstered in recent times due to digital communication technologies.

1.2.2. The role of the New Media on migrants' lives and intercultural communication

Mediated communication is a fundamental aspect of the current human experience, especially for diasporic communities. It is a process that is closely linked to the formation of identity and communities through the contemplation of forgotten historical events and potential future developments. The formation and dynamic character of digital diasporas are shaped by various intersectional factors. These factors make them fluid, non-

homogeneous and difficult to comprehend (Minchilli, 2021). Identifying who constitutes the digital diaspora becomes crucial in comprehending the reasons behind the expression of digital practices intended for diasporic networking but is also of paramount importance to consider how diasporic identities exist both locally and globally. These identities consist of networks of transnational identifications that include both imagined and encountered communities (Brah, 1996). People who live in diaspora often participate in physical communities that are mainly location-dependent. However, with the rise of ICT, individuals can create new online communities or use the Internet to achieve specific goals related to their sense of identity with their homeland, both within and across such communities (Brinkerhoff, 2009). To make one example, the usage of online ethnic support groups among international migrants eventually assists in alleviating acculturative stress, and participation in these groups provides a feeling of community among diasporans (Croucher, 2011).

New media – i.e., all the innovations that occurred in digital media in recent decades and that enables people to interact with multiple individuals simultaneously – have altered and keep on altering the way we think, behave, and live, resulting in a highly interconnected and complex society (Chen, 2012). According to Chen (2012), new media has challenged the very existence of intercultural communication in its traditional sense, but it also significantly contributed to accelerating the trend of globalization in human society, which in turn redefines the meaning of cultural identity and civic society and demands a new way of intercultural interaction. Under these circumstances, we observe an increasing number of scholars getting involved in intercultural communication in its traditional sense (Chen, 2012). New media has created global trends that lead to the emergence of new social networks and activities, redefining political, cultural, economic, geographical, and other boundaries affecting human society. These trends expand and stretch social relations, intensify, and accelerate social exchanges, and involve both personhood micro-structures and community macro-structures (Chen, 2012). Therefore, communication in these online contexts facilitates interactive dialogues that foster understanding of diverse perspectives, and in particular, social media provide people from various parts of the world with the opportunity to publicly express their opinions and engage in dialogue through a shared virtual platform despite the physical distance

between them, thereby helping them feel connected and close, hopefully improving the stressful conditions of the diaspora (Alencar et al., 2019; Sawyer & Chen, 2012). In fact, Alencar (2017) argues that the role of social media is different from that of other Internet-based applications because it is based on the development of migrants' social networks and the ability of users to consume, produce, and exchange content and opinions within and across networks.

The Internet and social media reduce the geographic and temporal gaps between the homeland of newcomers and the host country, creating a "universal cyberspace in which new cultural identity is emerging in different virtual communities" (Chen, 2012, p.5) and also enabling diasporans to uphold their ethnic cultural links and values. Newcomers can effortlessly acquire information from their home countries and converse with others sharing their interests and cultural heritage, making use of their native tongues, through the internet. As a result, stronger ethnic ties could contribute to a more diverse cultural milieu, and a sense of belonging to the community and own group could be forged in both worlds through the important roles played by the diasporic media (Ogunyemi, 2018; Wang & Quan, 2013). Research has provided compelling evidence that migrants can overcome adjustment challenges by maintaining social relationships in their home country and by being involved with transnational online communities, instead of experiencing social segregation in their new society (Alencar, 2017). New media, particularly social media platforms like Facebook, blogs, YouTube, Twitter, and smartphones, have enabled people worldwide to exhibit themselves in a certain manner and remain connected in the virtual world. In this way, new media is enabling the creation of diverse communities without the constraints of time and space, making cultural identity more dynamic, fluid, and relative. This poses severe challenges to maintaining the autonomy and stability of cultural identity (Chen, 2012).

Because new media allows people all around the world to interact and exchange messages, it has become popular for diasporans or immigrants to use it as a means of communication with their friends, classmates, family members, and relatives in both their home and host country for various purposes such as bonding social capital, learning, daily life, but also to gather and share basic information about where to locate, how to get around, how to shop, and how to develop markets in the country (Alencar, 2017; Chen,

2012). Regarding bonding social capital, research indicates that using social media to stay in contact with friends and family helps diasporans feel satisfied, and to receive the emotional support they need to address the challenges of living in a new country (Alencar, 2017). Moreover, it is interesting to note that diasporans' strong desire to belong to the host society is reflected in their increased use of social media technologies for facilitation purposes and social connections. In a survey conducted by Alencar (2017) in fact, it was discovered that although social media is generally viewed negatively, participants believe that such platforms can help eliminate stereotypes towards refugees, and some emphasized, for instance, the importance of creating more initiatives like Facebook pages and groups containing information about the habits, languages, and traditions of different cultures, and that promote more activities and meetings for intercultural dialogue. Although ICTs do not create a community by themselves, they facilitate communication that is necessary among community members (Kissau & Hunger, 2010). For these reasons, the use of new media for social interaction by immigrants is to be considered a critical factor that can impact a diaspora's successful adjustment to the host country (Chen, 2012).

In conclusion, it can be argued that new media provides a platform for individuals from different cultures to share their opinions and connect with each other. Additionally, its unique features – dissimilar from traditional media – may raise questions about the existence of communication within intra- and inter-cultural contexts (Chen, 2012).

1.3. Online networks, diasporic public sphere, and transnational political practices

It is increasingly recognized that diasporas, during the era of globalization, are not just seen as migrants by host states, but rather, they are simultaneously interconnected with various political contexts using affordable communication and transportation networks, and thus being more and more treated as a category of practices, projects, claims, and stances, instead of a defined or limited group (Koinova, 2010). Diasporas are emerging as political actors with local and transnational agendas, which exist across state borders, and which managed to "Display an ability to address the collective interests of members

of the social collectivity through a developed internal organizational framework and transnational link" (Koinova, 2010). It is argued that diasporas do not exclusively consist of identity-based actors motivated by either nationalist or ideological claims, but they can act strategically when it comes to addressing political issues in their homeland that require support from either their host country or the broader international community (Ember et al., 2005; Koinova, 2010). For these reasons, they may be actively involved in the politics of their respective homelands.

New media has transformed the means of expressing, organizing, and experiencing national identity and nationalism. ICT and digital communication methods have created new ways for imagined communities to exist more globally, enabling and empowering diasporas to actively participate in their home country's politics, get involved in political activities that transcend borders and cultures, and participate in social and political activism (Andersson, 2019; Brinkerhoff, 2009; Candidatu & Ponzanesi, 2022; Leurs & Smets, 2018; Werbner, 2002). The digital sphere is pivotal in shaping the formation of new public spaces, forms of protest, social groupings, and imagined spaces: borrowing the word of Leurs and Smets (2018), "Diasporic communities gain voice, visibility, and effective political impact by making use of the opportunities provided by digital technologies". Consequently, as also sustained by Andersson (2019), the diasporic public sphere blurs the boundaries between the public and private, allowing new opportunities for presenting and promoting dissenting voices, along with minority and subaltern views, eventually making the transnational public sphere an expressive and innovative space where digital diasporas can devise novel concepts of citizenship, community, identity politics and political involvement.

Digital diasporas can impact international affairs in several ways. These impacts include the potential to foster democratic values, support integration in the host society, and contribute to the security and socio-economic development in the homelands. Brinkerhoff (2009) argues that offering opportunities to diasporans to express their hybrid identities collectively can ease migrant integration, and that these expressions increasingly take place through activities that support the homeland. As a result, diasporas have become vital to the economic and political agendas of many nations, essentially because diasporas are likely to engage more in political activities as they benefit from and

contribute to democratization processes (Brinkerhoff, 2009). Indeed, democracy creates a more favorable environment for diaspora political engagement from the host country and offers more opportunities for influence in their homeland. On the other hand, Information Technology (IT) may also foster cosmopolitanism, which is a concept that is increasingly synonymous with promoting respect for human rights and democratic practices. The Internet enables the expression of liberal values like individualism and freedom of speech, either through anonymity or access to opportunities, and thus, it's notable to stress that communication technologies are not politically neutral, because they affect human beliefs and perceptions (Brinkerhoff, 2009). Diasporas residing in foreign countries may assimilate values and concepts from their host community, even as they oppose traditional values and practices of their native land that they deem responsible for persistent discord. Often, such communities contemplate peaceful developmental strategies for their homeland (Brinkerhoff, 2009). The internet offers a platform for diaspora members to maintain these discussions and shared meanings until they can be implemented domestically, and it can help in creating voluntarily structured communities that present opportunities for negotiating identity, facilitating the spread of liberal values, such as respect for democratic practices and human rights, as well as experimentation with them (Brinkerhoff, 2009).

Digital diasporas convene diasporans to deliberate on issues related to human rights, express their opinions, and discuss policy alternatives. Such deliberations can take place solely online or more actively through political initiatives informed by or resulting from virtual exchanges (Brinkerhoff, 2009). Consequently, both migration and IT have been seen by scholars and policymakers as threats to sovereignty and to the established political order (Brinkerhoff, 2009). The most obvious impact of the speed and volume of people and information movements is that they hinder states' external interdependence sovereignty, which refers to the ability of states to regulate transborder movements. The concept and experience of diasporas have evolved from being victimized to becoming challengers to nation-states, given that globalization creates 'communities not of place but of interest' (Cohen, 1997, p. 517). Organized diasporas may actively work to promote policy and regime change in their home territories, moreover, they are likely to develop an enhanced sense of unity and are even more likely to mobilize when they perceive a

threat to their identity (Brinkerhoff, 2009). In this sense, IT has the potential to influence how people perceive themselves and prioritize their values, including political ones. For diasporans, some of these ideas and perceptions reflect liberal values, thus they can inspire a sense of empowerment based on individualism and/or individual rights that may not have been considered prior to migration or access to information technology (Brinkerhoff, 2009; Leung et al., 2017). In addition, the Internet enables fast communication for coordinating collective action and promoting political agendas of marginalized groups, which in turn can assist members in preparing for political action, even if those individuals are not yet fully engaged in it (Brinkerhoff, 2009).

The political awareness and particular agendas that arise from such discussions can be implemented in the real world through individual participation in other organizations and networks, or through the material components of diaspora organizations. Digital diasporas can expand the perception of legitimacy for their causes both within and outside their communities by adopting and promoting liberal values, and by striving for political inclusion (Brinkerhoff, 2009; Kozachenko, 2013; Ogunyemi, 2018). Brinkerhoff (2009) identifies "Three types of factors [that] inform diasporas' mobilization to influence the homeland", which are related to their ability, the enabling environment, and their motivation. Quite obviously, IT can contribute to each of these. The primary factor identified as necessary for effective mobilization is the development of a sense of solidarity and community identity. In general, mutual understanding results in collective action: closely-knit network of relationships, or bonding social capital, can foster trust and create the shared identity needed for collective action (Brinkerhoff, 2009). Additionally, more intense interaction increases the likelihood of taking part in collective action. Diaspora groups and individuals may have varying levels of interest in quality of life and policies of their home countries; thus, it is their level of interest or motivation to maintain solidarity and exert group influence that will play a significant role (Brinkerhoff, 2009).

According to the IOM's Migration Data Portal, diaspora members may participate in development activities in their home countries, either directly or indirectly. Five different levels of diasporas involvement in development are identified and ranked, ranging from the lowest to the highest level of participation (IOM's GMDAC, n.d.):

- Information reception: Members of diasporas receive information on development-related initiatives in their home countries in a passive manner.

- Passive information gathering: Members of diasporas provide information to interested parties, often governments in their home countries.

- Consultation: To inform policy or practice, development actors, including governments, seek consultation from members of diasporas.

- Collaboration Diaspora members share responsibilities either through task delegation or joint design and implementation of development interventions.

- Self-mobilization: Diaspora members are fully responsible for development initiatives and maintain ownership of them.

In order to mobilize effectively, individuals in the diaspora must have the necessary capabilities, including personal and interpersonal skills and experience, as well as confidence. Moreover, a networking system provides the diaspora with opportunities to exceed their individual capabilities by pursuing diverse networks, in which individual actors function as bridges connecting various sources of information and resources (Brinkerhoff, 2009). Diaspora communities mobilize to express their identities, which can be strengthened by activities in support of their homeland or to improve their quality of life in the host society; for some, expressing an attachment to the homeland helps to build a sense of belonging. The desire to actively express identity may result from various forms of marginalization, such as social, economic, political, and psychological factors; confusion and a sense of losing the homeland identity without being proactive; or simply in response to social reinforcement and perhaps pride (Brinkerhoff, 2009). For many, mobilization serves as a display of a blended identity that includes liberal values. Ideally, establishing self-worth in their blended identity leads to an endorsement of fundamental human rights, psychological empowerment, and the conviction that these diasporans can effectively advance, preserve, and demonstrate these rights independently and for their ancestral land too (Brinkerhoff, 2009).

IT platforms enable mobilization through organizational and networking resources, such as bridging social capital, among other things. It also creates a forum for solidarity and collective identity, fostering valuable encounters that lead to positive

emotions and contribute to psychological empowerment (Brinkerhoff, 2009). Therefore, in other words, the internet links geographically dispersed individuals to decision-making arenas, which allows them to make claims and represent a broader community that is not present in one specific location. Moreover, it can be used to inform the progress and success of certain initiatives; by doing so, it can motivate continuance and encourage others to take action (Brinkerhoff, 2009). In summary, the Internet acts as an organizing and networking foundation which also provides a means of disseminating information in relation to generating a feeling of efficacy and influence. Furthermore, it links diasporans of similar and diverse minds, creating a dynamic but variegated social capital network (Brinkerhoff, 2009).

Chapter 2. The Chilean diaspora

"There is no important city in the world where you will not find a Chilean"

– Rodríguez Villouta in 'Ya nunca me verás como me vieras' (1990)

Chilean emigration started to become a relevant phenomenon in the 1970s, along the 16-year-long military dictatorship led by General Augusto C. Pinochet and the exiling policy that systematically forced real and perceived opponents to the regime out of the country (Wright & Oñate, 2005). It was observed that the period of the military dictatorship in Chile remains the one of greater intensity, in terms of emigration, and that, regardless of a progressive decrease as the years pass, the flux of Chileans departing from their homes is holding steady, and largely exceeds the number of people immigrating in the country (DICOEX & INE, 2017). In fact, while receiving unprecedented immigration flows, Chilean emigration stock continues to be larger than its immigration stock. Since the return of democracy in 1990, despite Chilean state efforts to develop connections with Chileans living abroad, the country does not have a comprehensive policy to deal with its "diaspora" (Doña Reveco & Mullan, 2014). According to the latest information available on the *Segundo Registro de Chilenos en el Exterior* conducted by National Institute of Statistics (INE), the Minister for Foreign Affairs (MINREL) and in collaboration with the *División para la Comunidad de Chilenos en el Exterior* (DICOEX) in 2016, it was estimated that the Chilean population living abroad accounted to 1.037.346 people (DICOEX & INE, 2017). This figure reveals a sharp increase of 21,4% with regards to the same study – namely, the *Primer Registro* – which instead was conducted between the years 2003 and 2004 (C. Montes, 2018). Currently, the diaspora composition is mostly made of businesspeople who achieved success with the still current economic model, developed during Pinochet's dictatorship, economically displaced workers (due to the same economic model), and young professionals who have left the country to continue

their studies and who often stay in the country of reception after completing their studies (Doña Reveco & Mullan, 2014).

2.1. Historical grounds of the Chilean diaspora

It was with the military coup that took place on the 11 September 1973, that the Chilean armed forced led by General Pinochet triggered the emigrant wave that is now recognized as diaspora by forcing into exile approximately 200.000 Chileans – about 2% of the population at that time (Wright & Oñate, 2005).

The military coup overthrew the *Unidad Popular* government of Salvador Allende, who had been heading a Socialist-Communist party coalition since 1970, making him the first elected Marxist head of state in Latin American history. The government and its 'democratic road to socialism' (Roberts, 2016) met harsh opposition and, together with destabilization efforts undertaken by a combination of external and domestic conservative forces, eventually succeeded in creating an extremely polarized political context in the country, to the point where military intervention and political violence were called for to remove Allende from his office (Wright & Oñate, 2005). The military coup, thus, was intended to reverse the socialist reforms and utilize extensive military force to suppress the parties and unions that supported them, disintegrate their grassroots constituents, and impose an authoritative political system that would not entertain societal demands (Roberts, 2016). The brutality and repression of the coup immediately signaled that the president's supporters were the real targets of state terror, and thus, "exile began on the day of the coup" (Wright & Oñate, 2005).

Only two months after the coup, the new regime adopted a decree "which gave it virtually unconditional authority to expel citizens" and, in conjunction with the newly-established secret police, made it impossible for much of the civilian left who held progressive views to keep their job or to simply remain in Chile through measures such as harassment, incarceration, or torture (Wright & Oñate, 2005). With these measures Pinochet's government systematically and deliberately violated article 13, Part 2 of the 1948 United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the prohibition of forced

exile: "Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country" (Wright & Oñate, 2005).

Many of the departures happened between 1974 and 1976 and those who could took their families with them. Although the majority left Chile legally, exile is not to be considered voluntary; about 4.000 people in fact, preferred to be expelled from the country, at times as an alternative to long term jail (Wright & Oñate, 2005). Initially, hoping that the dictatorship would not last long, emigrants left for the neighboring countries of Argentina and Peru. However, these two countries gradually became less desirable and inconvenient destinations due to Peru's weak economy and violent political turmoil in Argentina, by mid- 1974 (Wright & Oñate, 2005). Within the Americas, Chileans settled mainly in Venezuela, Mexico, Cuba, Costa Rica, Brazil, and Canada, and more than one third of the Chilean diaspora chose Western Europe as their final destination. Particularly: Italy, Sweden, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, West Germany, and Spain - after the fall of the Franco dictatorship in 1975 – proved to be very receptive, signaling also support to the defeated left (Wright & Oñate, 2005). Given the leftist political affiliation of the diaspora, many chose – or were induced to choose as such given the lack of other options – to settle in communist countries such as the USSR and countries in Eastern Europe as well as in newly established social democratic regimes such as Nicaragua, Angola, and Mozambique (Wright & Oñate, 2005).

For 11 years after the coup, exiled considered dangerous, i.e., political opponents, were not allowed to return, in accordance with Pinochet's mission to eradicate the left from the country. Massive resistance occurred in 1983 due to the collapse of the liberalized financial system and the onset of a severe recession amidst the region-wide debt crisis. After a decade of enforced inactivity, Chilean society swiftly regrouped as the economic crisis weakened the dictatorship, causing internal dissention within the ranks of the military regime and among its technocratic and business allies (Roberts, 2016). This resurgence of social mobilization aligned with a recovery of opposition parties, in which the centrist Christian Democrats (PDC) and a moderate faction of the deeply divided PSCh led negotiations for a regime transition with civilian representatives of the dictatorship. Thus, the opposition was divided between those who believed in the potential of mass protest and popular insurrection to remove the regime from power, and

those who deemed insurrection against a well-equipped military impractical, favoring a negotiated transition as the only viable means of shedding the dictatorship (Roberts, 2016).

Only in 1983, due to the political climate in the country, small lists of people permitted to return started to be published by the regime. However, the lists were not enough to reach an acceptable compromise, but rather they fomented harsher opposition (Wright & Oñate, 2005). The turning point occurred in the latter part of 1986 and throughout 1987. At this time, the protest movement began to diminish, the economy started a gradual recovery, and the dictatorship made moves toward implementing measures for a plebiscite on Pinochet's rule based on the regime's 1980 constitution. With the regime granting parties the opportunity to regain legal status and resume political activities, a coalition of centrist and moderate left opposition parties comprising 16 organizations, known as the *Concertación*, devoted their resources to the plebiscite campaign, aiming to weaken the dictatorship where it was most vulnerable: in the polling booth (Roberts, 2016).

Meanwhile, in 1988, forced exile was eventually abolished for everyone but those who had taken the nationality of their new country of residence, who were instead prohibited to returned and marked as "undesirable aliens" (about 10.000 people) (Wright & Oñate, 2005). De facto, this was one first step signaling the upcoming period of political transition to democracy that Chile was to begin in 1988 and that lasted for about fifteen years. A change which involved both the regime and the civil society. Chile transitioned to democracy after the opposition coalition's victory in the plebiscite on October 5, 1988. The vote determined whether Pinochet should become the elected president, but he was defeated with 56% of votes against his election, ending his rule after more than sixteen years (Roberts, 2016; Wright & Oñate, 2005).

Subsequently, the *Concertación* coalition negotiated a package of constitutional reforms with the regime, leading to their victory in the competitive presidential elections held in December 1989. Nevertheless, the regime transition's logic, as well as the balance of power supporting it, presented significant obstacles to the politicization of inequalities under the new democratic regime (Roberts, 2016).

When Pinochet's successor Patricio Alywin assumed the presidency in 1990, who lead a center-left coalition (PDC), along with a gradual rise in social welfare and social spending, the atrocities of the dictatorships began to come to light, and incentives started to be offered to those exiles who had not returned yet. Figures show that those who benefitted from return programs only amounted to about 56.000, hence less than half of political exiles decided to go back to Chile after the dictatorship's end (Wright & Oñate, 2005). Those who did, however, found a rather hostile environment towards them, as people believed they had gone away and enjoyed their long-lasting vacation abroad – as the dictatorship's propaganda narrated – and thus, they were often disregarded by friends and family who stayed in Chile. In addition, practical obstacles to adjusting and difficult economic conditions due to prejudice in the job market made it common for returnees to leave again and go back to their previous host country or to seek an entire new place suitable for settlement (Wright & Oñate, 2005).

2.2. Characterization of the diaspora: then and now

The common characteristic of the first exiles who have given rise to Chile's diaspora was that they were all considered threats to the government because of their suspected political views and past actions. Nevertheless, apart from that, the composition of the group was quite diverse: among them figured women, men, children, and elderly people, from all parts of the country, with different levels of education and practitioners of different occupations and professions. In general, the process of adapting in a new – unknown – country, without knowing if returning would ever be possible, resulted in a consuming and tough challenge (Wright & Oñate, 2005). Certainly, those who chose Latin America as their destination could count on linguistic and cultural affinities that made the process relatively easier, while on the other hand, encountering unknown languages, exotic cultures, different foods and climate in Europe, Canada, Australia, Africa, or Asia represented major obstacles towards adaptation (Wright & Oñate, 2005). Even though many developed countries offered governmental assistance programs to welcome exiles, Chileans still found it difficult to overcome cultural barriers and merge with their new

communities, thus often adding a feeling of separateness to their already heavy psychological baggage. The scenario of the diaspora then, was that of a scattered group, with families torn apart, careers destroyed and broken dreams, in a place where one could not count on the support and solidarity of the typical Chilean extended family (Wright & Oñate, 2005).

If on the one hand high rates of depression, alcoholism and suicide were recorded among diasporans, on the other hand, a big portion worked tirelessly to improve their lives, by learning new skills, pursuing higher education, earning some capital, and most importantly, keep the Chilean culture alive within the family and the new community. They even engaged in the political arena, by keeping the atrocities and human right violations of the dictatorship in the news, in an effort to ease the way for the restoration of democracy in Chile (Wright & Oñate, 2005). This political activism revealed to be a crucial feature of the Chilean diaspora, which succeeded to raise awareness around the world and at the local level through a wide range of practices such as organizational activities, circulating information on their homeland, organizing marches and demonstrations, but also forming folkloristic groups and making and selling *empanadas*, the traditional Chilean dish, to raise money and consciousness, and keep their culture alive (Wright & Oñate, 2005).

