

Leopoldina Fortunati, Raul Pertierra, and Jane Vincent (Eds.), **Migration, Diaspora, and Information Technology in Global Societies**, New York: Routledge, 2012, 290 pp., \$133.00 (hardcover).

Reviewed by
Benedicta Ideho
University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Migration patterns and diaspora have been studied by such distinguished researchers as Jonathan Mafukidze (2006) for many years. In recent times, however, there has been a significant shift in how migrants experience the diaspora since the space can be easily crossed with the aid of technological advancements. This technological change is examined by Leopoldina Fortunati, Raul Pertierra, and Jane Vincent, who edited **Migration, Diaspora, and Information Technology in Global Societies**, a collection of articles focusing on how migrants conduct their social relationships across space. The book looks at the ways that migrants utilize technology—electronic devices, the Internet, and Internet community platforms—as well as at the corresponding development in new identities and relationships that such technologically mediated interactions generate. Indeed, the topic of this edited volume is timely, because due to the globalization of employment markets and educational facilities, migration occurs more rapidly and easily now than it did in the past decade. Migration-related corporeal movement of people can be attributed to many dynamic factors such as lack of jobs, wars, and international marriages. Such movement causes the emergence of new diaspora communities where people rely heavily on ICT to sustain relationships and linkages. The authors in this collection analyze the many factors affecting how information technology is utilized by immigrants in global societies, and the editors have organized the book in five thematic sections.



Migration, Diaspora, and Information Technology begins with the conceptual perspectives of migrants in postmodern societies, with contributions from Giuseppe Mantovani, Maria Bortoluzzi, and Alice Robbin that present a chronological and detailed analysis of the impact of new media on shaping the patterns of migration and cultural co-constructions. The three authors argue the concept of migrants as e-actors, which sees migrants as digital subjects. Utilizing three case studies (UK, Italy, and the United States), this first thematic section explores the approaches, models, and languages by which migrants become engaged in a host community as well as in the global society. It is interesting to note that migrants, as perceived in this section, shape the development of new ICT mediums of communication via their habits and mode of ICT usage.

The book's second section, featuring three specific case studies from two countries (Jamaica and Australia) brings together contributions from Heather Horst, Clifton Evers, Gerard Goggin, Lelia Green, and Nahid Kabir. These authors investigate how gender and generation issues are intertwined with migration by examining the gender identity changes that migrants undergo with the influence of old and new media. This section argues, and rightly so, that new media serve as a constructing tool to define how technology is utilized to bridge cultural boundaries between male and female. However, this does not

happen in a vacuum, as the social construction of femininity and masculinity of a host country plays a significant role in the interpretation of gender dynamics. For example, in a host community where prominent participation of the female is encouraged in the society, migrant females develop a strong sense of control over their daily affairs, and this is transmitted in their homeland relationships. This scenario is particularly emphasized when the female plays the role of bread winner in the family.

The book's third section, with articles by Raul Pertierra, Heike Mónica Greschke, Polina Stoyanova, and Lilia Raycheva, looks at migration and diaspora through the lens of new media and examines the complex maze of communication tools— the Internet, Internet community platforms, and mobile communication devices—occasioned by its birth. Utilizing case studies from three countries (Philippines, Paraguay, and Bulgaria), these scholars argue that migrants exploit new media, such as mobile phones and Web-based communities (e.g., discussion forums), to reproduce original relationships with respect to the sense of proximity and togetherness. By doing so, they conform to new social dimensions of relationships—work related, intimate, and otherwise—that are enabled by ICT and that allow for maintaining links between homelands as sites of being and of belonging. In fact, this is quite evident in the explosive growth of niche forums on the Internet. Each forum strives to fulfill a need that is otherwise not physically possible. Such forums act as reference points where members deliberate on effective ways by which daily affairs can be transmitted to their homeland. For example, participating in such forums makes it possible for migrants to remain actively involved in the lives of their loved ones back home via emerging media technologies.

The fourth section of the book focuses on religion, mobility, and social policies in the age of new media, with contributions from David Garbin, Manuel A. Vásquez, Andreas Hepp, Cigdem Bozdog, Laura Suna, Stefano Kluzer, and Cristiano Codagnone. They argue that the use of ICT as a means of cultivating new identities plays a significant role in restructuring and transforming the everyday life of migrants. This interaction with ICT has a significant influence in social phenomena, such as religion, social mobility, identity, and social policies. Consequently, this is reflected by the different practices and meanings attributed to such interactions by migrants. For example, with the use of new media and availability of technology, migrants find it easy to keep in touch with current events in their homeland. In most cases, they become actively involved in the political and religious affairs of their country of origin, thus making them a force with which to be reckoned. Most interesting are the methods by which migrants disseminate homeland information amongst themselves. This, in turn, gives birth to new media technologies that make involvement even more accessible.

The book's fifth and final section, comprising contributions from Pui-lam Law, Chung-tai Cheng, Tom Denison, Graeme Johanson, and David Kurt Herold, explores internal migration, diaspora, and expatriates in China. The section focuses on the economic transformation of China via the use of the Internet, mobile phones, and blogging. It notes that the adoption and use of new media not only transforms the economy of China but also ensures internal migration from rural and inner regions to the urban and coastal regions. The section also illustrates that the internal migration and the presence of expatriates create dynamics of identity and contribute to the co-constructions of new hybrid cultures.

An interesting aspect of *Migration, Diaspora, and Information Technology* is that it credits new media as a catalyst for the growth of intercultural processes. It explores the use of new media as a central point of interaction between natives of a country, migrants, and their homeland. The book considers and explores the concepts of culture and intercultural as essential tools for social scientists who try to understand the processes of migration in the global society.

From the perspective of new media and how it shapes the contemporary global society, the book's editors do a thorough job in not only marrying the different aspects of global migration and new media but also in analyzing the multiple factors influencing ICT usage among migrants in their host countries. That migrants may assume new identities in their new environments while also influencing the cultural and social practices of their host countries is perhaps the most intriguing aspect of this migration study. Fortunati, Pertierra, and Vincent explain this interaction between migrants and the host community as co-constructions, which, in this sense, refer to situations where both natives and migrants consider the diversity of each other's culture during interactions, and by so doing enrich both parties. Such cultural considerations are evident in the policies of the host country as well as in the manner by which migrants begin to adapt to the new community. Interestingly, this new cultural consideration is also transmitted by migrants via interactions with their homeland relationships.

As a case study analysis of specific countries from Asia, the Americas, and elsewhere, this volume did a thorough job of methodologically analyzing the use of ICT by migrants. However, it lacked the perspective of African migrants and their use of ICT. Even though African migration has been widely studied, the use of ICT in maintaining homeland relationships by African migrants remains a relatively new perspective. Incorporating this dimension in the book would have broadened its perspective.

Nevertheless, *Migration, Diaspora, and Information Technology* can be recommended to everyone in the social sciences space, especially social scientists—those interested in migration patterns and contemporary uses of ICT—as well as geographers. The book is also suitable for social scientists interested in social policy, because the emerging dependence on the use of ICT raises policy issues such as security and privacy that cannot be ignored. This book also could serve as ideal course material, as it features and addresses new perspectives of migration patterns and the dependence on ICT as a medium of communication. It is a well-structured, interesting, and educational read that compels the reader to view migrants in a new light; after all, we are all migrants at some point in our lives.

References

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