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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Migrant Activism in Contexts of Discrimination: Political Strategies and Competitiveness in the Associative Sphere

Raquel Tarullo

University of València

Cristina Renedo Farpón

University of Valladolid

María Díez-Garrido

University of Valladolid

ABSTRACT: The political participation of migrants reveals a fundamental tension between their positioning as objects of welfare policies and their potential as active political subjects. Based on this premise, the present study examines the forms of activism promoted by Latin American migrant social organisations in Spain, within a context marked by the increasing visibility and diversification of migrant activism. A mixed-methods approach was applied, combining quantitative and discourse analysis of the official accounts of diaspora associations with semi-structured interviews conducted with representatives of these movements. The findings show that, while associations mobilise repertoires of action aligned with immigrant politics, their involvement in traditional political arenas remains limited, shaped by dependence on public funding and organisational precarity. Active mobilisation is concentrated in digital campaigns against racism and xenophobia. Moreover, the persistence of colonial logics is evident through institutional mechanisms of control that curtail the autonomy of these organisations. At the same time, the communicative practices developed by these associations can be understood as forms of communicative resilience, especially in relation to the networks of solidarity they establish and their efforts to sustain political and cultural presence despite structural constraints. The study concludes that, even when agency is exercised, migrant associations continue to face structural barriers that hinder their full recognition as political actors, thereby reproducing symbolic forms of exclusion in the host society.

KEYWORDS: Activism, Civil rights, Spain, Latin American Migration, Political Subjects

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR(S): maria.r.tarullo@uv.es

1. Introduction

The political participation of migrants reveals a fundamental tension between the figure of the migrant as the “object” of public policies and their potential as a political “subject”. Despite their active engagement in various social spaces, migrants are typically recognised institutionally as beneficiaries of welfare policies, but not as legitimate actors in shaping those policies (Gil Araujo, 2023). This symbolic and material exclusion from formal political spheres contrasts with the capacity of many associations to influence public agendas, denounce discriminatory practices, and build alliances with diverse social movements, including those of a transnational nature (Faist, 2024). Migrants are political actors who live and act simultaneously across multiple geographic scales and systems of belonging and reference, thereby challenging traditional conceptions of citizenship rooted in state-national logic (Tungohan et al., 2024).

Contemporary migrant activism is characterised by growing visibility and diversification (Leurs, 2023), its articulation through digital networks (Flores-Marquez, 2019), its transnational character (Faist, 2024), and its ability to contest the institutional structures of nation-states from positions previously regarded as peripheral (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2009; Appadurai, 1996).

Within this framework, diaspora associational life offers a privileged field for analysing the forms of civic and political participation that these citizens develop in host societies (Leurs, 2023). These associations—whether ethnic, national, religious, cultural, political, or mixed—perform multiple functions, ranging from mutual support and intercultural mediation to the advocacy of rights and involvement in public debates on migration policy, inclusion, racism, and citizenship (Tungohan et al., 2024). Through such collective spaces, migrants not only respond to structural conditions of vulnerability but also enact political practices that challenge exclusionary normative frameworks (Gil Araujo, 2022, 2023). From this perspective, their communicative practices can be understood as forms of communicative resilience (Buzzanell, 2019), insofar as they enable the creation of shared meanings, the reinforcement of solidarity networks, and the articulation of collective narratives that sustain participation and belonging in contexts of structural adversity (Buzzanell, 2010). The emergence of these associative spaces is inseparable from the legislative and political frameworks of the host country, which “plays a central role in setting the boundaries of inclusion, exclusion, and citizenship, enabling or restricting different forms of political mobilisation within its borders” (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2009: 27). In Spain, for example, the legal recognition of the right of association for all individuals, regardless of administrative status, has facilitated the proliferation of migrant organisations since the 1990s. While this legal framework has enabled the formalisation of many groups, significant barriers remain—such as bureaucratic hurdles, dependency on subsidies, and precarious membership (Tungohan et al., 2024). Furthermore, legal recognition has not necessarily translated into equitable access to political deliberation and decision-making spaces (Aceros et al., 2023). Although migrant associations have often been incorporated instrumentally into institutional “integration” programmes, this does not equate to full recognition as autonomous political interlocutors (Aceros et al., 2023).

This study aims to analyse the forms of activism promoted by social organisations formed by Latin American migrants in Spain. It seeks to contribute on two complementary levels: firstly, by enhancing scholarly knowledge of the political and social participation dynamics of the Latin American migrant community in Spain—a field still insufficiently explored in recent academic literature; and secondly, by proposing a mixed-methods approach that combines the analysis of activist discourse with an examination of their strategies for visibility and collective action in digital environments. In this way, the study offers a comprehensive approach that considers both the experiential dimension and contemporary modes of political and communicative resilience within online activist practices.

2. Studies on Migration and Activism: Theoretical Notes for their Analysis

For a long time, dominant approaches in migration studies have tended to depict migrants as passive agents in their processes of integration into host societies (Leurs, 2023). This perspective has framed them, on the one hand, as recipients of assistance from the state and social organisations—primarily seen as beneficiaries of resources—and on the other, as a labour force to be incorporated into the workforce. Within this framework, the notion of integration has frequently been understood as a unidirectional process of adaptation, in which migrants are expected to accommodate themselves—subordinately—to pre-existing social structures and norms (Gil Araujo, 2022; 2023).

Postcolonial theories, along with decolonial approaches, have made a significant contribution to problematising dominant understandings of contemporary migration, highlighting the persistence of the colonial matrix of power in discourses, institutional practices, and the production of knowledge on migratory processes (Quijano, 2007). From this standpoint, scholars have evidenced how colonial logics not only survive but continue to structure social, political, and epistemic relations in the present. As Quijano (2007, 93) notes, coloniality manifests itself through the “naturalisation of racial hierarchies,” which sustain and reproduce dynamics of domination and the subalternisation of peoples, communities, nations, and forms of knowledge and experience.

In this regard, many traditional approaches to international migration have reproduced ethnocentric and Eurocentric perspectives, contributing to representations of migrants within a deficit paradigm (Gil Araujo, 2022). This paradigm tends to emphasise what migrants “lack”—language proficiency, skills, integration, legal status—rather than recognising their knowledge, trajectories, and capacities as historical and political subjects (Lacomba Vázquez and Moraes Mena, 2020). Such narratives perpetuate the positioning of migrants as objects of intervention or management, rather than as agents with the right and ability to produce knowledge from their own experience (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2009). In contrast, decolonial perspectives propose a critical reading of the knowledge-power regime that has shaped migration studies, advocating for a plural, situated epistemology committed to cognitive and social justice (Lacomba Vázquez and Moraes Mena, 2020). This theoretical and empirical turn entails an opening towards an inclusive, plural form of citizenship articulated through social action and the right to participate in shaping the shared space of the host society (Lacomba Vázquez and Moraes Mena, 2020).