With regards to more recent data, according to the latest Chilean government statistical survey conducted throughout 2016, Chileans that appear to be settled abroad vastly exceed the 200,000 that were estimated to have been forced into exile in the 1970s. The most up-to-date statistics on Chilean citizens living outside the country's frontiers are drawn from the survey carried out in 2016 by the Chilean Minister for Foreign Affairs (MINREL), through the work of the *Direccion para la Comunidad de Chilenos en el Exterior* (DICOEX) and the National Institute of Statistics (INE), namely the Second Register of Chileans Abroad[2]. The survey combines the censuses of the population in the host countries of Chilean expatriates, collected on a voluntary basis in 131 countries across all five continents, with the aim of recording and actualize the magnitude of the Chilean people abroad along with its characterization with regards to socio-demographic,

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[2] *Segundo Registro de chilenos en el exterior.* 2017. Available at: www.registrodechilenos.cl

socio-economic, and migratory aspects (DICOEX & INE, 2017). The results showed that Chileans living out of the country amounted to 1.037.346, hence approximately 5.6% of the total citizens of the country. It's important to note that of them, a 55% is constituted by people born in Chile, while the remaining 45% are part of the citizens for they were born from either one or both parents with Chilean citizenship (DICOEX & INE, 2017).

According to the survey, as shown in table 1, Latin America is the subcontinent with the biggest concentration of Chilean population (stands out Argentina, hosting the higher number of Chileans, accounting for the 42,4% of the total diaspora), followed by Europe (26%) and North America (18,2%) (DICOEX & INE, 2017). Oceania, for its part, accounts for 3,9% of the Chilean population abroad, while Central America and the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa, respectively reported 0,7%, 0,6% and 0,1% of the total (DICOEX & INE, 2017).

Table 1. Chilean population living abroad.

Area/ continent of residence	Chilean-born population	Foreign-born pop. with Chilean born parents	Total population	%
South America	238.222	284.282	522.504	50.4
Europe	167.165	103.012	270.177	26.0
North America	128.506	60.461	188.967	18.2
Oceania	27.347	13.22.	40.567	3.9
Central America and Caribbean	4.305	2.654	6.959	0.7
Asia	4.159	2.562	6.721	0.6
Africa	452	198	650	0.1
Not estimated pop.	547	254	801	0.1
Total	570.703	466.643	1.037.346	100

Source: Segundo Registro de chilenos en el Exterior (DICOEX & INE, 2017)

It is interesting to mention that the previous survey – also the first official one, i.e., the *Primer Registro de Chilenos en el Exterior* – had been carried out during 2003 and 2004, and published in 2005. In that instance it had been possible to collect information from 100 countries, estimating a total population of 857.781 living abroad. With the

investigation of 2016, however, relevant countries increased to 131, which means that the geographical coverage of the information expanded of 31% with respect to the First Register (DICOEX & INE, 2017). What's more, when comparing the data of the First and Second Register, it is possible to observe that Europe is the continent in which occurred the higher growth of people (corresponding to about +116,1% in relation to 2005) , with Spain being the most receptive country, due to the fact that it's a developed country in cultural proximity with Chile and with the same language, thus revealing a natural inclination to choose it as new home (C. Montes, 2018). Central America, on the contrary, is the area in which the number fell the most, decreasing of more than 10%, from one to the other edition of the survey (DICOEX & INE, 2017).

Of all the information contained in the Second Register (2017), some interesting data stand out with respect to different variables such as: distribution of population and level of education, sociodemographic and socioeconomic aspects, migratory dimension, and integration level in the host country.

The survey shows that the period of greatest emigration of Chileans abroad continues to be that corresponding to the military dictatorship in Chile; however, it was also observed that, albeit the decrement of intensity of migration over the years, the flow continues to be constant. On the other hand, countries such as Argentina, Sweden, Canada, Australia, and Venezuela which were important destinations during the dictatorship, have been joined, since the 1990s, by new destination countries such as Spain, the United States and, more recently, Germany (DICOEX & INE, 2017). Argentina still has the highest number of Chilean immigrants. However, this population is declining and aging gradually. Another relevant aspect of Chilean-born residents in Argentina is their low level of education, this is evidenced by the fact that most of them are employed in low-skilled jobs. In Brazil and Venezuela, the aging trend is similar to that of Argentina's (DICOEX & INE, 2017). In Spain, Chilean-born individuals are predominantly immigrants with intermediate educational levels, most of whom have completed secondary education. In contrast, those who emigrated to the United States tend to have higher education. Similar to the case in the United States, Chilean-born immigrants in France also have high educational levels and a higher proportion of women in the population (DICOEX & INE, 2017).

Regarding sociodemographic aspects, the registered population presents a slightly higher distribution of females (50.5%) than males (49.5%). Nearly half of the registered population (48.8%) aged 15 or older is married, and only focusing on the population born in Chile with partners, it is noticeable how 56.9% of them belong to a non-Chilean nationality, with the majority having the same nationality as the country of residence. This situation reflects the kind of social integration that people born in Chile have developed in the countries where they reside (DICOEX & INE, 2017). Furthermore, 9.5% of registered people of Chilean origin identify themselves as a part of indigenous groups. Of these groups, the Mapuche (85.2%) and Aymara (4.0%) are the most predominant, followed by the Diaguita people (2.3%) (DICOEX & INE, 2017).

At the same time, in terms of the socioeconomic dimension, it was discovered that the Chilean population has a considerably high educational level, with 46.8% of individuals having completed a higher technical, university, or postgraduate education. This is followed by 29.8% of individuals registered with a high school level and 23.4% with a basic level or lower. These data are particularly interesting because they corroborate the assumption according to which expatriates usually tend to have relatively higher levels of education than their non-migrant compatriots, meaning that they are not the poorest, nor the least educated in their country, as instead migrants are often portrayed by the rhetoric in receiving countries (Sellers, 2021). Thus, it can also be said that Chileans generally do not emigrate to compete with other immigrants in the cheap labor pools of developed countries.

Concerning labor force participation, 56.7% of the registered population aged 15 years or older are part of the labor force, and when looking at distribution across different branches of activity, the largest number of registered individuals are concentrated in education, public administration, health services, and social assistance at 23.3%, followed by commerce and construction (DICOEX & INE, 2017).

In terms of migration and the main reasons cited for leaving Chile, stood out economic reasons and the search for better job opportunities (24.3%), followed by family reasons at 21.5%. It is critical to note that the reasons for migration vary significantly over time. In the previous survey, the main reason for Chilean migration was studies (21.3%) – a new trend in recent years, political reasons also reached a significant 12%, apparently still

a consequence of the residual effects of General Pinochet's dictatorship (Courtis, 2016; DICOEX & INE, 2017). Therefore, it appears that two primary generational fluxes of emigration exist in Chile: one that is a direct result of the dictatorship, predominantly comprising the oldest generation, and another, more recent generation, largely consisting of Chileans who emigrated for economic and educational reasons.

Lastly, concerning the connection with Chile, most of the registered population reports that they keep themselves informed about their country of origin (97.7%), with their primary sources for acquiring information being television (23.3%) and connections with relatives and/or friends (23.3%). The internet and social networks rank respectively third and fourth place in the means of information, with 19.8% and 17.7% (DICOEX & INE, 2017).

Chilean expatriates are known for maintaining a strong connection with their homeland and being dedicated to preserving and sharing their culture. The internet is thus crucial for this purpose, to stay informed about news, and access specialized websites for expatriate issues (Wright & Oñate, 2005). As it will be explored in the following chapters, social media were also instrumental for the emergence and diffusion of movements advocating for the right to vote in national elections from abroad, notably *Haz Tu Voto Volar*. This aspect reflects the idea according to which leaving one's country can be an indication of dissatisfaction with the current government (Sellers, 2021). Thus, diasporans can stay informed about politics in their home country while living abroad, and additionally they may be able to consider their current economic situation abroad in comparison to that in their country of origin. As a result, expatriates could have a more transnational outlook and be more politically sophisticated, as they consider the situations in both their homeland and their country of residence when making their voting decisions (Sellers, 2021).

To sum up, all this information, when considered collectively, indicates that the Chilean diaspora comprises people from a variety of geographical locations who have strong connections to the countries where they settled. The relationship of expatriates to their homeland appears to make Chileans abroad fit the definition of a transnational community, one that has active interests that span home and host countries. The Chilean diaspora has now existed for 50 years, and to this day it is being acknowledged by the

Chilean government, Chileans living in Chile, and expatriates alike, that it forms an essential part of the national experience and reality (Wright & Oñate, 2005).

2.3. Achievement of the right to vote from abroad: background and results

The question of foreign voting takes on special meaning in the context of a globalized world. One of the factors that lead to this conclusion is undoubtedly related to international migration: the increase in international migration during this era of globalization has in fact extended the traditional limits of the franchise beyond the state territory for non-resident citizens and beyond citizenship status for resident aliens (Escobar, 2017). Additionally, what this reality has generated is the collapse of the old geographic conception of citizenship, resulting in in the overlapping of national communities, with states retaining entirely separate jurisdictions, and the proliferation of phenomena such as duplicity of citizenships. In this way a whole new constellation of situations has been generated, that should make one rethink the traditional categories of citizenship and their associated rights (Barberán, 2011). Another element, therefore, relates to the evolution of the right to vote. The participation of individuals in the political community provides a way for them to convey their preferences, making universal suffrage an essential part of democracy. It is clear that those who are disenfranchised are disadvantaged in the protection of their interests, and yet, certain political systems still limit suffrage rights (Finn, 2020). The emigrant, in his condition of being absent from the national sphere, is excluded, in fact, from the political sphere, considering that the possibility to vote from abroad is essential for the exercise of one of the most important civil rights: the right to vote (Courtis, 2016; Finn, 2021; Goldberg & Lanz, 2021; Pogonyi, 2014). Political rights are integral to citizenship, and thus, since all members of a political community are formally equal, individuals with citizenship status should be entitled to influence political decisions even if they are not present in their home countries during the voting process (Pogonyi, 2014). Persons who are abroad do not face constitutional limitations in exercising their citizenship, indeed, article 13, paragraph 2 of the Chilean Political Constitution (Constitución Política de La República de Chile, 1980) broadly establishes the right to vote for all citizens who meet the relevant requirements,

irrespective of their place of residence. However, while granting rights is necessary for migrant voting, it is also insufficient to ensure it: if on one hand, the existence of political rights is not a sufficient condition for political mobilization , on the other hand, to fully achieve emigrant enfranchisement, a country must incorporate suffrage rights into its electoral or constitutional law, establish regulatory procedures for migrants to obtain the right to vote, and ultimately put these laws into practice (Finn, 2021).

Over the past few decades, an increasing number of countries have permitted their citizens residing abroad to participate in national elections. Today, almost three-quarters of the world's countries have implemented some sort of external voting which is due, in part, to relatively recent changes in electoral laws (Goldberg & Lanz, 2021; Luna et al., n.d.; Pogonyi, 2014). This trend is in fact seen by the scholarship as a governmental response to the rising levels of immigration and mobility that necessitate the creation of new policies to guarantee the rights and protections of their citizens overseas. Incorporating external voting, nonetheless, adds complexity to the electoral system, and, as a result, states must create secure, fair, and efficient electoral mechanisms. Three variables significantly contribute to achieving these results: (1) registration mechanisms and limitations, (2) mechanisms for exercising the right to vote, and (3) participation (Luna et al., n.d.).

Indeed, technical barriers that previously hindered expatriates from taking part in their home country's public affairs have diminished. Modern telecommunication networks allow voters living far away to keep up with, and potentially impact, the political discourses in their countries of origin, hence helping to overcome the traditional challenge of the gap between issues that affect the country and the ability of residents abroad to act responsibly and stay well-informed (Barberán, 2011; Pogonyi, 2014). The increasing accessibility of the internet has particularly made transnational political participation in a remote public space easier.

With regards to Chile, since the early 1990s, after Patricio Aylwin of the PDC was elected (1990), the Concertación managed to negotiate a slight boost to the income tax, enabling a gradual escalation in spending on housing, health, and family allowance programs, and ultimately leading to a significant decrease in poverty rates after 1990 (Roberts, 2016). In the short term, the increase in living standards undeniably aided Chile

in evading the societal mobilization and mass demonstrations that other nations in the area faced amid extended financial struggles. Electoral stability was further bolstered by the sociopolitical divide present between the pro- and anti-Pinochet blocs, which had structured competition and helped organize the electorate in the new democratic regime. This division had both political and economic aspects, separating individuals based on their authoritarian or democratic beliefs and their stance on the adoption of the neoliberal model. As poverty rates decreased and Chilean society became wealthier, both the *Concertación* and its conservative opponents started discussing inequality topics more candidly in their platforms and electoral campaigns during the second decade of democratic rule (Roberts, 2016). The left wing of the *Concertación* was also willing to frame the issues in terms of citizenship rights to fundamental social resources. This shift in elite political discourse has played a crucial role in bringing social and economic inequalities to the forefront of the political agenda, carefully politicizing them from the top-down.

Chilean organizations worldwide noticed that many of their compatriots would remain permanently abroad. As a result, they requested the Chilean State to formulate a policy that would consider their particular position (Bolzman, 2011; Finn, 2021). In particular, following the path of other typically left-leaning governments in South America, the Chilean government started to take such form of democratization – or a *return* to democracy – to reconnect with diasporans who left during nondemocratic periods, in a way to compensate for past wrongs of authoritarian and undemocratic regimes (Finn, 2021; Pogonyi, 2014). In addition, the process likely led the new political elite to seek ways to enfranchise the Chilean community living overseas, hoping to gain a friendly electoral force. In fact, the diasporans were politically exiled and, as a result, supporters of the new democratic transition, rendering them potential voters for the new post-Pinochet political establishment (Finn, 2021; Pogonyi, 2014; Roberts, 2016). The shift in circumstances prompted Chileans around the world to organize emigrant politics. The question of nationality was a central component of their demands, also, they claimed to be entitled to vote in parliamentary and presidential elections while living abroad. Chilean representative associations from various countries established a European Coordination

of Committees for Return in 1993, emphasizing the transnational aspect of their work. In a collective book that it published in the same year, it stated:

> "*As never in its history, Chile will have thousands of people scattered across Europe and the world who want to maintain a close relationship with the homeland. For this reason, it becomes necessary to establish a policy of migration addressed to all citizens, without exception. This policy should consider each citizen and his or her family residing abroad as full members of Chilean society and accordingly, the State will have to assume certain functions for them (...). A specific aspect that requires a quick solution is the problem of the children born abroad. For them we should eliminate the condition of stateless persons that prevails now and grant them Chilean citizenship automatically. Similarly, we must create the appropriate legal mechanisms to allow dual citizenship"* (Montupil et al., 1994, p. 185. Cited in Bolzman, 2011, p. 158).

Considering the demands so widely shared among Chileans living abroad, during the second decade of democracy, the leadership of the *Concertación* shifted towards the left upon the election of PSCh presidents R. Lagos and M. Bachelet. This followed the presidencies of two PDC leaders in the 1990s. Both presidents of the PSCh reformed a privatized social pillar of the neoliberal model, which had been commodified. As a result, public policy was redirected toward granting universal social citizenship rights (Roberts, 2016).

The government of President Lagos (2000-2006) established a novel policy regarding non-resident communities and founded Dicoex, i.e., *Dirección para la Comunidad de Chilenos en el Exterior* or Department for Chilean Communities Abroad, whose mission involves promoting human and citizen rights, preserving cultural identity, promoting inclusion in national development, and strengthening the associativity of Chilean communities residing overseas (Barberán, 2011; Courtis, 2016). In addition to such linkage mechanisms with its citizens abroad, the government proposed a constitutional reform draft (Mensaje No. 117-343. Gobierno de Chile, 2001) to Congress in January 2001 which addressed the issue of nationality, as a way to symbolically include them in

the national community. In July 2005, four years later, the Parliament approved this project along with additional reforms to the constitution. From that moment on, Chileans who had lost their nationality gained the right to recover it, and children of Chileans born abroad could automatically apply for citizenship. On the other hand, conservative parties (such as Unión Demócrata Independiente (UDI) and Renovación Nacional) have opposed giving Chileans living abroad the right to vote, claiming they would be more likely to support left-wing parties pertaining to the *Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia* (i.e., Coalition of Parties for Democracy). However, this was a demand that most Chileans abroad had expressed, regardless of their political beliefs. A survey conducted by a Chilean governmental agency, the Directorate for Chilean Communities Living Abroad (Dicoex), and published in August 2005, revealed that 72.5% of the Chileans from the diaspora were interested in voting in presidential elections (Gobierno de Chile, 2005).

In June 2007, President Michelle Bachelet stated in her speech that *''Chile is one of the few countries in the world that prevents compatriots residing abroad from voting (...) We believe that the Chilean state must effectively render possible the exercise of such rights, as it happens in most democratic countries''* (Bolzman, 2011, p. 159). Moreover, she urged the Chilean State to recognize the Chilean communities living outside the country as legitimate interlocutors. A matter that had been raised by Chileans since the 1990s, but such legal recognition had not yet been granted. Two years later, in early 2009, President Bachelet submitted a bill to the Senate that granted automatic registration, voluntary suffrage and voting rights to Chileans abroad in presidential elections. The President of the Senate, member of the political opposition, delayed the process by referring the bill to the Supreme Court to verify its compliance with the Constitution, and it was never addressed again. It was only on the 16th of October 2015 that a bill regulating the voting rights of Chilean citizens living abroad was officially signed into law by second-time-Chilean-President Michelle Bachelet (Courtis, 2016). This project aimed to operationalize Law 20.748 of April 2014[3], which approved voting from abroad in national

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[3] Ley 20.748 (30 April 2014). Law. Regulates exercising suffrage by citizens outside of the country. [https://www.bcn.cl/leychile/navegar?idNorma=1061853&idParte=9440174&idVersion=2014-05-03]
It was a constitutional reform that altered Article 13 of the Constitution, permitting Chilean citizens residing outside the country to cast their vote from overseas. Additionally, this reform established that a Constitutional Organic Law (LOC) would dictate the protocol to follow to register overseas voters and

primary elections, presidential elections, and national plebiscites. In that occasion, Bachelet commented:

> *"We believe that with this law, we are honoring democracy, by allowing each of our compatriots to effectively have the possibility of marking his or her preference in our national elections. And that is what we are doing—we are cutting a tie that was limiting [the breadth of] our democracy and also [we are] strengthening the bond between the sons and daughters of this land, by enacting the law that will regulate the right to vote of Chilean men and women abroad"* (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2016. Translated by Finn, 2021, p. 84)

This last stage towards achieving migrant enfranchisement in Chile took three years to complete, and it involved three steps towards emigrant enfranchisement: Law 20.748 was enacted in 2014, and in 2016, government regulation formalized the process of external voting through Law 20.960[4]. This law required Chilean citizens to change their residential address to prove that they live abroad and that they had lived in Chile for at least one year in the past, hence, it represents a significant milestone in expanding democracy and fulfilling Chile's international commitments as a State (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2018). Finally, emigrant enfranchisement was granted and came into effect in 2017: Chilean citizens living abroad can now cast – for the first time – their ballots in presidential primaries and during the first and second rounds of the presidential elections (Finn, 2021).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Heraldo Muñoz Valenzuela had an essential role in the process, by proactively contributing to the creation of documents and providing inputs that enabled the legislators to obtain more precise knowledge about the Chilean community abroad. In the report "*Voto de los Chilenos en el exterior. Un Avance en la*

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regulate the implementation of electoral and plebiscitary procedures for Chileans residing outside the country" (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2018).

[4] Ley 20.960 (7 October 2016). Law. Regulates the right to vote abroad. [https://www.bcn.cl/leychile/navegar?idNorma=1095759]

democracia chilena" published in 2018, he commented on the achievement by saying that:

> *"The implementation of voting for Chileans abroad is a historic milestone for our democracy. The achievement of this would not have been possible without a broad citizen consensus, which involved both the tireless work of the communities of compatriots abroad, as well as the agreements reached in the Legislative Branch, where all political sectors, agreed, without distinction, on the importance of facilitating the exercise of this citizen's right, regardless of the place of residence. This right is undoubtedly in line with the present times, where the push of globalization and transnationalism are advancing – not without questioning – towards a world in which citizenship is becoming more and more universal every day."* (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2018)

As a matter of fact, the process for the implementation of exterior voting in Chile, is unique and unprecedented in its history. At a governmental level, the belief was that this is a state policy that contributes to the strengthening of democracy and for this reason, the utmost citizen participation should be encouraged while ensuring that those responsible for enforcing the law and preserving Chile's electoral institutionality act with the highest regard (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2018). Therefore, Chile responded to the wishes of its citizens living abroad and adhered to its commitments ratified at the international level by implementing the measures. Throughout the process, the Foreign Ministry encouraged close collaboration between the Electoral Service (SERVEL) and other Secretariats to carry out legislative work. The bill was then sent to Congress by the President of the Republic in October 2015 for discussion by legislators. For the implementation stage of the law, the Chancellery determined that the General Directorate of Consular and Immigration Affairs under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Dirección General de Asuntos Consulares y de Inmigración (DIGECONSU), del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores*) would be responsible for taking the necessary measures to carry out the process, thereby playing a crucial role in operationalizing the law's provisions (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2018). To accomplish this goal, DIGECONSU established the Unit of the Vote Abroad (*Unidad del Voto en el Exterior or UVEX*) in

January 2017, which is tasked with organizing and overseeing the implementation of the vote abroad (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2018). However, it is worth noting that, exactly as in Chile, voting rights abroad are voluntary. In this regard, the Foreign Ministry had to take measures to facilitate suffrage and inform citizens of their right to vote abroad, as instructed by SERVEL. This was done through diverse means of communication that include multiple communication channels, which will be briefly tackled in the following section.

2.3.1. Implementation process and distribution of information

According to the official report published by MINREL (2018), to implement voting from abroad, the UVEX examined the requirements and needs of this pioneering experience, carefully identifying various tasks and components of the process, that called for the dedication of specialized work teams. The primary categories that were identified for the implementation of external voting process are the following:

a) Legal aspects; b) Registration and change of address; c) Diffusion: press, field work; d) Infrastructure and polling sites; e) Logistics and simulations; f) Data transmission; g) Staffing; h) Training; i) Finances; j) Simulation of the electoral process; k) Help desk and monitoring process.

For the scope of this study, only three, most relevant aspects will be addressed, namely: Legal aspects, registration and change of address and diffusion of information.

For what concerns the legal aspects, for implementation process of Law No. 20.960 – which came to modify Law No. 18.556 on the electoral registration system and the electoral service, as well as Law No. 18,700 on popular voting and scrutiny – a general framework was devised to ensure that all decisions made in both the Foreign Minister and the Consulates complied fully with the mandates of both this regulation and the Political Constitution of the Republic. In fact, the implementation of the electoral act abroad must respect the same principles that govern elections within the country, in accordance with

Article 18[5] of the Political Constitution of the Republic, i.e., a personal, secret, equal, universal, and voluntary vote must be guaranteed.

