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Media, Migration, and Sociology. A Critical Review

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A Critical Review

by Andrea Pogliano

1.   Introduction

The main goal of this article is to review and discuss the interconnections between media studies and migration studies – namely, the field of "media and migration" – focusing in particular on three major books which were published in the last five years [Moore, Gross & Threadgold 2012; Benson 2013; Hegde 2016].

By looking at these interconnections, the article identifies and critically examines major subfields of studies and research in media and migration, it discusses their strengths and weaknesses, and it suggests a few potential research strands with the intention of both reinforcing the sociological contribution to the field and better bridging migration studies and media studies.□□□

In 2001, when King and Wood introduced their edited book *Media and Migration*, they suggested three main ways in which "media may intervene in the migration process and in the individual and collective experience of migration" [King and Wood 2001, 1]. The first is the media information and imagery from destination countries received by potential migrants. They wrote:

> Whether this information is accurate or not, it can act as an important factor stimulating migrants to move [*Ibidem*].

The second way is the "host country media constructions of migrants" which, King and Wood warned, conditions "migrants' eventual experience of inclusion or

exclusion." Finally, the third way media may intervene in the migration process is via the flow of media content originating from the migration sending countries, whose influence has been strengthened by satellite technology and the internet. This flow, King and Wood argue, plays "a dynamic role in the cultural identity and politics of diasporic communities" [*ivi*, 2].

To summarize, the three ways in which the media may intervene in the migration process have to do with *a*) its role as a push factor for emigration; *b*) its role in fixing stereotypes and co-constructing discourses of inclusion or exclusion, influencing civic actions but also policies on migration in the host countries; and *c*) its role in "the creation and maintenance of transnational communities [which] may help migrants feel at home in their country of exile but at the same time perhaps slow down their processes of integration and incorporation" [*Ibidem*].

A close look at the literature on media and migration shows that the first way traced by King and Wood has been almost completely abandoned by scholars. The second – which was already well established before 2001 – continues to be of great interest, with political communication now going hand in hand with news analysis. Finally, the third way – about which few important studies were already produced in the years preceding 2001 – has found new interest, but King and Wood's earlier concern about "slow[ing] down [...] processes of integration" has been rejected; concepts mainly borrowed from anthropology and postcolonial studies (such as culture of diasporas, diasporic identity, transnational lives, hybridity, appropriation, authenticity, etc.) are now key for these studies.

Communication studies and cultural (and postcolonial) studies are two sides of the same coin, both contributing to the field of academic research commonly known as "media and migration." The first thing to note is that these two sides have little if any form of exchange, so it is probably better to consider them as two separate areas or subfields, one to be called "news media and migration," or, even better, *journalism, political communication and (im)migration*, and the other to be called "migrations and the media" or, still better, *transnationalism, diasporas and the media*. The two subfields are clearly different in terms of their research methods and theoretical references. They also clearly diverge in their presuppositions and aims.

With regard to methods, the first subfield is linked to communication and journalism studies, from which it borrows content analysis, critical discourse analysis and frame analysis as the main tools through which to investigate media content and news and political discourses. The second is linked to anthropology and cultural studies, with ethnography (and online ethnographies) as the main method for observing the "signifying practices" developed by members of diasporas or ethnic groups as media users.

With regard to theoretical references, the first subfield has been criticized for being largely descriptive and scarcely concerned with social theory [Threadgold 2011]. Although it rarely engages with general social theory, it often makes reference to: *a)* the sociology of journalism, through news production mechanisms and the political economy of news; *b)* the sociology of culture and deviance through boundary-making concepts and labelling processes or, instead, through ideology and hegemony; and *c)* political science through liberal and democratic theory. In contrast to the first, the second subfield, namely *transnationalism, diasporas and the media*, is often over-theorized, with usually data-poor case studies used to confirm the theoretical frameworks. It has its theoretical roots in anthropology and history, via globalization studies, cultural and postcolonial studies (nation-building and imaginary communities, the politics of identity, etc.) and citizenship studies.

Finally, if we look at presuppositions and aims, the first subfield – about which an impressive number of journal articles and books have been produced – often takes as a departure point or as an implicit concern the problem of a misrepresentation of immigrants in Western societies through news media in terms of ideological conflict, group divisions, discrimination, spread of nationalism and racism. The second – which is less diffuse in terms of quantity of research outlets – is more interested in what migrants do with the media; how the global imagination influences, but does not determine, local practices; and how media technologies allow transnationalism and diasporic cultures and identities to develop.

Thus, while the first subfield is mainly embedded in methodological nationalism, poor in transnational comparisons and often undertheorized, the second has in its anti-methodological nationalism approach its core message, characterised by overtheorization and the qualitative methods it adopts.

The first section of this article deals with two books: *Migration and the Media* [Moore, Gross and Threadgold 2012] and *Shaping Immigration News: A French-American Comparison* [Benson 2013]. The two books will be discussed in the larger context of the *journalism, political communication and (im)migration* research strand, examining in the two contributions what is typical of and what is new for the subfield.

The second section presents the book *Mediating Migration* [Hegde 2016]. It will be discussed as a new release within the *transnationalism, diasporas and the media* research strand.

There are a few other published or possible research strands which are not included in these two directions, but are still viewed as part of "media and migration." For various reasons they are off the radar for both *journalism, political communication*

and (im)migration, and *transnationalism, diasporas and the media*. Together, however, they help to stimulate a critique of current trends in conceptualizing "media and migration" in the Western academic debate. These possible research strands will be discussed in the final section.

2.   Journalism, Political Communication and (Im)migration

The majority of books and journal articles released under the label of "media and migration" are no doubt intended to show how news media represent immigrants, or specific categories of immigrants, within Western national contexts. Most of this research focuses on the United States or the UK, but there is a significant amount of media content analysis research on immigration in most of the EU countries, in Australia and in Canada.

Quantitative content analysis is the most extensive method, but qualitative and mixed-method research also abounds, via discourse analysis and frame analysis. Although a large number of studies have been produced, very few works have attempted to conduct a comparative review of these studies (for Europe, see ter Wal [2002] and Bennett *et al.* [2011]). What tends to emerge when a general discourse on these works is produced (such as in the introductions of collective contributions in the United States or the UK, or in EU-funded reports on media and migration) usually has more to do with the commonalities than with the differences. In a nutshell, media discourses have been shown to be influential in constructing migrants as "others," as "criminals" or "undesirables." A generalized trend is to overemphasize ethnic and immigrant crime. This means an overrepresentation of ethnic minority offenders in the news and, at the same time, a tendency to overlook the problems experienced by ethnic groups, including episodes of racist violence in which immigrants are the victims. Analyzing five approaches to media research – content analytical, discourse analytical, newsmaking, social constructionist and "news and public attitudes" – Maneri and ter Wal tried to answer the "question of how and why, as research consistently shows, news on migrants is so often negative and so often about crime" [Maneri and ter Wal 2005, 2]. Each of the five approaches offers a contribution to the discussion, by examining the extent to which migrants are overrepresented in the coverage of "problem areas," by quantifying the topics on which the news stories tend to focus or not focus when dealing with immigrants and ethnic minorities, by discussing the importance of news values and production routines, by qualitatively analyzing the ideological biases embedded in language, the role of political actors in producing biased reporting, the agenda-setting role of media effects on public opinion, and so on.

Indeed, another general finding across the EU is that immigrants and "ethnic, cultural, religious minorities [and NGOs supporting their voices] are not quoted very frequently and are not treated as regular news sources" [ter Wal 2002, 40]. An effect of the news-making mechanism is that news and feature articles on immigrants rely heavily on politicians, official figures and the police as sources of information and explanation.

> With regard to news on deviance and crime, this means that official definitions of the situation (by the police and other officials) are likely to be prioritized and to receive prominent coverage as well as high credibility [Maneri and ter Wal 2005, 6].

This evokes the concept of "primary definers" once used by Hall *et al.* in a classic study on the subject [Hall *et al.* 1978]. The role of primary definers in producing securitarian representations of migrants, involving both racism and law-and-order political discourse, is often used as a reference in studies concerned with the reciprocal influence of media and political representations on migrants.

Notwithstanding this reference, *Journalism, political communication and (im)migration* has lost most of its sociological afflatus towards processes (such as the construction of moral panics) and power (only few works engage with ideology or hegemony), moving almost entirely towards a more linguistic/semiotic and less sociological approach. This partial abandonment of media and migration studies by sociologists is part of a more general process of sociological abandonment involving the history of the wider field of communication and media studies. This process has been scrutinized elsewhere [e.g. Pooley and Katz 2008]. References to labelling theory have long been the only bridge linking content analysis of media or political representations of migrants with a sociological vision.

The importance of labelling in media representations of persons, groups and places has been repeatedly evoked in these studies. Labelling is undoubtedly a fruitful concept for studying the creation of differences (related to class, gender, nationality and ethnicity) in the media. Both in studies adopting a quantitative content analytical approach and in those adopting a qualitative discourse analytical approach, the question of how the media produce and use labels to construct social categories and trace symbolic boundaries is critical. In the study of media representations of immigrants and ethnic minorities, we might assert that the concept of labelling, together with that of stereotyping, is most commonly used in analyses of the discursive boundaries separating natives from immigrants and/or different racial, ethnic or religious groups, but also legal working migrants from undocumented migrants and asylum-seekers, and internal migrants from third-country migrants in Europe.

Although it is widely recognized that the symbolic order is a product of the interactions among media, authorities, administrations, organizations and public opinion, triggering feedback loops from all of the aforementioned actors, most research does not focus on these interconnections and feedback loops.

Works covering the complex structure of influence and power over media, such as the classic work by Hall *et al.* [1978], or agenda-setting mechanisms are rare in "media and migration", as are ethnographies of news production. With mechanisms of news production underexplored and news content overexplored, research in *journalism, political communication and (im)migration* often raises the need for media self-criticism in order to counter discrimination and symbolic exclusion in the news.

Self-criticism refers to "initiatives of media organizations and individual journalists to elaborate (or demand the elaboration of) non-discriminatory texts" [Banon-Hernàndez 2002, 191]. Journalists' associations and unions have tried to change reporters' attitudes about ethnic, cultural and religious differences by promoting the use of guidelines and training facilities. This has sometimes happened nationally, sometimes locally, and with significant differences – both in terms of the period in which they were introduced and of their effectiveness. Some studies – particularly from the UK and Germany – support the thesis of a general increased awareness of these concerns among journalists and editors, which has resulted in more positive reporting practices. More cautiously, the 2010 EU *Handbook of Integration* [Niessen and Huddleston 2010] restated that the existence of journalistic codes and self-regulation does not in itself prevent unfair and discriminatory discourse about immigrants and immigrant groups.

In an often-quoted study on the British news media [Law 1997], the findings prompted the author to argue that news on ethnic minorities had "become the scene of an 'anti-racist show,' where increasing amounts of space were being given to the opinion of accredited minority actors" [Maneri and ter Wal 2005, 4]. Although these findings show inevitable ambivalence, they nevertheless trace a line between countries with recent histories of immigration and those with longer histories, reflecting improvement in media narratives on immigration and ethnic minority issues which appear to be, to some extent, directly proportional to the length of time that migrant groups have been present in a given country.

Beyond a generic analytical critique on the criminalization of migrants produced by political discourse and news reports, scholars have often moved towards specific constructions, especially those of Muslim migrants and asylum-seekers.

The *MEDIVA Thematic Report* found that in the 2000s one major theme in press reporting "was that of Islam, linked with terrorism, cultural (in)compatibility, and Islamophobia […] with a focus on aggression and threat" [Bennett *et al.* 2011,

12-13]. The increase of studies on media and Islam after 9/11 and 7/7 is unsurprising, especially in the UK [see, for instance: Alsultany 2012; Flood *et al.* 2012; Hutchings *et al.* 2011; Karim 2011; Morey and Yaqin 2011; Yaqin, Forte and Morey 2017]. Islam has become such a central theme in the representations of immigration that, to some extent and mostly in Northern Europe, one could say – as Roggeband and Vliegenthart [2007] have with regard to the Netherlands – that immigration has been mostly represented in the last fifteen years through the frame of Islam. This is a shift from an emphasis on the ethno-nationalist dimension to the religious dimension. Scholars working with critical discourse analysis are particularly concerned with this topic, showing in various ways how the hegemonic discourse of the "clash of civilization" [Huntington 1996] has been reproduced in political and media discourse through the representations of Muslim migrants in all corners of the West, rejecting the very idea of integration and constructing an ambivalent frame combining gender, ethnicity and religion in a way to produce – under certain circumstances – generalizations about all migrants and asylum-seekers.

As it has been emphasized in several studies [e.g. Nyers 1999; Article 19 2003; Gross, Moore and Threadgold 2007], the news media typically adopt a double standard in framing stories of people fleeing persecution or escaping wars and disasters. In the foreign news they are described as victims within a humanitarian framework, while in the domestic news they are often described as intruders within a law-and-order framework. This double standard builds the refugee

> as a fundamentally ambivalent figure that is, simultaneously, a *sufferer* of geo-political conflict and a *threat* to the Westphalian, nation-based global order [Chouliaraki 2012, 14].

This type of double standard is also typical within the domestic news. In his analysis of Belgian press coverage of the asylum issue, Van Gorp found that representations of asylum-seekers were almost equally distributed between

> a frame that referred to the archetypical role of the innocent victim [and] a frame that referred to the stereotype "all strangers are intruders" [Van Gorp 2005, 489].

The first frame was found to be more frequently used in the quality broadsheet press while the second was more frequently used in the popular press. The two frames have been described as radically distinct and each develops a specific chain of connected reasoning devices (i.e. problem definition, problem source, responsibility, moral judgement, policy solution), news sources used and quotes referred to by journalists.

Another focus of attention concerning asylum-seekers is the way representations trace a boundary between them and undocumented migrants and how various forms

of political and media discourse menace this boundary through constant production of suspects and conspiracy theories. Here again, unless there is a generic claim of commonality in the West around this critical symbolic production, it is difficult to find relevant differences and to link these differences to specific political and social contexts and clear processes producing them.

Research conducted using the frame analysis approach also sustains the idea of several national public spaces of discussion shaped by the same frames. Although not all the frames founded in various accounts are equally frequent in different countries, the impression one gets from this literature is that every corner of the Western world now shares pretty much the same frames for debating the issue. However, the very fact that most news items mention multiple frames may lead to the question of whether these articulations give rise to new frames which are specific to a country or a period of time and more closely linked to political activism or discourse configurations under some and not other social and symbolic conditions. In the rich literature on frames in communication studies it is often remarked that new frames are indeed often produced by linking two or more established frames into new configurations. I suggest caution about this use of frames, wondering if it has not become, at least in large part, a sort of aprioristic exchange between researchers who try to find analytical tools to interpret data more than data-driven conclusions from media analysis that surprisingly fit previous results from studies conducted abroad. Since frame-building operations are highly arbitrary [see D'Angelo and Kuypers 2010; Van Gorp 2010] we cannot ignore this risk and its consequences in terms of conclusions on the media and political representations of migration.

Notwithstanding this cautionary claim, we can nevertheless assume that a convergence of frames is in place and that this convergence may have to do with several factors.

A first factor could have its origins in the spread of the intercultural paradigm in the West, through intercultural pedagogy and communication, which have produced common tools for Western educators and professors which have long been shared internationally. A second factor may have to do with changes in Western humanitarian representations [e.g. Boltanski 2003; Chouliaraki 2013; Cottle and Cooper 2015]. In particular, the shift from negative to positive representations [see Chouliaraki 2010] might explain, to a certain degree, the characteristic shape that some frames on migrations in the media have assumed in the West. This discursive shift in the global context of humanitarian narratives could have an even more sharply explanatory effect if we consider its interconnections with the previously mentioned intercultural paradigm. A third factor could be found in the spread of securitization and surveillance discourses in the Western world along with a set of political representations

of urban life and urban decay [e.g. Neocleous 2008; Chebel d'Appollonia and Reich 2008; Chebel d'Appollonia 2012]. Along with these three factors, we must consider as a fourth factor, especially linked with the third, the homogenizing process in public discourse on immigration produced by the fervent research into and sharing of political communication strategies. These are common among people who use the migration issue as a tool for campaigning, especially right-wing politicians and anti-immigrant moral entrepreneurs in the West.

It is easy to see that these factors produce homogenization but at the same time they can produce heterogeneity; they are sometimes informed by pre-existing frames, and at other times they produce frames, but they can also sometimes significantly change the frame by adapting to local context and culture. To offer just one example, the civic integration model could have effects in redefining three often-mentioned frames (e.g.: national cohesion, cultural diversity and integration), and once the model is transplanted from one context to another through political adoption or super-national imposition, it can produce new categories and new country-specific frames arising from the re-alignment of previously clearly separated frames.

Following the history of these broad discourses and political strategies and accounting for their influence in both political communication and media discourse on immigration, by looking at the processes of the frames' journey from country to country and their adaptation to specific national contexts, would be a stimulating work. It would indeed help in combating the underlying risk of the adoption of frames as aprioristic variables for content analysis. It would also help narrow the gap which still separates media studies and migration studies. I will return to this in the concluding section.

2.1. *Migration and the Media: A Few Significant Changes from the Main Direction*

The book *Migration and the Media* [Moore, Gross and Threadgold 2012] is a collection of contributions in *journalism, political communication and (im)migration* which is divided into three clear sections.

The first section is more theoretically oriented but empirically grounded and addresses "the discursive construction of crisis" from several angles: a crisis in solidarity; a crisis in "the capacity of the normal legal and political systems of European nations to exercise sovereign power" [Moore 2012, 5], or "in maintaining what Balibar [2006] has referred to as the south Mediterranean fence" [*Ibidem*], and a human

rights crisis around the asylum issue and its suspension of human rights laws, legitimized by the discourse of crisis itself – economic crisis, crisis of terrorism, etc. With regard to the last angle, in the introduction Moore refers to Agamben's "states of exception" which has become a "paradigm of government" [Agamben 2005].

This section is built around four contributions and different subjects such as the humanitarian discourse of the United Nations on refugees (Chouliaraki), news on crises linked to the immigration debate and national "values" in Canada and Germany (Bauder), election debates in the UK (Gross), and political and news narratives in the UK (Moore).

The second section is more empirically oriented and illustrates, through five contributions, the topic of "crisis reporting and the representation of migration." Here we find mixed content and discourse analysis of politics and news media representations of unauthorised immigrant workers in the United States (Santa Ana), a critical examination of climate refugee discourse (Farbotko), a framing analysis of Chinese irregular migration to Europe in Chinese-language transnational newspapers (Wu, Zeng and Liu), a representation of human trafficking in the Serbian press (Bjelica), and a final study on Chinese migrants' representations in the British press (Jiang).

Taken together, the first two sections are a good example of the *journalism, political communication and (im)migration* subfield as illustrated above, with the first section mostly engaged with discourse analysis and the second mostly concerned with content analysis, focusing on stereotypes, media categories in representing migrants, bias and framing, with a few references to news values and "regularities" in the process of news production. They nonetheless contain a few interesting elements of innovation in the subfield, as I will better argue later.

The third section is about the practice of journalism in representing migration, through three discussions. The first chapter, written by Blaagaard, concerns tolerance, freedom of speech and free press in a global multicultural world. It centres around the case study of the Danish cartoon incident in 2005 and the debate that followed in 2008. The second chapter (Bayer) is a critical discussion starting from the results of a German project trying to foster cultural awareness among young journalists over the issues of migration and integration. The final chapter (Harris) is a critical re-examination of her work as a producer of a television documentary for BBC on the UK border.

By looking at *Migration and the Media* in the wider context of the subfield of journalism, political communication and (im)migration, I argue that the book is both a good example of the direction taken by these studies and a partially accomplished attempt to renew these studies and to bridge some gaps at the intersection of media

studies and migration studies. All three sections offer some interesting and partly new aspects for discussion.

The theoretical efforts made throughout the first section, are relevant because they attempt to link media discursive analysis of the "migration crisis" with classic social theory. This is at least a call for more theoretically oriented works in this sub-field, which is characterized – as I have already stated – by a more empirical tendency with few and relatively rare incursions into theoretically established⬜frameworks which are directed towards cultural studies (mainly through Stuart Hall's works on representations) and journalism studies (through the sociology of news). Bauder's use of Marx and Hegel in theorising crisis and Moore's use of "post-Marxist discourse theory" [Laclau and Mouffe 1985] are relevant pieces here. In particular, Moore's chapter touches on the important and still insufficiently researched process through which

> liberal democratic values in the form of human rights [are] reconstructed in the media stories […] as a threat to the stability and security of the British nation [and other Western countries] [Threadgold 2012, 270].

A clear element of novelty is demonstrated by the inclusion in this collection on "migration and the media" of Chouliaraki's contribution on representations in the humanitarian discourse produced by the United Nations. Following several important works on the topic of changing solidarity and humanitarian communication through concerts, celebrity advocacy, appeals and journalistic texts, she focuses here on refugees. She originally summarizes her established historical and analytical approach which illustrates changes from a "policy of pity" and "solidarity as pity" to "irony" – a concept she borrows from Rorty [1989] – and "ironic solidarity"; from negative representations to positive representations and then to a confessional, intimistic way of representing "the victims" in a post-humanitarian discourse. Chouliaraki concentrates on the two properties defining the discourse of irony, solidarity as a private choice and solidarity as self-fulfilment:

> It is precisely this view of solidarity as sentimental education that dominates the post-humanitarian genres [Chouliaraki 2012, 25].

Her analysis goes to the critical concluding point of depoliticization and an absence of discourse on "vulnerability as injustice" [*Ibidem*], which brings her to support a reflexive solidarity:

> The alternative, I suggest, should be a reflexive discourse on solidarity that starts by treating the imperative to act towards refugees as a matter of public judgment rather than private preference. This means that, *contra* irony, we need to be explicit about the social values, notably social justice, that inform our solidarity towards

displaced populations as a public act. It also means that, *contra* pity, we do not treat the meaning of these values as "universal" truths, for there may indeed be many "truths" to justice and many manifestations of responsibility that could serve the project of solidarity" [*ivi*, 28].

What Chouliaraki designs is a narrative structure of solidarity which influences – among other things – media narratives on migration.

The importance of her contribution within the field of "media and migration" rests ultimately, in my view, in the opportunity her work offers to look outside the media discourse on migration in specific countries and to finally discuss the rise and fall of narrative global structures (or master-frames). Produced as a result of a range of heterogeneous elements, these structures include the economic instrumentalization of humanitarianism, the crisis of ideologies, and innovations and changes in communication technologies and media practices. Unfortunately, Chouliaraki's work does not try to connect with audience and reception studies, leaving some of her views waiting to be validated by a study of consumer practices.

Other elements of improvement come from the editors' effort to include in the content analytical studies (section 2) work that

> broadens the debate about the media representation of migration but also contributes to an understanding of the huge stabilities of the global media and policy discourse around these issues [Threadgold 2012, 274].

Santa Ana's chapter includes a study of metaphors, borrowing ideas from Lakoff's insights on framing in political communication. Among other things, her study shows that counter-discourses on migratory issues often use the same frames adopted by dominant right-wing politicians and media discourse. This allows for tight connections with studies on the strategic production of frames, in an effort to show not only the weakness of a "pro-immigrant" communication in media and campaigns, but also to rethink global narratives of migration in more general terms. As in Chouliaraki's work, here again we are confronted with the institutional context and sources that shape narratives on migration, a notion Threadgold has well in mind when she refers to the Ahmed [2004] concept of "archive" and to the work of Blommaert and Verschueren [1998]. All of these contributions help to offer an explanation to the apparent homogeneity of representations of migrants and migration in the West.

Farboko's chapter on the media representations of climate refugees shows

how a Western discourse of displacement is imposed on Pacific peoples by Western journalists who can neither access nor understand the alternative discourses and narratives in which these people position themselves [Threadgold 2012, 277].

Among the merits of this contribution is the reintroduction in the *journalism, political communication and (im)migration* subfield of an approach that is almost exclusive – in "media and migration" – to *diasporas, transnationalism and the media*: namely, postcolonial theorisation.

Finally, the third section, which is about journalistic practices and reflexive self-regulations, contains important critical observations which need further attention from scholars.

In particular, Bayer's chapter raises a critical point to which I will return in the next section: the implicit limits of the initiatives for supporting changes in journalistic practices and media representations on immigration and a need for rethinking these approaches which includes a consideration of the systemic or structural conditions of the media. Referring to Fleras's [2006, 179] identification of the "conventional news paradigm as systemic bias" (which is institutional, consequential, cultural and based on routines, instead of personal, intentional, conspiratorial, and attitudinal), Bayer's final view is sceptical of the current flow of initiatives and their effectiveness. I argue that much of these initiatives – especially awareness-training for journalists to promote media diversity, discussed here by Bayer – are embedded in the intercultural paradigm and yet suffer from a foundation in culturalism. Both the systemic bias, which is true for all media representations of marginalised groups, and the narrative structures more specifically related to migrants as "others" need to be confronted if we want more effective and durable results from initiatives concerned with journalistic practices and representations.

To conclude, *Migration and the Media* is both a good illustration of the research in this subfield and an innovative collection which introduces some under-theorised and under-researched topics and articulations in studying media and migration, but which has neither the intention nor the strength to re-establish the field. More than a little work remains to be done, as will be argued in the concluding section.

2.2. *Shaping Immigration News: A Comparative Research in Journalism and Political Communication*

Rodney Benson's recent work [Benson 2013] has been largely acclaimed by media scholars: it won – among other awards – the best book award from the *International Journal of Press/Politics*.

Undoubtedly, the book – which reviews and updates Benson's long intellectual journey, beginning at least with the publication of *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field* [Benson and Neveu 2005] and continuing through several works [see Benson 2006; Benson and Hallin 2007; Benson 2010a; Benson 2010b], as part of a complex comparative study – is an invaluable contribution to both political communication and the sociology of journalism.

Before describing what the book offers to the specific field of "media and migration," I briefly trace the main points of what it offers to journalism and media studies in more general terms.

First, Benson's research is impressive in itself for several reasons: because it is a rare example of a comparison between two national journalistic fields; because of the number of media outlets considered for news content (three US and three French newspapers; three US commercial networks and two French national channels) and the long timeframe within which this content has been produced (from the early 1970s through 2006); the 80 qualitative interviews with journalists, activists, scholars and politicians; and the knowledge of the historical journalistic context in the two countries. But Benson's research is even more impressive because he used several methods, carefully considering a great number of variables which could intervene to determine the results of content analysis in a way that few if any media studies have ever offered. For this reason, Benson's book has the air of a classic, a text every media scholar will have to read and re-read in order to learn how to rigorously engage with media analysis. The analytical engagement is indeed so vividly expressed in the book that we can find in every chapter the construction and deconstruction of hypotheses which are always theoretically informed.

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's field-theory, Benson has produced a study of journalism, developing a fruitful dialogue with political economy, liberal theory, Hallin and Mancini's [2004] comparisons of media systems, and sociology of news production. His work suggests the revision of a few pivotal hypotheses such as liberal assumptions about the chilling effects of state intervention on press criticism of government. At the same time it confirms

> one of the more dire predictions of critical political economy – that commercialism
> is inversely related to ideological diversity in the news [Benson 2013, 20].

Benson uses all the tools of field analysis and redefines some of its assumptions. For instance, he contests Bourdieu's idea that heteronomous power is always a destructive force.

> In the long term, autonomy from the market is only possible if it is materially secured by someone or something else (philanthropists, foundations, voluntary political, religious, or civic associations, the state), in other words, an opposing heteronomous pole. […] Many forms of "quality" journalism […] may be the product of proximity rather than distance to a heteronomous power [*ivi*, 13].

And again:

> Focusing only on the struggle for autonomy draws attention from the ways in which heteronomy(ies) can be productive. The particular balance of power between competing heteronomous forces also shapes practice within the field [*ivi*, 24].

After having reconceptualized the journalistic field's external position, Benson focuses on an aspect that was only partially explored by Bourdieu: the structural organizational ecology of the journalistic field, "the relative directness and intensity of competition among journalists and media outlets" [*ivi*, 13].

The research reflexively unfolds its own results and their consequences and implications, raising fundamental questions in the field, such as "What makes news more multiperspectival?" (ch. 6); "What makes for a critical press?" (ch. 7); and "Does the medium matter?" (ch. 8).

Moreover, through this work, structure and systemic factors are shown in light of their direct interconnection with specific news content, through an exploration of "how changes in news treatment of immigration are related to structural transformations of the journalistic field" [*ivi*, 1]. This investigation fills a gap which is unfortunately quite common in this field of studies, where systemic and structural factors, when they are analysed at all, are not directly linked to news content, and news content analyses are therefore usually unable to identify the causes of media coverage. The only exceptions here are the analyses of news production. However, these studies concentrate on organizational patterns and contextual practices, while economic and political factors are often impossible for newsroom ethnographies to capture.

Benson's field theory approach accounts for field position (relative proximity to either non-market or market power), field logic (dominant news practices and formats) and field structure (distinctions inside the field); it is constantly informed by history (of field formation), and journalists' and audiences' characteristics in terms of class and habitus, and all these and other factors are discussed in terms of how they condition the form of news and the frequencies of the news frames.

Given his interest in structural factors linked to "the democratic performance of news media," Benson is not directly interested in the details of facts, events and the variations in public debate related to migration (which is often event-driven). An example explaining this point is provided by his intellectual engagement on "What makes for a critical press?" (ch. 7). Here we find that Benson is clearly interested in the "who" question and not interested in the "what" question: *against whom* is critical journalism directed (policy or business criticism? And, more specifically: government or political parties or civic society organizations?) and what are the structural causes accounting for it, but not *what concrete actions* within the range of political, cultural or economic events/choices involving migrants or asylum-seekers are criticized by journalism and how. The only "what" question concerns the type of criticism (for instance, within policy criticism he distinguishes between "administrative criticism", "truth criticism", "ideology criticism", etc).

Benson has identified ten frames of the immigration debate and has adopted them as dependent variables in order to compare French and US media representations of immigration. He identified the frames after having read

> dozens of policy papers, activist manifestos, and academic studies, as well as numerous news articles and editorials in a range of alternative and mainstream media outlets in both France and the United States [*ivi*, 6].

They have been grouped into four threat frames (jobs, public order, fiscal and national cohesion), three victim frames (the global economy, humanitarianism and racism/xenophobia) and three hero frames (cultural diversity, integration and good worker). These frames are thus the main tools through which Benson accounts for immigration events and debate.

His deepest interest seems to be directed towards journalism, while representations of (im)migration represent a case-study, adopted in order to link structural forces with media content and to better understand and even redefine crucial questions in media and democracy such as multiperspectivalism in the news and critical journalism. Accordingly, Benson writes from the beginning of his book that

> the ongoing debate about whether news coverage is pro-immigrant or anti-immigrant misses the point. Rather, the test for journalism is how well it helps citizens and policymakers understand the causes and consequences of immigration, as well as the backlash against it [*ivi*, 1].

This incipit is not on its own very innovative, but linked with the following sentence it anticipates some of the conclusions:

> [W]e are more likely to get a clearer picture of this complex reality when the "journalistic field" is shaped more by civic-cultural ends than by commercial or instrumental political ends. This is […] a question of social structure: the challenge is to find the best ways to institutionally secure "quality" journalism [*ibidem*].

The strength of Benson's view is to reject solutions that support recommendations which journalists themselves are encouraged to incorporate in their daily practices (e.g. to use correct words and definitions; to use correct data; to give more voice to migrants and their associations; to avoid references to nationality, ethnicity or colour if it is not a determining aspect of the news, etc.), in favour of more structural (and durable) recommendations. Institutional change, more than changes in personal attitudes, is undoubtedly a more effective response. Benson puts it this way:

> [g]iven that the forms of news are refractions of field position, it will be difficult to durably transform practice without changing broader structures of power [*ivi*, 208].