Within this renewed framework, the communicative dimension of migrant organising becomes central. Migrant social organisations enact communicative resilience, that is, discursive and relational processes through which groups create shared meanings, sustain solidarity networks, and keep collective action viable under conditions of dependency, precarity, and institutional constraint (Buzzanell, 2010; 2019). Rather than a static attribute, resilience is accomplished through everyday talk, narrative sense-making, and networked communication that reframe vulnerability, align heterogeneous actors, and translate lived experience into public claims and rights-oriented participation (Buzzanell, 2010). This lens allows us to understand communication not merely as a tool but as a constitutive practice that enables migrants to negotiate belonging and presence in the public sphere despite structural asymmetries.

Migrant engagement in the political life of the host country plays a crucial role in their recognition as political subjects (Gil Araujo, 2022), offering them a platform from which they can position themselves and influence public affairs in their place of residence (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2009: 34). Within the study of political participation and migrant activism, Østergaard-Nielsen (2003, 2009) proposes an analytical typology that enables an understanding of the various ways in which migrants engage politically, both in the country of origin and in the host country. This typology distinguishes between four main dimensions: homeland politics, emigrant politics, local-local politics, and immigrant politics. According to Østergaard-Nielsen, homeland

politics refers to migrants' political engagement oriented towards their country of origin. This participation may take diverse forms, including support for political parties, social movements, nationalist causes, or campaigns advocating democratic reforms in the home country. Through mechanisms such as remittances, transnational social networks, or digital activism—facilitated by communication technologies—migrants actively contribute to political processes in their countries of origin, shaping discourse, supporting leaderships, and engaging in the definition of political agendas.

Emigrant politics refers to the ways in which states of origin seek to establish political relations with their citizens residing abroad. This category encompasses policies such as the extension of voting rights, dual nationality, the creation of ministries or secretariats for migrants, or the inclusion of diaspora representatives in consultative bodies. As emigrant politics is often motivated by various state interests, it is important to differentiate between inclusive and democratic approaches—which recognise the agency of the diaspora and incorporate it into deliberative processes—and more authoritarian or instrumental approaches—which seek to reinforce state control over citizens abroad.

The concept of local-local politics, also introduced by Østergaard-Nielsen (2003, 2009), refers to the political participation of migrants in matters that directly affect their everyday lives in their place of residence, regardless of whether such actions are marked by a migrant identity. This form of participation—often in coordination with non-migrant grassroots organisations—manifests in struggles over housing, public services, environmental protection, or resistance to gentrification. It embodies the notion of “citizenship from below” (Isin and Ruppert, 2020), making visible migrants' agency as residents committed to transforming their immediate environments and broadening the boundaries of the political in increasingly diverse and complex societies.

The notion of immigrant politics relates to the forms of political engagement that migrants develop within the host country. The agendas associated with this type of activism have evolved progressively, in part in response to global dynamics that shape the migratory experience (Leurs, 2023). From the defence of the rights of undocumented individuals to struggles for the recognition of care work, the visibility of racialised violence, or the promotion of historical memory of migrant communities (Moreno, 2018)), migrants engaging in this form of activism demand equal treatment, regularisation of administrative status, access to public services, cultural recognition, and effective political participation. Some practices are also located outside the boundaries of conventional civic and political action—dynamics which Moraes Mena and Cutillas Fernández (2018, 611) describe as “infrapolitics”: festivities, rituals, storytelling, songs, religious ceremonies, sports gatherings, and games often function as spaces of resistance (Bolzman, 1997).

2.1 Latin American Activism in Spain

Spain has become one of the main receiving countries of international migrants: it ranks second within the European Union in terms of migration volume, behind only Germany (Olmo, 2024). In 2022 alone, a total of 1,120,474 foreign nationals established residence in Spain, representing a 41.8% increase from the previous year and the highest net migration figure recorded in the last decade (Instituto Nacional de Estadística [INE], 2024). This phenomenon is particularly significant in a context marked by population ageing and low birth rates, with demographic growth in 2023—exceeding 500,000 people—attributed primarily to the arrival of migrants (INE, 2024). These figures underscore not only the central role of migration in Spain's demographic dynamics, but also the importance of addressing its social and political implications.

With approximately 3.8 million individuals born in Latin America residing in Spain, this group constitutes the country's largest migrant community (INE, 2024). Spain thus ranks as the second-largest host country of

Latin American migrants globally, surpassed only by the United States (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2024).

Beyond its demographic significance, the Latin American community in Spain has played an active role in the public sphere through various forms of organisation and activism (Gil Araujo, 2023), in ways that echo the mobilisation landscape characteristic of Latin America. A comprehensive understanding of migrant activism must account for the influence of the political culture of countries of origin, as well as the political learning and socialisation processes migrants have undergone both prior to and following migration (Mezzadra, 2022).

Recent studies identify a more politically-oriented profile among grassroots Latin migrant organisations in Spain (Moraes Mena and Cutillas Fernández, 2018; Lacomba Vázquez and Moraes Mena, 2020). These organisations no longer function solely as platforms for community support and assistance with regularisation processes, legal advice, or labour market integration (Domínguez Mujica and Díaz Hernández, 2012), but also as actors engaged in constructing citizenship and claiming rights in the host country (Mezzadra, 2022).

3. Research Objectives and Questions

The central aim of this research is to identify the civic repertoires articulated by these organisations, as well as the issues that motivate their mobilisation and presence in the public sphere. The following specific objectives guide the study:

1. To describe the communication strategies employed by Latin American social organisations in Spain, with particular attention to how they represent themselves politically and build community through social media and digital platforms, understood as forms of communicative resilience.
2. To analyse the extent to which Latin American social organisations in Spain articulate expressions of immigrant politics, identifying, where applicable, mobilisation repertoires oriented towards improving living conditions and securing rights in the host country.
3. To explore whether Latin American social organisations in Spain engage in civic actions related to their countries of origin (homeland politics).
4. To investigate the degree to which Latin American social organisations in Spain participate in political dynamics within transnational contexts (emigrant politics).
5. To examine whether the initiatives of Latin American social organisations in Spain lead to alliances with local collectives (local-local politics).

In line with the research aims, the following research questions have been identified:

1. How do these organisations use digital environments to construct a collective political voice, disseminate their activities, and expand their support networks?
2. What repertoires of action and demands characterise the immigrant politics practised by Latin American migrant associations in Spain?
3. In what ways are these organisations connected to political processes in their countries of origin (homeland politics), and what issues dominate these connections?
4. What relationships do they maintain with state or institutional actors in their countries of origin (emigrant politics), and how do these relationships shape their political strategies?
5. To what extent do Latin American migrant grassroots associations participate in joint initiatives with local organisations in the host country (local-local politics), and what shared frameworks enable such cooperation?

4. Methodology

To address the research objectives, an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was adopted (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017), which first maps quantitative empirical patterns and subsequently explains them in depth using qualitative data, applied to ten grassroots migrant organisations. In the first phase, organisations' communication strategies on social media were systematically mapped. In the second phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted.

Integration across phases was ensured at the design stage, as both phases drew on a shared category framework. Coherence was further secured through an interpretive synthesis of results, juxtaposing findings from both phases to derive consistent inferences.

Organisations were selected according to criteria of heterogeneity—in terms of their origins, organisational structures, and geographic areas of activity—as well as their institutional longevity. This approach aimed to ensure a broad representation of organisational trajectories and experiences of social and political engagement, thereby capturing a diversity of perspectives relevant to the study's objectives. The combination of these criteria follows a purposive sampling strategy typical of qualitative methods, designed to maximise the information richness of the selected cases (Patton, 2002).