Registration and change of address are regulated by Law No. 20.960, which regulates the registration of Chileans living abroad and the changing of domicile for those who wish to vote, many of whom are already registered. Individuals will need to register once and repeat the process only if they change their address, as per the general rules, when abroad, the registration and the change of domicile may be made before the respective Consulate. The Electoral Service is responsible for the electoral registration process, and to ease the procedure it made available two forms entitled "Request for incorporation to the Electoral Register" and "Request for Change of Electoral Address" on the SERVEL and Chancellery websites, which could be downloaded by citizens. In a second phase, compatriots could change their address through an online system accessible through the "Clave Única" (Unique Key) mechanism, thus allowing many compatriots to complete this process remotely. The Report (2018) emphasizes the fact that all the work performed was aimed at effectively promoting and encouraging the participation of nationals, providing them with information, and facilitating channels for voter registration or address changes. Therefore, as a result of the communication campaign and fieldwork, the electoral roll of Chilean citizens living abroad and eligible to vote in the primary and secondary election rounds almost doubled, from 21,270 to 39,129 voters. With this in mind, the effectiveness of the communication strategy and fieldwork done by Chilean consulates abroad is indeed evident, as it was critical to reach the largest number of Chileans abroad, to inform them and educate them about the voting process.

Thirdly, the proper communication and information dissemination to citizens residing abroad regarding electoral logistics and procedures is an essential aspect of the implementation process. If communication flows with expatriate Chileans are not consistent, it can undermine the objective of granting complete political citizenship rights to Chilean expats, which may ultimately lead to legitimacy and trust issues (Luna et al.,

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[5] Constitución Política de la República de Chile. Artículo 18. "*Habrá un sistema electoral público. Una ley orgánica constitucional determinará su organización y funcionamiento, regulará la forma en que se realizarán los procesos electorales y plebiscitarios, en todo lo no previsto por esta Constitución y, garantizará siempre la plena igualdad entre los independientes y los miembros de partidos políticos tanto en la presentación de candidaturas como en su participación en los señalados procesos. [...]*" (Constitución Política de La República de Chile, 1980)

n.d.). For what regards diffusion of information and the communication strategy, the report made a subdivision between press and media communication, and actual fieldwork. In addition, two stages were to be identified in terms of communication strategy: the first from November 2016 to June 30, 2017, focused on simplifying the process of changing address and registering to vote, while the second stage, from July to November 2017, aimed at making it easier for voters to cast their votes. Given the scope of the communication effort, the Directorate for the Chilean Community Abroad (Dicoex) conducted a social media campaign to bid for the countries with the most substantial Chilean communities. Brochures and posters were printed and distributed to all consulates, while resources were provided to Chilean consulates for radio advertising. In the report (2018) are indicated some of the most suitable means do disseminate information internationally. These are: the *www.votoenelexterior.cl* website, social networks such as Twitter and Facebook, paid media plan, press management, support from prominent figures, printed material, direct communication from consulates to nationals, and consulates' remote and field work. In particular, it's worth mentioning that Twitter and Facebook were the primary and most convenient communication channels due to their high level of interaction with citizens both in Chile and abroad. Additionally, the website aforementioned was established to provide users with access to specific content that optimizes their understanding of the right to vote abroad and the necessary procedures for its exercise. Also, this website enabled citizens to ask questions online and maintain open communication with the voting abroad communication department. The most significant efforts lasted until June 30, 2017, and resulted in reaching more than seven million people, both Chileans and foreigners, in terms of dissemination (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2018).

While the campaign was present across the Chilean consular network, the largest concentration of resources and efforts targeted the 15 countries with the largest contingent of Chilean residents at the time: Argentina, the United States, Canada, Sweden, Spain, Australia, Brazil, Venezuela, France, Norway, Mexico, Germany, Bolivia, Italy, and Switzerland. On the other hand, together with media campaigns and social media outreach, one of the primary methods for facilitating and promoting the process of

changing domicile and voter registration were remote consulates, which, along with field consulates, have reached out to citizens residing in foreign countries all around the globe.

2.4. Political landscape and Chilean diaspora political participation since 2017

On December 15, 2013, Michelle Bachelet won the Chilean presidential elections, signaling the return of the center-left to government after a four-year interlude. At first, the government program did not place a significant emphasis on international migration; regarding Chilean nationals living abroad, there is a push to promote emigrant citizenship, primarily concerning voting rights, development of connections between the Chilean state and communities abroad, and civic participation (Doña Reveco & Mullan, 2014). In April 2014, the President signed the Constitutional Reform that grants individuals the right to vote from overseas for the first time in history. To govern the election process, a Constitutional Organic Law was established. What is important to note about this fulfilled and long-awaited promise is that all Chilean citizens who were born in the country and currently reside outside of it, for various reasons, were finally able to exercise their fundamental right to vote. President Bachelet characterized the reform as a measure of justice for those who were forced to leave their homeland, emphasizing that "*regardless of their reasons, WE ARE ALL CHILEANS, WE ARE ALL CITIZENS, and it does not matter where we are or why we had to leave our motherland*" (Mena, 2015). The reform thus marks a significant milestone in the history of Chile, but it also poses a new challenge to devise methods for engaging citizens in the electoral process, providing genuine opportunities for participation via executive action, notably in those nations where geography or economic constraints hinder the ability to partake in voting. This places Chile on the list of the 116 nations worldwide that grant their citizens this civic right and resolves a long-standing debt towards diasporans (Quezada Vergara, 2016).

As observed by Escobar (2017), by 2014, when Chile ultimately approved the non-resident franchise, not only were internal political obstacles eradicated after a lengthy and arduous process of democratic expansion, but also the global organization of emigrants and their social media outreach benefited from two additional advantageous factors. First,

all South American countries except for Guyana, Suriname, and Uruguay had already expanded the voting rights to non-residents. Second, Chile had officially approved the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW) in 2005, whose article 41 states the political rights of migrants in their country of origin, including the right to vote (Escobar, 2017). In their documents and press conferences, the leaders of the Chilean emigrant organization repeatedly referenced other nations and neighboring countries that had already extended the franchise to non-residents, they also cited Chile's breach of the ICRMW, and the gentle persuasion employed by the UN to encourage Chile's adherence (Escobar, 2017). As also noted in Chapter 2.2, the Chilean electorate abroad is rather heterogeneous, because it comprises various migratory generations, dating back those who fled the dictatorship, to more recent arrivals. These individuals, actually express a certain political subjectivity as Chileans residing abroad, which diverges from the prevailing political perspective in their home country. As a result, they reclaim the possibility to participate in their country's political processes from afar.

Voting is the ability to express an opinion in an election or consultation, a basic right which the Constitution confers on citizens. For numerous years, Chilean expatriates have worked tirelessly to be able to exercise this right from their countries of residence. Consequently, one of the greatest steps in the history of Chile's democracy is the implementation of the Constitutional Organic Law, which allows Chilean citizens residing abroad to participate in plebiscites, presidential primaries, and presidential elections. The November 2017 presidential elections marked the recognition of Chile's insertion in the globalized and interconnected world, and most importantly, a significant democratic milestone for many compatriots who have awaited such moment for years.

As in Chile, the right to vote from overseas is optional, individual, equitable, and confidential, and is cast using the same paper ballot employed for voting within the country. To vote, individuals must attend designated polling places abroad and cast their ballots. Chilean citizens who vote overseas must follow the same guidelines and utilize the same equipment provided to them at the Suffrage Receiving Table as they would within Chile. The Electoral Service (SERVEL) is the institution which offers comprehensive information on the procedures for voting abroad.

2.4.1. Context and participation rates of the 2017 and 2021 presidential elections in Chile

Chile's presidential election for the 2018-2022 term occurred on November 19th, 2017. It was preceded by primaries and a runoff election which was held on December 17th. In the presidential primaries conducted on July 2, 2017, the candidates of two coalitions, *Chile Vamos* led by Sebastián Piñera, and *Frente Amplio* led by Beatriz Sánchez were elected. Notably, this primary round was the first in the history of Chile to be open to Chilean citizens residing abroad (BCN.CL). Eight candidates ran in the presidential elections: Carolina Goic (*PDC* – center-right-wing), José Antonio Kast (Independent – right-wing), Sebastián Piñera (Independent – *Chile Vamos* – center-right-wing), Alejandro Guillier (Independent – left-wing), Beatriz Sánchez (Independent – *Frente Amplio* – left-wing), Marco Enríquez-Ominami (*PRO* – center-left-wing), Eduardo Artés (*UPA* – far-left-wing) y Alejandro Navarro (*PAIS* – left-wing).

In the first round of the Presidential election, Sebastián Piñera received 36.64% of the votes while Alejandro Guiller earned 22.70%. The third position was held by Beatriz Sánchez from Frente Amplio, receiving 20.27% of the votes, placing the pact as the third political force in the electoral scenario. In the second round, conservative Sebastián Piñera was re-elected as the President of the Republic, securing 54.58% of the votes, while progressive leftist Alejandro Guillier obtained 45.42% (*Elecciones Presidenciales de 2017.*, 2017). Interestingly, at the level of continents, Piñera emerged victorious in Africa, Asia, and America. Conversely, Sánchez emerged as the winner in Europe, and Guillier triumphed in Oceania (Marusic, 2017).

According to the data provided by SERVEL, with 121 constituencies distributed in 62 countries, Chileans living abroad for a total of 39.137 eligible voters went to the polling stations set up in all five continents, however, their participation amounted to slightly less than 60% (precisely, 59,5%). Among them, stood out Argentina with 7.500 voters, the United States with 5.358, Spain with 3.104, Canada with 2.581, and Australia with 2.013, all of which represent a 46% increase of eligible voters from the previous primary elections. The results of the elections are consistent with the preferences at the national level. As reported by SERVEL, in fact, the definitive results abroad showed Sebastián Piñera and Alejandro Guillier as the candidates who passed to the second round with

31.32% (6.858 votes) and 28.48% (6.344 votes) respectively. These figures are in line with the national results, which gave them 36.64% and 22.70%.

It's notable to mention that electoral registers show that 39,137 people are eligible to vote abroad, approximately 10% of those eligible to vote, and almost double of the 21,270 voters who registered to participate in primaries. Such increase demonstrates the growing interest in participating in the electoral processes taking place in the country. In addition, in the primaries there was an abstention of 60% abroad, which was considered as a low turnout. The Chancellery recognized that the participation may have been affected by the fact that many people were not able to register and there was not much information available (Velásquez Ojeda, 2017). Unlike what happens in Chile, in fact, registration abroad is not automatic, but voluntary, thus expressing the interest and commitment of Chilean citizens to the electoral processes taking place in their home country, all of which is eventually reflected in their turnout at voting stations.

Turning now to the presidential election for the 2022-2026 term, it was held on November 21, 2021, and as it occurred for the previous elections, if was followed by a second round which instead took place on December 19, 2021. During primaries – held on the 18th of July, the *Apruebo Dignidad* and *Chile Vamos* coalitions defined their presidential candidates. Unlike previous elections held since the return to democracy, in which the country's two primary electoral coalitions were more stable, the panorama for the 2021 elections was significantly more volatile: in fact, the 2017 presidential and parliamentary election results generated a greater number of political forces represented, as well as a fracture in the center-left alliance.

Furthermore, this phenomenon can also be attributed to the current push for change that the Chilean society has been demanding since late 2019. Specifically, I am referring to the social and political protests that have occurred in Chile since October 25, 2019 – a process referred to as the *estallido social* or social uprising. On that occasion, over a million people marched in the streets of Santiago and tens of thousands more filled smaller towns and cities across Chile resulting in what is widely regarded as the country's largest mobilization in a single day (Frens-String et al., 2021). This was in response to the Chilean government's October 2019 implementation of a 30-peso (approximately 4 cents) fare increase for Santiago's congested metro system (Frens-String et al., 2021).

Discontent rapidly escalated when Piñera, Chile's conservative president, declared a 'state of siege' in the capital, and provocatively stated that Chile was 'at war'. This was the first instance since the country's military dictatorship that Chilean armed forces had been mobilized. Piñera's statement triggered memories of the Pinochet era for numerous Chileans. Therefore, the sudden and violent response by the government appeared to transform a protest led mostly by youth into a national urban awakening almost overnight (Frens-String et al., 2021). In this sense, the origins of this movement for change, which occurred in Chile between the 2017 and 2019 presidential elections, have deep roots and regard the UP as a crucial reference for those seeking radical change today. Specifically, during the year following the eruption of protests until the national plebiscite held on October 25, 2020 to determine Chile's constitutional future, various battle lines emerged and were marked. The society took back control of politics and demanded a say in shaping their collective future (Frens-String et al., 2021).

So, while Allende and the UP pledged themselves to operate within the country's existing political structures of their era to pursue radical change, Chileans today have demonstrated their tenacity to redefine where and how democracy itself can be practiced moving forward (Frens-String et al., 2021). The variety of movements involved in the *estallido social* is indicative of a more profound and democratic process than that which transpired in the early 1970s. Contemporary Chile is undergoing an indeterminate reform process driven by a societal movement. As a consequence of this socio-political climate, many marginalized political organizations and parties have been sidelined since October 2019 (Frens-String et al., 2021).

Thus, seven candidates competed in the 2021 election: Gabriel Boric (*CS, Apruebo Dignidad* – left-wing), José Antonio Kast (*PREP* – far-right-wing), Yasna Provoste (*PDC* – center-left-wing), Sebastián Sichel (Independent, *Chile Podemos Más* – center-right-wing), Eduardo Artés (*UPA* – far-left-wing), Marco Enríquez-Ominami (*PRO* – center-left-wing) and lastly, Franco Parisi (*PDG* – right-wing). According to the data provided by SERVEL, in the first round election, 7,114,318 voters – equating to 47.33% of the electorate – cast their ballots; in that occasion, José Antonio Kast obtained 27.91% of the votes and Gabriel Boric 25.82% of the votes (*Elecciones Presidenciales de 2021.*, 2021; Servicio Electoral de Chile, n.d.). During the subsequent

round, in December, insufficient public transport and services prompted opposition parliamentarians to file a complaint against the Minister of Transportation and Telecommunications on the same election day. However, participation was not hindered and, surprisingly, the highest voter turnout in Chilean history occurred, with 8,364,481 votes cast (55,5% of the voter registry). Gabriel Boric, the *Apruebo Dignidad* candidate, won the presidential race and solidified his position as the president-elect of the Republic of Chile with 4,621,231 votes (55.87%), while José Antonio Kast – *Frente Social Cristiano* candidate – secured second place with 3,650,662 votes (44.14%) (*Elecciones Presidenciales de 2021.*, 2021). Interestingly, Boric is president thanks to a significant and uncontested victory, which has achieved several historic milestones: he has obtained the highest number of votes for a president, and, at 36 years old, he became the youngest president in the history of the country, factors which reflects the political change demanded by Chileans during the couple of years preceding the elections (BBC News Mundo, 2021). Moreover, Boric is the first president not affiliated with the two significant factions (center-left and center-right) that shared power since the reinstatement of democracy in 1990, and lastly, he is the primary contender to be re-elected after losing in the primary round, which Kast emerged victorious from.

At international level, polling stations were established in 65 countries, a significant increase over other elections, as was the number of voters: in the 2017 presidential elections, approximately 40,000 individuals registered to vote from abroad, but in the 2021 election cycle, that figure has risen to 71.007 (Servicio Electoral de Chile, n.d.). Among countries with eligible Chilean voters, the largest populations are found in Argentina, the United States, Canada, Spain, and Australia. Among those registered, the voters who showed up at the polling stations amounted to 47%, which is a total of 34,042 people (Servicio Electoral de Chile, n.d.). The trend abroad in the second round mirrors that of the first, where Boric triumphed with 53.75% compared to José Antonio Kast's 21.21%. In December's final vote, Boric emerged victorious with 71.03% of the vote. The *Apruebo Dignidad* candidate won in all five continents and garnered over 80% of the vote in countries such as Sweden, Canada, Germany, Denmark, Finland, France, New Zealand, South Korea, and Cuba, to name some. Nevertheless, Europe offered the strongest backing to Gabriel Boric, with 64% of support in the tallied tables (Rojas, 2021).

Meanwhile, Republican Party's Kast secured a victory over Boric in various countries including the Philippines, Venezuela, United States, Israel, Singapore, China, India, Colombia and more (Garrido, 2021). At the transnational level, understanding Chileans' motivations to vote hundreds of thousands of kilometers away from their country of origin is crucial, that's why the data from votes cast abroad may provide valuable insights into this matter which will be further discussed in section 2.4.3. Boric, in contrast to his ultra-rightist counterpart Kast, endorsed the efforts of the Constituent Convention: his progressive and transformative agenda aligns with the majority sentiment of Chileans abroad, who demanded greater social rights, increased government involvement, and a reduction in the inequality that has persisted despite the country's economic growth in recent years (BBC News Mundo, 2021). Furthermore, Boric achieved greater success in this endeavor by mobilizing voters who abstained in the initial round. The turnout, in fact, was one of the salient features of the 2021 election.

2.4.2. Constitutional reform: national plebiscites and failed attempts

The holding of plebiscites or direct consultations with citizens, typically for the approval of new constitutional texts, marked a significant milestone in the country's institutional life. The plebiscite mechanism, utilized during critical moments in the country's history to make major decisions, adheres to the same rules of transparency and fairness as any election, and follows the same organizational procedures, hence, making it the most democratic and inclusive process that Chile has ever had (Montes, 2022; Servicio Electoral de Chile (SERVEL), 2020). The Plebiscite, like elections, provides a mechanism for citizen participation. However, rather than voting for individuals to fill specific roles, voters cast their ballots for an option, indicating agreement or disagreement with the proposed alternatives regarding a significant decision affecting the country.

The call for a Plebiscite on October 25, 2020, is included in the Constitutional Reform Project for a new Constitution which the President of Chile submitted to Congress as a part of the Agreement for Social Peace and the New Constitution endorsed on November 2019 by the representatives of the primary political forces of the country (Servicio Electoral de Chile (SERVEL), 2020). This project suggests implementing an institutional mechanism to address the serious political and social crisis that the country was facing in

2019, the *estallido social* – under the conservative administration of Sebastián Piñera (2018-2022) – as a result of a social upheaval which broke out in October which demanded greater dignity and better social goods (Montes, 2022). The initiative thus aimed to respond to the mobilization of the citizens and the call made by the highest authorities to reach an institutional solution to the crisis, while Chileans continue to deliberate the refoundation of their country through the drafting of a new constitution (Volk, 2021). The primary objective of this agreement is to seek peace and social justice through an undeniably democratic procedure, such as a Plebiscite (Servicio Electoral de Chile (SERVEL), 2020). In this way, Chile decided for a popular and participatory exercise to decide whether to adopt a new Constitution and determine the composition of the drafting body in the event of a "*I approve*" victory. The ballot in fact contained the following question: "*Do you want a new Constitution?",* to which each voter must choose between the "*I approve*" and "*I reject"* options to such statement. Voters residing outside Chile and eligible to vote could exercise their right in the both the 2020 and 2022 Constitutional Plebiscites. It is crucial to note that, for these voters, participation was optional, and to vote, they had to appear at the designated polling locations determined by the Electoral Service ("Plebiscito Constitucional," 2022).

On October 25, 2020, following a postponement due to the pandemic, a plebiscite was held to decide the fate of the 1980 Constitution implemented by the Pinochet dictatorship and to determine whether Chileans desired a new Constitution. The casting ballots also discussed the process of drafting a new charter in the event that it is required. if deemed necessary. Half of the eligible voters living outside national borders (52,02%) participated in the election, and the results were clear: 78% of them approved the idea of a new Constitution. In Chile too, nearly four out of five voters requested a new constitution, with 79 percent choosing a fully elected, constitutional convention. By doing so, they dismissed a "mixed" assembly in which half of the seats would be reserved for elected congress members (Volk, 2021). Therefore, in October 2020, Chilean voters decisively chose to discard the constitution established by the Pinochet regime and agreed that a fresh charter would be devised by a fully elected, gender-balanced constitutional convention. It was unsurprising that voters chose to discard the most significant remnants of the former dictator's legacy. However, the scale of the rejection was remarkable in a

nation where conservative views are prevalent (the incumbent center-right President Sebastián Piñera won the 2017 elections with 55% of the vote) (Volk, 2021).

The October 2020 vote represented the culmination of generations of popular defiance, fed and guided by profound and tragic historical memories and experiences (Volk, 2021). The outcome of the plebiscite displayed the ability to motivate and rally a vast array of diverse popular support, while also exhibiting astute preparation for the inevitable violent backlash. Additionally, as Volk (2021) argues, the result showed a widespread agreement that, at minimum, social, economic, and political aspects of life require "rebalancing," for instance, through enhancements in healthcare, education access, food security, and salaries. Components which have been significantly undermined by neoliberalism during the last four decades.

The electorate was diverse, including both center-left and certain sectors of the right. On that occasion, the body responsible for drafting the proposal was also chosen. The former Foreign Affairs Minister under Michelle Bachelet's administration, Heraldo Muñoz, expressed his appreciation for those Chileans who cast their votes from abroad: "*I believe it is crucial [that they take part], because Chileans living abroad are citizens, irrespective of where they reside, thus, citizenship has nothing to do with residency, which is established in the Constitution*," Muñoz declared, and he also added that this fact is particularly significant in a world as interconnected as ours, especially with social networks providing instant information on events in our country (Reyes & Soto, 2020). Thus, it is beneficial that Chilean individuals can participate in the plebiscite on October 25th.

Data made available by SERVEL reveal that the eligible voter roll outside Chile amounted to 59,522 in 65 countries, of which 52,02% – or 30,962 people – voted. Thousands of Chilean expatriates exercised their right to vote and participated in the historic process. According to the Electoral Service, the "I approve" option triumphed among Chilean expats, with a total of 25,331 votes (82.03%), compared to the 5,548 votes (17.97%) in favor of the "I reject" option. The results were in line with the preference expressed by Chileans in the country, which approved the drafting of a new constitutional text with a 78,29% of the votes (amounting to 5.874.352 out of 7.542.952 registered voters). For a further analysis, it's useful to mention that in Latin America, the "I

approve" option won in most of the countries, such as Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Mexico; and although the trend was predominantly in favor of *Approve*, there were countries where *Reject* prevailed, specifically in four nations: Venezuela, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Panama (Vera, 2020). In the United States, the majority of voters (62.87%) favored modifying the Constitution; also in Canada, the "Yes" side achieved a resounding victory with 2,218 votes (89.26%) against 267 votes (10.74%) for the "No" side (Vera, 2020). Additionally, the *Approve* option won among Chileans residing in European countries, except for Croatia, where both options received 13 votes each. Chilean expatriates in Asia were also well represented in the referendum results: in Korea, the Approval option won with a majority of 85.71% compared to only 14.29% for Rejection. However, in the United Arab Emirates and Lebanon, Rejection was the majority choice, with 51.22% and 64.71% respectively (Vera, 2020).