Moreover, looking at media representations of migration without the lens of bias and "positive" or "negative" accounts avoids the risk of reproducing a pro- or anti-immigrant division which is arguably a nonsensical dichotomy and part of the problem within the Western representation of migration. For instance, presenting the ten frames, Benson writes that

> [t]he six victim and hero frames correlate roughly with pro-immigration advocacy, whereas the four threat frames correlate with anti-immigration advocacy [*ivi*, 7].

Forthwith, he recalls that "[s]ome scholars have grouped victim and threat frames together as both contributing to a negative image of immigrants and immigration" [*ibidem*], and he distances himself from this approach.

Meanwhile, one could argue that a weakness of Benson's view lies in the fact that structural solutions are not directly linked to journalists' agency. Changing structures themselves is not something people can easily contribute to, for the same reasons that Benson describes and that constitute a major assumption of the field theory approach (i.e. the constraints given by the history of field formation, by the power relations in the field and between interrelated fields, etc.).

Benson is clearly aware of this potential critique and in his final chapter he addresses it directly. After having suggested "the need to expand and strengthen public media…ideally…through public subsidies" because "it seems clear from this study that the best journalism tends to be that with the most civic-cultural capital" [*ivi*, 207], he reminds us the extent to which both US and French journalism are embed-

ded in history and in power relations. Thus, "moving U.S. media in this direction will be difficult" [*ivi*, 208]. Nevertheless, he finds a way to do so by arguing that

> [j]ournalists who want to improve their working conditions and capacity to produce quality work should support the efforts of progressive media policy reform groups [*ibidem*].

This may be a long and difficult journey towards change, but Benson is arguably right to see that support for public policies and structural change offers a more effective way to change media representations of migration than any effort towards changing journalistic practices through cultural events and local training. Nevertheless, the need to consider the link between scholars' findings and social intervention for change remains and Benson's work offers some new points for future debates.

A more practical recommendation comes from another result of his work. He founds that

> when American journalists cover civil society events their coverage is often just as multiperspectival as French news coverage. The difference, in part, is simply that civil society events make up a far larger proportion of immigration news coverage in France than in the United States [*ivi*, 208].

Here the recommendation is more clearly linked to journalistic work, supporting an intervention about which sources deserve more attention in representing events connected with migration.

While Benson seems to be more interested in journalism than in media representations of migration, his work has important things to offer to the debate on media and migration.

The first consideration is that the field theory approach

> helps one avoid both semiotic analysis devoid of the social and a crude political economy that reduces journalistic (or other cultural) texts to broad social determinations [*ivi*, 23].

His work combines external influences (from state and market), mechanisms of production and news content. In so doing, it finds in the link between positions, structures and logics the main journalistic causes accounting for different news representations of immigration. In closer detail, for Benson, *the "field logic–form of news"* nexus and its connection with field positions as well as field structure are key.

This is an interesting point that allows for further comparisons as well as extensions and integrations – e.g. to the field logics and forms of news photographs [e.g. Solaroli 2016] or TV video shoots, and their role in representing migration – going beyond semiotic and linguistic content analysis and opening the path to more

sociological comparisons at the international level. As Benson's research shows, the two forms of news directly influencing media output on immigration are dramatic personalized narratives in the United States and the debate ensemble format in France.

Another important point is that Benson has collected and clearly explained the prevailing frames of coverage of immigrants and immigration. Although there might be room to search for new frames made up of the combination of two or more frames, the work of summarizing the frames and clearly defining them is an important step. Of particular interest is Benson's analysis of their success and decline. A great example is given by his explanation of how

> immigration, once considered an essential part of the labor beat, was progressively reconceived as a story of race and culture [Benson 2013: 76].

Benson takes this a step further with a couple of important shifts. In the first shift he finds connections between frames and advocacy groups and other influencing factors. He writes:

> On the pro-immigration side are left progressives (global economy), civil libertarians (humanitarian), and laissez-faire capitalists (good worker); on the anti-immigration side are some labor unions and African-American groups (jobs), as well as various tribes of conservatives […] concerned with balanced budgets (fiscal threat), cultural unity (national cohesion), or law and order (public order) [*ivi*: 7].

In the second shift he finds that these influences do not explain the pattern of news coverage.

> [T]he reason why is that all of these social forces and social actors have been taken up, processed, and refracted in various ways by the journalistic field, which itself is riven by complex, competing and sometimes contradictory, imperatives [*ivi*, 99].

Notwithstanding this complexity, some clear cause-and-effect relationships may be found. Benson shows the connections between the "*field logic–form of news*" nexus and two diffused frames: the "humanitarian frame", which is favoured by personalized narratives typical of US journalism, and the "global economy frame", which is favoured by the "multigenre événement news format" and the "société desk", which are typical form of news in French newspapers (but not in television news). Other connections are found in the habitus affinity between journalists and well-educated, socially connected humanitarian activists in both the United States and France which supports the production and reproduction of the humanitarian frame. Meanwhile, threat frames are reproduced more when leading political parties embrace them, and

they are downplayed when the only supporters are immigration restrictionist groups (the habitus is the explanatory concept, and here indeed we have habitus disaffinities). Moreover, the different journalistic field position accounts for the more market-oriented immigration frames in the United States and more civic solidarity–oriented frames in France.

Field position, field logic and field structure alone do not explain all of the relevant coverage of immigration by the media. Benson is attentive in his consideration of numerous other factors influencing frames' success and decline. For instance, in explaining the success of the humanitarian and public order frames (which are the more diffused frames in the West, judging from the literature on "media and migration"), he refers to the wider bourdieusian conceptual framework, including habitus, often reinforced with important elements of news values, borrowed from classic works in the sociology of journalism.

3.   Transnationalism, Diasporas and the Media

If the area of *journalism, political communication and (im)migration* occupies the largest part of the field of media and migration, another area of study, the one I have labelled *transnationalism, diasporas and the media* is nevertheless well established [e.g., Karim 2003; Bailey, Georgiou and Harindranath 2007; Volkmer 2008; Hopkins 2009; Sun and Sinclair 2016]. Books and papers are continually produced which can easily been associated with this label. This subfield is characterized by an attempt to connect several theoretical approaches produced under different disciplines: from anthropology to philosophy, from sociology to studies which are interdisciplinary from the very beginning, such as postcolonial, citizenship and cultural studies. Here the works of Appadurai [1996], Anderson [1991], Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton-Blanc [1995], Balibar and Wallerstein [1991], Balibar [1991], Hall [1990], Spivak [1987], Sassen [1991], Clifford [1994], Portes [1997], Bhabha [1994] and a few others are seminal, but many other references are used to design *ad hoc* theoretical and analytical paths.

Obviously, several influences come from media studies. The unmentioned first influence is that of the uses and gratifications approach [Blumler and Katz 1974; Blumler 1979], which turned attention from what the media do to people (media effects) into what the people do with the media. Its roots in functionalism have been largely criticized in subsequent years, but the shift it produced within media studies led to the nascence of socio-anthropological studies of the media [e.g. Ginsburg,

Abu-Lughod and Larkin 2002; Rothenbuhler and Coman 2005; Horst and Miller 2012].

This socio-anthropological side of media studies generated a number of works which are the explicit references for research on *transnationalism, diasporas and the media*: from (active) audience and consumption studies [Morley 1980; Ang 1991; Morley and Silverstone 1990; Silverstone 1994; Lull 1991; Gillespie 1995] to works on media, ritual and identity [Liebes and Curran 1998]; from projects of de-Westernizing media studies within anthropology [Sreberny-Mohammadi *et al.* 1997; Ginsburg, Abu-Lughold and Larkin 2002], to the idea of a plurality of public spheres influenced by cultural diversities within any given society [Morley 2000, 105-127].

All of these references have found in the concept of diaspora a perfect subject for development, and in the digital communication environment, a key factor accounting for the acceleration and the growing relevance of transnational processes.

To better understand these studies it is important to remember that they do not view diasporas within a historical-only framework. Diaspora

> has become more than a historical category; it is also a social category [and an analytical category] which, next to race (or racialized) politics, addresses socio-political inequalities and exclusion [Georgiou 2007, 14].

