JYX JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

This is a self-archived version of an original article. This version may differ from the original in pagination and typographic details.

Author(s): Horsti, Karina

Title: Book review: Radha Hegde, Mediating Migration

Year: 2019

Version: Accepted version (Final draft)

Copyright: © The Author(s) 2017

Rights: In Copyright

Rights url: http://rightsstatements.org/page/InC/1.0/?language=en

Please cite the original version:

Horsti, K. (2019). Book review: Radha Hegde, Mediating Migration. European Journal of Cultural Studies, 22(2), 267-268. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549417743043

Radha Hegde: Mediating Migration, Polity, 2016.

There have been two main approaches to combine media and migration in scholarship: how media represents migration and migrants, and how the mediation of every day life and media technologies shape transnational relationships and the lives of migrants. In her book *Mediating Migration* Radha Hegde combines these two approaches and organizes them around five themes, which also make the main chapters: legitimacy, recognition, gendering, domesticity, and authenticity. The chapters on legitimacy and recognition examine how migrant subjects, their belonging and citizenship are represented and negotiated in public debates. Certain bodies are under constant suspicion, and their belonging is unsettled. Hegde also pays attention to how gendered subjects, namely the veiled woman, figures in the construction of liberal modernity. Finally, through performances of ethnicity in the realms of culture, such as food and music, Hegde questions the notions of authenticity, homeland and domesticity in transnational context.

Hegde begins the book by telling a story of a winning lottery ticket in an immigrant neighborhood in New Jersey and how publics in Rio Janeiro and Newark speculated whether the winner is illegal or legal, whether cashing the ticket would be a risk for an undocumented migrant. What if good luck is impossible for those living in the condition of being undocumented? The story opens a key theme of the book: how local lives are transnationally situated and how mediated connectivity creates a sense of simultaneous presence. Identities of people who have a migrant background are often connected transnationally to here and multiple theres simultaneously. While this has been well argued in cultural studies literature since, for instance the seminal work of Stuart Hall, a lot of research still fails to analyze mobility and social relations in their transnational entanglements. Moreover, in the present day public debate categories such as culture, ethnicity, and nationality seem to be treated as fixed containers. These topics are increasingly debated in classrooms and this book offers a very good reading for students and teachers who examine citizenship, transnationalism and mobility in the context of mediated societies.

Eloquently Hedge opens these entanglements by analyzing various kinds of mediated practices. One chapter, for example, examines Indian food blogs and the ways in which the women who tinker their grandmother's recipes produce cosmopolitan and adaptive image of Indian cooking, and in doing so, also the identity of "Indian woman". Indian cooking is stereotypically considered time consuming but these bloggers celebrate life where one can have a career and still enjoy good food and cooking. Food blogging is just one of the ways in which technology is operationalized for place-making and for negotiation of citizenship, for creating ways of being both Indian and American. In these blogs, contemporary life is about finding cultural flexibility that bends and complies with multiple identities. Writing a blog about this bending is performative: the women become who they are by performing their hybrid identity by blogging. This communicative practice also constitutes a social group of women who share similar struggles in their cosmopolitan belonging.

Other examples where Hedge finds similar negotiations of in-betweenness include protest, sport, music and rituals. For instance, she observes the Dreamers in New York as the undocumented students perform their citizenship by public speech acts

saying: We are American. By protesting in public they act as citizens, and in doing so, revision what citizenship means.

However, while Hegde shows how people successfully bend their cultural identities, she doesn't avoid talking about the tensions and moments where there is just cultural stiffness. One source of anxiety is that many people don't conceive culture as something flexible but constantly raise questions about authenticity and legitimacy. Can Algerian-French support the Algerian soccer team? Can Carnatic music be played in a Jazz Club in New York and can it be learned without the traditional teaching method that transmits knowledge from the guru to the student? Those thinking in nationalist ways have a clear answer to these kinds of questions. For them there are no multiple loyalties. In this black-and-white cultural thinking the figure of the migrant, or actually the migrant-looking one is seen with suspicion. Hegde analyzes mediated representations of "the veiled Muslim woman" and the digital hunt of the Boston bomber as examples of mediated representations of something that is "out of sync with modernity". Powerfully, she counters these narrow perceptions and shows how culture is not a substance in people or in their actions but that people continuously make culture in specific situations.

This book successfully applies concepts we associate with migration, such as globalization, transnationalism, and cosmopolitanism in complex contemporary situations. Through various case studies we learn how media shapes the understanding of migration but also how migrants shape their lives in mediated worlds, and by doing that, make the world. Radha Hegde takes her reader through stories and details that have caught her attention, and she turns conceptual ideas alive and makes us re-examine them. The complexity of these theoretical perspectives dissolves as she "watches" images and reads novels, journalism and scholarly literature. Most fascinating are her own observations of diasporic everyday lives, migrant protests and cultural events in New York where she lives and elsewhere where she travels. Hedge keeps her analytical eyes open everywhere and in an original way she thinks through mediated life. This book is a pleasure to read.

Karina Horsti
Academy of Finland Fellow, University of Jyväskylä