As required by the Constitutional Reform Project for a new Constitution, on the 4th of September 2022 the Constitutional *Exit* Plebiscite ("*De Salida"*) took place, giving voters the possibility to approve or reject the new text devised and presented by the Constitutional Convention. The ballot paper therefore included the question: "*Do you approve the text of the New Constitution proposed by the Constitutional Convention*?", once again, the voter was asked to indicate their preference between the two options *"I approve"* and "*I reject*" ("Plebiscito Constitucional," 2022). The text proposes a significant alteration in Chilean institutionality, including the establishment of a social rule of law and the termination of long-standing institutions such as the Senate. What's more, the proposal is unique, as it is the first in the world to be drafted by an equal representation of men and women, with a clear feminist perspective throughout. While this and the promised public benefits appeal to the general population, there are differing concerns amongst specific groups, resulting in a lack of widespread support for the proposal (R. Montes, 2022).

The poll summoned 15.173.605 Chilean citizens, both domestically and abroad. The official count of eligible voters abroad totaled 97,239 dispersed across 116 polling places in 64 countries. SERVEL records show that 59,510 individuals cast their vote, signifying a 61,21% turnout among eligible exterior voters, with a 12% increase from the last election held in 2021 (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2022). Indeed, this

demonstrates the high level of interest from the international community in participating in this process, which all Chileans can access by simply updating their voting address through an online procedure or through our network of Consulates. This is the eighth process with the participation of fellow citizens residing abroad, in compliance with the provisions of Law No. 20.960 and under the oversight of the Chilean Electoral Service. Interestingly, voting by continent was directly linked to the number of Chileans registered in the electoral register, which this year saw a 38% increase compared to the 2021 register. In particular, the five countries which totaled the highest number of voters were: the United States (9.174), Spain (7.228), Argentina (5.536), Canada (4.838), and Germany (4.442) (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2022).

In Chile, the outcome of the exit plebiscite was overwhelming: with over 13 million registered voters, amounting to 85.86% of the voter registry, this election marked a crucial milestone as the most participated electoral process in Chilean history. Of them, a 61.89% rejected the constitutional proposal drafted by the Constitutional Convention. Thirteen million people cast their votes, and of those, 61.89% supported the *Reject* option, while 38.11% voted for *Approve*. This trend replicated across the country in every region. Conversely, the results were the complete opposite abroad, where 61% of Chileans diasporans supported the constitutional proposal drafted by the Convention, with 36.045 (60,62%) votes in favor of it, with a difference of more than 12,925 votes (Servicio Electoral de Chile, n.d.). In 35 out of 64 countries this option was favored (among them: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Spain, the United Kingdom and Sweden), following the general inclination of Chileans in Europe and Oceania which tend to align with progressist options the most; in contrast, in the countries where Rejection triumphed – including the United States, Colombia, Ecuador and China – this option reached its greatest percentage distance in Morocco (85.71% versus 14.29%) (Díaz, 2022; Gallardo, 2022). After hearing the outcome of the Exit Plebiscite, the President of the Republic, Gabriel Boric, delivered a message to the nation on national television, in which he expressed that:

"T*he decision of the Chilean people necessitates our institutions and political leaders to redouble their efforts, engage in more dialogue, and show more respect and empathy, until we come up with a proposal that represents us all, inspires confidence, unites us as a nation, and dispenses with maximalism, violence, and intolerance towards those who hold different viewpoints.*" (Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile, 2022).

Lastly, as of more recent state of affairs, it needs to be mentioned that a new constitutional plebiscite will be held later in 2023, again, to determine whether citizenship is in accordance with an updated text of the new Constitution drafted by the Constitutional Council, more specifically, it was agreed that the exit referendum will be scheduled for December 17, 2023 (Hidalgo Sius, 2023). Indeed, if the vote passes, the new Constitution of the Republic of Chile will be enacted, hence the text will be published in the Official Journal, and the new document will go into effect while the 1980 Constitution will be repealed.

2.4.3. Mobilization, engagement, and turnout of the Chilean diaspora since 2017: four electoral processes in comparison

The last section of this second chapter will finally try to briefly go behind the results of the electoral processes analyzed until now, in order to give reason to them, but also to understand what factors influenced the diaspora's participation, thus yielding all the different turnout rates that have been shown in the previous pages.

For starters, it is believed (Bolzman, 2011) that the contrast between the considerably broader political opportunities in the host society and the restricted opportunities in the home society might spur mobilization. In this scenario, the social resources that expatriates acquire in the host society generate demands that are directed towards the home society. Specifically, Chilean mobilization has been increased by the disparity in political opportunities between the society of residence and the limitation of those opportunities in the home society. In this sense, a resilient collective identity – be it ethnic or ideological, already established during the period of exile, cultivated, and adjusted to

fit the current post-exile circumstances – is crucial for disparity in political rights between two societies to prompt mobilization. Therefore, three factors that promote mobilization are identified (Bolzman, 2011): first, the political involvement of a diaspora can be facilitated by a structure of political opportunity offered by their society of residence, such as the right to vote at the local level. Additionally, the influence of the diaspora's society of origin can aim to maintain their identification with it, including the right to vote in their country of origin. Finally, a collective identity among individuals in a diaspora can be fostered through common ethnic or religious identification as well as shared political ideologies.

The analysis of expatriate voting, which studies the motives and patterns of voting by foreign-born individuals in their home-country elections, is a recent and developing field of research. Additionally, the recent emergence of expat voting in many countries poses a challenge towards the establishment of a long-term behavioral analysis. While scholars have extensive knowledge about the determinants of vote choices made by domestic voters, the process by which an expatriate casts their ballot and the potential impact of this group of voters on their country of origin remains unclear. Sellers (2021), however, considers the "transnational economic voting theory" as instrumental for such an analysis. The theory posits – similarly to what has been said before – that the economic conditions of the host country where the migrant resides, compared to those of their home country, influences their voting preferences. In this scenario, an individual migrant's financial and broader economic evaluations would be based on the economic situation of their host country but serve as a metric to evaluate the incumbent government of their home country. Sellers (2021) found that diasporans do tend to compare aspects of their life in their host country and life in their homeland, and thus, she also discovered that being an expat may not alter one's thoughts on political matters, but rather offers a different perspective and worldview on politics and the world around them.

Some existing research has shown that expatriates are more likely to support different parties than voters at home. Particularly, citizens living abroad may tend to vote more strongly for the incumbent political party or candidate than their fellow citizens residing within the country, or conversely, they may also exhibit a higher level of support for the opposition parties (Goldberg & Lanz, 2021). The differential impact of these two theories

may stem from their structural and/or behavioral mechanisms. Goldberg and Lanz (2021) argue that in general, compared to citizens residing in their home country, expatriates display a lower voter turnout rate and tend to support different political parties. However, table 2 and table 3 below, illustrate that in the case of Chilean citizens the difference in terms of electoral turnout is not so marked, rather, especially for what regards presidential elections, participation rate is to some extent equivalent within the country and outside. Thus, turnout abroad being not so low and neither so different from the domestical one is unexpectedly not in line with past studies on low expatriate participation (see Goldberg & Lanz, 2021; Luna et al., 2017).

Table 2. Chilean presidential elections' turnout and results in comparison

	2017 Presidential elections (second round)	*2021 Presidential elections (second round)*
Voters registered in Chile	14.347.288	14.959.956
Participation in Chile	7.032.878 (48,49%)	7.080.276 (47,33%)
Voters registered abroad	39.137	71.018
Participation abroad	21.320 (54,5%)	34.149 (49,5%)
National results	**54,62% in favor of Piñera** 45,38% in favor of Guiller	**55,80% in favor of Boric** 44,20% in favor of Kast
External results	39.34% in favor of Piñera **60,66% in favor of Guiller**	**71,03% in favor of Boric** 28,97% in favor of Kast
Total election results	**54,57% in favor of Piñera** 45,43% in favor of Guiller	**55,87% in favor of Boric** 44,13% in favor of Kast

Source: SERVEL (Servicio Electoral de Chile). Available at: https://www.servel.cl/centro-de-datos/resultados-electorales-historicos-gw3/

Table 3. Chilean Constitutional Plebiscites' turnout in comparison

	"Entry" Plebiscite 2020	*"Exit" Plebiscite 2022*
Registered in Chile	14.796.197	15.076.690
Participation in Chile	7.542.952 (50,98%)	12.969.229 (86,02%)
Registered abroad	59.522	97.215
Participation abroad	30.962 (52,02%)	59.510 (61,21%)
National results	**Apruebo: 78,29%** Rechazo: 21,71%	Apruebo: 38% **Rechazo: 62%**
External results	**Apruebo. 82,03%** Rechazo: 17,97%	**Apruebo: 60,92%** Rechazo: 39,08%
Total plebiscite results	**Apruebo: 78,31%** Rechazo: 21,69%	Apruebo: 38,11% **Rechazo: 61,89%**

Source: SERVEL (Servicio Electoral de Chile). Available at: https://www.servel.cl/centro-de-datos/resultados-electorales-historicos-gw3/

In an interview with the newspaper *La Tercera* (Rojas, 2021)*,* a few days following the 2021 presidential election, Gilberto Aranda, academic at the University of Chile gave an insightful opinion on the results of the elections that occurred abroad. In particular, he observed that voting preferences are not homogeneous around the world, not within the same continent. In fact, in the countries such as that of Bolivia and Colombia, in which votes for conservative ultra-rightist Kast prevailed, the primary factor driving Chilean is due to individuals employed in business and commerce, including Chilean investors and companies. The result is that, in several of these nations, citizens are not fully content with certain economic proposals presented by Boric[6], such as trade agreements and global value chains, as well as others, and decided to rely upon Kast. He argued how electoral behavior in these countries traditionally tends to favor right-wing voters (the same phenomenon was also observed in the 2017 elections). This may be related to the experience of a country with low levels of stability and few democratic credentials, thus, living with this reality, Chileans abroad may exhibit greater opposition to leftist candidates. Venezuela and Peru, other two countries with leftist governments, support this assumption as they majorly voted for Kast as new President of Chile. On the contrary,

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[6] More information about Gabriel Boric's Apruebo Dignidad government program available at: https://www.servel.cl/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/5_PROGRAMA_GABRIEL_BORIC.pdf

observing that Europe is the continent which most supported Boric's candidacy, suggests that Chileans who reside in countries with higher levels of political stability, better quality of life, and state social benefits cast their votes for more liberal parties, such as *Apruebo Dignidad.* However, in regions with considerable political instability like Lebanon, Israel, and the Philippines, ultraconservative parties such as Kast's *Frente Social Cristiano* came out on top.

Finally, Arana (2021) points out that the process for Chilean voters to register in another country requires advance notice at the consulates, therefore, generally, it is not an impulsive vote but a meditated one. The Chilean who chooses to vote does so because of genuine concern for Chile, a continued commitment, and love for their homeland, regardless of their current place of residence. In the West, it is typically a vote cast by undergraduate and graduate students or professionals seeking better quality of life abroad, lacking the same opportunities in Chile, or young people with significant identity factors. The surge of votes for Boric then, was anticipated, as they are cast by voters dissatisfied with the Chilean political establishment and with significant grievances regarding the system's implementation in the country in recent years. Consequently, neither the traditional center-left nor pro-system conservative candidates are convincing to them, but rather, the prospect of change appeals to them more. Regardless of the candidates' stances during the campaign, these outcomes are unlikely to differ substantially in the second round. This can be seen also in the outcome of the 2022 Plebiscite, in which, contrarily to what happened in Chile, voters abroad maintained their stance and continued to approve the new constitution. Nevertheless, the *Rejection* achieved an overwhelming victory which was partly due to foreign votes as well. Notably, in the People's Republic of China, out of 149 voters, 65.77% favored Rejection; similarly, in Israel, *Rejection* won more than three-quarters of the preferences, with 78.72%. As in Israel, Chilean residents who voted in the United States approved the entry plebiscite (62.87%) and rejected it two years later in the exit plebiscite (62.55%). Similarly, the second round of the 2021 presidential election was won by José Antonio Kast. This phenomenon in probably related to a need of change to the rules perceived by citizens as necessary, although not widely shared among compatriots, and thus not enough to unite and seek for improvement. The text of the new constitution itself, apparently caused more concerns

than certainties, that's why many rejected the text due to its lack of feasibility and flawed process (Díaz, 2022).

Finally, while the Chilean community experienced the electoral process with great anticipation, and registration significantly increased, the data from the four electoral processes since 2017 collectively suggest that the impact of votes from the exile diaspora on election results is generally limited. Yet, this does not constitute a justification to overlook their political and electoral behavior. Rather, diasporas require special consideration especially because they differ from the home-based population. This is significant, not only scientifically but also concerning campaign strategies aimed at expatriates: such campaigns may be particularly beneficial as expatriates' distinct voting patterns originate mainly from behavioral differences (Goldberg & Lanz, 2021). However, since behavior can be externally influenced, the expatriate community may, eventually, increasingly come into the focus of party campaign strategies.

Chapter 3. Observing the Chilean Digital Diaspora on social media

In the study of diasporas or migrants' transnational activities, researchers typically focus on aspects such as social networks, identity construction, migrants' role in bridging national and cultural borders, and their position in the public sphere and their migration history (Baubock & Faist, 2010). Indeed, the internet can be understood as a major resource for the exploration of many of these aspects. In the sense that it can function as a framework for those networks on which diasporic communities have traditionally relied on, by providing distinctive insights into their characteristics.

Today, as never before, the proliferation of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and new media environments has begun to challenge the assumption that strong relationships necessarily require face-to-face interactions (Baldassar et al., 2016). The internet – and online social media platforms in particular – serve as virtual meeting points and represent different levels of interaction within diasporas. In light of this, the concept of *digital diaspora* is used as an umbrella term which encompasses a number of new configurations that stem from two related fields: migration studies and new media studies(Andersson, 2019).These new configurations emphasize that durable transnational communities are sustained by stable linkages between websites and user groups, rather than by mere classical transnational practices. In this regard, online platforms are used for personal discussions between friends and family, organizing community activities, or sharing of various information about the home countries or diaspora. As Kissau and Hunger (2010) point out, it is through this information on the general public, as well as on other migrant community members, that dispersed diasporas gain political and community visibility.

The impact of ICTs and online social networks enhances migrants' chances to become involved in their home country's politics, engaging in political activities that span borders and cultures, and engage in social and political activism. It is crucial to note that ICTs alone do not create a community anew. Instead, they enable communication among members of a community which already exists, but needs a shared imagination to be constructed, in order to sustain itself. Social media platforms play a pivotal role in this process, as they facilitate group identification and goal achievement while rekindling imagined homelands. Thus, via digital diasporas, migrants can establish "communities of belonging" (Candidatu & Ponzanesi, 2022) to strengthen connections with their homelands, and also to form new relations and networks of solidarity in the host countries and translocally, within their respective diasporic groups. This interconnectedness has eventually transformed the nature of international migration, as expressed by Diminescu in "*The connected migrant": an epistemological manifesto* (2008):"*Yesterday the motto was: immigrate and cut your roots; today it would be: circulate and keep in touch.*" (p. 568).

Considering that social networking is facilitated by ICTs and relies heavily on ongoing user participation, the communication in these online contexts fosters interactive dialogues that enhance understanding of diverse perspectives (Sawyer & Chen, 2012). This suggests that individuals have the opportunity to voice their opinions to the public and engage in conversations and dialogue through a shared virtual medium, potentially resulting in the development of interconnectedness and mutual understanding among global communities which will feel closer despite the physical distance separating them. Two commonly used social media platforms that facilitate worldwide message exchange are Facebook and Twitter. Facebook was created in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, whose mission was to bring people together with different backgrounds and encourage interaction (Wu, 2021). On the other hand, Twitter was founded in 2006 by a group composed by Jack Dorsey, Noah Glass, Biz Stone, and Evan Williams. Their vision was to create a platform that would allow users to create and share ideas and information freely, without delay or barriers (Fox, 2014). The two mission statements then, essentially encompass some of the core elements of a digital diaspora, namely: transnational interaction and interconnectedness, and transnational sharing of spaces, ideas, and

information. Their implementation ultimately overcomes the distinction between 'here' and 'there', and enables diasporic communities to gain voice, visibility, and effective political impact by making use of the opportunities provided by digital technologies (Leurs & Smets, 2018).

Diminescu (2012) observed, however, as described in greater detail in Chapter 1.2., that only portion of a diaspora is active on the web, and among them only a small minority typically engages in political action. The extent of activism depends on current events and is commonly associated with specific contexts such as historical commemorations, drastic regime changes or highly contested elections. In such contexts, in fact, online platforms provide virtual arenas and new public spheres that allow the safe expression of opinions challenging oppressive and dangerous political systems. Thus, they serve as critical tools for the political mobilization of migrant communities and the democratization of the sending societies (Kozachenko, 2013).

The purpose of this chapter is thus to draw on all the aspects aforementioned, and analyze the behavior of the Chilean Diaspora online, specifically on Facebook and Twitter, taking the 2017 Presidential elections as starting point. The focus will be on observing the behavior the newly enfranchised part of Chilean citizenship regarding the election's outcomes on one side, and on the interconnection between the online and offline spheres. Additionally, on the other hand, the chapter aims to determine to what extent this community's sense of belonging was strengthened by participating in political discussions online. Before proceeding, however, I will discuss the methodology that I will employ to reach the final considerations. Specifically, I will use media ethnography and discourse analysis approaches to investigate the Chilean diasporic communication practices and their impacts on the global political arena. I will then proceed to refer to empirical evidence from online posts and tweets by Chilean community abroad, which I have found on the internet, and which I deemed relevant for this study's scope. The intent is to ultimately assess any correlation between the implementation of law 20.960[7] approved in 2016 by the Chilean Congress – which finally granted the expatriates of the

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[7] Ley 20.960 (7 October 2016). Law. Regulates the right to vote abroad.
[https://www.bcn.cl/leychile/navegar?idNorma=1095759]

country the right to vote in presidential elections and national referendums – and digital diaspora engagement in their homeland's transnational political arena.

3.1. Methodology: media ethnography approach and critical discourse analysis

Although the concepts of digital diaspora and e-diaspora are receiving increasing attention, and thus being further and further theorized, some scholars have noted that there is a general "paucity of research" in this field, in particularly with regards to methodological issues in dealing with media and communication in diaspora research (Leurs & Prabhakar, 2018; Ponzanesi, 2020). This may be partially due to the fact that the term 'digital diaspora' still fails to have a clear definition, an aspect which regrettably makes it difficult to outline a clear methodology (Ponzanesi, 2020). Therefore, searching for instances of digital diasporas and establishing a definite framework for analyzing their expression across platforms remains a challenging task that digital migration scholars and researchers must cope with.

Digital migration studies correspond to an emerging research focus which essentially encompasses research conducted across multiple disciplines, including media, cultural and communication studies, internet studies, information studies, migration studies, ethnic, diaspora and racial studies, as well as transnationalism, gender and postcolonial studies, anthropology, development studies, geography, border studies, urban studies, human-computer interaction, science and technology studies, law and human rights (Leurs & Prabhakar, 2018). Given the scope of this transdisciplinary field, it is necessary to narrow it down to the point where digital migration studies can be defined as that field that combines media, communication technologies, and the society, and seeks to understand the relation that exists between migration and digital media technologies objectively. Additionally, scholars in the field of digital migration also investigate how such media and communication technologies have historically played a crucial role in the everyday lives of migrants and expatriates across the world (Leurs & Smets, 2018).

To comprehend and analyze how the Chilean digital diaspora engaged online and possibly influenced the presidential elections and referendum's results, I have relied on

different levels of analysis and methodological approaches, chiefly based on observation and contextual research. My general approach falls under the logic of the media ethnographic approach, as it is believed to be the proper methodology for studying diasporic communities' practices online (Andersson, 2019; Candidatu et al., 2019; Candidatu & Ponzanesi, 2022; Leurs & Prabhakar, 2018; Widjanarko, 2020; Witteborn, 2012). To this end, I have incorporated a further level of analysis, namely that of Critical Discourse Analysis (Weiss & Wodak, 2003), which has proven to be quite informative in the attempt to determine the extent to which online diasporic communities are sustained.

Media ethnography gained recognition in the 1980s as an alternative to media research that resulted from survey and content analysis (Widjanarko, 2020). As a methodology, it works by comparing communicative practices from the participant' perspective. In other words, media ethnography enables the researcher to compare and analyze certain practices along the lines of situated uses, communicative acts, premises, purposes associated meanings to individuals (Witteborn, 2012). In light of this, it aims to reveal the underlying significance of social interactions, behaviors, and lifestyles of diasporic groups, as evident in their media consumption and production. Witteborn (2014) relied on the method of ethnography of communication (Hymes, as cited in Witteborn, 2014) to investigate how "communicative practice created meaningful social life in situated locales" (p. 77). In her research, Witteborn (2014) conducted multiple participant and unstructured observations in various sites where individuals interacted with digital practices. She collected their statements, and then analyzed where, when, and why people would write a specific comment. In her analysis, the focus is on the setting, the participants, and the goals and outcomes of the communicative acts and practice.

In practical methodological terms, what I intended to do was to blend qualitative and quantitative data through a combination of multi-sited and multi-temporal ethnographic research with research across digital platforms. De facto, the information presented in this chapter is drawn from the two most notorious social media platforms Facebook and Twitter, over which I have conducted extensive online research over the course of three months, from March to May 2023. The research, which essentially involved the mere observation of the interactions within Facebook's groups and pages and on Twitter discussions (including single personal accounts and institutional accounts), provided me

with first-hand empirical evidence of the Chilean diasporic practices online. The obtained material, collected through screenshots and URL listings, consists almost exclusively of Spanish language content. Additionally, data was acquired via a keyword and hashtag search that aligns with the study's objectives (e.g., *diaspora chilena, chilenos en el extranjero, voto en el extranjero, #ChileElige, #Elecciones2017, #Elecciones2021*). Notably, diverse research combinations were utilized to conduct a thorough investigation. To accomplish my objective, I utilized my currently existing personal accounts both on Facebook and Twitter. Consequently, I could only have access to publicly available posts and comments, with the exception of certain Facebook groups which required prior approval for admission. As such, it is important to note that all the comments and statements included in this work, real authors' names have been substituted with pseudonyms to ensure the protection of privacy and identity of their respective authors. As further discussed in Chapter 3.1.1, the assessment of pertinent material was conducted using specific criteria, which nonetheless, varied depending on the platform under review. Criteria for selection were based on popularity of Facebook groups and pages determined by the number of participants and average engagement allowing for analysis of their diversified content, as well as popularity of recurring hashtags and individual Twitter accounts, all taken within the condition of relevancy to the focus of this study, that is, diasporic political practices and discussions surrounding recent electoral events since enfranchisement. All posts analyzed, therefore, have a publication date no earlier than 2017, namely the year when the Chileans living abroad were finally granted the right to vote in national elections from their countries of residence all around the world.

In this regard, the media ethnography approach is instrumental to understand how people – specifically, the Chilean diaspora – are and have been engaged in processes of media reception and cultural practices within various temporal and spatial interaction contexts (Andersson, 2019). According to Candidatu et al. (2019), the underlying assumption guiding this type of investigation, is that extensive digital data sets can be studied to draw general societal and political conclusions.

The second methodological approach that I have employed is the one that Weiss and Wodak have theorized in 2003 and that is considered pivotal in the study of digital diasporas, migration studies and international relations that put special focus on websites,

fora, and blogs, and on how communities are sustained online: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This approach is based on the premise that conceptual tools should combine sociological and linguistic tools, or simply put, discourse and society. CDA views discourse as the language that is used in speech and writing, which is essentially a form of "social practice" (Weiss & Wodak, 2003). In other words, discourse is verbal or written communication between individuals that goes beyond a single sentence. The purpose of discourse is to look at the overall meanings conveyed by language in context. "Context" here refers to the social, cultural, political, and historical background that shape discourse. Understanding this context is crucial for grasping the underlying meanings conveyed through language. Often, discourse is regarded as language used in specific social contexts, and as such it is instrumental to prompt some form of social change or achieve some specific objectives (Crosley, 2021).

As Weiss and Wodak (2003) put it: when using a CDA approach, "language is not powerful on its own, it gains power by the use powerful people make of it". Discourse analysis then goes beyond the literal meanings of words and languages, and rather, it uses the language constituting a body of data to draw meaning. In brief, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is employed in problem-oriented social research to investigate and analyze how language is used to communicate within a specific social context, its impact on that context, and vice versa (Crosley, 2021). The authors also contend that CDA is indispensable for researchers who want to concentrate on power structures and how discourse is shaped by society and culture. In other words, analyzing language may aid in comprehending the social context, and specifically, power dynamics.

With that in mind, I have attempted to interpret the various texts and posts I found online, by positing the existence of a 'duality of structure' (Giddens, 1984, as cited in Weiss & Wodak, (2003) between the agent and the structure, wherein the agents (here, the diasporans) repeatedly replicate the conditions that enable text through communication. Thus, considering the structure as the medium and the result of behavior which it organizes, but most critically, discourse as "socially constitutive" and "socially conditioned" at the same time. The type of investigation that CDA allows me to conduct is, therefore, a qualitative analysis based on how the language in use expresses, constitutes

and legitimizes certain social relationships and societal dynamics, with a particular focus on comprehending how language is employed to attain its – social – objectives.

Thus, my aim is to employ a combined use of qualitative research methods, such as social media ethnography and critical discourse analysis, to provide an inclusive and comprehensive overview of the Chilean digital diaspora's role and engagement in the country's latest electoral processes.

3.1.1. Facebook and Twitter: how they differ analytically and why they are relevant

After discussing the question of methodology, this section will essentially focus on presenting the empirical material that I collected during the spring of 2023. The data is both descriptive and analytical, depicting how the Chilean digital diaspora expressed themselves on the selected online platforms during the latest electoral processes. Namely the 2017 and 2021 presidential elections, and the 2020 and 2022 constitutional reform plebiscites. I have decided to concentrate exclusively on two social media platforms, namely Facebook and Twitter, being these the ones I'm most familiar with, but mainly to have higher chances of grasping the complexities of the phenomenon, by narrowing down the scope of my research. For this same reason, I have designed my exploration through the websites based on popularity and relevance of groups and pages, and of accounts and hashtags, respectively on Facebook and Twitter.

Before getting to the heart of the question and analyze Chilean digital diasporans online behavior, however, it is necessary to note that the two social media platforms are not exactly equivalent. Through my research, I have found several aspects that differentiate them, and that therefore affected they modalities of research, but also the results I would obtain from them. This is inevitably due to the distinct purpose of the two platforms: while Facebook is predominantly used to create and maintain connections with acquaintances from offline settings, Twitter's limited-count messages facilitates discourse within communities based on shared interests, regardless of whether individuals know each other in real life, and additionally, registered users often use the platform to stay informed on news and topics of personal interest. For these reasons, Facebook provides all those various features for connecting with people, including chatting,

uploading pictures, sharing stories, videos, and links, making voice and video calls, posting, and reading statuses, and more. In contrast, Twitter is well-known for its microblogging function, which allows for the expression of useful facts, moments, or ideas to a vast public audience in short messages.

The first and most evident difference that I encountered pertained to the type of sources that I would find valuable. Each platform's distinctive features provided contrasting sets of tools for conducting the research. As such, I primarily relied on Facebook's groups and pages and on Twitter's most popular hashtags and individual users' accounts.

To my surprise, Facebook did not offer the extensive material that one might expect. While there are many pages and groups connecting Chileans living abroad, they tend to be very specific to one country, geographical area, or even a particular topic, such as football, music, or work-related concerns. However, many of these groups and pages appear to lack popularity, indicating a considerably low rate of participant involvement. Considering that the number of Chileans living outside their country's borders in 2016 was 1,037,346 (DICOEX & INE, 2017), this lack of popularity is somewhat unexpected. Given that this study focuses primarily on the political aspects of online engagement within the Chilean diaspora, I have selected several groups and pages (table 4) that were topically relevant and involved expatriates worldwide. Additionally, I opted for groups and pages with an adequate number of participants or followers to enable productive interaction, exchange of opinions, ideas, and information. The criteria for selection therefore consisted of the relevance of the topics covered, the number of participants, and an appropriate level of engagement.

Table 4. Most relevant Facebook groups and pages

Group/Page	# of participants/ followers	Topical areas
Haz tu voto volar	5.711	Political freedom and right to vote; cultural identity and cultural survival
Chilenos en el extranjero	52.812	Asking for info; news; cultural identity and cultural survival; politics; political freedom and right to vote; miscellaneous
Chilenos en el mundo	7.624	News; self-help; travel suggestions; miscellaneous
División para la Comunidad de Chilenos en el Exterior - Dicoex	14.008	Governmental information; news; political rights; social/cultural issues
Mejorando chile desde el extranjero	140	News; cultural identity and cultural survival; human rights; miscellaneous
Derecho al Voto de los Chilenos residentes en el extranjero	1665	News; political freedom and right to vote; social/cultural issues

An even more comprehensive investigation of the selected groups and pages validated what appeared to be an unlikely scenario at first. Table 5 illustrates the actuality of the Facebook groups and pages that fulfilled my criteria: there is an exceedingly low level of interaction among the members of each group and page. Exception is made for the cases of "*Chilenos en el extranjero*" and "*Haz Tu Voto Volar.*" These are the only two pages that provided me with enough threads of interaction to conduct my research and develop a sufficiently comprehensive analysis of the participants' behavior. The other cases, unfortunately, showed almost no interaction or engagement (in the table, indicated by the low number of shares and comments on each post), despite being fairly active in terms of weekly post count. Thus, against this backdrop and considering the initial scope, I focused the investigation on the two aforementioned pages, which nonetheless displayed a diverse range of individuals from various parts of the world communicating, expressing their viewpoints, and exhibiting support for their fellow diasporans. Interestingly, *Haz Tu Voto*

Volar[8] is a noteworthy example of a diasporic campaign that originated and evolved through social networks in 2012, persisting for years in its push for approval of Chilean expatriates' right to vote. With the enthusiastic support of thousands of Chileans beyond their homeland's borders, it achieved this measure in just a few years (*Haz Tu Voto Volar: Concept and Graphics for Political Campaign*, 2014).

Table 5. Average engagement within groups and pages

Group/Page	Average reply rate	Average share rate
Haz Tu Voto Volar	7	13
Chilenos en el extranjero	20	62
Chilenos en el mundo	0,05	0,1
División para la Comunidad de Chilena en el Exterior (Dicoex)	1,5	4,5
Mejorando chile desde el extranjero	0,1	0
Derecho al Voto de los Chilenos residentes en el extranjero	0,6	0,4

Twitter, on the other hand, does not provide an equivalent to groups or collective pages that gather individuals under one label, therefore I modified the criteria for selecting pertinent data sources. De facto, to find tweets that were relevant for this study, I inputted keywords and hashtags that I deemed could be crucial for refining the research as it gradually proceeded towards a more in-depth exploration. Thus, using keywords and hashtags such as *diaspora, voto en el extranjero, voto exterior* and *elecciones de chile*, to name some, enabled me to broaden my research and eventually led me to discover a plethora of new hashtags and significant accounts specific to my inquiries. Table 5 lists some of the commonly used hashtags for each respective electoral process, although I do recognize that it is not an exhaustive list of all the hashtags used by the diaspora and by the Chilean community on these topics.

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[8] "*Chilenos en el extranjero*" translates to "Chileans abroad, while "Haz Tu Voto Volar" translates to "Make your vote fly"

Table 5. Most common hashtags for each electoral event

Type of electoral process	Hashtags
2017 Presidential elections	#Elecciones2017 #HazTuVotoVolar #votochilenoexterior #derechoavoto #chilenosenelextranjero #votoexterior #votoextranjero
2020 Constitutional referendum ("de entrada")	#plebiscito2020 #apruebo #votoexterior #apru_eboCC #rechazo #votoenelextranjero #ChileElige #Apru1eboGana #plebiscitochile #convenciónconstitucional #HazTuVotoVolar #chilenoseneelextranjero
2021 Presidential elections	#votoextranjero #votoexterior #BoricPresidente #elecciones2021CL #Boricnosune #primariaspresidenciales #tuvotocambiatodo #ChileElige #eleccioneschile2021
2022 Constitutional referendum ("de salida")	#ChileElige #plebiscitoconstitucional #plebiscitoChile #votoexterior #plebiscitodesalida #apruebo #nuevaconstitución #chiledecide2022 #apruebo4deseptiembre #plebiscito2022 #derechoavoto #rechazo #votoapruebodesdeelextranjero #apruebounchilemejor #rechazoporchile

Furthermore, with the progress of the research, I uncovered a set of user accounts that exhibited high levels of activity, accountability, and interest in the matter of Chileans voting from abroad. Table 6 includes the most significant accounts.

Interestingly, data, figures, and statistics on voting results receive far more attention on Twitter than on Facebook. This information is often accessible in real-time and is continuously updated by both official and unofficial sources. This may be attributed to audience differences between the two platforms, as well as variations in educational levels, which can affect the range of interests, the tone of discussions, and thus the type of information made available. What is important to note is that, as mentioned before, newspapers and information platforms are more prominent on Twitter compared to

Table 6. Relevant Twitter accounts

Twitter handle	Username
@Minrel_Chile	*Cancillería Chile*
@RParticipación	*Red Para la Participación*
@GobiernodeChile	*Gobierno de Chile*
@ServelChile	*Servicio Electoral*
@FESChile	*FES Chile*
@dicoex	*Dicoex*
@chilenossinvoto	*Chilenos Sin Voto*
@MujeresRegion	*Mujeres Chilenas Region Exterior*
@El_Ciudadano	*El Ciudadano*
@ahrnostoca	*Ahora Nos Toca Participar*
@convencioncl	*Chile Convención*
@24HorasTVN	*24 Horas*
@mbachelet	*Michelle Bachelet*
@PulinaAstrozaS	*Paulina Astroza S.*

compared to Facebook, which instead is more popular for informal groups and pages (in this case, especially, but not exclusively, related to politics).

This was clearly evident during the 2017 and 2021 elections. For instance, in regard to the 2021 elections, data was collected through the official accounts of Chilean embassies and consulates around the world, which hosted polling stations. They tweeted numerous pictures and updates of the process, turnout, feedback from people, and exit polls. Moreover, the press department of Chile National Television, represented by the *@24HorasTVN* account, made a significant contribution to this objective by providing frequent updates on country-to-country trends and partial results. For similar reasons, a noticeable difference in discussion patterns and topic selection was observed between Facebook and Twitter. In comparison to Facebook, Twitter users exhibited a higher propensity to engage in political discussions about their preferred candidates. This was evident among both the Chilean community as a whole and diaspora members, who ardently support Gabriel Boric in his bid to improve their country and defeat his purportedly fascist opponent, in the 2021 presidential run. Many tweets included hashtags to show affiliation with *Apruebo Dignidad'*s candidate, such as #BoricPresidente,

#HoyseVotaBoric, #BoricPresidentedeChile, and #BoricPresidente2022. These were complemented by the #votoexterior hashtag to identify diasporans voting from abroad. Conversely, as far as I could see, discussions on Facebook did not, except for a few isolated instances, dwell on the mere political dispute between parties and candidates. The only instance in which Facebook appeared to be more polarizing in terms of online debates and discussions was during the two constitutional referendums of 2020 and 2022. This could be attributed to the fact that the only options were *'Approve'* and *'Refuse'*, which, understandably, could have made it simpler and more direct to express an opinion on the matter.

Having emphasized these important differences, it is now essential to note that the topics and corresponding sentiments that arose from the examination of Twitter and Facebook, were consistent and in agreement with each other. The first aspect that transpired was a collective sense of emotion and pride for a significant and highly anticipated accomplishment. The emotion and feeling of belonging were evident and complemented by overt mutual support among compatriots and motivation to engage in voting and participation. However, not everyone showed themselves to be in favor of the new Chilean enfranchisement. Critiques coming from non-diaspora Chilean citizens instead opposed the new measure, thus creating situations of serious debate and quarrels between diasporans and their counterparts, both on Facebook and on Twitter. In addition, a recurrent issue arose which differed from the optimistic expressions of satisfied and gratified diasporans. Many expressed frustrations about difficulties encountered to reach embassies and polling places, which prevented them from voting altogether. Consequently, complaints about the entire electoral system diffusely emerged, along with appeals to modernize the process and implement electronic and mail-in voting. Lastly, a final recurrent aspect that was observed, on both platforms, was the photographic documentation of the electoral processes. This documentation was captured not only by users present at the polling stations, but also by official Chilean consulates and embassies' accounts around the world, which additionally provided useful information and real-time updates on the turnout.

3.2. Diasporans perceptions of Chile: sharing thoughts through Facebook

To support the points made in the previous chapter's points on Chilean diasporans and their connection to the homeland – and before delving into the core of the chapter, that is the analysis of the Chilean diaspora's behavior in relation to their country's latest electoral processes – this section will present a series of comments and statements made by members of the Chilean digital diaspora themselves. As part of a Facebook thread of comments[9], they openly share their utmost personal experiences of having started a life hundreds of kilometers away from their beloved Chile. Specifically, the thread asked participants to describe the perception they had of Chile, either at the time of the comment or once settled in the new country, and additionally, to try to recollect those aspects that affected them the most while living abroad. With more than a hundred and eighty comments, diasporans were able to give a highly comprehensive and insightful image of what it feels like to be an expatriate, but also, they corroborated the idea at the basis of the concept of digital diaspora, namely a migrant collective that creates connections and personal relationships in the cyberspace (Diminescu, 2008). De facto, dispersed diasporans, thanks to ICT means like social media, are able to bond aided by a unique benefit of shared experiences and understanding that cannot be found elsewhere (Brinkerhoff, 2009), as could be observed in the thread examined.

There are indeed some aspects that can be found in the majority of the comments. It's not surprising how diasporans emphasize how hard it is to be far from home, especially because "*when you're away, you tend to highly regard the country*"[10]. What emerges from the comments, that is a widespread thought, is that people miss certain things the most: first and foremost, family and friends, followed by traditional culture and popular

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[9] The thread of comments in question is featured in the Facebook's group *Chilenos en el Extranjero* [Chileans abroad] (see chapter 3.2). As a matter of fact, I retrieved it while investigating Chilean digital diaspora's groups and interaction on Facebook. The thread dates back to the 6th of September 2013, thus it falls out of the scope of the case study presented in this thesis; however, I deemed the thread to be exceptionally significant in terms of the arguments that emerged from it. [Available at: https://www.facebook.com/ChilenosEnElExtranjero/posts/pfbid0fHztPhmBWYXbcNuRDvwsypmbVy4S YFZwWR85eNw1VRJtebLVtcr5cPcW7WPtxByel]

[10] Elisa. "*Estando fuera de Chile se valoriza mucho al pais, se extraña la familia su gente y cuando escuchas la Cancion Nacional te la lloras toda. El aire sus paisajes, las Fiestas Patrias etc*". Septemper, 2013. [Facebook]

festivities, the cuisine holds a significant role in Chilean reminiscences, in particular the flavor of signature dishes like *empanadas*. Additionally, the wine, the *asado* (grilled meat), as well as freshly caught fish, are also highly missed. An important role is also played by the music, the smell of their childhood cities, the climate, and the environment, which according to Chileans is unique and unrivaled: the landscapes that Chile has to offer, with its mountains and the sea, certainly hold a special place in their hearts.

> *"You miss the most family, friends and all those little details of our homeland. I've been living in France for 12 years, and I can say that I have a lot of acquaintances here, but my real friends are faraway, and it sad, here everything is colder and more calculated.[…]"[11]*

> *"30 years out of Chile…nostalgia grows with time, children grow up...what you miss is our capacity of being happy with a little…it's a reunion with friends, fries and Pisco and you are happy […], the joy of a Chilean song sung all together, the laughter without reason…a good wine with your best friend […]. the best of Chile is its people, literature, natural beauties, food, music…"[12]*

> *"[…] Simply how you imagine Chile, all that's beautiful is what makes me nostalgic at times and makes me miss my country which despite everything is the best in the world."[13]*

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[11] Jimena. "*Se hechan de menos la familia, los amigos y todos los detallitos de nuestra patria.*

Hace 12 años que vivo en Francia y aquí te puedo decir que tengo montones de conocidos, pero mis verdaderos amigos están fuera de aquí, y es triste, aquí todo es más frío y calculado. […]". Septemper , 2013. [Facebook]

[12] Gabriela. "*Treinta anhos fuera de Chile.la nostalgia crece en el tiempo,los hijos grandes .lo que se extrana es nuestra capacidad de ser felices con poco..en una reunión de amigos papas fritas y piscola y eres feliz.la energia de la gente en la manana cuando se va trabajar.la voluntad de ser mejores ..la alegria de una canciòn chilena cantada juntos..de la risa sin razón.el vinito bueno con tu amiga deL alma[…]. o mejor de Chile es su gente, literatura, bellezas naturales, comida, música.*". Septemper, 2013. [Facebook]

[13] Marcela. "*[…] simplemente lo que te Imagines de Chile todo lo que sea lindo es lo que me hace estar a vece nostalgica y extrañar a mi pais que pese a todo es el mejor del mundo.". Septemper, 2013. [Facebook]*

"[…] I really miss the taste of all the various Chilean dishes. Even Chilean wine if you drink it here tastes different. And the climate too. […]"[14]

"[…] What do I miss? EVERYTHINGGG…the mountain range, the sea, the fields and the desert, the food, the smells, that life with family and friends that I don't have here, I long for the day I can return to my homeland, being far makes the pains worse, with the earthquake we suffered more than those who were there, and with illnesses and passing of relatives and friends it's the same. Not even mentioning national holidays, Christmas, New Year's, or birthdays, that's when sadness hits the most. My thoughts and heart go to Chile. Proudly Chilean!!"[15]

Another thing that became apparent, was the shared perception that non-Chilean people are generally not nice, or at the very least, they're not as friendly and generous as their fellow citizens. In Europe, in particular, it seems that people are cold, distant, and unsympathetic, nothing like what Chileans have grown accustomed to, such as "*greeting each other with two kisses on the cheeks*"[16] or "visiting a friend without having to call them on the phone first"[17]. These aspects, indeed, had a significant impact on diasporans adaptation process in the host countries. Some individuals mentioned finding it very hard, "at first you suffer a lot"[18], for several reasons, but mainly for lacking a support system consisting of trusted people, as well as having to cope with language and cultural shocks of various kinds. As if this were not enough, the issue of racism is also present, which

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[14] Patricio. "*[…] Echo muchísimo de menos el sabor de diversos platos. chilenos. Incluso un vino chileno bebido aguí sabe diferente. Y el clima. […]*". Septemper, 2013. [Facebook]

[15] Jenny. "*[…] Que extraño? TODO0O. la cordillera, el mar, el campo y el desierto, las comidas, los olores, esa vida de familia o amigos que aca no tengo, añoro el dia que pueda volver a mi Patria, al estar tap lejos los dolores son peores, con el terremoto sufrimos mas los que estamos lejos, con las enfermedades o partidas de familiares o amigos idem. Ni te digo estas fechas, fiestas Patrias, Navidad, Año Nuevo o cumpleaños de la familia o mio, es cuando mas tristeza se siente. Mis pensamientos y corazon estan en Chile. Orgullosamente Chilena!!*". Septemper 6, 2013. [Facebook]

[16] Eli. "*[…] es algo q nos caracteriza. También el saludarse con un beso en la mejilla q involucra darse la mano, un abrazo, un beso y luego dar la mano a nuevo, es intrinsico del chileno. […]*".
[17] Fabiola Zurita. "*[…]lo que extrañó es juntarme con mis amigos, en Chile es sólo un toque de teléfono y se arma la fiesta o que las visitas lleguen sin invitación […]*". Septemper, 2013. [Facebook]
[18] Rebeca. "*[…] Mis experiencias como chilena en el extranjero: Personalmente Se sufre y mucho, primeramente por no tener un apoyo familiar (ya nos separan 11.000 kms) , no saber expresarse y en aquel entonces existia racismo , y yo sin poder cortar el cordón umbilical, me llevo años vivir fisicamente en Australia y emocionalmente en Chile. […]*". Septemper, 2013. [Facebook]

labels them solely as the migrants, the strangers, and prevents them from fully integrating with the host society, simply due to prejudiced stereotypes against their personalities, their personal values, but also their knowledge and their professional skills. Obtaining employment and beginning a new life, therefore, become even more challenging.

> "I live in Sweden and here they don't have a good opinion on Chileans. Personally, what affected me the most was how wrong the are in thinking that we don't have a good education or work expertise [...]. This is the reason why they don't employ us in our field of study. It's a pity [...]."[19]

> "I have lived in the US for 15 years...and I've never gone back to my beautiful Chile..at first when you arrive for the first time in an unknown country where they speak another language is terrible,,,you don't understand anything of what they tell you, because the English they teach you at school and the pronunciation and the speed in which they talk to you it's very different. You miss the food,, it's horrible there, nothing that you like and everything seems tasteless,, the climate in the summer is very hot and in the summer I freeze...after the first week I wanted to go back. The beginning is terrible and depressing, but as soon as you adapt life gets easier..i said I would only stay here for two years, and now it's been already 15 [...]"[20]

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[19] Ruth. "*Yo vivo en Suecia y aca no tienen buena opinion ni imagen de los chilenos.Personalmente lo que mas ma a afectado es el error que tienen aca de pensar que nosotros no tenemos un buen nivel de educacion y de profesionalismo aquellos que logramos sacar no solo una carrera en la Universidad sino que ademas contamos con perfeccionamientos u otros estudios superiores, y la verdad es que estamos mucho mejor preparados que la media sueca. Es esta la razon por la cual no nos dan trabajo en núestra area de estudio. Es una pena [...]".* Septemper, 2013. [Facebook]

[20] Carlos. "*yo vivo en los estados unidos por 15 anos.y desde abinuca he vuelto a mi chile precioso.al principio cuando llegas por primera vez a un pais desconocido y que hablen otra idioma es terrible,.no entendi nada lo que te dicen, ya que el ingles que te ensenan en la éscuela y la pronunciacion y la velocidad q te lo hablan es muy diferente „anoes la comida, es asquerosa „nada te gusta todas las cosas tienen gustos casi insipidos,el clima en el verano es muy caliente y en el invierno me congelo.a la primera semana ya queria volver a chile el principio es terrible y deprimente, pero cuando te adaptas alsistema la vida se te hace mas facil.es ironico solo je que estaria solamente dos anos en este pais y ya llevo 15.. [...]".* Septemper, 2013. [Facebook]

"Hi, I've been in Europe for many years, it's other habits, like the food, the freedom, the work, in Chile we're warmer, you miss that when you're in Europe they're colder love isn't demonstrated, Chileans are more lovely [...]"[21]

"Hi, well, actually it's a nightmare living far from your country, regardless of how many years you live abroad. You'll always be looked upon as a stranger, as much as you try to learn the language, they'll notice: and first thing they'll ask you where are you from????? But that's nice sometimes because it gives you the possibility to talk, about your country, you see!!! [...]"[22]

While on one hand, distance can lead diasporans to look back and feel nostalgic for the good things they left behind, as well as for all those little things which do not seem so little anymore after missing them for several years, it is important to acknowledge that being abroad can amplify both the positive and the negative aspects. On the other hand, in fact, Chileans have demonstrated their awareness of the social, economic, and political situation in Chile, openly criticize it, when necessary. Certainly, living in another country gave them a perspective to compare their current situation with the one to which their roots belong, leading to an understanding that Chile and its citizens encounter numerous daily challenges, which they don't solve, but simply *"adapt to them, because it's the only reality that they've come to know."* [23] Apparently, an objective evaluation of this circumstance reveals the existence of problems of violence and poverty, along with injustice and police violence, as perceived from external perspectives, resulting in serious security issues, to the extent that people don't feel safe to go back or to bring their children to Chile any longer. Open criticisms of social inequality and classism highlight how

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[21] Francisco. "*hola yo estube varios años en europa,son otras costumbres ,ejemplola comida,la libertad, el trabajo, en chile somos mas de piel esose extraña en europa son mas frio no se demuestra el amor, los jovenes sonas libres,aca aun les preguntamos a k hora vuelves las comidas son diferentes, aca son con mas amor [...]*". Septemper, 2013. [Facebook]

[22] Claudio. "*Hola camila, bueno realmente es una pesadilla vivir lejos de tu pais, estes los años que estes por el extrajere "siempre seras, mirado como tal, especialmente en paisés que ablan otra lengua, como ser ingles, ya que por mucho que trates de aprender la lengua del pais que estes, lo notaran: Y lo primero q' te preguntaran de donde eres??????? Pero eso aveces es bueno porque te da la posibilidad de ablar, de tu pais, mira tu!!!!! [...]*". Septemper, 2013. [Facebook]

[23] Daniel. "[…] *Mi imagen de Chile es que es un pais injusto con su gente y la misma gente a veces se conforma con algunas cosas porque es la realidad que conocen. [...]*". Septemper, 2013. [Facebook]

jealousy and intolerance often harm relationships and perceptions among individuals (*"[…] What I don't miss: the political maneuvering and the ability of people of being jealous of those who have more. […]"*[24]). Comparison with Western countries also allows Chileans to recognize the underdeveloped and inaccessible nature of their educational and healthcare systems[25], which fall far short of the efficient systems that instead are found elsewhere. Chileans desire progress in these areas, which would allow their country to grow and develop as it should[26].

> *"[…] I've lived in turkey for 2 years, but I do am happy to live here because of security […] I know that my son can easily go out in the streets and his bike won't be stolen, or even I can go out alone in the evening and nothing bad will happen to me […]"*[27]

> *"[…] When you look at your country from outside you realize all the flaws that it has, and what it lacks. We're a super messed up, disorganized, and latecomer country […] I look at the two sides of an extremely advanced country like Germany and I see Chile still fighting for political reasons rather than paying attention to what's really important like poverty and the issue of education for those who can't afford it […]".* [28]

> *"[…] In Chile inequality is ever-growing and there's still no public education of quality, universities are among the most expensive in the world, and good healthcare*

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[24] Elena. *"[…] lo que no echo de menos: la politiqueria constante y la capacidad de la gente de evidiar al que tiene mas, las protestas por lo mismo […]".* Septemper, 2013. [Facebook]

[25] Gurel. "*desde fuera todavía bajo ciertas circunstancias Chile sigue siendo parte del sur del mundo, se ve mucha diferencia social y en algunos casos pobreza, delincuencia, si mencionar otros aspectos como la desigualdad en la salud y en el estudio […]".* Septemper, 2013. [Facebook]

[26] Elvira. *"[…] Quisiera ver muchos cambios en Salud, Educación en la desigualdad y en las pensiones de quienes han trabajado toda su vida, pero tambien veo con mucho orgullo que es un gran país, que su gente se puede unir ante la adversidad y también tras una pelota. […]".* Septemper, 2013. [Facebook]

[27] *Gy. "[…] vivo en Turquía hace 2 años,m i esposo es Turco, pero si estoy feliz de vivir acá por la seguridad ,como escribió alguien por ahí, sé que mi hijo puede salir tranquilo a la calle y no le quitaran su bicicleta o yo misma puedo salir y caminar tarde en la noche y no me pasará nada […]".* Septemper, 2013. [Facebook]

[28] Marcia. "[…] *Cuando miras tu pais desde fuera te das cuenta de las falencias que este tiene y lo que falta. Somos un pais super desordenado, desorganizado, grupientos, impuntuales, flojos y miradores en menos. […]".* Septemper, 2013. [Facebook]

is not affordable by everyone, the retirement system is terribly unjust and there's too little tolerance towards differences and too big of a moral rigidity. […]"[29]

"Hi, I've lived in Germany for almost 30 years and I traveled to Chile many times, it's nice to go back again to my roots but when I'm there I want to return soon since delinquency is and will be terrible, obviously the beaches and nature are beautiful and there you have everything you want, empanadas, wine and typical food. Once you exit Chile and come live in Europe your mentality changes, yes my roots are there but I like it here and I also have friends here, I wouldn't go back to live in Chile, to be honest."[30]

All negativity and bias aside, it is undeniable that the overall feeling that is shared among the diasporans who participated in the thread is not merely one of resentment and frustration, although that is a significant aspect. Instead, the bigger picture is that Chileans have a strong attachment to their homeland, have learned to cherish it, and take a great pride in calling themselves citizens. Despite spending many years away from Chile, they remain proud of their Chilean heritage and will never forget that that is where they come from[31]. They are Chilean at heart, and they truly appreciate the baggage that being a Chilean diasporan carries with it.

"[…] when they ask me my nationality, I often give in and say that I'm Chilean, because I have suffered so much and I have lived so intensely when I was in Chile, that now, even if Mozambique is the country which I'm fond of, it's not my reality, I

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[29] Margarita. *"[…] en chile han crecido las desigüaldades, ya no hay educacion publica de calidad, las universidades estan entre las mas caras del mundo, la salud de calidad no esta al alcance de todos, a pesar de la calidad de los profesionales, el sistema de jubilacion es terriblement injusto, hay poca tolerancia con la diferencia y una rigidez moral muy grande […]"*. Septemper, 2013. [Facebook]

[30] Marcela. *"Hola yo vivo hace casi 30 años en Alemania y he viajado varias veces a Chile, es lindo llegar denuevo a mis raíces pero cuando estoy allá quiero regresar pronto ya / que la delincuencia es y será horrible claro las playas y su naturaleza es hermosa y aquí hay de todo lo que tu quieres, empanadas, vino y las comidas típicas las puedes hacer acá, al salir de Chile y entra y vivir en Europa te cambia tu mentalidad , si mis raíces son de allá pero me gusta y amistades también las tengo aquí, no volvería a vivir en Chile nuevamente , soy sincera."*. Septemper, 2013. [Facebook]

[31] Rosa. *"[…] lo más importante para mi es que NUNCA OLVIDARE donde nací y me crié, eso lo tengo claro, soy chilena y Maipucina de corazón. […]"*. Septemper, 2013. [Facebook]

am a child of Chile, I was born in Chile, the history of Chile is my history and unfortunately, for me that history ended up being the history of the world more than my own. […]"[32]

" […] I remember the Chile that I left 35 years ago, my country stayed frozen in my memory, I know, thanks to conversation I had with people who travelled there, that now Chile is totally different, but I also know that there are many other things that did not change, […] and that it's not only my perception, it's the perception we give in front of people from other countries, I currently live in the US and people here treated me well and said very nice things about Chile, and that's something that fills me with pride, despite all the years that I've lived out of my country I feel 100% Chilean. […] I feel my heart not fitting anymore into my chest for all the pride that being Chilean gives me. [….]"[33]

3.3. Chilean diaspora on social media surrounding recent electoral processes

As already mentioned in chapter 2.4, since the approval by Congress of Law 2.960 (2016), which regulates the right of expatriates to vote from abroad, there have been four major occasions in which Chilean citizens living abroad have had the opportunity to exercise their right to vote. The first was, in fact, the presidential election in November 2017, followed by the national referendum to approve the proposal for a new Constitution in

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[32] Javier. *"[…] de todas maneras cuando me preguntan que nacionalidad tengo, yo igual me inflo entero y digo soy Chileno, porque puta que la sufri, puta que vivi intensamente esos años en Chile. Y auque*

Mozambique sea el país al que le tengo más cariño y del que me encantaria ser parte, no es mi realidad, soy hijo de Chilenos, nací en Chile, la historia de Chile es mi historia y lamentablemente esa historia para mi termino siendo la historia del mundo más que la mia. […]". Septemper, 2013. [Facebook]

[33] Emilio. *"La imagen que tengo de Chile es un poco confuse pues recuerdo al Chile que deje hace 35 años, mi pais se quedo congelado en mi memoria, por conversaciones que he tenido con gente que ha viajado para alla se que Chile es totalmente diferente hoy en dia, pero tambien se que hay muchas otras cosas que no han cambiado, como por ejemplo la educacion, la cultura y la amabilidad que nos caracteriza, y esa imagen no es solamente mia, esa imagen es la que tenemos ante muchas personas de otros paises, actualmente vivo en EEUU y la gente de aqui me ha tratado y han hecho comentarios muy bonitos de Chile y eso es algo que me llena de orgullo, a pesar de los años que he vivido fuera de mi pais me siento 100% chileno […], siento que mi Corazon no cabe en mi pecho del orgullo que siento de ser chileno […]".* Septemper, 2013. [Facebook]

2020. With the expiration of the four-year presidential term, a new presidential election was held in November 2021, and less than a year later, in early September 2022, the second and final constitutional referendum marked the setback of the constitutional process with the victory of the *rechazo* (i.e., rejection) of the newly drafted constitutional text. In order to carry out the analysis of Chilean digital diaspora practices, I will structure this chapter as follows: a first part will deal with diasporic engagement during the two presidential elections of 2017 and 2021, as they constitute two analogous types of electoral processes. The same will be done for the second part, which will instead group together the two constitutional referendums of 2020 and 2022. The reason for this separation is that I found recurring themes, behaviors, and patterns in the two types of processes. In this way, it may be easier to understand the phenomena and related online practices.

3.3.1. Online diasporic engagement in the 2017 and 2021 presidential elections

The 2017 presidential elections heralded – understandably – a historic day for all Chileans, in the words of *Haz Tu Voto Volar*, "A long struggle, a great triumph"[34], as it was the first time in two centuries of history that Chileans living abroad could participate in a political matter from outside the national borders, thus becoming an active part of the population and having a say in the development of their home country *("Chileans today is an historical day to which we have all made a small contribution. Today for the first time we're participating from a distance, with our vote we're taking a part in the changes of our country. May our vote fly higher than ever before today and tomorrow…Starting from today we'll make our vote count!"[35]).* The general feeling of the people in the commenting online was one of deep emotion, excitement, and pride, sharing their experiences at the polling stations or happily expressing their willingness to vote *("How exciting!"; "Mission completed with emotion"; "Very exciting to see Chileans abroad*

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[34] Haz Tu Voto Volar. "*En todo el mundo los chilenos ya están haciendo "sus votos valer".jornada histórica. Una larga lucha, un gran triunfo para l@s chilen@s.*". July, 2017. [Facebook]

[35] Haz Tu Voto Volar. "*Chilenas y chilenos hoy es un día histórico del cual todos hemos aportado nuestro grano de arena. Hoy por primera vez estamos participando a la distancia, con nuestro voto somos parte de los cambios de nuestro país. Hoy y mañana que nuestro voto vuele más alto que nunca... Desde hoy hagamos nuestro voto valer!".* July, 2017. [Facebook]

voting!"; "Congratulations to my compatriots for this tremendous initiative. Mission Accomplished!!!"[36]). The ability of fellow citizens around the world to vote and exercise their rights for the first time is a significant and emotional moment for those both participating and observing from home *("So exciting to see Chileans abroad voting. Finally, after many years since conservatives denied this right to them"; "Proud and moved by seeing how Chileans abroad are participating in the elections #haztuvotovolar"; "With immense joy on Sunday 'll go vote here in Buenos Aires. Chilean democracy is strengthened with the participation of us Chileans abroad." [37]).* A large number of pictures documented the participation and the queues in front of the consulates in hundreds of cities around the world, and many admitted that it was a moving moment to be part of such a milestone with thousands of other diasporans.

Some even felt the urge to thank President Michelle Bachelet and all those who voted for believing in Chile and its citizens *("Thanks to President Michelle Bachelet! Thanks for believing in this beautiful country even if you don't live in it…you're true Chileans at heart!"* [38]). It is worth noting that Twitter offers a greater opportunity to observe interactions between individuals and prominent figures, including heads of state such as presidents, than Facebook does. In particular, a tweet from former president Michelle Bachelet on November 15, 2017, deserves attention due to the unique response it garnered. Ms. Bachelet in her tweet writes: *"More than 39 thousand compatriots that live abroad will be able to vote this Sunday in the presidential elections. The recognition of their right for the full exercise of their citizenship is an achievement of our democracy. While voting, no one will decide for them in the #Elecciones2017."[39].* The this that is

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[36] Haz Tu Voto Volar. Sara. *"Qué emocionante!!".* Moni. *"Misión cumplida con emoción".* Paula. *"¡Muy emocionante ver votar a los chilenos en el extranjero!".* Cristobal Ruiz-Tagle. *"Felicitaciones a mis compatriotas por tremenda iniciativa. Misión cumplida!!!".* November, 2017. [Facebook]

[37] Alvaro. *"emocionante ver a los cullenos en el extremiero votando. Ringlmente despues de tantos anos en que los conservadores les negaron ese".* July, 2017.
haztuvotovolar (@haztuvotovolar). *"Orgullosos y emocionados viendo como los chilenos en el extranjero están participando en las elecciones #haztuvotovolar #eleccion360";* Fernando. *"Gracias presidenta, con una inmensa alegría iré el domingo a votar acá en Buenos Aires. La democracia chilena se fortalece con la participación de los ciudadanos que estamos en el exterior. #VotoChileBsAs".* November, 2017. [Twitter]

[38] Haz Tu Voto Volar. Paula. *"Gracias a la la Presidenta Bachelet! Gracias por creer en este bello país aunque no vivan en él.son chilenos de corazón!".* November, 2017. [Facebook]

[39] Michelle Bachelet (@mbachelet). *"Más de 39 mil compatriotas que viven en el exterior podrán votar este domingo en las elecciones presidenciales. El reconocimiento de su derecho al ejercicio pleno de su*

peculiar is that, among the 198 replies to this tweet, which also earned 1697 likes and 944 retweets, multiple individuals expressed gratitude directly to the president for enabling such a significant achievement. Many thanked the president for the chance to once again be a part of the Chilean community and for instilling hope for the future *("Thank you very much for this possibility to continue to feel Chileans"; "Thank you president, I'll remember you when it's time to vote; THANK YOU for the fight of yesterday, of today and for the hope you leave for tomorrow. From Uruguay"; "That's good President, my admiration and respect for all the big transformations you achieved, you'll honorably go down in the history of our country"; "Thank you for giving them this opportunity President!!!"; I congratulate you Ms, all this effort for my country…thankful."[40]).*

However, not all comments were positive. There was dissatisfaction and disappointment with the voting system and the organization of the polling stations. While many were happy to be able to exercise their right, a significant number of people complained that the designated consulates were not enough to be easily accessible to everyone. Apparently, for many, the nearest consulate was hundreds of kilometers away from their homes, making it difficult, if not impossible, to get there, and extremely expensive to travel to travelling ("*I will vote, I'll travel 6 hours from Bordeaux to Paris"; "I'll travel 4 hours from Boston to go vote in New York"; "I am the only Chilean in a small town of 10 thousand inhabitants, […]. I'll travel to Copenhagen, 4:30h to go and 4:30 to come back."; Most of País Vasco, Navarra, Cantabria couldn't vote, because the voting centers were in Barcelona and it's very far away and expensive to go there. There should be one in Bilbao too, where all those living in this area filled out their paperwork. The place chosen to vote was very wrong for Chileans living in País Vasco.";*

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ciudadanía, es una conquista de nuestra democracia. Al votar, nadie decidirá por ellos en las #Elecciones2017.". November, 2017. [Twitter]

[40] Lucio. "*Muchas gracias por esta posibilidad de seguir siendo chilenos*"; Carolina. "*Gracias presidenta, me acordaré de usted al momento de votar.*"; Dan. "*seguramente no responda. No importa. GRACIAS Por la lucha de ayer, de hoy y la esperanza que deja para el mañana. Desde Uruguay*"; Omar. "*Bien Presidenta, vayan para ud., mi admiración y respeto por todas las grandes transformaciones q ha hecho, pasará con honores a la historia de nuestro país*"; Mónica. "*Gracias por darles esa oportunidad Presidenta!!!*"; César. "*La felicito Sra. Digna de una mujer, todo este esfuerzo por mi país... Se agradece. .ud. No merece el trato que le han dado acá... Saludos.*". November 16th, 2017. [Twitter]

"Unfortunately I couldn't vote being so far away from the city where we could vote here in NZ but I am happy with the result of those who voted!"[41]).

This general dissatisfaction prompted complaints about the process and led a number of users to suggest that the system should be simplified not only by adding more polling stations, but also by following the example of other countries and reforming the law to include the possibility of voting by mail.

> *"I'll travel 2,5 hours (x2) to vote in London. I think it's very important to be able to vote from abroad for the first time, but I believe that the law should be reformed, because it keeps being discriminatory. In the UK there's only one voting station, which means that if you're far from there, you need to travel many hours and spend a lot of money (in my case, living "near" the consulate, the minimum I can spend is 20k pesos, without counting the cost of going to register in person and the cost of a possible second time). It's not acceptable that voting costs so much. For someone with low income it's prohibitive. Other countries have implemented the possibility to vote by mail. I think the law should be revised in that direction."[42]*
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> *"I will not be able to vote because I live more than 3000km and much $ away from the voting location. They should implement an electronic system accessible from anywhere through the internet. In that occasion we do be able to vote."[43].*

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[41] Haz Tu Voto Volar. *María Isabel. "Yo voto viajo 6 horas de burdeos a Paris.";* Jacqueline. *"Yo viajaré 4 horas desde Boston para votar en New York";* Cristian. *"Soy el único chileno en un pueblito de 10 mil habitantes, en Dinamarca hay cerca de 10 chilenos pero solo votamos 93. Viajaré a Copenhague, 4:30 hrs, de ida y 4.30 hrs, de vuelta";* Tania. *"Gran parte del País Vasco, Navarra, Cantabria, no se pudo votar, porque el centro de votación, estaba en Barcelona y es muy lejos y costoso, para ir allá. Debería de ser en Bilbao, donde hacemos nuestros trámite todos los de esta zona. Muy errado el lugar para votar los chilenos del País Vasco.";* Elizabeth. *"Q pena no pude votar estanos muy lejos de la ciudad en la q se podía votar aca en NZ pero me gusta el resultado de los a votaron.".* November, 2017. [Facebook]

[42] Haz Tu Voto Volar. Gloria. *"Viajaré 2,5 horas (x2) para votar en Londres. Me parece muy importante poder votar por primera vez en el extranjero, pero creo que la ley debiera reformarse, porque sique siendo discriminatoria. En UK sólo hay una sede de votación lo que significa que si estás lejos tienes que viajar muchas horas y gastar mucho dinero (en mi caso, que estoy "cerca" el mínimo que se puede gastar es 20 mil pesos, eso sin contar el costo de ir a inscribirse personalmente y de una probable segunda vuelta). No puede ser que el hecho de votar cueste tanto. Para alguien con ingresos bajos es prohibitivo. Otros países han implementado la opción de voto por correo. Creo que la ley debiéra modificarse en esa dirección.".* November, 2017. [Facebook]

[43] Andrés. *"No podré votar ya que vivo a 3,000 km y muchos $ de distancia del lugar de votación.Deberían implementar un sistema electrónico accesible desde cualquier lugar con internet. Ya se hizo una prueba antes de que fuera ley y funcionó a 100%. En esa ocasión sí pude votar."* November, 2017. [Twitter]

However, not everyone was discouraged by the long journeys and expenses. For many members of the diaspora, participating in the elections meant being direct representatives of their community. This community, despite being scattered around the world, has rights and problems that must be addressed by institutions. Through the exercise of the vote, members of the community can feel less isolated from other citizens of Chile. According to data collected by SERVEL in 2016, the number of Chileans living outside the country exceeded one million. However, this figure falls far short of the number of eligible voters registered by SERVEL for elections just one year after the census. The enrollment of only 39,137 individuals (DICOEX & INE, 2017) reflects the numerous criticisms and expressions of disappointment regarding the issues that hindered the majority of potentially eligible Chileans from registering and participating in the vote. The limited number of Chilean consulates had a clear impact on the diaspora's involvement in the 2017 elections, as observed and noted online by many. As one user on the Haz Tu Voto Volar Facebook page expressed, *"It depends on the eye of the beholder. If the electoral balance weighs more than being able to exercise a civic right. For hundreds of voters it was a moment which marked a before and an after and for me that's much more significant than some electoral calculations, because it involves emotions, affections and compromises."*[44]. Those who were eligible to vote felt that their sacrifices were worthwhile for the cause. They embraced their right with immense pride and felt blessed to finally have a say in their homeland's government decisions. Chileans living abroad made it clear that they cared about voting, would honor their right, and that all fellow citizens could count on them (*"This is our duty and our hard-won right"; "You can count on me!"; "I care to participate."*[45]). What's more, Chilean expats express a keen interest in participating in elections because they often still have family and loved ones within the country. Casting their vote allows them to assist their homeland from afar and improve the lives of those they care about. Consequently, a sense of responsibility, along with

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[44] Haz Tu Voto Volar. Diana. "*Depende del cristal con que se mire. Peso en la balanza electoral o el poder ejercer un derecho ciudadano. Para miles de votantes fue un momento que marco un antes y un después y para mí eso es mucho más significativo que la calculadora electoral, porque pasa por las emociones, los afectos y los compromisos.*". November, 2017. [Facebook]

[45] Chilenos en el extranjero. Julia. "*Así es Pia estaremos votando en Nueva York. Este es nuestro deber y nuestro derecho que tanto nos costó lograr!*"; Tom*ás*. "*Yo votaré en Tegucigalpa Honduras. Me interesa participar.*" June, 2017. [Facebook]

fondness and nostalgia towards their country of origin, emerges: "*I live abroad but my family is in Chile and we all want our dear country to change, if I don't do anything for that to happen, although I may seem naïve and dumb, I'll feel excluded from the decisions that the government will take…if I vote I have the right to complain or to be grateful…I'll go to the consulate of Chile in New York. Love to all my compatriots.*"[46]