Media and diasporas is an area of study primarily concerned with demonstrating the impossibility of achieving cultural homogeneity. Under the lens of these intellectual productions,□ cultures are socially constructed objects; they are continually redefined and negotiated, and this continuing work of imagination and representation expressed through social practices produces diasporas as imagined communities [Anderson 1991] whose borders are never given or fixed. Diasporas are always – at least in part – built through communicative exchanges and practices of consumerism. This construction nevertheless works as a reality, conditioning transnational lives in many ways, sustaining "real and imagined connections across spread populations and/or a country of origin" [Georgiou 2007, 14]. Appadurai's concept of imagination in a global society [Appadurai 1996] and Thompson's [1995] work on the reception of global images and their role in identity and social change are seminal here.

The focus on the global imagination and social imaginary is also a product of the shift, within media studies, from the view of media's strong effects to weak or soft effects. The idea of a weak effect of media representations on their public – which paralleled a rise of the uses and gratifications approach mentioned above – drew scholars' attention to the

slow, cumulative, complex, indeterminate and unpredictable processes [of media effects]. In this view, the power of media representations lies in the creation of a certain environment of images, narratives and sensations that become the resources that shape what we know about the world. The power of media representations, in other words, resides in producing symbolic resources that feed individual and collective imaginations [Orgad 2012: 41].

Similar to Swidler's approach to culture [Swidler 1986], which changed the framework for investigating cultural effects on social action, the focus on the relationship between media representations and individual appropriations of social imaginary opened new spaces for researching and theorizing, triggering a shift from "media production" and "media effects" to "media uses and their soft and complex effects." This shift, which still coexists with more traditional works on media that reproduce the neat analytical distinction between media production, media text (or message) and media consumption, accelerated with the diffusion of interactive technologies of communication which blurred the boundaries that previously separated production and consumption. According to several scholars, alternative and diasporic media and dispersed and transnational lives contributed to the partial loss of an analytical sense with clear distinctions into the three-step process which characterized media analysis. Georgiou [2007, 23] put it this way:

Deterritorialized and dispersed production and consumption redefine the roles of production-text-consumption in a number of ways:
(i) media production is more diverse and includes corporate, public, community, niche media
(ii) media corporations are less able to predict audiences' interests as they are geographically and culturally dispersed
(iii) content is produced locally and globally, in different languages and by people who might be professional or amateurs
(iv) a growing number of audience members is more media literate than ever. Their consumption includes different media (local, national, transnational; corporate, public, alternative; large and small). Thus, the way they relate with production and text of each medium is far from linear and predictable.
In this context, the production of meanings shifts from being primarily controlled in the production side of the media to being negotiated in an ongoing dialectic relation between production and consumption.

For the field of media and migration, this shift has been seen as particularly fruitful, because the two processes of migration and mediation have been conceptualized by scholars of globalization as two intertwined phenomena. For instance,

Appadurai [1996, 4] posits that the joint forces of mass migration and the rapid flow of mediated images and narratives that mark the modern world impel the work of imagination in fundamentally new ways [Orgad 2012, 43].

With the works of Appadurai [1996] and Thompson [1995] in mind, Orgad [2012, 108-109] wrote that, in a globalized world:

> [t]he imagination has broken out of the designated expressive spaces in which it was sequestered, such as art, myth and ritual, and has entered everyday life. The migration of populations and the intermingling of people from different cultures and traditions form a source of enormous cultural creativity and symbolic activity. At the same time they are also sources of conflict, tension and instability.

With these aspects in mind, several scholars focused their attention on the so-called diasporic media which can be defined as alternative media and media contents mainly produced and consumed by people who recognize themselves as members of the diaspora. They are sites for self-representation and for politicization of a community because they offer an alternative to the symbolic exclusion those people face in the mainstream national media. As Bailey, Georgiou and Haridranath [2007, 2] assert,

> diasporic media cultures become strategic positions for self-expression and representation, even if the intentions of their producers are not political.

Although several scholarly products fit the *transnationalism, diasporas and the media* sub-field, we nonetheless must consider that these contributions are heterogeneous. We can arguably divide them into three main directions.

The first is *more cultural and postcolonial studies–oriented*, while the second is *more media anthropology–oriented*. Both these directions for studying media and migration are theoretically strong and empirically underdeveloped. Case studies are analysed through *a*) ethnographies or experiential accounts with specific minority groups in specific cities, or *b*) brief historical reconstructions of interesting/emblematic public debates. Finally, there is a third less represented direction, which is *more empirically centred and methodologically based on network analysis*. It focuses mainly on diasporic media practices in the digital environment.

Within the first two directions the media specificities are often taken for granted and treated implicitly. Their presence is just one aspect of many elements shaping a transnational environment. It does not mean that the media are not rhetorically constructed as a crucial aspect of the move to transnational identities and cultures, but wider theoretical considerations around the practical crisis of concepts such as the nation, citizenship and the public sphere take the stage, while investigations on concrete media uses are often behind the scenes.

The unanswered question is: what is new from a media studies perspective since 1997, when *Media in Global Context* [Sreberny-Mohammadi *et al.*, 1997] – a book which coped with questions about the relationships between media and globalization,

looking at culture and identity and discussing the transnational shift – was published? In other words: what are the changes in *transnationalism, diasporas and the media* twenty years later?

Wimmer and Glick Schiller [2002, 302] asserted that

[r]ather than a recent offspring of globalization, transnationalism appears as a constant of modern life, hidden from a view that was captured by methodological nationalism.

And they continue by saying that

the value of studying transnational communities and migration is not to discover "something new" […] but to have contributed to this shift of perspective away from methodological nationalism [*Ibidem*].

This assertion opens a question about the role the media played in this shift. In fact, if the pivot to transnational cultures and identities can be understood as a turn in methodology and theoretical frameworks instead of social and technological changes, how then does one account for the media role in changing the signifying practices of the social actors in a way that actively undermines the received ideas of nation, citizenship, identity, and the public sphere? How does one understand transnationalism in connection with changes in media technologies and media uses if transnationalism is a constant of modern life?

From the role of "small media" in the Iranian revolution, analysed by Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi [1994] to social networks' role in the invention and re-invention of diasporic cultures there is indeed a huge change which needs to be discussed in more detail and through a framework which accounts for the specifics of media technologies, media genres, and media uses by different groups in different locations. This lack of conceptualization of the specific role of media and media practices probably has to do with disciplinary boundaries in the academic field, major theoretical trends in academic departments, journals' orientations and other structural factors, which would merit an *ad hoc* study.

Notwithstanding these shortcomings, the works under discussion here have a number of merits. Probably the enduring merit is of having produced – together with a great number of other studies unconcerned with the media[1] – a clear undermining of cultural and ethnic essentialisms, demonstrating how cultures are continually renegotiated through practices, including media practices, and showing the erroneous

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[1] Within constructivism see Barth [1969]; Brubaker [2004]; Wimmer [2013]; Poutignat and Streiff-Fénart [2015].

presuppositions of discourses that blame diasporic media as if they were responsible for slowing migrants' integration processes in the host societies.

From a migration studies perspective these works shed some light on processes of cultural inclusion and exclusion, on the complexity and ambiguity of processes of integration in the cities of the West, thus undermining the very idea of integration in terms of "acculturation" and contrasting this vision with concepts such as cultural hybridity and cosmopolitanism.

The processes of creative reinvention of traditions, of re-adaptations and re-negotiations of cultural authenticity, have been illustrated through a variety of case studies – see for example Morey and Yaqin's account of the "Islamic Barbie" distributed via internet purchases for members of a Muslim diaspora in the West and its role in the production of the imagined digital Muslim diaspora [Morey and Yaqin 2011, 182-192].

It is nevertheless easy to argue that these contributions to migration studies from anthropology and cultural studies could have been produced in large part even without a focus on media practices, which are understood here as nothing more than one factor among many others, a factor that still needs to be better articulated and deeply understood.