Feminist organisations were excluded from the sample, as their inclusion would have required a specific theoretical framework centred on gender studies and a distinct methodological design, which goes beyond the scope of the present study. It is acknowledged that Latin American migrant women—particularly those organised in feminist collectives—are active public actors who have played a significant role within the feminist movement in Spain (Gago and Cavallero, 2021). However, their analysis constitutes a distinct object of study with specific dynamics that will be addressed in future research.

The final sample was composed as follows in Table 1:

Table 1 – Sample of organisations analysed

<i>Name of the association</i>	<i>Year of Establishment</i>	<i>Purpose of Establishment</i>	<i>Name of the interviewee</i>	<i>Interviewee's role</i>	<i>Mode of interview</i>	<i>Date of the interview</i>
Organizations whose representatives were interviewed and with digital communication analyzed						
Alma Latina	2004	To promote education for the inclusion and development of migrant youth	Victoria Castrillón	President	Face-to-face interview	07/02/2025
Regularización Ya	2020	To promote a new migration policy centered on the lives and rights of migrants	Silvana Cabrera	Spokesperson	Face-to-face interview	26/02/2025
Homologación Justa Ya	2023	To defend the rights of foreign professionals and advocate for fair and agile recognition	Tatiana Salcedo	Spokesperson	Videoconference interview, conducted via zoom	24/02/2025

AESCO	1994	To promote solidarity and development cooperation between Europe and Latin America	Andrés Gaviria	President	Videoconference interview, conducted via zoom	17/03/2025
Asociación Rumiñahui	1997	To defend and promote the rights of migrants	Vladimir Paspuel Revelo	President	Face-to-face interviews	16/06/2025

Organizations analyzed through their digital communication

ACULCO	1992	To serve as an integrating bridge in Spanish society through awareness, outreach, education				
ACOBE	2002	To support the social and labor integration of people at risk of social exclusion, especially migrants				
FedeLatina	2004	To promote social cohesion and the integration of migrants				
Asociación Guaraní	2004	To develop social interventions to achieve inclusion, especially of migrants and/or vulnerable individuals				
Llatins per Catalunya	2009	To create a space for encounters between people from Latin America who live in Spain and Catalan society.				

Source: Authors own elaboration

In a preliminary phase, the digital presence of each organisation was analysed, including their official websites and activity across different social media platforms. It was found that Facebook and Instagram were the most frequently used networks by the majority of the organisations, both in terms of posting frequency and number of followers. Consequently, the study focused on these two platforms. To collect the data, the web scraping tool Apify was used to extract all posts published between 1 January 2024 and 31 March 2025, in order to ensure exhaustiveness and replicability. The selection of this period rests on three criteria. First, to prioritize empirical currency, analysing current communication practices and reducing the risk of examining routines that are already outdated. Second, to achieve sufficient temporal coverage, allowing the capture of different mobilisation cycles and fluctuations linked to the associative and civic calendar. Third, to ensure analytical stability by mitigating the bias of exceptional conjunctures while maintaining a sufficiently broad window to observe regularities without losing sight of ongoing innovations. In total, 2,173 Instagram posts and 2,612 Facebook posts were obtained.

Based on these data, a descriptive quantitative analysis was carried out to identify the volume of posts per organisation, posting rate, type of content shared (image, video, carousel, etc.), and levels of audience interaction. Posting regularity was categorised into four groups: daily (≤ 1.5 days between posts), weekly (≤ 7 days), monthly (≤ 30 days), and sporadic (> 30 days). Subsequently, a simple random sampling method was applied to the total number of posts published on each platform, using a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. This resulted in a sample of 328 Instagram posts and 336 Facebook posts.

A qualitative content analysis of this sample was then conducted, examining both thematic and tonal elements using a combination of inductive and deductive categories derived from the literature and prior fieldwork. The thematic categories identified were:

1. Legal and regulatory frameworks
2. Social support and services provided by the organisation
3. Cultural activities and events

4. Denunciations of discrimination
5. Testimonies, interviews, and personal experiences
6. Advocacy, activism, and political participation
7. Other (residual category)

In parallel, the communicative tone of the posts was coded according to three broad categories:

- Informative/Institutional: Descriptive and neutral in style
- Mobilisation/Activist: Emphatic and call-to-action tone
- Emotional: Personal style with affective content

The qualitative analysis of thematic and tonal content was complemented by semi-structured interviews with representatives from five of the ten selected organisations. These cases were chosen through purposive sampling, aiming to reflect diversity in organisational trajectories, levels of formalisation, areas of activity, and the communication strategies identified during the preliminary analysis, as well as the organisations' willingness to participate.

Interviews were guided by a semi-structured protocol aligned with the category framework from the quantitative phase and with the study's objectives, to ensure comparability and analytical coherence. Each interview maintained a common core of open questions while allowing the order and depth to be adapted case by case, preserving cross-case comparability and facilitating the emergence of substantive information. The common script addressed, in an integrated manner, organisations' trajectory and composition; funding and resources; integration processes and key challenges; formal and informal collaboration networks; media representation and use of social media; experiences of discrimination and organisational responses; community life, culture, and repertoires of mobilisation; as well as cultural and national dynamics across communities. As a qualitative technique, the semi-structured interview enables a comprehensive exploration of the meanings actors assign to their practices and contexts, fostering both cross-case comparability and the emergence of unforeseen themes (Kvale, 2007). This methodological design sought to integrate content analysis with qualitative fieldwork, enabling data triangulation and thereby enhancing the interpretive validity of the findings (Taylor and Bogdan, 1987).

4. Results

4.1 Results of the quantitative analysis of the posts

Latin American migrant associations in Spain demonstrate diverse and strategic use of social media platforms, with a stronger concentration on Instagram and Facebook, as pointed out in Table 2. Instagram stands out as the preferred space for visual interaction and more dynamic campaigns, while Facebook remains key for sustaining community engagement and sharing events or activities. It was also observed that some associations are expanding their presence to newer or more specific platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, or X (formerly Twitter), although these are less commonly used. Platforms such as Telegram, WhatsApp, or LinkedIn were mentioned in particular cases as alternative communication channels.

In terms of reach, Instagram is the platform with the highest total number of followers, far surpassing the others. Facebook and X follow, albeit with significant differences. Among the associations, Regularización Ya, Homologación Justa Ya, FedeLatina, and AESCO stand out for having a substantial number of followers across multiple platforms, reflecting consolidated and effective digital communication strategies. For instance, Regularización Ya has over 50,000 followers across all platforms, demonstrating strong mobilisation and visibility capacity. On the other hand, some associations such as Llatins, Alma Latina, or ACOBE have a more

modest presence, often focused on a single platform. Overall, this landscape shows that associations are increasingly investing in strengthening their digital presence, albeit with varying levels of reach and use of each platform depending on their objectives, capacities, and audiences.

Table 2 – Main social networks and number of followers of the associations

<i>Association</i>	<i>Instagram</i>	<i>Facebook</i>	<i>X (Twitter)</i>	<i>YouTube</i>	<i>TikTok</i>	<i>Total Followers</i>
Alma Latina	2,047	1,574	475	0	0	4,096
Regularización Ya	30,001	10,000	15,317	1,060	336	56,714
Homologación Justa Ya	20,047	206	1,962	438	4,406	27,059
AESCO	886	8,214	1,634	441	0	11,175
Asociación Rumiñahui	3,747	14,000	1,135	60	7,159	26,101
Llatins per Catalunya	0	0	2,695	7	0	2,702
ACULCO	1,183	1,926	539	396	62	4,106
ACOBÉ	2,062	4,305	420	242	0	7,029
FedeLatina	4,550	14,000	0	87	2,294	20,931
Asociación Guaraní	962	4,096	66	0	0	5,820

Source: Authors own elaboration

Regarding the two platforms with the highest follower counts, Latin American migrant associations in Spain have published a total of 2,173 posts on Instagram and 2,612 posts on Facebook. Over the period analysed, this corresponds to an average of 4.77 posts per day on Instagram and 5.73 posts per day on Facebook, indicating an active and sustained digital presence on both platforms. Although Facebook has a slightly higher volume of posts, Instagram stands out for its capacity to generate interaction. When disaggregated by association, Asociación Rumiñahui and AESCO emerge as the most active entities on both platforms, each with over 300 posts, as reported in Table 3.

Table 3 – Number of posts on Instagram and Facebook

<i>Association</i>	<i>Instagram</i>	<i>Facebook</i>
ACOBÉ	417	750
Homologación Justa Ya	394	97
Asociación Rumiñahui	323	796
Regularización Ya	318	75
AESCO	254	244
Alma Latina	169	90
ACULCO	106	215
FedeLatina	102	330
Guaraní	90	14
Llatins per Catalunya	0	1
TOTAL	2173	2612

Source: Authors own elaboration

On Instagram, ACOBE and Homologación Justa Ya are particularly notable, using this platform as their main channel for visual communication and engagement. On Facebook, ACOBE and Asociación Rumiñahui also show strong activity, tailoring their posts to the platform's more common formats, such as images and links. At the opposite end, associations such as Guaraní and Llatins have a more limited presence, with infrequent activity on Instagram and little to no significant presence on Facebook.

The analysis of posting cadence on Instagram among Latin American migrant associations in Spain reveals a predominance of frequent communication strategies. AESCO, Asociación Rumiñahui, and ACOBE maintain a daily posting rate, reflecting a strong and consistent commitment to visibility on social media. Meanwhile,

associations such as ACULCO, FedeLatina, and Alma Latina publish on a weekly basis, while others like Llatins per Catalunya adopt a much more sporadic rhythm.

Similarly, the analysis of Facebook posting regularity indicates that Latin American migrant associations are committed to maintaining an active and steady digital presence. On this platform, AESCO, FedeLatina, and Asociación Rumiñahui stand out with daily activity, while ACULCO and Alma Latina post weekly. Despite some differences in posting averages, the general commitment to frequent updates remains consistent.

Comparing both platforms, it is evident that most organisations replicate their strategies across both, as is the case for AESCO and Asociación Rumiñahui, which have become reference points for digital consistency. Overall, this supports the idea that constant activity on social media is now a central element of contemporary activism, generating visibility, community, and impact.

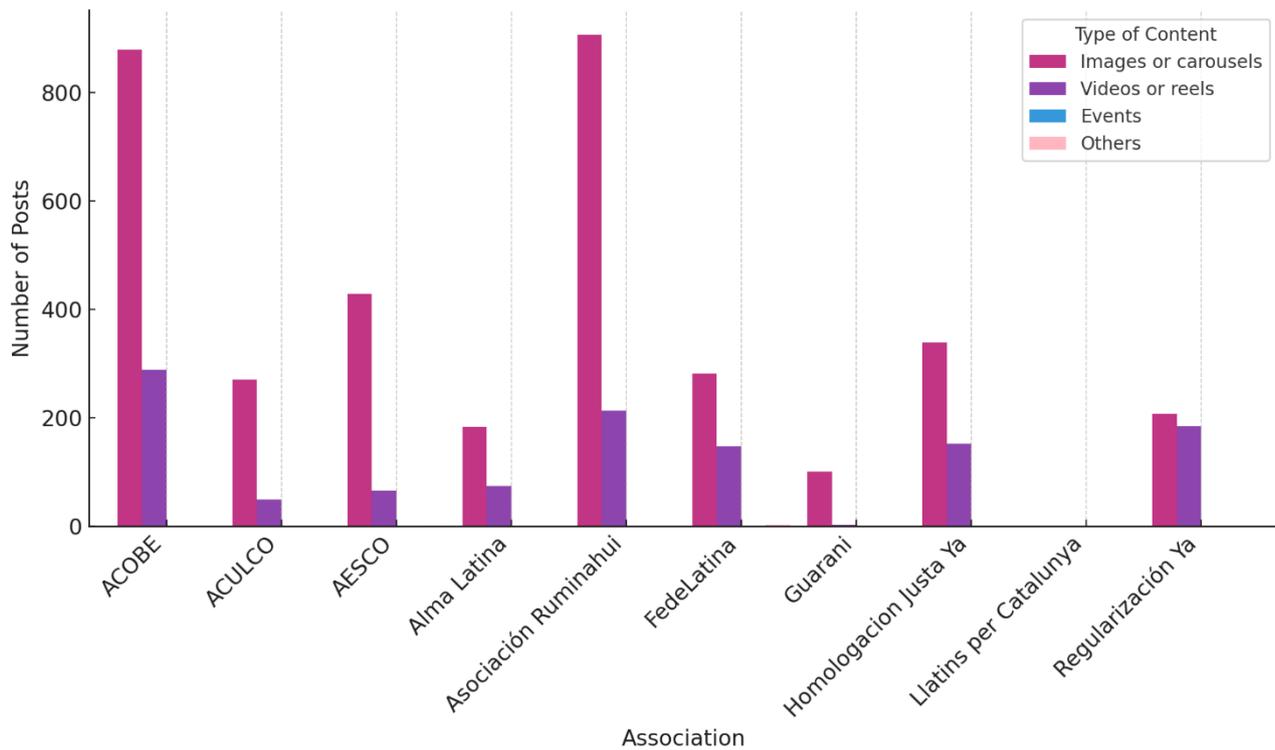
Regarding the format of posts, the analysis reveals that images or image carousels are the most prevalent content type on both platforms, with a total of 1,606 posts on Instagram and 1,992 on Facebook. This pattern indicates a clear preference for static visual content, which is comparatively easy to produce and effective for conveying concise messages, publicizing activities, and consolidating a recognizable visual identity. Video formats also occupy a relevant place in the communicative strategy of these organizations, with 567 videos or reels published on Instagram and 613 on Facebook, suggesting a complementary use of more dynamic and attention-driven content. Finally, minor formats appear almost exclusively on Facebook—such as event posts ($n = 1$) and profile picture updates ($n = 6$)—which points to a more multifunctional use of this platform, oriented not only to content dissemination but also to organizational signaling and basic page management practices.

Secondly, the use of video—both reels and traditional formats—is also significant, with 567 posts on Instagram and 613 on Facebook. This points to a growing interest among associations in more dynamic and narrative content, which enables them to convey emotions, share testimonies, or offer more in-depth explanations.

Event posts were minimal, appearing only once on Facebook, suggesting that this specific format is not a priority in the associations' digital strategies. Finally, profile picture updates—recorded exclusively on Facebook with 6 posts—may be interpreted as one-off actions related to visual identity renewal or symbolic moments within the organisation.

Associations such as Rumiñahui and ACOBE have a highly visual profile, using images as their main communication medium. In contrast, organisations such as FedeLatina and Regularización Ya stand out for a more balanced use of media, with a notable number of videos and reels, in some cases making video the most common format. While some associations prioritise simplicity and visual efficiency, others are committed to a more audiovisual and emotionally driven narrative—likely aimed at deepening engagement with their communities or addressing more complex topics. Although visual content dominates across the board, comparative analysis reveals differentiated communication strategies (Figure 1): some associations lean toward static visuals, while others explore more dynamic content.

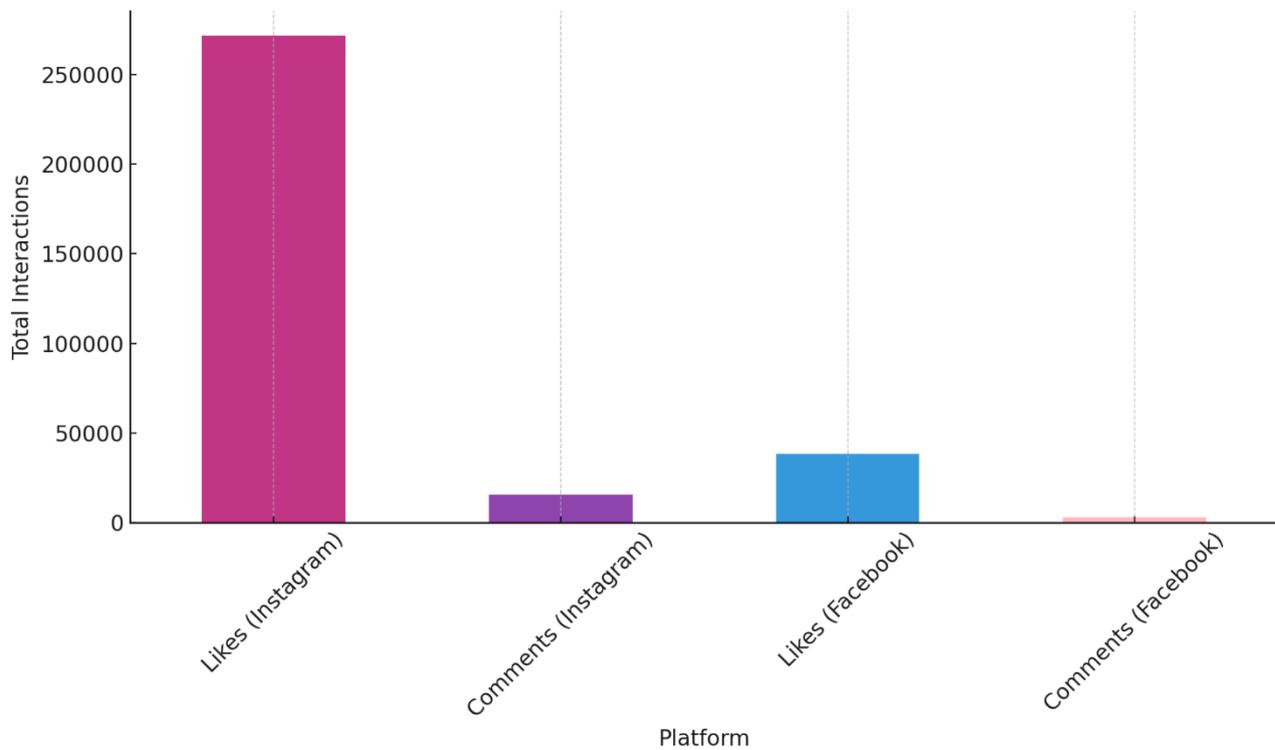
Figure 1. Predominant type of publication in each association



Source: Authors own elaboration

In terms of audience interaction, the findings clearly show that Instagram is the platform with the highest volume of engagement, particularly in the form of “likes.” Associations generated a total of 271,810 likes on their posts, indicating a strong level of visibility and visual engagement on this platform. As summarised in Figure 2, comments are also more frequent on Instagram, with a total of 15,535, reflecting greater active participation compared to Facebook.

Figure 2. Interactions on Facebook and Instagram



Source: Authors own elaboration

By contrast, while interaction levels are notably lower on Facebook, the platform still registers a significant amount of activity, with 38,368 likes and 2,744 comments. This suggests that although Facebook remains relevant, its dynamics are less geared towards the rapid and high-volume interaction typical of Instagram. Overall, this analysis confirms that Instagram is not only the most widely used platform among the associations, but also the most effective in generating audience response, making it the cornerstone of their digital strategies.

4.1 Results of the qualitative analysis of posts and interviews on the thematic agenda of the organisations

The qualitative analysis of the social media posts published by Latin American migrant associations revealed that the most frequently used theme was related to social support and services provided by the associations, accounting for 178 posts across both platforms, representing 26.85% of total content. The content classified under this category is mainly associated with the promotion of training courses for migrants. These training activities are generally focused on the service sector, where formal qualification requirements are typically low.

Image 1: Example of training opportunities offered by the organisations studied



Source: AESCO, official page on Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/p/DIJMVPIK-rP/?hl=es-la&img_index=1)

In the case of ACOBE, training courses are primarily oriented towards health-related occupations, such as dental assistant, nursing assistant, geriatric care assistant, and dental clinic receptionist. AESCO, by contrast, offers training focused on the hospitality, catering, beauty, and personal care sectors. Asociación Guaraní provides workshops on office cleaning and domestic care.

While the primary aim of these associations is to offer training opportunities that enhance migrants' prospects for labour market integration, the range of available courses also reflects and reinforces labour market dynamics in which certain sectors remain open to migrant participation, while others continue to exclude the Latin American community.

We focus on training initiatives in low-skilled sectors, where there are job opportunities for migrants because these are areas that Spaniards don't want to work in. (Andrés Gaviria Álvarez, President of AESCO)

In terms of employment, the Latin American community remains concentrated in labour market niches—mainly low-skilled services—with wages around 37% lower than those of the native population. Even though we account for roughly 20% when including naturalised individuals, this presence is not reflected in sectors such as the police, education, or supervisory roles in supermarkets. Real opportunities are not being opened up, and the few visible cases are used instrumentally by companies. (Vladimir Paspuel Revelo, President of Asociación Rumiñahui)

Read through a post/decolonial lens, these testimonies evidence a coloniality of labour: the naturalisation of racial hierarchies channels Latin American migrants into low-paid service niches while closing access to status-bearing and state-linked professions. Such targeted “low-skilled” training is a pragmatic response to precarity yet risks reproducing the same institutional logics that organise who perform which work and under what conditions. In this sense, wage penalties, occupational segregation and the instrumentalisation of isolated

success cases are not anomalies but expressions of the colonial matrix of power that continues to structure contemporary incorporation (Quijano, 2007).