All these factors combined are valuable for diasporans to join forces and effectively respond to all those Chileans who oppose voting from abroad. Consequently, one can find various threads of discussions between those residing within Chile and those living elsewhere, attempting to persuade each other of the validity of their viewpoints ("*it bothers me that you get to have an opinion if you're not in our country and for sure you're exiles stealing money from all sides those who're not here shouldn't have the right to vote*" "*No, you're completely wrong, I live in Chile and abroad because of my job, and I know exactly what happens in my country. What else are you going to make up about us?*"[47]). Critiques and objections to the newly established voting rights are very common to find in online discussions, with tweets such as "*why do they have to vote if they don't live in Chile anymore, regardless of the reason?*"[48] or "*If they want to decide for what happens in Chile, have they come here. They're not here to see the condition in which the country is.*"[49], to which diasporans, clearly upset, must respond to ("*From El Salvador, Central America, I Will vote…Exercising my right!!! I don't care what people say, what happens in Chile affects me too, as much as it affects my family who lives in the country*

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[46] Chilenos en el extranjero. Alejandro. "*Triste ver tanto pesimismo y dificultades para votar... Lo tomaré como lo que es ...ahora tengo la posibilidad de ejercer mi derecho como Chilena que soy. Vivo en el extranjero pero mi familia está en Chile y todos queremos que nuestro querido país cambie, si no hago nada para que eso suceda, aunque parezca inocente o tonta, me sentiré excluida de las decisiones que tome el gobierno ... Si voto tengo derecho a reclamar o a agradecer ... Iré al Consulado de Chile en New York. Cariños a todos mis compatriotas.*". June, 2017. [Facebook]

[47] Chilenos en el Extranjero. "*No, completamente equivocada, vivo en Chile y en el Extranjero, ya que mi trabajo me lo exige y se exactamente lo que pasa en mi país. ¿Que mas quieres inventar de nosotros?¿Siempre inventas cosas de alguien al que no entiendes?*". March, 2017. [Facebook]

[48] Lorena. *"Por que tiene que ellos votar si ya no wiven en chile independiente de los motivos?*". July, 2017. [Twitter]

[49] Sonia. "*Si quieren decidir lo que pase en Chile, que se vengan a vivir acá. Ellos no están acá para ver en las condiciones q ud deja el país*". November, 2017. [Twitter]

[48] Chilenos en el extranjero. Ana. "*La embajadora de Chile en El Salvador, y los funcionarios de la Embajada, nos instaron a inscribirnos, hicieron charlas y hasta trabajaron en horario extra para que los chilenos pudiéramos conocer y realizar el trámite... Desde El Salvador, Centroamérica, votaré... Ejerciendo mi derecho!!! Pues igual, lo que pase en Chile me afecta, al igual que a mi familia que vive en el país que me vio nacer, mi querido Chile!*". June, 2017. [Facebook]

in which I was born, my dear Chile!; "Not all of those who live far from our beautiful country wish the worst for it, the contrary! May god want things to get better from now on. I live abroad and I miss everything of my country, with all my heart I wish the best, for all Chile and for my big family! Everything is going to be all right![50]*). They are facing accusations of not having a clear understanding of the actual situation in the country and failing to be aware of the genuine problems that Chileans face on a daily basis, including corruption, violence, poverty, and injustice, as well as allegedly stealing money from the country in exchange for their exile compensation while enjoying numerous benefits in high-income capitalist countries. Their responses, in turn, continue to emphasize the family's presence in Chile and their ongoing connection to the country, evidencing their continued concern despite their physical distance. They possess knowledge of the actual situation in Chile, and account for it in their reasoning: "*Do not underestimate the voters, if they do is because they know what is going on…they're Chileans here and in any place.*"[51]

Along these lines, I found it noteworthy that a comment declared: "*Estar fuera no significa desvicularse. Seguimos amando a Chile y pendientes de todo lo que ocurre en nuestro país.*"[52] Which translated means: "Being outside doesn't mean to be disconnected. We'll continue to love Chile besides anything that'll happen in our country.". I consider this comment to be significant because it highlights the motivation for diasporans to gather globally and capitalize on their newfound enfranchisement opportunities. Attachment to the homeland in the key. "*Un país es más que un territorio*" is the motto of Haz Tu Voto Volar; the belief behind this motto, which made obtaining the right to vote possible, remains true.

Chilenos en el extranjero. Elena. "*No Pueden decir lo mismo ni insultar a nadie, no todos los que vivimos lejos de nuestro hermoso pais, deseamos lo peor, al contrario, Dios quiera que ahora, las cosas sean diferente. Yo vivo fuera y anoro todo de mi pais, con todo mi corazon deseo lo mejor, por todo Chile y por mi familia que tengo mucha, en todas partes de nuestro hermoso Chile! Todo saldra bien!!*". March, 2017. [Facebook]

[51] Mario. "*No subestimar a los votantes...si lo hacen es porque saben la realidad país.son chilenos acá y en la quebra del Ají #derechoavoto". ?".* July, 2017. [Twitter]

[52] Haz Tu Voto Volar. Araceli. "*Yo también, muy contenta de poder votar. Lo haré en Mendoza, Argentina. Al fin se nos reconoce este derecho. Seguimos amando a Chile y pendientes de todo lo que ocurre en nuestro país. Estar fuera no significa desvincularse.*". November, 2017. [Facebook]

Similarly, the behavior observed preceding the 2021 elections can generally be divided into two groups. On one hand, there are those who, feeling increasingly empowered since 2017, express great joy and pride towards voting ("*We're getting close to an historical election in which all united we can express powerfully what Chile we aspire to, supporting those who have been with us since the start, Chileans abroad. #ConNosotrxsTambien #ChileEligeInformado #ChileMigra.*"[53]). They encourage their fellow citizens to do the same, knowing the impact their votes could make. The sentiment is one of mutual support and encouragement as people are aware of their voting power for the greater good of Chile ("*The right to exercise our civil right to vote has been the result of a long fight from compatriots in the Foreign Region. Your vote is very important #EleccionesChile2021 #VotoExterior #regionexterior #LaDerechaNoEsOpción.*" [54]). They understand that elections are something that belongs to the people, and that the people have the final say in attempting to alter their destiny and work towards a significant change.

> "*Go vote! A call for all the community living abroad, let's make us present. Your vote is more than a collective voice pronouncing who will be the next face on our money. It is showing presence in the polls and showing that you care about your Chile. We've demonstrated on 25/10/2020 and in the primaries that we DO are present, we'll demonstrate on 21/11 that we'll keep doing that and that we do have something to say. We still have to achieve more than this to make sure that in Chile they see us as a community and not just as those who are abroad! This will favor us in the recognition as a community with more rights and participation! Let's go vote! Your vote is yours, secret and personal! No matter who you give your vote to today, it's your presence that counts!*"[55]

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[53] Somos Chile Despertó Italia #Apruebo (@DespertoItalia). "*Nos estamos acercando a una elección histórica en la que todxs unidxs podemos expresar con fuerza qué Chile aspiramos, respaldando a quienes desde un primer momento han estado con nosotrxs, xs chilenxs en el extranjero. #ConNosotrxsTambien #ChileEligeInformado #ChileMigra*". May, 2021. [Twitter]

[54] Mujeres Chilenas Region Exterior (@MujeresRegion). "*El derecho a ejercer nuestro derecho ciudadano a voto ha sido el fruto de una larga lucha de compatriotas en la Región Exterior. Tu voto es muy importante #EleccionesChile2021 #chile #regionexterior #VotoExterior #LaDerechaNoEsOpción*". November, 2021. [Twitter]

[55] Mejorando Chile desde el extranjero. Tamara. "*Vayan a votar! Un llamado a toda la comunidad que reside en el exterior, hagámonos presentes. Sus votos son más que una voz colectiva en pronunciar quien será el próximo en la Moneda. Es mostrar presencia en las urnas y que su Chile bis importa. Hemos*

On the other hand, some still openly criticize the flaws in the system and express disappointment in the institutions' inability to improve external voting procedures, even after the 2017 elections. This time, in addition to the disappointment for the system's failure to implement electronic voting ("*Electronic and mail vote for all Chileans!!! For a PARTICIPATIVE democracy reflecting the desire of many! Despite of where we are.*"[56]), they expressed frustration with the slow process and the challenges faced by voters. Along with issues related to distance and expense, the problem that caused the most frustration was the long and seemingly endless queues outside consulates, which put people in a state of discomfort from standing for hours. The following comment is an example of a user expressing her frustration:

> "*Many stations closed at 6 sharp with no last call and with still long lines waiting outside. It was a very chaotic process. Since there were people waiting to go in and vote, it was also not possible to see the vote count. A big disaster.*"[57]

To summarize, this brief overview of threads and comments regarding the 2017 and 2021 presidential elections reveals that diasporans tend to adopt values and ideas from their host societies while also questioning the practices and values of their home country. This allows them to contribute to a more peaceful future in Chile. Facebook and Twitter provide a collective space for mutual encouragement towards greater political involvement in the home country, fostering a general sense of confidence. According to Brinkerhoff (2009): through processes like this, "diasporans build their confidence in their ability to contribute to the homeland".

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demostrado el 25/10/2020 y en las primarias que SI estamos presentes presentes, demostremos el 21/11 que síguenos y q si tenemos algo q decir. Tenemos q lograr más pees novia para que en Chike nos vean como comunidad y no esos q solo están afuera! Eso nos apoyará en el reconocimiento como comunidad con más derechos y participación! Vamos a votar! Tu voto es tuyo, secreto y personal! No importa a quien le darás tu voto, es la presencia que cuenta hov!". June, 2021. [Facebook]

[56] Pamela. "*Voto electrónico y postal para todos lxs chilenxs!!! Por una democracia PARTICIPATIVA que refleje el deseo de muchxs! Sin importar dónde estás.*". July, 2021. [Twitter]

[57] Chilenos en el extranjero. Margarita. "[…] *Muchos locales cerraron a las 6 en punto sin último llamado y con largas filas de espera. Fue un proceso muy caótico. Como había gente esperando entrar para votar, tampoco se pudo ir a ver el conteo de votos. Ha sido el proceso de votaciones de la historia! Incluyendo candidatos y elegidos. Un gran desastre. Hoy cero orgullo de ser chilena.*". November, 2021. [Facebook]

I report a thread from Chilean-origin user, which here I will call Fernando, dated November 30, 2021. I believe that the user's words aptly capture the experience of Chilean expatriates during a momentous time in their country's history, as well as that of the Diaspora. The sensations conveyed by the user speak clearly for his compatriots around the world and are likely shared by them. The message is simple yet powerful, revealing the frustration of a community that has long felt powerless but now has the ability to influence the future of their homeland.

"Dear Chile,

You don't know me, but we're compatriots.

I'll start this personal thread to contribute with a different view, from abroad.
The horrible dictatorship forced me to leave my land, exiled, at just 8 years old.
My personal experience of extreme poverty, in a humble campsite in Santiago, profoundly marked me, as it did witness so much pain, terror and injustice, caused by the brutal dictator.

In my family, as in that of thousands of Chileans, there are disappeared and tortured members and that, creates memory.

Nevertheless, I have beautiful memories of my homeland, how it is to stare at the snow-covered mountains at sundown, the smell of the streets of Santiago after it rained, and the human warmth of a humble, welcoming, and a fighter people.

But I don't want to talk about the past, rather about the future. In a sense, I'm writing to you from a possible future that you have within your reach and that you can start to make a reality this 19th of December.

Because it's not only about overcoming the horrors of the past that once again threaten the soul of my people, but instead, at the same time, about building a better future for everyone in a highly democratic Welfare State.
In this kind of state, not everything is perfect. Social perfection is a myth.

But there do exist the material conditions to achieve economic equality, for an accessible social mobility, that possibility to get through, regardless of the size of your wallet or that of your parents.

There exists a guaranteed free education for everyone up to the university level. Workers can benefit from strong rights with decent salaries and with a 40-hour workweek since 1970.

Citizens rely on a big social network to fix individual disadvantage and counter structural harm.
Children, youth, and adolescents, as much as our elderly, are taken care of in their most delicate life phases, and all of this is guaranteed during all their lives, with a big project of universal health, where all have access and right to a dignified health.

It's a country that cares for the environment, where no private beaches exist and nature, to which everyone has free access, is respected.

There exists transparence in public institutions and in political power to avoid corruption.
There also exists sacred civic rights, which means that, in a democratic state, the unrestricted respect of human rights is not opposite to public order, but it is its most absolute condition.

It's a country where the military never take part in civil affairs, almost always respecting the democratic supremacy. A democracy where they'll never send the army to point at its own people with war weapons.

This and much more, has existed in these distant lands for more than half a century, and all of this has managed to create not only an exceptional Welfare State unanimously supported by all political sectors, but also one of the most stable democracies and one of the most admirable economies of the world, with a solid growth which always helps the country to grow.

THE WHOLE country, not only a few privileged families.

Compatriots, this future is not impossible in Chile. It is not a fantasy, but a reality in many corners of the world.

Being so far from my homeland which saw me born, the most beautiful dream I've always had, and that today is closer than ever, is that this dignified future and these possibilities come to my people.

You deserve a state as well which cares about its people and a safe country where hate, violence and greedy selfishness won't determine the limits of daily life ever again.

For this reason, here, from the welfare state of Sweden, from Europe, we'll vote for Gabriel Boric this 19th of December.

We'll vote with remembrance, conscience, and solidarity, but more than anything, with hope and with the certainty that IT IS possible to bring full DIGNITY to the life of our people, which is so far away, but that we carry so, so close to us.

Things won't change overnight. But with good will and collective effort, without letting go, we have a beautiful future ahead.

To overcome fascism, we don't just have to be strong and united, but we also have to allow ourselves the luxury to dream of a dignified life and being prepared to fight for a better future for our sons and daughters, even more when that dream, in other places, is already a reality.

Chile can. You can. Gabriel Boric can. Together, without fear, we'll get there.

And listen…it'll be wonderful. "[58]

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[58] Fernando. *"Querido Chile, No me conocen, pero somos compatriotas.*
Abro un hilo algo personal para aportar con una mirada diferente, desde el exterior.
La horrorosa dictadura me obligó dejar mi tierra, exiliado, teniendo solo ocho años.

Mi experiencia personal de extrema pobreza, en un humilde campamento en Santiago, me ha marcado profundamente, al igual que el hecho de haber precenciado tanto dolor, terror e injusticias, causadas por el brutal dictador.

En mi familia, igual que en la de miles de chilenos y chilenas, existen miembros desaparecidos y torturados y eso, crea memoria.

Sin embargo, tengo lindos recuerdos de mi patria, como es el mirar hacia la nevada cordillera al atardecer, el olor de las llovidas calles De Santiago, y el calor humano de un pueblo humilde, luchador y amable.

Pero no les quiero hablar del pasado, sino del futuro. En cierto sentido, les escribo desde un posible futuro que ustedes tienen a su alcance y el cual puden comenzar hacer realidad este 19 de diciembre.

Porque no solo se trata de vencer a los horrores del pasado que de nuevo amenazan el alma de mi pueblo, sino que a la vez, de construir un mejor futuro para todas y todos en un altamente democrático Estado de Bienestar.

En este tipo de estado, no es todo perfecto. La perfeccion social es un mito.

Pero sí existen las condiciones materiales para lograr igualdad economica, para una accesible movilidad social, esa posibilidad de salir adelante independientemente del tamaño de tu bolsillo o el de tus padres.

Existe para todos una educación gratuita garantizada hasta el nivel universitario. Los trabajadores cuentan con fuertes derechos laborales con sueldos dignos y desde 1970 con una semana laboral de 40 horas.

La cuidadania cuenta con una gran red social para curar desventajas individuales y contrarestar males estructurales.

A los niños, jovenes y adolecentes, al igual que a nuestros viejos, se les cuida durante sus más sensibles fases de la vida y todo esto se garantiza durante toda la vida, con un gran diseño de salud universal, donde toda persona humana tiene acceso y derecho a una salud digna.

Es un país donde se cuida el medioambiente, donde no existen playas privadas y se respeta la naturaleza a la cual todos tienen acceso libre.

Existe transparencia en el ambito del las instituciones publicas y del poder político para evitar la corrupción.

Existen también sagrados derechos civiles y se entiende, que en un estado democrático, el irrestricto respeto a los derechos humanos no es contrario al orden publico, sino su mas absoluta condición.

Es un país donde las FFAA nunca participan en asuntos civiles, respetando casi siempre la supremacia democrática. Una democracia donde jamás enviarán al ejército a apuntar con armas de guerra a su propio pueblo.

Esto y mucho mas, ha existido en estas tierras lejanas desde hace más de medio siglo y todo esto ha logrado crear no solo un excepcional Estado de Bienestar unánimemente apoyado por todos los sectores políticos, sino que tambien una de las más estables democracias y una de las más admirables economías del mundo, con un sólido crecimiento económico que siempre ayuda crecer al pais. A TODO el país y no solo a unas pocas familias privilegiadas.

Compatriotas, este futuro no es imposible en Chile. No es una fantasia, sino una realidad en muchos rincones del mundo.

Estando tan lejos de mi patria que me vio nacer, el mas lindo sueño que siempre he tenido, y que hoy esta mas cerca que nunca, es que este futuro digno y estas posibilidades, lleguen a mi gente.

Ustedes también se merecen un estado que cuida de su gente y un país seguro donde el odio, la violencia y el mesquino egoismo, nunca mas determinaran los limites de la vida cotidiana.

Por eso, aca, desde el estado de bienestar de Suecia, desde Europa, votaremos por Gabriel Boric este 19 de diciembre.

Votaremos con memoria, con conciencia y con solidaridad, pero más que nada, con esperanza y con la certeza de que SI es posible llevar DIGNIDAD plena a la vida de nuestro pueblo, el cual está tan lejos, pero que llevamos, tan, tan cerca

No cambiaran las cosas de la noche a la mañana. Pero con buena voluntad y el esfuerzo colectivo, sin soltarnos, tenemos un lindo futuro al alcance.

Para derrotar al fascismo no solo tenemos que ser fuertes y unidos, sino que también tenemos que darnos el lujo de poder soñar con una vida digna, y estar dispuestos a luchar por un mejor futuro para nuestras hijas e hijos, más aun cuando ese sueño, en otros lados, ya es realidad.

3.3.2. Online diasporic engagement in the 2020 and 2022 constitutional plebiscites

The 2020 referendum on constitutional reform presented voters with the question, "Do you want a new Constitution?" The electorate overwhelmingly approved the proposal, with 78.31% voting in favor. The approval rate was even higher among voters residing abroad, with 82.03% in agreement (Servicio Electoral de Chile, n.d.). By observing the behavior of diaspora members on Facebook and Twitter, it has to be noted that there is little difference from the topics and questions of interest among diasporans already mentioned in the preceding section. In general, two types of tweets prevail: on the one hand, the tweets of those who express gratification and support for the achievements of the campaign, to secure votes from Chilean citizens living abroad ("*In 2017 we changed history and accomplished the possibility of voting from abroad. It was a prolonged and memorable fight of which we should all be proud. Now the challenge is to make our participation bigger every time.*")[59], and on the other hand those who express complaints for either their inability to participate in the referendum or the expenses they had to incur to exercise their right ("*I won't be able to vote…[...] the polling station (consulate) is 200km far from my house.; I am in Edinburgh and I have to go to vote in London, the transfer costed me £100 without counting the stay. There are many people who won't be able to vote because of that.*")[60]. Despite this, however, emerges a degree of acknowledgement of the success of the *Haz Tu Voto Volar* campaign. It had significant resonance on the outcome and general turnout in foreign countries by combining unity and organization to create full-fledged mobilization ("*What I can say with pride is that I participated from DC in the Haz Tu Voto Volar campaign, and today we get to vote from*

Chile puede. Tu puedes. Gabriel Boric puede. Juntos, sin miedo, llegaremos.
Y Oigan....será hermoso.". November, 2021. [Twitter]
[59] Cristian. *"[...] en el 2017 cambiamos la historia y logramos el voto de Ixs Chilenxs en el exterior. Fue una lucha prolongada y memorable de la cual debemos estar orgullosos. Ahora el desafío es para que nuestra participación sea cada vez mayor.".* October, 2020. [Twitter]
[60] Cecilia. "No podre votar... no sabia cuando podía viajar de vuelta desde a al país donde vivo..no alcance a cambiar domicilio... El lugar de votación (consulado) queda a 200 km de mi residencia. […]."; Carla. *"Yo estoy en Edimburgo y tengo que ir a votar a Londres, el pasaje me costó £100 sin contar la estadía. Hay mucha gente que no podrá ir a votar por eso. Ade+ para aprovechar el viaje quería renovar pasaporte, pero el consulado estará cerrada para trámites luego del plebiscito CUEK".* October, 2020. [Twitter]

abroad. (it's one of the few political triumphs of which I felt 100% a part of, so I'm highlighting it, tnx.)")[61].

In the months preceding the "entry" plebiscite, it was apparent that many were willing to support the proposal by commenting "*Yo apruebo*" under any referendum-related post or tweet. The central idea behind this was that the current Constitution was written during Pinochet's military government, making it illegitimate. People argue that Chile may have different needs and demands now than it did in 1980. Therefore, a new text should be drafted as a starting point to work towards meaningful changes and better conditions for the country and its people *("It's worth trying, because the old one is tied up with officers, the military and right-wing politicians"; "The changes we need can be realized by changing the current laws, not the constitution.[...] A new one won't simply solve any problem, but without it we won't have any chance to solve them; I am approving the new constitution as well!!!! Let's go Chileans outside Chile let's help our people!!!!"*[62]*).*

> *"All that you're saying doesn't change the fact that we need to have a new constitution. In any case it will be worse than the one we have now, but that's also not a reason not to try and have a good constitution providing real democratic mechanisms for its amendment or for drafting a new one in the future. The actual constitution doesn't include the possibility to write a new one, and that, now that most people want it, brought us to the chaos in which we're living."*[63]

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[61] Vera. "*Lo que si puedo decir con orgullo es que participe desde DC en la campaña haz tu voto volar, y hoy hay voto en el extranjero.(es de los pocos triunfos políticos de los que me he sentido100% parte así que lo alumbro, grax)*". October, 2020. [Twitter]

[62] Chilenos en el extranjero. Eduardo. *"Puede ver mil opciones ,pero hay que intentarlo, porque la antigua esta muy amarrada con los uniformados y políticos de la derecha*"; Javier. *"[...] Que los cambios que necesitamos pueden hacerse cambiando las actuales leyes, no la Constitución. Se le olvida que la actual constiticion permitió que no tenga cambios la estructura del país vía senadores designados, sistema binominal, lo que explica claramente que por casi 30 años una pocos aperaran sus privilegios. Una nueva Constitución de por sí no resolverá los problemas, pero sin una Nueva Constitución no tenemos chance de resolverlos.*". Juan. *"Yo también apoyo una nueva constitución!!!!! Vamos chilenos fuera de Chile démosle una mano a nuestra gente!!!!".* November, 2019. [Facebook]

[63] Chilenos en el extranjero. Gustavo. "*Y cuál es la novedad?. Todo lo dicho allí no quita que se deba hacer una nueva Constitución. En ninqún caso quedará peor que la que está, pero eso no es razón tampoco para hacer una buena constitución que contemple mecanismos democráticos reales para modificarla o hacer una nueva en el futuro. La actual constitución no contempla la posibilidad de hacer una nueva Constitución y eso, ahora que la gran mayoría quiere una nueva Constitución, ha llevado al caos que actualmente vivimos.*". November, 2019. [Facebook]

On the other hand, those in favor of *'Rechazo'* argued that the proposed new constitution was merely a disguise, as it would not address the country's problems, not until the same corrupt politicians who had been in power in Chile up to that point were the ones appointed to draft it *("The constitution isn't the problem. The problem is the political establishment which disregard laws and the constitution to achieve their business and personal interests."; "The new constitution is a big fraud"; "This is a scam, a new constitution, to improve things the only thing needed is the willingness to change laws, changing the constitution has other aims, don't be blind…"[64]).*

Nevertheless, two issues continue to be a topic of debate. First, the issue of Chileans voting from abroad. Some opponents of the extended right to vote remain relentless online, despite years of attempting to convince diasporans that they lack a real say in the affairs of a country where they don't reside. The comment featured by *Chilenos en el extranjero* is just one example among many: *"Chileans who live abroad don't live here and don't have any idea what it was like the 10 months of the year in which they're not here, come only come 2 months during the summer and everything's great and beautiful, on holiday, thinking that we're also enjoying ourselves, while instead in most cases we can't even afford to book vacation."[65].* To comments like this one, diasporans typically respond with the same arguments heard before. They argue that they want Chile to be a better country for their family and loved ones who still reside there, and that voting is a *"right that they gained; no one can prevent them from voting whatever they want"[66].*

Second, the issue of insufficient polling stations in each country remains a relevant topic of concern for voters interested in both the "entry" and "exit" referenda. As a result, there is a high demand to modernize the process and introduce mail or online voting.

[64] Chilenos en el extranjero. Lidia. *"La constitución no es el problema.El problema son la clase política que se pasan por alto las leyes y la constitución para lograr sus negociados y sus intereses personales. [...]";* Jose. *"La nueva contitucion es un gran engaño.".* Jonathan. *"Esto es una estafa, una nueva constitución, para mejorar todo solo se necesita voluntad para cambiar la leyes, cambiar la constitución tiene otro propósito, no seamos ciegos..".* November, 2019. [Facebook]

[65] Chilenos en el extranjero. Elsa. *"Los Chilenos qué viven en el extranjero [...] no viven aquí y no tienen idea lo qué pasamos los 10 meses del año porqué aquí algunos vienen 2 meses de verano y todo es bello hermoso calor vacaciones igual como nosotros lo disfrutamos aunque sea tomando sol en las termas de ZINC (arriba del techo de la casa) porqué si la repara o arreglos no se puede salir de vacaciones como muchos colegas qué he tenido es lo uno o lo otro,a ustedes no les sucede esto !!! [...]".* January, 2020. [Facebook]

[66] Chilenos en el extranjero. Olivia. *"Este es un derecho que se ganó";* Alejandra. *"[...] Nadie puede negarnos a votar lo que nos de la gana.".* January, 2020. [Facebook]

According to Paulina Astroza S. (@PaulinaAstrozaS), a lawyer, journalist, and associate professor of legal and social sciences at the Universidad de Concepción in Chile:

"*I hope we'll continue to modernize the voting process and achieve more possibilities to vote as it happens in other countries. This would remove obstacles for Chileans abroad. The electoral register abroad increased by 52% in respect to 2017. This is something that SERVEL should consider in order to improve the voting system abroad. It's not possible that people only have to travel to consulates to vote. It implies travel costs that many can't simply bear.*"[67].

Below I am quoting a few comments that I believe to be instrumental in understanding the frustrations that diasporans feel regards the difficulties they must face before being recognized as rightful citizens. They have been joining forces and supporting each other while countering the opinions of those who do not consider them entitled to the same rights as every other Chilean. The desire for increased political engagement in Chile from abroad implies a tendency to compare the socio-economic and political situations of host countries – which often exhibit superior conditions – to that of Chile. This is inspired by a sense of psychological and political empowerment that would not have been possible without exposure to better conditions abroad. The demonstration of having acquired a certain degree of optimism to believe it is possible to accomplish important goals has been essential for mobilizing diasporans scattered globally.

My family lives in Chile and for that I must vote!;
As long as we have our passports saying that we're Chileans, or that we have double nationality (as in my case) we can give our vote. Whether you like it or not!;
I've been living in Canada for 46 years, but my family lives in Chile and I have the right to support not only my people, but the whole Chilean people, let's not forget

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[67] Paulina Astroza S. (PaulinaAstrozaS). "*Espero que sigamos modernizando esto y teniendo mes posibilioso es de emitir en sufragio como ocurre en otros países. Eliminarías obstáculos a chilenos en el extranjero. Se aumentó en 52% padrón electoral en el extranjero en relación a 2017.Es algo que SERVEL debería considerar para mejorar el sistema de votación en el exterior. No puede ser que haya que movilizarse a consulados solamente para votar. Implica costo de viaje muchos no pueden asumir.*". October, 2020. [Twitter]

that we left our country to run from a dictatorship like the one we're experiencing today. NEW CONSTITUTION!!!;

If you're Chilean you have the legitimate right to vote whatever you circumstance and wherever you live. PERIOD!!!;

I live abroad and I have all the right because I am Chilean and I care about my country, this concerns me too. Also, my people live there. [68]

The connection within the community is thus evident, and is based on shared feelings of pride and excitement, which engender intra-group support, sympathy, and solidarity among members. These sentiments are openly exchanged between them. In line with the other electoral processes addressed in this study, photographic documentation of the referendums' voting processes was observed. The documentation was generated by both voters present at the polling stations, who were pleased to share the exceptional nature of the occasion, and official accounts of Chilean consulates and embassies around the globe, which provided updates on the voter turnout. ("*Long queues of Chileans waiting to vote in London, making worth one of the fundamental principles of democracy. #plebiscito2020 #votoexterior"; "Voting with my mom from Barcelona. With the dream of leaving behind Pinochet's Constitution and with the hope of a better Chile. #AprueboCC #AprueboConvencionConstitucional #Chile #Votoexterior #votoenelextranjero #Barcelona"[69]*)

Regrettably, even after two additional years, the attitude towards the diaspora's vote did not shift significantly in the months leading up to the 2022 Chilean national referendum for the ratification of the new constitutional text. The same pattern persisted,

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[68] Chilenos en el extranjero. Paulina. "*Mi familia vive en chile y por ellos debo votar!";* Anita. *"Mientras tengamos el pasaporte que diga que somos chilenos? O doble nacionalidad (como es mi caso) Podemos dar nuestro voto. Les guste a quien le guste!";* Pablo. "*Yo vivo 46 años en Canada pero mi familia vive en Chile y tengo el deber de apoyar no solo a mi gente sino a todo el pueblo chileno no nos olvidemos que salimos de nuestro país por una dictadura como se vive hoy en Chile. NUEVA CONSTITUCIÓN!!!!!";* Lucia. "*Si eres chileno tienes el derecho legítimo de votar cualquiera sea tu circunstancia y el lugar donde vives. PUNTO!!!";* Beatriz. "*Cómo así? Yo vivo afuera y tengo todo el derecho por que sigo siendo chilena y mi país me interesa y preocupa. Además ahí vive mi gente".* January, 2020. [Facebook]

[69] Ignacio. "*Larga fila de chilenos & esperando votar en Londres la, haciendo valer uno de los principios fundamentales de la democracia. #plebiscito2020 #VotoExterior @Chil_ in_the_UK @Minrel_Chile*"; Kate.. *"A votar con mi madre desde Barcelona. Con la ilusión de dejar atrás la constitución de Pinochet y con la esperanza de un Chile mejor. #AprueboCC #Apruebo #AprueboConvencionConstitucional #ConvencionConstitucional #Chile #VotoExterior #votoenelextranjero #Barcelona #España".* October, 2020. [Twitter]

with Chileans being accused of advocating for misery while living in safety in some capitalist nation, to which they responded with the same arguments they had been using for over five years *("I keep being Chilean and I care about my country and my family and I'd love them to enjoy some of the privileges that I have here…It'd be very selfish to say that what happens there doesn't bother me.[70])*. On the other hand, it is still possible to see hopeful and proud diasporans displaying their willingness to approve the new constitutional text with photos and comments of various kinds:

From Stonehenge, England, I approve! We're a world full of hope; I love you Chile and I wish you could have the same social rights that I have out here;
We have the privilege of living abroad under a more egalitarian constitution and we benefit from that…I think I do have the right to vote because I'm Chilean and I live in another country because of the lack of equality in mine.[71]

As many compatriots, travelling for about 5 hours from Edinburgh to London to vote. #votoinformado #votoexterior #ChileDecide2022 For a more equal Chile (women, children, adolescents and dissidents), more ecologic, decentralized and that #cares.[72]

In the train toward Toulouse to go vote tomorrow. With this pen I hope that along with all my compatriots we'll be able to write a new history for Chile #chilenosenelextranjero #4deseptiembre #NuevaConstituciònParaChile.[73]

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[70] Chilenos en el extranjero. Adela. *"[…]yo sigo siendo chilena y me importa mi país y mi familia y me gustaría que viviría algunos privilegios que yo vivo acá. sería muy egoísta decir que no me importa lo que pase aya"*. September, 2022. [Facebook]

[71] Chilenos en el extranjero. Victoria. *"Desde Stonehenge, Inglaterra. Somos todo un mundo lleno de esperanza."*. Chilenos en el extranjero. *"TE AMO CHILE Y QUISIERA QUE TUVIERAS LOS MISMOS DERECHOS SOCIALES QUE YO TENGO ACÁ FUERA."*; Lara. *"[…], tenemos el privilegio de vivir en el extranjero con una constitución más igualitaria, y gozamos de eso...creo que si tengo derecho porque soy chilena y vivo en otro país por la falta de igualdad en el mío"*. Semptember, 2022. [Facebook]

[72] Lisa. "Como muchos compatriotas, viajando aproximadamente 5 horas desde Edinburgh a Londres para votar #VotoInformado #VotoExterior #ChileDecide2022 Por un #Chile mas igualitario (mujeres, niños, adolescentes y disidencias), ecológico, descentralizado y que #cuida". September, 2022. [Twitter]

[73] Carmela. *"En el tren dirección Toulouse para ir a votar mañana. Con este lapicito espero que con tod@s mis compatriotas escribiremos una nueva histona para chile #chilenosdelextranjero#4deseptiembre #NuevaConstitucion ParaChile"*. September, 2022. [Twitter]

You are living, making History. You'll be, together with compatriots, part of History. It'll be 5 fundamental hours to accomplish a New Chile, from everyone, for everyone. #AprueboUnChileMejor #AprueboSinCondiciones[74]

Here we are with anxiety and distress. So much it costed to achieve this opportunity and to write for the first time a democratic Constitution, equal and participatory. Send hugs, love and good vibes because tomorrow a new Chile will rise. #Apruebo4deSeptiembre #votoexterior[75]

What is notable this time is the response to the result of the exit plebiscite. In reality, the text proposing the new constitution was refused by a majority of 61.89% to 38.11% (Servicio Electoral de Chile, n.d.), while votes from abroad once again supported the proposal with a majority of 60.92%. Therefore, the diasporic stance remained in line with the previous referendum, while Chileans within the country completely reversed the decision. This elicited great disappointment among the entire diaspora community, which had pinned their hopes on the new text, despite its greater inclusivity towards their political rights. Comments expressing anger and frustration certainly attract attention, among other reactions ("*Unfortunately, ignorance won; It hurts my soul to live in this Chile*"; "*I can't remove the pain, even less the rage*"; "*I give up, I don't want to fight anymore. I am getting older and I want to live the time I have left in peace. I wish someday the dream of everyone here comes true.*"; "*I find it odd that 8 million Chileans trusted those who lied to them for 40 years.*"[76]).

Despite this, a small portion of the diaspora have managed to convey a positive attitude and hope for the future of the country. It is argued that the diaspora has fulfilled its obligations, and that with continued action and decision-making for the benefit of their

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[74] Vanessa. "Lissette, estás viviendo, haciendo Historia. Serás, junto a compatriotas, parte de la Historia. Serán 5 horas fundamentales para lograr un Nuevo Chile, por y para todos y todas. […] #AprueboUnChileMejor #AprueboSinCondiciones". September, 2022. [Twitter]

[75] Sergio. "*Aquí estamos con ansiedad y angustia. Tanto nos costó tener esta oportunidad de escribir por primera vez una Constitución democrática, paritaria y participativa. Manden abrazos, cariño y buenas vibras que mañana nace el nuevo Chile. #Apruebo4deSeptiembre #votoexterior*". September, 2022 [Twitter]

[76] Chilenos en el extranjero. Helen. "*Desgraciadamente , ganó la ignorancia*"; Laura. "*Duele el Alma vivir en este Chile*". Anyela Soto Bernales. "*No, el dolor no se me quita, y la rabia menos.*"; Susana. "*Me rindo, ya no quiero luchar mas. La edad avanza y lo que me queda lo quiero vivir en paz. Ojalá algún día se cumpla el sueño de todos.*". September, 2022. [Facebook]

homeland, their circumstances may eventually improve, and political leaders may choose to follow the positive examples of other nations. A post, with over two hundred likes and nearly one hundred sympathetic comments, on the *Chilenos en el extranjero* page read, "*Today is a new day. We are Chileans at heart and will put aside our frustration to continue supporting our country.*", which demonstrates how the diaspora is a cohesive group, most of the time sharing the same ideas and feelings. They pay allegiance to their homeland and feel empowered collectively, which is necessary to generate purposive endeavors that could eventually influence policies and support the socioeconomic development of their home country (Brinkerhoff, 2009).

> *The president of Chile has not changed, so the fight continues!!!;*
>
> *Frustration? No? Now is the moment when the constituent democratic process has to repeat and we have to be on the alert. Chile needs another and stronger jolt. There's no need to cry for the charter. Anyhow, in 2020 we voted to take out the previous constitution. Well let's make sure that another vote will happen before the next elections and let's show the world Kast's opportunism and all the other deadbeats.;*
>
> *Those who believed in the right-wing will' have a big disappointment, I still have faith that Chile will move forward and succeed in getting a new constitution.*[77]

To conclude, the overall impression is that the community is cohesive and focused, with few exceptions, on supporting the #Apruebo movement for the creation and approval of a new constitution. The sentiment is that participating in the referendum is not only a way to exercise and honor one's civic rights, but also an opportunity to provide Chile and its people with a better future. What drives diaspora mobilization in the voting process in this case are the hopes and desires to achieve a more equal and inclusive constitutional text that grants basic rights to Chilean citizens, regardless of their location, and is

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[77] Chilenos en el extranjero. Francisco. "*El Presidente de Chile No se ha cambiado así es que la lucha sigue;* Gabriel. *"¿Frustración? ¿Nada? Ahora es donde se debe pedir que se repita el proceso democrático de constituyentes y estar alertas. Chile necesita otro remezón más fuerte. No hay que llorar la carta. De todas formas, en 2020, se votó para sacar la constitución anterior. Bueno entonces que se haga antes de las próximas elecciones y demostrar el oportunismo de Kast y los otros aprovechadores.".* Moni. *"@Gabriel yo pienso igual que tu, los que creyeron en la derecha tendrán una gran decepción, yo tengo esperanza de que Chile saldrá adelante y obtendremos una nueva constitución*". September, 2022. [Facebook]

safeguarded by the state's institutions. Seemingly, "*Chileans who live abroad know that it is possible to live well, that rights are not tradable, nor a business for which one should pay*"[78]. This perspective proved to be prevalent within the diaspora community, and it translated into the approval of "I approve" in both the 2020 and 2022 referendums. Chileans living abroad desire their country to be on par with the welfare systems in the countries they have resided in for years. Therefore, in a way, they consider the new constitution's approval a matter of patriotism ("Chileans abroad […] vote *Apruebo*, because they want the same for Chile. They are PATRIOTS! #votoexterior")[79]. However, despite all efforts, including online campaigns and in-person mobilization, the 2022 'exit' referendum resulted in the overturning of the previous referendum's outcome, with the desired outcome of approving the new constitution text not achieved, despite high participation at polling stations abroad.

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[78] Alvaro. *"¿Saben por qué el Apruebo arrasa en el extranjero? Porque los chilenos que viven en el extranjero saben que se puede vivir en bienestar, que los derechos no son un negocio por los que hay que pagar. Votan Apruebo, porque quieren lo mismo para Chile. Son PATRIOTAS! #VotoExterior*". September, 2022. [Twitter]
[79] Ibid.

Conclusion

This thesis aimed at investigating the impact of newly enfranchised Chilean diaspora living abroad, and their online practices on recent electoral outcomes, as well as the sense of community that is built among the dispersed group. My main intention was to provide a contribution to the emerging scholarly field of digital migration and diaspora studies, in the attempt to address an area of research that has not been extensively explored by scholars yet, namely the study of the interplay between diasporic subjects' networking and foreign voting. The research involved media ethnographic and discourse analysis approaches to digital migration studies, which have proved to be effective in analyzing the contextual social and political dynamics of diasporic communities both online and offline. This study has shown how these dynamics are indeed intertwined with practices easing the formation of diasporic subjects' identities, community building, the expression of a sense of belonging and political mobilization in a context of dispersion.

De facto, this thesis set out to answer to the following research question: What is the relationship between social media, Chilean diasporic communities worldwide, and political participation from abroad? And additionally, in what ways do these three elements impact one another? My focus on digital media practices for diasporic political engagement and networking centered on a specific contextual perspective. I examined four different events in the Chilean political landscape through the discourses, accounts, and interactions of diaspora members online. It goes without saying that conducting this research required a focused consideration of the context surrounding online practices as anchored in everyday diasporic connections. The conducted research involved observing and analyzing posts, tweets, and comments on Facebook and Twitter – two prevalent

social media platforms. The groups, pages and personal accounts on these platforms served as a source of empirical evidence for Chilean diasporic practices online. Most particularly, the study focused on the interactions occurring during the four electoral processes of interest, namely the 2017 and 2021 presidential elections, and the 2020 and 2022 constitutional plebiscites. The primary goal was to comprehensively explore the political engagement and social media interactions of the Chilean diaspora during these periods. The research was conducted by means of hashtags and keywords that aligned with the research objectives. Therefore, to ensure the inclusion of relevant sources, I selected those that were pertinent to the covered topics, had a sufficient number of participants, and an appropriate level of engagement. After examining the two websites, it became apparent that although they expressed similar sentiments and held consistent discussions on expatriate voting, there were notable differences between them. Namely, Twitter experienced greater traction among newspapers and information platforms, whereas Facebook tended to be the more popular choice for informal groups and pages due to its more 'narrative-oriented' nature.

Before delving into the factual case study presented in chapter 3, this work of thesis was structured with the intention of providing, first, a comprehensive overview of diaspora and digital diaspora characteristics, emphasizing transnational interconnectivity and political mobilization of diaspora groups, both online and offline (Chapter 1). Subsequently, in Chapter 2, the study examined the case in point of the Chilean diaspora, going through historical background and group characterization, along with policy implications, leading up to the attainment of voting rights in 2016. The studies carried out in the first chapters established the groundwork and enabled the analysis of the data gathered on Facebook and Twitter regarding the Chilean digital diaspora's perspective and discussions about their newfound political opportunities, involvement, and eagerness to engage in their country's political processes.

Therefore, Chapter 3' research demonstrated that following the approval of Law 2.960 (2016), dispersed diasporans engaged online with varying intensities over the years examined (Twitter proving to be more participated than Facebook, with regards to the rate of interactions), but driven by a rather consistent standpoint and objectives to accomplish. In particular, it has been revealed that being able to vote and participate

actively in Chile's political affairs can generate feelings of pride, belonging, hope for the future, and empowerment among diasporans. Both the enfranchisement and the possibility to communicate through social media provided the benefits of reducing feelings of isolation and increasing the community building potential of their online practices. Diasporans expressed a keen interest in participating in elections as direct representatives of the diaspora community, recognizing the importance of uniting their voices to support the homeland, despite physical distance. By doing so, they take on a sense of responsibility – and nostalgia – which allows them to improve the lives of their loved ones residing in Chile while maintaining meaningful connections. In this sense, attachment to the homeland was found to be crucial for motivating and mobilizing fellow diasporans to participate in the electoral processes and harness their newfound political agency. Evidence emerged of the connection within the community, characterized by strong intra-group support, cohesion, positive attitudes and a broad array of shared ideas and values. Twitter and Facebook thus provided a collective space for mutual motivation towards increased political involvement. This enabled citizens in Chile to build confidence in their ability to influence their country's future alongside their peers. The *Haz Tu Voto Volar* campaign exemplifies the success of the combination of unity and mobilization that occurred worldwide. Such accomplishment was confirmed by the growing number of registered voters throughout the years, which indeed brought meaningful resonance to the general elections turnout and to their outcome, although – understandably – it was not enough to markedly alter the overall national results. Acknowledging such success also awarded diasporans with a certain degree of optimism, demonstrating the possibility to achieve goals. This factor has undeniably been essential to bolster collective empowerment and thus, mobilization.

From these premises, it can be stated that research supports the literature as well as existing sociological and/or ethnographic analyses regarding these matters. The findings, most notably, indicate a marked tendency of diasporans to adopt values and ideas from the host societies while questioning the practices of their home country (Brinkerhoff, 2009; Leurs & Smets, 2018). This inclination to compare the domestic situation with countries that exhibit more favorable conditions fosters greater desire for political engagement, with the expectation of collectively mobilizing and contributing to a more

peaceful, equitable, and inclusive future in Chile. This confirms Koinova's (2010) argument according to which diaspora groups are increasingly emerging as political actors with transnational links, which thanks to advancements in ICT become involved and can act strategically when having to address issues in the homeland. The opportunities provided by social media and internet communication enable diasporans to gain a voice, visibility and ultimately political impact (Leurs & Smets, 2018), by fostering the spread of democratic values and contributing to socio-economic development in the homeland (Brinkerhoff, 2009). The Chilean diaspora, de facto, prioritized personal and political values such as respect for human rights and democratic practices, as well as policy alternatives, through internet discussions. Interestingly, they were inspired by the psychological and political empowerment gained from the exposure to these values abroad. Therefore, in the specific case of Chile, the success of diaspora mobilization resulted from a combination of endorsing fundamental human rights, psychological empowerment, and the conviction that they could independently advance, preserve and demonstrate their rights for their homeland.

To conclude, it can be argued that the internet, particularly social media, has afforded the Chilean diaspora the opportunity to publicly express their opinions and engage in dialogue despite being dispersed around the globe. This has undoubtedly helped to fortify their ethnic ties and sense of belonging, as well as work towards achieving goals related to their homeland identity (Alencar, 2017; Brinkerhoff, 2009; Sawyer & Chen, 2012). Social media, in this sense, were instrumental for the creation of an imagined community through the contemplation of a forgotten historical past and potential future developments. Political participation demonstrated to have significantly benefitted from social media and ICT, which enabled fast communication to coordinate collective action and promote the political agendas of the diaspora to influence the homeland. Factors such as a sense of solidarity and mutual understanding, along with intense interaction and a strong interest in the policies and quality of life of the home country, essentially emerged from this thesis as the primary factors that majorly informed mobilization and participation of the Chilean diaspora during the most recent electoral processes. These objective elements are also crucial in understanding the diaspora's role in shaping Chile's political landscape.

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