Finally, the major risk of this subfield is that *the celebratory discourse* of transnational lives, with the somewhat utopian emphasis it placed upon individual agency – an emphasis which originated within globalization studies and was partly reproduced by the cosmopolitan literature and active audience studies – may obscure a more radical sociological commitment to studies of inequalities as well as symbolic and social exclusions. Moreover, the celebratory discourse of transnational lives has brought many scholars to reduce the potentially diverse roles of transnational and diasporic media to the construction of transnational spaces and identity, "artificially isolate[ing] transnational media practices from more localised, parochial or mundane forms of media consumption that may in fact challenge diasporic solidarities" [Tsagarousianou 2004; Budarick 2014].

3.1. *Mediating Migration: New Case Studies and a Conceptual Clarification*

The book *Mediating Migration*, authored by Radha S. Hegde and published in 2016 by Polity Press is an excellent example of the *transnationalism, diasporas and the media* area of study, and, more specifically, of the *more cultural and postcolonial studies–oriented* works in the area.

In line with the majority of works in the subfield, the focus is not on media but rather on the process of mediation. This means that there is an explicit avoidance of media centrism in favour of a complex account of a set of cultural factors and practices which are increasingly mediated in contemporary societies, but which apparently do not need a detailed analysis of media practices to be described and understood.

In Hedge's words, the

> goal [of the work] was not to focus exclusively on the many technological artefacts, platforms, and devices that constitute the marvel and salve of our interactive times. Rather it was to address how various practices and modalities of communication bridge the representation, experience, and politics of migration [Hegde 2016, 121].

The structure of the book is an element of strength; the book contributes to the subfield by proposing a clear investigation of some of the relevant practices which have long been under discussion. Core chapters are about *legitimacy*, *recognition*, *gendered publics*, *domesticity*, and *authenticity*.

As in the majority of works in this area, in Hegde's book the methodology is mostly thematic, rather than empirical [Budarick 2016]. We can find a more empirical trend in chapter 5, where the author deals with domesticity by focussing on the culture of food through blogs, and in chapter 6, where she deals with authenticity through web-mediated musical performances. Both of these case studies are the result of an ethnographic work conducted by Hegde within the Indian diaspora in New York. The author looks at the digital media practices – women blogging about food and virtual training on Carnatic music through *Skype* – as complementary yet essential elements for the forging of cultural communities (including gender relations and generational divides).

In particular, in chapter 6, Hegde describes the practices through which young members of the Indian diaspora in New York renegotiate the authenticity of the Indian classical musical tradition. The chapter offers a clear example of the author's way of coping with culture and the desire to belong. Authenticity here is both a desirable condition and a practice of censorship and then of symbolic power, used to exclude members of the diaspora from the "true" India. Authenticity is also the terrain for playing the cultural game of education both "here" and "there". In this attempt to authentically perform in New York City the traditional music of the land of origin, young people from the diaspora are involved in a number of cultural practices which not only redefine their cultural identity, but also influence the redefinition of the diaspora itself. In this process, new media rewrites some of the rules, but

they are just one element in the web of signifying practices which constitute the real game.

With regard to methodology and the conceptualization of the role of the media, these two chapters offer a coherent idea, which is not easy to find in the rest of the book, where the media are sometimes an essential part of the cultural game, whereas in other passages they are relegated to the background or lost, and where the themes often lack empirical support. Furthermore, while these two chapters and a large part of the theoretical references of the book are clearly directed at the diaspora and transnationalism, a large part of the book is more generally focused on migrants (or undocumented migrants) and uses examples taken from mainstream US national media, or from alternative media that cannot be identified as diasporic. This point is emblematic of the low efforts to unveil the specific roles played by the media which characterize most of the studies in this subfield.

What *Mediating Migration* does at its best is putting the bodies of the migrants at the centre of the discussion. Migrants' subjectivities are seen as being conditioned during their formation by a constant process of surveillance and judgement which takes the forms of legitimate or illegitimate status, of recognition or misrecognition through labelling processes, as well as "in the crowd-sourced court of social media" [Hegde 2016, 19]. Migrants' bodies and public performances are scrutinized by a gendered eye for being modern or not, which often means being integrated or not into Western societies; they are judged from different perspectives (different places and groups) with regard to their performance of cultural authenticity, in both the public and private space, where digital media penetrates deeply into – and contributes in shaping – the everyday life of people.

In accordance to this approach, another element that characterizes Hegde's work resides in her explicit refusal of a celebratory discourse on transnationalism. This celebratory discourse is a major obstacle for revitalizing this area of study. In contrast to this discourse, the author is well aware of the strength of power relations that structure the communication environment, as well as the old and new obstacles in the path towards a cosmopolitan view of social life. In her accounts of migrants' lives the media are seen as sites of a cultural struggle which involve expectations and aspirations as well as censorship and surveillance, creativity as well as routine.

In conclusion, Hegde's book explores "the experience of transnational mobility and its intersections with complex lines of power" [*ivi*, 119], by stressing the importance some practices play in the making and unmaking of migrants' identities (legitimization, recognition, authentication, etc.) and by giving the process of me-

diation an embedded status in all the cultural processes related to such an experience.

4. Conclusions: Blind Spots and New Opportunities for Researching "Media and Migration"

This article has offered a review of prevalent approaches in the interdisciplinary field of studies on media and migration. First of all a distinction has been made between studies concerned primarily with news media and political communication and studies concerned primarily with culture and identity. The two subfields are largely independent in terms of both theoretical and methodological approaches and thus they have been treated separately in the article.

The first group of studies, which have been named *journalism, political communication and (im)migration* and whose contribution to the field of media and migration is certainly the most relevant in terms of number of publications, has been discussed with particular attention to two essential recent books: *Migrations and the Media* [Moore, Gross and Threadgold 2012] and *Shaping Immigration News* [Benson 2013].

Migrations and the Media □has the merit of having clearly developed two relevant points:

a) to link media discursive analysis of the "migration crisis" with classic social theory, in the context of a subfield which is mostly characterized by "relatively decontextualised content analysis of media texts alone" [Threadgold 2012, 270].

b) to broaden the debate about the media representations of migration, by looking at the rise and fall of narrative global structures (or master-frames) and their influence over the migratory discourse (e.g., through the narrative structure of solidarity and its influence on media narratives on refugees, described by Chouliaraki).

Taken together, these two points engage with processes of discourse and frame formations, and insist on scholars' involvement in connecting the media representations of migration at the national level with wider international discursive structures (having to do with post-colonialism, humanitarianism or the security issue, among other possible themes).

On the other hand, the greatest merit of *Shaping Immigration News* is that of having brought to the area of media and migration study a crucial attention to the social structure, thus connecting the media representations of migration with the journalistic fields which are specific to various national contexts. Indeed, the frequencies of discourses and frames are not just the result of events and contingent political

configurations, but they are strongly related to the histories of field formation, the relations between fields and the form of news produced as a consequence of these structural factors.

Thus, the two books under discussion propose new fundamental approaches to renovating the field of media and migration, and they do so by showing the need for a stronger sociological involvement. The partial yet relevant abandonment of media and communication studies by sociologists [Pooley and Katz 2008] has recently produced various calls for a reinstatement of the sociological approaches [e.g., Waisbord 2014; Vliegenthart and van Zoonen 2011] and it was time for an explicit reappraisal of the sociological contribution even in the crucial field of media and migration.

In line with this call for sociological analysis, four directions for new research in the field are now suggested.

a) A first suggestion comes directly from the book of Moore, Gross and Threadgold and is a call for investigating wider connections between representations of migrants at national levels and in global discourses – such as the humanitarian discourse in the West, but also the security policies at the US or EU level, or the Western intercultural discourse. Studies in these domains and the search for specific intertwining of these Western discourses with news media representations and other institutional representations of migration could trigger a new way of thinking about symbolic power, by recovering not only a semiotic-linguistic discourse analysis but also a socio-historical one. In general terms this is an invitation to "de-migranticize" and de-nationalize media and migration studies in the subfield of journalism, political communication and (im)migration. This suggested process might also be helpful in achieving a critical distance with the normalization discourse which emerges from migration and integration research originating in a historically institutionalized nation-state migration apparatus.

b) A second suggestion comes from Benson's book and is a call for more comparative studies.

