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## Book Review

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## Book Review

Kirsten Forkert, Federico Oliveri, Gargi Bhattacharyya and Janna Graham,  
**How media and conflicts make migrants**, Manchester University Press,  
2020, pp. 224, £80.00, ISBN: 978-1-5261-3811-8

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Migration is one of the most severe global concerns of the twenty-first century. Thousands of refugees have been mistreated in European countries since Arab Spring. Despite extensive research on many aspects of the refugee crisis, the western media's role in this problem has been less in focus. *How Media and Conflicts Influence Migrants* sheds light on this vague area. The book is the outcome of extensive research on how media shapes Europeans' perceptions of migration. This book develops a model outlining the subtle process of displaced persons becoming migrants. Among other factors, the book discusses the media's involvement in "migrantification." *How Media and Conflicts Make Migrants*, by Kirsten Forkert, Federico Oliveri, Gargi Bhattacharyya and Janna Graham, examines how global conflict has been constructed through media representations. The book focuses on the United Kingdom and Italy, two countries that have been hit by a wave of refugees and whose citizens are wary of European institutions. The book is the outcome of an AHRC-funded research project entitled, *Conflict, Memory, and Displacement*.

Following the Arab Spring, massive migrations of people from the Middle East, Asia, and Africa arrived in Europe. The humanitarian crisis was dubbed a "Migration Crisis" by the western media and was projected as a threat to Europe. The mainstream media and European states together made the displaced people "migrants" who do not deserve the natural rights of a regular citizen. The authors used Media analysis, surveys, semi-structured interviews, and ethnography of citizen solidarity initiatives to reveal the process of how media and states make displaced people "migrant."

Being made into migrants by the state is a central theme throughout the book. The book develops the concept of *migrantification*, in which people are made into migrants by the state, the media, and members of society, based on workshops and interviews with refugees in both countries. This means that the term migrant is actively constructed to erode other identities and create a new social identity that is devalued and constrained by official processes. The core of this identity is a sense of being other, illegitimate, and undeserving.

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The book first published in 2020, consists of five chapters. These chapters are, respectively, “Introduction: conflict, media and displacement in the twenty-first century,” “1- How postcolonial innocence and white amnesia shape our understanding of global conflicts,” “2-War narratives: making sense of conflict,” “3- Social media, mutual aid and solidarity movements as a response to institutional breakdown,” “4- The processes of migrantification: how displaced people are made into ‘migrants,’” “5- Refusing the demand for sad stories,” and “Conclusion: unsettling dominant narratives about migration in a time of flux.” The authors presented two theoretical perspectives of European society in the first chapter: postcolonial innocence and white amnesia. The authors argue that most regional conflicts in Africa or the Middle East relate to Europe’s colonial past. By reviewing past literature on western media, authors claim that the mainstream media of European countries only present day-to-day conflict news but avoid presenting the background of the conflict. The media intentionally avoid the causes of conflict. The book focuses on mainstream media’s role in cultivating collective amnesia about Europe’s history in connection to other regions of the world, a condition the authors refer to as postcolonial innocence.

The authors raise questions about the crisis frame of the media. They argued that the mainstream media, linked with the state, presented the refugee influx as a crisis. The media branded refugee issues as a refugee crisis, a humanitarian crisis, a migrant crisis, a EU governance crisis, a solidarity crisis, a crisis of European values and principles, a crisis of humanity, and a crisis of asylum law. (p. 19) This type of representation created anxiety about refugees among European people. According to the authors, media portrayals of the European refugee crisis, especially the framing of the crisis as a threat to Europe, is misleading. An essential role in postcolonial representations of migration is played in official and popular attitudes toward migrants, notably, demands for tighter border controls. In a recent poll, roughly 60% of Italians believed it was right to close their ports to African migrants, and 68% said former Minister Matteo Salvini was right to challenge the EU on the matter (p. 51).

In the second chapter, the authors revisit portrayals of conflict and war and their impact on common understandings of war. The authors refer to the second Iraq War (2003); for example, many people of the UK thought the Iraq War was a just war, as mainstream media exemplified attempts to justify British military incursions, especially using counter-terrorism justifications (p.68). The third chapter considers alternative media, notably by migrants and people interested in developing solidarity with migrants. Additionally, this chapter discusses social media as a medium for organizing solidarity acts and establishing new zones of political affinity. In contrast, in some cases, refugees are more cautious about discussing political issues on social media. In this context, the authors presented opinions of an Afghan refugee in Italy and a Kurdish refugee in the UK (p.105). Additionally, the authors examine how anti-immigrant groups have used social media platforms.

The notion of migrantification is developed in the fourth chapter, referring to a process in which people are produced as migrants by governmental institutions, the media, and members of society. These mechanisms elevate the migrant identity above other components of a person's personality and experience. Interviews and discussions with asylum seekers and refugees in Birmingham, London, Nottingham, Pisa, and Bologna, Italy, are examined in this section. Participants are asked to decide how they have been produced as migrants, using Frigga Haug's critical memory work methodology. The stereotype idea about migrants is that migrant is poor and they should be poor. If any migrant drives a BMW car, police may suspect him as a drug dealer (p.159). Discrimination, stigmatization and isolation are explored as part of the asylum system and the hostile environment.

The authors of the last chapter present the results of collaborative work with theater practitioners and workshops with participants, in which migrantification questions were used to develop performances. They criticize the ongoing demand that migrants convey their sad stories and discuss the strategies that can come from critically and imaginatively thinking about performance. In conclusion, the authors emphasize that a worldwide network of solidarity is needed to combat white amnesia and assumed European innocence, especially when prominent public officials and media commentators downplay Western responsibility for global conflicts and link it to populist grievances.

Overall, the book is one of the few books that shed light on the role of media during the Migration crisis in Europe. Although the authors present enough evidence for their concept of making migrants by media, the research focused on only two countries in Europe. The research could present more insight if the author could include countries like Germany and Turkey.

Finally, the book contributes to media studies and migration studies. This book will surely open readers' eyes to a new reality, in which they will see how the media has been working behind the scenes to make displaced people migrate. Academic and nonacademic readers can enjoy the lucid language of this book.

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