Dear colleagues,

apologies for x-posting, and please distribute widely:

Call for papers: Forced migration and digital connectivity in(to) Europe,

Special collection of Social Media + Society, edited by Koen Leurs and Kevin Smets

While it is increasingly observable that forced migration and digital connectivity are intertwined, there is a need for more in-depth, critical research into this topic, especially in the context of Europe. With this special collection of Social Media + Society, a high standing, peer reviewed, open-access journal published by Sage, we seek to bring together cutting-edge research on forced migration in(to) Europe and the way in which digital technologies and digital connectivity and in particular social media play a role in the lives of forced migrants. The collection aims not only to present empirical evidence for discussions about forced migration and digital connectivity, but also to offer new theoretical insights on the issue. Approaching forced migration as a complex societal, political and cultural phenomenon, we seek to consider different aspects of digital connectivity, such as the use of social media by migrants, activists and trolls, issues of affectivity, representation, materiality, mobility, solidarity, political economy and the communication industry, as well questions related to gender, race, sexuality, nation, class, geography and religion; identity; diaspora; media literacy; policy; legislation and human rights.

The label forced migrants includes here asylum seekers, refugees, forced migrants, stranded migrants, left-behind children and child migrants as well internally displaced populations amongst others. We welcome scholars from the (digital) humanities and (computational) social sciences. Theoretical perspectives may include but are not limited to communication, media and cultural studies, HCI, postcolonial, feminist, critical race and intersectional approaches, critical ICT4D, and political economy. Empirical perspectives may include but are not limited to (virtual) ethnography, big data, digital methods, fieldwork, action-research, creative methods, mixed-methods, and survey-research.

Contributions may address the following topics:

* connected migrants in Europe
* social media use in refugee camps and asylum seeker centres
* forced migration and selfie citizenship
* solidarity
* transnational communication and affectivity
* information scarcity
* encapsulation & cosmopolitanization
* differences and similarities different migrant groups (class, gender, race, age, generation, location)
* digital migrant identities, self-representations and alternative migrant cartographies
* migrant recruitment and radicalization online
* digital deportability and algorithmic sorting
* surveillance and tracking
* migrant networked learning
* migrant acculturation online
* trolling, extremism and anti-migration protest online
* political economy of migrant connectivity
* digital communication rights
Please send a 1-page (ca. 500 words) abstract outlining the main objectives of your paper as well as its empirical/theoretical contributions to the topic of forced migration and digital connectivity to both k.a.leurs@uu.nl and kevin.smets@uantwerpen.be by 15 April 2016. Decisions by the editors to solicit full papers will be made in May 2016. The deadline for submitting full papers (8000 words all inclusive) is 7 December 2016. The contributions will be published as a Special Collection of the online, open-access, peer-reviewed journal Social Media + Society, published by Sage and edited by Prof. Zizi Papacharissi (http://sms.sagepub.com).

Please contact the guest editors if you have any questions about this call for papers. Informal inquiries about possible topics, themes and proposals are also welcomed. The guest editors welcome contributions by established scholars as well as early career researchers.

**The special collection is developed in tandem with two events:**
1) the symposium “Connected migrants: encapsulation or cosmopolitanism?” (http://www.knaw.nl/connected-migrants) taking place in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, from 14-16 December 2016. The symposium is financed by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences.
2) two panels on “Forced migration and digital connectivity in(to) Europe”, to be submitted to the Association of Internet Research annual conference, to be held in Berlin, Germany from 5-8 October, 2016.

**Key dates**
-15 April 2016: 1-page abstract + 150 word bio
-May 2016: invitations for full papers after selection by guest editors
-7 December 2016: first version of full papers (8000 words all inclusive)
-Late 2017: anticipated publication date

**Rationale**
Daily, Europeans witness Syrian asylum seekers arriving on the beaches of Greek and Southern-Italian islands. TV news footage shows how freshly arrived migrants use smartphones to take selfies or use Skype to happily announce their safe arrival on European soil to loved ones elsewhere. In response, prejudicial discourses about migrants have centered on smartphones; for example, anti-immigrant politicians and various social media memes frame refugees who own ‘luxury’ smartphones as less deserving of asylum. Forced migrants, who are digitally connected, embody Europe’s Janus-faced character in an age when advanced technologies are celebrated for increasing communication speed and economic prosperity.

As a result of different conflicts worldwide, forced migration has become a major challenge for Europe. The enormous death toll of migrants at Europe’s borders, the reintroduction of border controls within the Schengen Area, and the violence and hostility towards refugees and asylum seekers in several European countries published across various social media platforms all attest to the way in which the current influx of forced migrants is overturning European society and political structures. At the same time mainstream media have devoted significant attention to the situation of refugees along their migration routes in(to) Europe. Interestingly, these instances often included digital technologies as central anchoring points in the lives of refugees. Detailed reports were made of refugees using smartphones, keeping in touch with
their relatives, or documenting their journey through social media. Other accounts, albeit less frequently, focused on the ways in which governments seek to deal with forced migration via digital technologies, for instance by making use of GPS tracking in smartphones, or by setting up online deterrence campaigns to discourage refugees to migrate to specific countries.

About the guest-editors
Koen Leurs is Assistant Professor in Gender and Postcolonial studies at the Graduate Gender Program, Department of Media and Culture Studies at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. He obtained his PhD in 2012. He is a feminist internet researcher interested in multiculturalism, race, migration, diaspora and youth culture using mixed methods and ethnography. He has just completed a 2 year EU funded Marie Curie research project titled Urban Politics of London Youth Analyzed Digitally, at the London School of Economics and Political Science, UK. From February 2016 onwards he will work on a 3-year Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research funded research project ‘Young connected migrants. Comparing digital practices of young asylum seekers and expatriates in the Netherlands’. See www.koenleurs.net.

Kevin Smets is assistant professor in Communication Studies at the Free University of Brussels, and a postdoctoral fellow of the Research Foundation Flanders. He obtained his PhD in Film Studies and Visual Culture at the University of Antwerp in 2013. He has published widely on diasporic media cultures, particularly film cultures, in peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes.