Book reviews

Leopoldina Fortunati, Raul Pertierra and Jane Vincent (eds), *Migration, diaspora, and information technology in global societies*. London: Routledge, 2012, 271pp, ISBN: 9780415887090

Reviewed by: Koen Leurs, *Utrecht University, the Netherlands*

As a teenager, I spent much of my spare time at the asylum seeker centre in the city where I grew up. I was an avid basketball player and skilled players were to be found among the centre's inhabitants. These were the mid-1990s and mobile phones were ubiquitous among the young asylum seekers I met there, long before these technologies became commonplace among fellow Dutch youths. Neither I nor friends in school owned such devices at that time. In hindsight, after pursuing a PhD in media and communications focused on the use of internet applications among migrant youth (Leurs, 2012), I can characterize this group of users as early adopters of digital media. Mobile phones, long-distance calling cards and email were used to stay connected with family members and friends elsewhere in the world. But what are the implications of the mediated environments in which migrants live their current life?

The 16-chapter volume, *Migration, Diaspora, and Information Technology in Global Societies*, edited by Leopoldina Fortunati, Raul Pertierra and Jane Vincent provides a multi-layered answer to this question. The book is an example of an emerging trend: following pleas to 'de-Westernize' and 'internationalize' media studies (Goggin and McLelland, 2009), media scholars have gained an interest in accounting for migration issues. However, media research on migration has historically focused on portrayals of immigration, instead of the often innovative use of new and old media among migrants. Concerning media use, migration studies have mostly left the medium-specific characteristics of technologies used among migrants unaddressed. This volume makes a substantial contribution in both fields by recognizing migrants as active actors who use media to articulate diasporic experiences and by unravelling medium-specific characteristics and user cultures. The anthology provides conceptual frameworks and empirical examples that open up the uncharted scholarly terrain that exists at the intersection of digital media and migration. In particular, the focus is on 'communicative, linguistic, emotional and technological dimensions' (p. xi) of migrants' use of technology across Europe, Asia, Australia, the Americas and Africa.

The book is structured in four sections. The first section, 'Conceptual Perspectives of Migrants in Post-modern Societies', reveals the difficulties of having to engage with unexplored territories. Mantovanni approaches new media as socio-cultural environments from the perspective of cultural psychology. However, his argument that diasporas

online should be understood as constituting intercultural, instead of multicultural, exchanges offers no new insights on how new media in particular has changed the situation. From the perspective of linguistics, Bortoluzzi traces constitutions of 'Englishes' through the migration of English through communicative technologies, contesting the binary between English as a lingua franca versus subaltern languages.

Robbin critiques the lack of ethnic minorities' voice in governmental racial and ethnic group data classification systems. The author does not make the link, but the ways in which populations are demographically slotted in contestable categories has resonance with how user-generated content is channelled for monitoring and monetization purposes, considering the 'menu-driven' drop-down options and default templates users are presented with in many online social networking sites and games (Nakamura, 2002: 101).

Innovatively documenting how migration intertwines with other coordinates of identification, Section 2 is more successful. Horst focuses on the mobile phone to unravel the dynamics of the transnational social field of Jamaican care-taking and family building across countries. Although based on a mostly descriptive account of Australian migrant children's use of technologies, Green and Kabir provide a strong point of departure for future media research that seeks to address why migration is not a one-generation phenomenon. Mobilizing theories of affectivity, Evers and Goggin make a strong claim for studying mobile phone use also as emotional processes. Discussing sight, touch and hearing experiences in mobile phone use among Somalis in Australia, they argue that these contribute to the masculine habitus of young men.

Section 3 provides case studies of home-making practices among migrants. Focusing on fascinating mediated participation in rituals, Pertierra explores Filipino diaspora networking – an intricate context, as Filipinos are heavy information and communication technology (ICT) users and 25 per cent of the working population is employed abroad. Greschke presents a case-study of www.cibervalle.com, an online discussion forum popular among Paraguayans at home and abroad. Its medium-specific characteristics are appropriated by its users to sustain a sense of global togetherness, solidarity and trust. Stoyanova and Raycheva provide a snapshot of the institutional workings of Bulgarian-language media abroad, arguing these may be harnessed to benefit the Bulgarian nation (economics, EU policy, etc.). However, the authors provide few cues on how these platforms may serve such purposes.

Section 4 is confusingly labelled 'Religion, Mobility and Social Policies': only the first chapter is explicitly about religion, while the remaining two chapters do not explicitly deal with mobility or social policies. Garbin and Vásquez celebrate the role of technology in the globalization of the sacred, focusing on the Congolese church. Based on research among Moroccans, Russians and Turks in Germany, Hepp, Bozdag and Suna propose a valuable non-exclusionary typology of 'origin-oriented', 'ethno-oriented' and 'world-oriented' migrants to understand complex flows of diasporic media cultures. Kluzer and Codagnone provide a meta-analysis of quantitative studies on the adoption of ICTs among migrants and ethnic minorities in Europe. Their overview demonstrates the lack of quantitative data beyond access, especially about the content that migrants generate online.

Section 5 offers a unique case study on technology and Chinese migration by exploring the previously uncharted Chinese media landscape. Pui-lam is the first contributor in

the book to highlight negative dimensions of IT use: mobile phone use and internet connectivity among workers from rural areas can sustain a 'false consciousness', exacerbating feelings of being lost in urban host societies. Chung-tai assesses class differentials by looking at the use of the Chinese instant messaging application Mobile QQ among workers. Its use allows workers to remain connected while floating between workplaces, thus escaping a repetitive working life. Yet, they also become prone to withdrawal. Denison and Johanson delve into external migration and showcase the multiple – diaspora and lifestyle based – identities that young Chinese migrants adopt in Prato, Italy and Melbourne, Australia. By analysing expatriate bloggers, Herold covers the rarely accounted for situation of expats. Not only do they sustain online expatriate communities, by interpreting and communicating Chinese realities to people back home in Europe and the US, expats may build 'bridges' of understanding.

In sum, this anthology ambitiously attempts to cover the wide spectrum of IT use among migrants. The red thread of the collection sometimes becomes opaque, also due to the many different disciplines included, such as linguistics, cultural psychology, sociology, media studies and ethnography. The volume would have benefited from stronger engagement with post-colonial scholarship on diaspora as well as from attention to financial inequalities, dangers, extremisms and surveillance. In addition, an unwanted dichotomy between the online and offline is partially reified due to the lack of attention to the interconnectedness of online and offline experiences. However, the book does offer a wide-ranging introduction for students interested in the cultural dynamics of transnational media flows and inspiration for scholars working at the intersection of migration and media studies.

References

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Nakamura L (2002) *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity and Identity on the Internet*. New York: Routledge.

James Curran, Natalie Fenton and Des Freedman (eds), *Misunderstanding the Internet*.
London and New York: Routledge, 2012, 194pp, ISBN: 9780415579582

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In *Misunderstanding the Internet*, three leading media and communication scholars present their take on the history, sociology, politics and economics of the internet. Curran, Fenton and Freedman have divided these aspects between them into three parts, with altogether six individually authored chapters and a co-authored conclusion.

The book is framed as a counter-argument to overly celebratory views of the transformative potential of internet technology. The first chapter, 'Reinterpreting the Internet',