However there is a risk involved in comparative studies in this field: that of an a-critical adoption by scholars of frames and discourses which emerge from studies conducted in different national contexts. To avoid this risk, scholars in the field might better integrate the media analysis with the migratory contexts and histories, and with the policies and the integration models studied by scholars within migration studies. More comparative studies could produce new data and foster new theoretical approaches for considering the role of journalism in the representation of migration. They could open new discussions to help identify adequate practices for changing the present situation, which is characterized by a general disappointment over the media representations of such an enormously important issue in contemporary political and

social life. In general terms this is an invitation to better integrate comparative media studies with comparative migration studies.

Other suggestions come from the re-evaluation of approaches which are largely missing in media and migration, and which would fruitfully enrich both the theoretical framework and the methodological investment. They are primarily concerned with *local processes*, with practices more then news content. They invite de-mediatization of media and migration studies by looking at the media in tight relations with other crucial local actors involved in the narrative-making of (im)migration. A sociological engagement in studying how the media intervene in complex social processes involving a multitude of actors and interests, how the local dimension inhibits or fosters the spread of news at the national level, and how national and international frames condition the local media narratives [Lawlor 2015] and the narrative-making processes would arguably be a new and fruitful research strand for the field.

c) The third suggestion is thus an invitation for more empirical studies on how local media are involved in the success or failure of mediated social phenomena, such as moral panics [Pogliano 2016]. In fact, while the classic study of Hall *et al.* [1978] is often referenced, studies in media moral panics have curiously been almost abandoned by scholars operating within the field of media and migration. This has happened despite the fact that the local dimension appears to be key to "anti-immigrant" political and moral entrepreneurs' strategies, which are more and more connected with local events in order to enflame national debates and to obtain new political consensus. It seems that the *journalism, political communication and (im)migration* subfield has renounced to a large degree its sociological engagement, by both overemphasizing media texts and undervaluing the social processes and actors' strategies which affect media output, especially at the local level. This is a relevant failing, if we consider that political studies' engagement in the migration issue has led to the rediscovery of the centrality of local processes and have developed multi-level policy-framing analyses which could be integrated with the media-framing analysis [e.g. Caponio 2005; Caponio and Borkert 2010; Campomori and Caponio 2013; Scholten 2016].

d) Finally, the "media and migration" scholars could produce a tighter connection with that part of the social movement literature – within which there is growing attention to the civic and political participation of people of migrant background – particularly involved in studying the strategies and the repertoires of action, the alliances at the local level and the frame production in a range of media – mainstream and alternative, traditional and new [e.g., McCurdy 2012; Mattoni and Treré 2014; Cappiali 2016]. In general terms it is an invitation for considering the news media and the news framing processes along with other media production and communicative strategies emerging from bottom-up processes. Against the idea of looking at

migrants' inclusion in the media by considering how much the news media give voice to migrants (content analysis), it is a call for discussing how this voice can penetrate the range of media outlets (process analysis).

In conclusion, these four suggested research strands converge into a general suggestion: instead of more nationally and media-centred studies, scholars in the subfield of *news media and migration* should focus more on both international and comparative discourse analysis, and on local process analysis. These research strands would better prove the specificities of the roles that the media play, or could play in the larger process of the production of social, political and institutional representations about migrants and migration. Furthermore, a push towards these suggested directions would arguably enlarge the conceptual toolkit for investigations into the subfield *of journalism, political communication and (im)migration.* As a consequence, these approaches could offer new opportunities for bridging some gaps that still remain at the intersection of media studies and migration studies.

The idea that the local and the global, instead of the national, are the relevant levels to be investigated, something that is worth suggesting for studies in *journalism, political communication an (im)migration*, is already common in the second group of works – e.g., studies in *transnationalism, diasporas and the media.*

These studies have been partially reviewed in this article, with special attention to the book *Mediating Migration* [Hegde 2016]. It seemed useful to make distinctions within these studies. Given the fact that the *transnationalism, diasporas and the media* subfield has been co-produced by numerous disciplines and approaches, it is anything but a monolithic group of studies. With regard to this concern, three orientations appears to be constitutive. The first strand in terms of outputs is *more cultural and postcolonial studies-oriented.* A *more media anthropology–oriented* strand follows. Finally, a third strand is *more empirically centred and methodologically based on network analysis.*

The works in this subfield had the great merit – among others – to connect media and migration with practices of consumption, that is, with the socio-cultural context of media reception and production, in particular by questioning how identities are built through media practices. As a consequence, they have contributed to the wave of anti-essentialism in cultural studies by investigating the importance of media in producing transnational communities and hybrid identities. However, these studies have been criticized for a few important reasons.

First, a consistent part of this literature is not immune to the critical argument first asserted by Brubaker [2004] as part of the constructivist literature, namely that of methodological individualism. In Brubaker's words,

> [t]he alternative to the substantialist idiom of bounded groups is not an idiom of individual choice, but rather (as Bourdieu never tired of emphasizing) a relational, processual, and dynamic analytical language [*ivi*: 3].

The idealization of individual agency, along with the reduction of the potentially diverse roles of the transnational and diasporic media in the construction of transnational spaces and identity [Budarick 2014] have led to a celebratory discourse of transnationalism and transnational lives which have much in common with the literature on cosmopolitism and have downplayed questions on power and social exclusion.

The celebratory discourse of transnationalism and the methodological individualism do not go hand-in-hand with empiricism in this area of studies, an area which is rarely engaged in data collection and data analysis.

Within this subfield there are, however, some attempts to cope with these critiques, even within the *more cultural and postcolonial studies-oriented* area, which is arguably the most exposed to these criticisms. The book *Mediating Migration* [Hegde 2016] is one interesting attempt in this direction. One of the merits of this work the choice to put the migrants' subjectivities at the centre of the discussion and to do so by investigating processes of surveillance and judgement which take the forms of legitimate or illegitimate status, of recognition or misrecognition in the mainstream media as well as "in the crowd-sourced court of social media" [*ivi*: 19], that is, in both the public and the private space. This approach counters the critique about the idealistic agency which is attributed to migrants by scholars in this area, reintroducing the theme of social control and the dialectic between inclusion and exclusion at the centre. In Hegde's accounts of migrants' lives the media are seen as sites of a cultural struggle which involve expectations and aspirations as well as censorship and surveillance, creativity as well as routine.

However, Hegde's work shares with several other studies in the area a low degree of empirical data collection and – partially as a consequence of this – a weak conceptualization of the diverse media and their specific roles in the processes under analysis. As it has been noted [Budarick 2014], the over-emphasis on diasporic media, understood as media whose main effect is to make room for the diaspora as a form of self-imagined community, going beyond national identification, can displace attention from the complexities and ambiguities of the broader range of transnational and diasporic media.

The main suggestion for this subfield is thus for a more media-specific account of mediation, in order to better explain the connections between the media uses and the signifying practices, and to find new frameworks for discussing the process of mediation in migrant's lives.

This does not mean that postcolonial literature is now worthless in the field of media and migration. Conceptual tools coming from postcolonial studies have proven to be highly innovative if applied to the *journalism, political communication and (im)migration* subfield, where they were long ignored. Furthermore, as said above, these works would probably be crucial in studies of global (humanitarian, security and intercultural) discourses, and their interconnections with media representations of migration.

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Media, Migration, and Sociology

A Critical Review

Abstract: The article reviews and discusses the interconnections between media studies and migration studies – namely, the field of "media and migration" – focusing in particular on three major books which were published in the last five years: two in the sub-field of *journalism, political communication and (im)migration* [Moore, Gross & Threadgold's 2012 edited *Migration and the Media*, published by Peter Lang, and Benson's 2013 *Shaping Immigration News: A French-American Comparison*, published by Cambridge University Press], and one in the sub-field of *transnationalism, diasporas and the media* [Hegde's 2016 *Mediating Migration*, published by Polity Press]. By looking at these interconnections, the article identifies and critically examines major subfields of studies and research in media and migration, it discusses their strengths and weaknesses, and it suggests a few potential research strands with the intention of both reinforcing the sociological contribution to the field and better bridging migration studies and media studies.

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