The next example follows a similar pattern: the training for those who choose to participate in the Retorno Productivo (Productive Return) programme, which facilitates migrants' return to their countries of origin (Image 2). This programme is administered by AESCO and ACULCO. Funded by the Spanish central government and the European Union, it provides support to migrants who decide to return to their home countries. In some cases, such as the one shown, the programme offers guidance and support in launching a small business in the country of origin.

Image 2: Return assistance



Source: ACULCO, official page on Facebook

(https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=957019163242738&set=pb.100068039898431.-2207520000&type=3&locale=es_ES)

The prominence of cultural activities and events (147 posts; 22.17%) signals communicative resilience at work: these organisations are not merely delivering services but cultivating relational and discursive practices that repair belonging and sustain participation. School support, computer literacy and artistic programmes function as narrative infrastructures where young people—who, as noted, often “feel foreign... excluded”—co-produce shared meanings, rehearse recognition, and strengthen solidarity networks across generations. The social media output operates as a digital archive of resilience, translating everyday learning and cultural expression into public visibility and community presence. In this way, the initiatives reframe absenteeism and school failure from deficit markers into capability-building processes, subtly contesting exclusionary dynamics while navigating policy environments that often reproduce them.

I believe the reasons behind this, especially among young people from migrant families, are linked to the lack of a strong cultural identity. They feel foreign all their lives—excluded. I also think current migration policies reinforce this exclusion. (Victoria Castrillón, President of Asociación Alma Latina)

Image 3: Educational assistance and school support



Source: *Guaraní, Official Page on Facebook:*

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=980892354233739&set=pb.100069389500992.-2207520000&type=3>

This pattern of cultural identity work—simultaneously recognising the host country (e.g., Asociación Rumiñahui’s trips within Spain) and celebrating Latin American heritage, as reflected in the following quote, constitutes a form of communicative resilience, as associations curate practices and narratives that sustain transnational belonging. Moreover, these dance activities also operate as counter-public performances that unsettle racialised hierarchies of value by legitimising migrant knowledge, aesthetics and histories. In effect, the organisations enact cultural citizenship, crafting hybrid spaces where recognition is negotiated on more equal terms while resisting the subtle assimilationist pressures that often accompany institutional inclusion.

There is a rise in dance groups where young people born here embrace their parents’ culture with joy. My reflection is that this return to one’s roots may be a response to social rejection: not feeling fully accepted as part of this society, they turn in the other direction—they affirm their identity of origin. Social media also plays an important role, amplifying cultural pride through the sharing of these expressions, which are a form of love for one’s roots. (Vladimir Paspuel Revelo, President of Asociación Rumiñahui)

The dense stream of posts and activities on the legal–regulatory front (20.06%; 133 posts) shows organisations acting as boundary-spanning communicators: they translate shifting rules (e.g., reforms to arraigo and minimum-stay requirements), curate “know-how” via talks and workshops, and scaffold rights-claiming by converting dispersed uncertainties into actionable guidance. These communicative practices sustain participation and belonging under conditions of legal precarity, mitigating the “administrative limbo” highlighted by AESCO (in the following interview excerpt) and fostering a collective legal consciousness that endures beyond individual cases. At the same time, the efforts of these organisations—especially AESCO, ACOBE, ACULCO and Asociación Rumiñahui—to organise informational talks on the new Law on Foreigners and to provide guidance to recently arrived migrants (Image 4) both navigate and contest colonial logics, using informational campaigns and public-facing posts to make visible the unequal distribution of risk

and to reframe migrants not as passive beneficiaries but as political subjects capable of interpreting, negotiating and reshaping the terms of membership.

We accompany individuals undergoing regularisation, especially in light of the changes introduced by the reform of the immigration law, which modifies several types of arraigo (residency regularisation pathways) and reduces the minimum stay period from three to two years. We are concerned that many people may end up in a legal and administrative limbo. Studies and surveys show that full integration typically takes between three and seven years, and current obstacles—such as delays in obtaining immigration appointments—continue to hinder this process. (Andrés Gaviria of AESCO)

Image 4: Assistance in understanding Spain’s migration regulatory framework

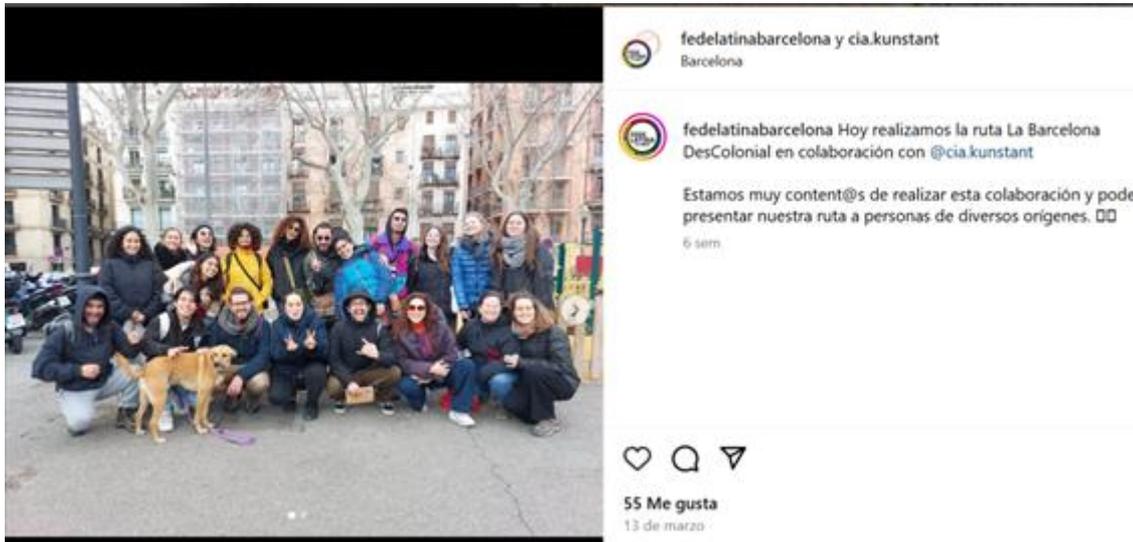


Source: ACobe official page on Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/p/DGTBoNqKC93/?hl=es-la>

In fourth place is the category related to advocacy, activism, and political participation, which accounted for 79 posts—11.92% of the total. Four thematic areas were identified as focal points for mobilisation and political engagement:

- The regularisation of migrants with irregular administrative status
- The demand for the acceleration of degree and qualification recognition processes
- The fight against racism and xenophobia
- The recovery and revalorisation of the Latin American community’s colonial past, as illustrated in a post by FedeLatina (Image 5)

Image 5: Decolonisation as a goal of the organisations



Source: FedeLatina official page on Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/p/DHJoL_3tX8I/?hl=es-la&img_index=1)

Findings show that organisations are not merely convening events but enacting communicative resilience: by moving from online calls to embodied repertoires in public space (marches, artistic interventions), they convert dispersed sentiments into shared meanings, strengthen relational trust, and keep collective action viable beyond the screen (Image 5 and Image 6). The collaborative actions led by Regularización Ya and Homologación Justa Ya exemplify how coalition-building operates as a resilience mechanism—amplifying demands, aligning heterogeneous actors, and securing recognition in broader mobilising arenas. As Silvana Cabrera notes, sustaining participation depends on trust and real community networks; in resilience terms, these are the connective infrastructures that stabilise engagement under conditions of legal precarity and policy neglect.

There has to be trust among those of us involved in political spaces. What I sometimes see is that, due to this lack of recognition, these spaces start to fall apart because we're unable to sustain them. There is an urgent need, since communities are completely unprotected and not considered in legislation. If we don't build real community networks to sustain this work, things won't change. (Silvana Cabrera, from Regularización Ya)

We've held regular in-person demonstrations across 14 regions. We've also encouraged six or eight non-legislative proposals (PNLs). We have a WhatsApp group where we organise campaigns on public networks like Instagram and X. We support each other across different professional collectives. We've also met with political representatives—from the PP, PSOE, Bildu, Esquerra Republicana. With all of them, to see whether we can achieve our goal of having our qualifications officially recognised. (Tatiana Salcedo, spokesperson for the Homologación Justa Ya movement)

In the next post (Image 6) it can be observed that artistic repertoires and co-organised actions function as counter-public performances that unsettle racialised hierarchies of worth -as illustrated in the previously mentioned post by FedeLatina (Image 5) and reframe migrants not as managed beneficiaries but as political subjects capable of interpreting, negotiating and reshaping the terms of membership of the host society.

Moreover, these performances also contest the logics of coloniality that governs who may speak and be visible in public space:

Image 6: Art and activism in networked spaces



Source: Regularización Ya official page on Instagram, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DHebI6ptLGw/?hl=es-la>

However, none of the analysed posts from the organisations included information on civil rights of migrants—particularly concerning participation in Spanish or European elections. Despite this absence in online discourse, the low voter turnout among Latin American communities is a concern frequently raised by the organisational representatives interviewed. In addition to this, the lack of visible Latin American figures in political parties is perceived as a weakness of the community.

We are the migrant community with the highest number of people who have acquired Spanish nationality, yet we are the least likely to vote. I think we lack political influence—we don't have political representatives. (Silvana Cabrera, from Regularización Ya)

Moreover, the reproduction of discriminatory logics within Spanish political parties—regardless of their ideological orientation—further contributes to the political marginalisation of the Latin American community, sustaining a politics of (in)visibility that normalises who counts as a political subject.

It doesn't matter which party you're in—Party A, Party B, or Party C—the discrimination and difficulties are the same. You're still looked at as just another immigrant. You face the same discrimination. You're there as a token. They put you in to justify or attract some votes from your community. Political parties are not doing serious, transparent, or honest work. In reality, they use you. That's why, in this respect, the Latin American community does not act collectively or fight in an organised way. What prevails instead are individual struggles to reach political office. (Vladimir Paspuel Revelo, President of Asociación Rumiñahui)

Although the discrimination and racism category were among the least frequent in the posts (54 publications, 8.14%), interviews accounts depict it as a persistent structuring force. This gap aligns with post/decolonial critiques: media framings and party rhetoric operate as technologies of coloniality that naturalise racialised boundaries, producing a politics of visibility in which migrants are fixed as “foreigners” and treated as threats. The testimonies underscore how xenophobic discourses circulate across legacy and social media, shaping schooling and neighbourhood life, while organisational communication translates these diffuse harms into publicly legible claims and protective networks that support participation despite hostile narrative environments.

The media are exclusionary, and xenophobia is growing across Europe. That’s the reality. Social media reproduces those discourses; they label you as a foreigner and don’t take the label off. Even children born here grow up feeling stigmatised, already singled out in schools. (Victoria Castrillón, President of Asociación Alma Latina)

Migration—from Latin America or Africa—is seen as a threat. The movements gaining strength portray us as invaders, advancing a Trump-style politics where the migrant is the enemy. Lies are spread about crime and social benefits, even though studies disprove them. Today, instead of open-door policies, the European Union is increasingly closing itself off with a focus on security and defence. (Andrés Gaviria, from AESCO)

This discrimination is also institutional and present in all kinds of discourse—even within professional bodies:

It’s the professional colleges of medicine, dentistry, and psychology that oppose the recognition of our qualifications, even though there is high demand in the healthcare sector that Spain itself cannot meet. (Tatiana Salcedo, spokesperson for Homologación Justa Ya)

Among the posts analysed, two anti-discrimination campaigns were identified. One was led by ACOBE, focusing on debunking misinformation and falsehoods about migrants (Image 7), an approach that combines counter speech with knowledge translation to curb the circulation of xenophobic claims.

Image 7: Debunking Xenophobic Hoaxes



Source: ACOBE official page on Facebook

At ACOBE, efforts are made to counter xenophobic discourse by promoting media narratives that offer positive framings of migration. To this end, the organisation’s official page regularly features press articles from Spanish newspapers, as well as from reputable international outlets. These publications recognise the role of migration in driving Spain’s economic and demographic growth.

In fifth place are posts grouped under the category of testimonies, interviews, and personal experiences (45 posts, accounting for 6.79%). Included in this category are posts from a campaign by FedeLatina, funded by the Barcelona City Council, which uses personal testimonies and life stories of migrants to promote training opportunities in project design and development (Image 7). These testimonial repertoires operate as narrative infrastructures that turn individual trajectories into shared meaning, legitimise experiential knowledge, and mobilise interest in skills-building—sustaining participation and belonging while countering stigmatising frames.

AESCO also promotes, via its official social media channels, the personal achievements of individuals who have completed the association’s employment training programmes, funded through regional, national, and European calls for proposals. ACULCO, for its part, publishes the success stories of individuals who have benefited from the Retorno Productivo programme, featuring first-hand accounts of the positive outcomes experienced by returnees.

Finally, under the “Other” category (27 posts, representing 4.07%), are posts promoting events such as informational sessions on migrants’ right to access housing, awareness-raising spaces, second-hand clothing markets and protocolary activities such as the inauguration of the renovated Colombian Consulate in Madrid.

The system also finds many ways to divide us, creating competitiveness among us—through projects, for instance, which, although just a small part of the money managed at the European level, still drag us into that cycle. (Silvana Cabrera, from Regularización Ya)

The second most common tone was mobilising/activist, with 270 posts across both platforms, representing 40.72%. The two organisations most clearly characterised by this tone are Regularización Ya and Homologación Justa Ya. Both use Instagram intensively to promote actions in both digital and public spaces. Unlike other associations, these two groups focus all their efforts on activism, specifically on the regularisation of migrants with irregular administrative status and the acceleration of qualification recognition procedures. Their constant drive for visibility fuels creative campaigns:

We're always looking for innovative ways to highlight our struggle—to get our qualifications recognised. Memes, hashtags—these are all strategies to keep the issue alive. (Tatiana Salcedo, spokesperson for Homologación Justa Ya)

Finally, the least frequent tone was emotional, with 71 posts (10.71% of the total). This tone was identified in first-person posts where personal stories and lived experiences were the main focus.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

This study examined the activism of Latin American migrant social organisations in Spain using Østergaard-Nielsen's (2003, 2009) analytical typology, which distinguishes between homeland politics, emigrant politics, local-local politics, and immigrant politics. Based on the proposed objectives, the research explored repertoires of action, formulated demands, and forms of political engagement both in the host country and in relation to countries of origin. This was achieved through a methodological design that combined quantitative and qualitative analysis of their discourse on social media of grassroots Latin organisations in Spain and semi-structured interviews with their representatives. Interpreting these patterns through communicative resilience and post/decolonial perspectives helps to explain how organisations sustain participation and recognition under constraint while operating within enduring hierarchies of value and visibility.

The findings show that the organisations analysed focus their activism primarily within the realm of immigrant politics, with Instagram being used more intensively, particularly by leveraging the platform's visual and interactive features as part of their visibility strategies. These digital repertoires function as narrative infrastructures that convert dispersed concerns into shared meanings and sustain belonging (communicative resilience), even as racialised framings in public discourse reproduce a politics of (in)visibility (post/decolonial lens). involvement in vocational training for specific labour niches, legal advice, and workshops on immigration law serves to highlight the structural vulnerabilities faced by migrants and reconfigure traditional boundaries of political participation—echoing the contributions of Moreno (2018), Mezzadra (2022), and Leurs (2023). Notably, legal-information work also scaffolds a collective legal consciousness that endures beyond individual cases (communicative resilience).

By contrast, emigrant politics was only marginally present, limited to specific initiatives such as the “Voluntary Productive Return” programme, while homeland politics was virtually absent. Local-local politics emerged sporadically, particularly in struggles related to housing rights, but always framed through the lens of migrant experience. This confirms that, although these organisations engage in the defence of broader social causes, their action remains anchored in the specificities of their migrant status. In line with Gil Araujo (2022,

2023) and others, the results demonstrate that while participation in social movements and organisations contributes to the visibility of migrants as political subjects, this recognition is partial and highly conditioned. Where coalitions did materialise—such as Regularización Ya and Homologación Justa Ya—collaborative action amplified demands and widened recognition, exemplifying coalition-building as a practice of communicative resilience that also contests exclusionary norms.

The analysis revealed dimensions that align with the study's conceptual framework. Notably, access to state and European funding emerged as a key factor shaping the possibilities for organisational action, influencing the tone of activism and reproducing colonial power logics (Quijano, 2007). Competition for scarce project funds fragments networks and normalises differential inclusion (a post/decolonial dynamic), with dependency on public subsidies, undermines the consolidation of horizontal networks and limits alliances with state institutions—except in those rare cases where institutional actors themselves challenge existing power structures.

Although existing literature highlights the transformative potential of migrant mobilisation in the public sphere (Faist, 2024), in the case analysed, such mobilisation was concentrated almost exclusively on campaigns against racism and xenophobia. With few exceptions that managed to extend into physical public spaces, these actions largely remained confined to social media and targeted audiences already aligned with the narratives being promoted. This dynamic reflects a widely shared consensus regarding the existence of structural discrimination within educational institutions, the media, and professional bodies. Testimonial and counter-disinformation campaigns illustrate communicative resilience in hostile narrative environments, while the limited attention to electoral rights online, together with low turnout, points to the coloniality of citizenship and civic stratification.

The findings also indicate that migrant associations remain largely subject to dynamics of subordinate incorporation. Far from transforming existing social frameworks, their participation tends to reproduce a unidirectional model of integration (Gil Araujo, 2022), adapting to the structures of the host country without generating proposals for intercultural dialogue. This same logic is reflected in the training opportunities offered to migrants, which are mostly concentrated in low-skilled labour niches—primarily within the service sector—thereby perpetuating their subordinate position in the labour market (Leurs, 2023). Read together, this underscores the coloniality of labour and the limits it places on mobility, even as organisations deploy communicative practices that sustain presence and participation.

Finally, although political participation should, in theory, constitute a mechanism for recognition as political subjects, the study revealed a very limited or non-existent presence of migrant associations in traditional political spaces such as political parties or electoral processes. Overall, while Latin American organisations in Spain deploy diverse forms of activism, their room for manoeuvre remains constrained by persistent colonial structures, economic dependency, and symbolic exclusion. In sum, while Latin American organisations in Spain enact communicative resilience across digital, cultural, and legal arenas, their room for manoeuvre remains constrained by post/decolonial structures—economic dependency, projectification, civic stratification, and symbolic and non-symbolic exclusion. These findings should nevertheless be interpreted in light of several limitations: the analysis was conducted on a limited number of associations, which constrains the breadth of organisational diversity captured; further research should extend the empirical scope to other regions of Spain to account for territorial variation; and longitudinal designs are needed to incorporate the time dimension and examine how organisational repertoires, dependencies, and communicative practices evolve.

Building on these findings and acknowledging these limitations, further research is needed to examine how structural conditions—economic, institutional, and epistemic—enable or constrain migrant activism practices in Europe. They also call for the exploration of alternatives that strengthen the political agency of migrant organisations beyond welfare-oriented logics, recognising them as legitimate actors in the democratic

construction of host societies. From this perspective, while Østergaard-Nielsen’s framework has been a useful point of departure, our evidence indicates that its categories require revisiting in light of contemporary activism and migrant organising—both transformed, individually and in their entanglement, by hybrid digital/embodied repertoires, trans-scalar coalitions, and shifting institutional terrains. Accordingly, we refocus the analysis from “where” participation occurs to “how” it is communicatively enacted and structurally conditioned, attending to the narrative, connective, and translational work through which organisations sustain mobilisation amid projectified funding, labour/citizenship stratification, and a politics of (in)visibility.

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Authors’ Information:

Raquel Tarullo holds a PhD in Social and Human Sciences (UNQ) and an MA in Communication, Culture and Society (Goldsmiths). She is a Professor of Journalism at the University of Valencia and a member of the Mediaflows, Meso and RICCAP research groups. As a CONICET researcher, she developed much of her academic career in Argentina, where she served as lead researcher on five R&D projects. She has undertaken research stays at leading universities in Latin America and across the UK and Europe, and has been awarded prestigious international research fellowships. She is the PI of the project Civic Dimension of the Latin American Diaspora in Spain (CIGE2023/48).

Cristina Renedo Farpón is an Assistant Professor at the University of Valladolid. She holds an International PhD in Communication. Her research focuses on digital communication, citizen participation, social movements, inclusive journalism, and disinformation. She has participated in six funded research projects and is a member of the OCENDI and Mediaflows research groups. Her academic output includes 21 publications, combining journal articles and book chapters, as well as presentations at national and international conferences. She completed a six-month research stay at the University of Chile.

María Díez Garrido is an Assistant Professor at the University of Valladolid (accredited as Associate Professor by ANECA) and Coordinator of the Bachelor’s Degree in Journalism. Her PhD dissertation received the 4th ACOP Award for Best Doctoral Thesis in Political Communication. Her research focuses on transparency, disinformation, and digital political communication. She has taken part in six nationally funded competitive research projects and one research excellence network and has carried out research visits at the Institute of Social Sciences (University of Lisbon), the University of Manchester, and the Centre for Political and Constitutional Studies (Ministry of the Presidency, Spain).