

# Consuming Familiarity and Alterity in Domestic Space

## *Transnational Television Practices among Migrants in Norway*

Dag Slettemeås

### Abstract

The present article addresses how stereotyped constructions of migrants' television behaviour should be contrasted with empirical investigations into the perceptions and articulated practices of migrants themselves. In order to do this, the article explores how 20 migrant households in Norway make sense of television and TV-related activities in their everyday lives. The analysis, employing the domestication theoretical framework, reveals that TV consumption is a multi-faceted and situationally contingent phenomenon. The "practicing of television" goes beyond the mere viewing of programmes based on ethnic origin. Although transnational broadcasts are important, they are neither uncritically domesticated nor sufficient in creating a sense of stability and belonging for migrant families. Rather, it is television as a *total experience* that proves to be a crucial element in home construction. The domestication theory offers an analytical framework that allows for the dynamics of household relations to be properly articulated, including the embedding of television within household moral economies.

**Keywords:** domestication, television, satellite-TV, migration, household

### Introduction

Over the past decades, the Nordic countries have experienced migration and ensuing political, social and cultural challenges. Since the 1990s, discourses on migration have become more problem-oriented and *culturalised* (Andersson 2005: 4), in particular regarding social and cultural integration of immigrants and descendants<sup>1</sup>. Urban immigrant-dense neighbourhoods have been singled out as spaces of condensed challenges, portrayed in media discourse and political rhetoric as *ghettos*, *parallel societies*, or *enclaves* – constituting mechanisms for reproducing ethnic homogenization and social marginalization. These challenges comprise assumed participation, loyalties and values directed elsewhere than towards the national community of the hosting nations (Carlbom 2003, Algashi et al. 2012). The *satellite dish* has figured as a potent symbol of disconnection from host societies in these discourses, providing migrant audiences with transnational cultural content<sup>2</sup> and connectivity with original homelands and regional diasporic communities (Hargreaves & Mahdjoub 1997, Morley 2000, Karanfil 2007). The

mere visibility of satellite dishes makes private choices about television viewing public (Parks 2012: 65), and hence they become easy targets for stereotype interpretations.

The present article seeks to critically address these tendencies of linking transnational television to the assumed withdrawal of immigrant groups into “cultural enclaves” (Volcic 2006: 65). To do this, attention is given to the experiences and interpretations of migrants “on the ground”. These people live prosaic and local lives (Chamberlain 1998) and engage in diverse household television practices. Still, dominant ideas and stereotyped constructions are relevant to the empirical examination. To quote Carlbom (2003: 15) – “no empirical material speaks for itself”. By this he is implying that empirical data must be compared to existing political, public or academic imaginations or constructions to be positioned and rendered meaningful. Therefore, the sketched stereotype of the problematic “migrant television consumer” will figure as a vantage point for investigation in the present article.

The aim is hence to study the phenomenon of migrant television consumption by examining the articulated experiences of migrants/descendants in their daily lives, keeping the *household unit* central in the analysis, accentuating *family dynamics (relationships and activities)*, while exploring how *television practices* are perceived and interpreted among a diverse group of migrant households. The *domestication theory perspective* (Silverstone & Hirsch 1992, Silverstone 1994) will frame the analysis, representing a novel approach to studying migrant media practices. This framework, initially developed for studying “Western households”, is lacking in studies of migration, transnationalism and media engagement. The present article contends that the domestication perspective to some extent amends the lacking conceptualization of the dynamics between household members, between household domesticity and the public (national and transnational) realm, and the embedded media practices that are involved in processes of home-making and belonging.

## Sticky Stereotypes and Real Consequences

Before laying out the theoretical foundation and the empirical analysis, the article briefly responds to the introductory claim of persistent stereotypes. These stereotypes tend to take a broad and simplified view on complex phenomena and seek to categorize diverse groupings, and they are often sustained and reproduced over time. Ian Hacking (1999:10) has analysed socially constructed classifications and provides examples of how such *ideas* or *kinds* (constructions) do not exist in isolation, but are formed in time and space.

To illustrate this point, Hacking alludes to “the child viewer of television” – a *kind* of person not historically relevant until child viewing was considered a social problem. As Hacking (1999: 25) puts it: “The child viewer, steeped in visions of violence, primed for the role of consumer, idled away from healthy sports and education, becomes an object of research”. What is socially constructed is an *idea of the child viewer*, which is given meaning under certain historical, spatial and temporal conditions. The problem with such *kinds* is that they appear as *coherent and real objects*. The label tends to be sticky once it is proposed – the *kind* of person becomes reified (Hacking 1999: 27). Derived from this argument, the “migrant television consumer” can be perceived as a similarly sticky stereotype, where behaviour is anticipated, problematized and aggregated. Consequently, these constructions are liable to become real in their consequences through popular uses and policy actions.

In several urban areas in the Nordic countries, which have a large base of migrants or ethnic minorities, local cooperative boards have already introduced policies to prohibit satellite dishes in order to “upgrade” the areas and get rid of the “ghetto-label” (Slette-meås & Lillebø 2010). Political right-wing parties, e.g. in Norway and Denmark, have also suggested banning satellite dishes to avoid further exclusion of migrants as well as Muslim extremism<sup>3</sup>. These issues have been activated in Nordic mass media on several occasions, usually spurred by specific incidents and often involving immigrant-dense areas<sup>4</sup> and satellite antennas (Roald 2001, Carlbom 2003, Tufte 2003, Roald 2004, Slette-meås & Lillebø 2010, Algashi et al. 2012). Nikunen (2011), on the other hand, claims there is less debate on the potential symbolic conflict posed by satellite antennas in Finland. Nevertheless, these Nordic arguments and debates often resemble, and discursively draw on, the conditions in other migrant-dense areas such as the French *banlieues* (Hargreaves & Mahdjoub 1997, Morley 2000) or the Dutch “dish cities” (Parks 2012).

### **Complex Realities and Diverse Practices**

Research within the Nordic context has addressed the troublesome relationship between majority constructions of migrants and migrants’ own perceptions and practices (Fuglerud 2001, Tufte 2003, Andersson 2005, Lillebø 2006). This aspect has also been introduced more specifically in research on media use and transnational television consumption (Christiansen 2004, Algashi 2009, Eide & Nikunen 2011). Studies conducted beyond the Nordic context have addressed various problematic issues related to transnational television, such as the proliferation of transnational satellite stations and migrants’ immersion in transnational content (Echchaibi 2001, Dudrah 2005, Karanfil 2007). Other studies have shed light on aspects of diversity and creativity, such as the ability of migrants to actively and critically engage with transnational media (Gillespie 1995, Aksoy & Robins 2003, Karim 2003, Christiansen 2004, Nikunen 2011).

Dudrah (2005), studying transnational TV directed at South Asians in the UK, focuses on the strength of transnational channels and their explicit role in diasporic identity formation. However, the channels’ *actual effects* on the receiving audience depend on the strength of the communities in question and on the articulated role and capacity of satellite stations to sustain such communities. Hargreaves and Mahdjoub (1997: 473), reporting on migrants of Maghrebi origin in France, state that satellite channels from original homelands are actively consumed in the living rooms of many migrant homes, often resulting in reduced interest in French affairs. In the same vein, Georgiou (2007: 25) argues that the presence of transnational media within western mediascapes to some extent has destabilized dominant hierarchies of control over cultural resources (see also Karanfil 2007).

At the same time, immigrants experiencing exclusion make use of these alternative outlets and representations. They compare and supplement them with existing media in a balanced way (Georgiou 2007). Aksoy and Robins (2003), having studied the Turkish diaspora in London, state that Turkish broadcasting synchronizes migrants with the ordinary and banal reality of everyday life in Turkey. TV is perceived as a cultural resource that is actively negotiated, resulting in multiple and dynamic identifications. Hence, the authors denounce the myth that a “pure” Turkish identity is being reproduced. This is in line with Gillespie’s seminal work on young Punjabi Londoners. She looks at how

the identities of diasporic youth are negotiated in complex ways, with ethnic identity being redefined and enacted in collective reception of both transnational and regular television (Gillespie 1995). Nikunen (2011: 219), studying migrant youth in Finland, similarly states that diverse television practices are used to negotiate various identity positions – “from resistance to identification”.

## **Family Dynamics and Domestication Processes**

Many of these empirical contributions signal balanced media practices among migrants and descendants and the formation of hybrid identifications and subjectivities, which are both situational and contingent. Hence, they deviate from the notion that migrant audiences direct their attention exclusively towards a home-cultural mediated framework at the expense of host-cultural content and imageries. However, many of the studies presented have been conducted in large communities, comprising people from mainly *one ethnic origin* (except for some of the Nordic studies, e.g. Tuftte 2003, Nikunen 2011) where diaspora audiences have access to a range of transnational channels. Attention is thus directed at identity formations on the individual, peer-group, or ethnic/diasporic group level.

The present article diverges from these contributions in two ways: first, it seeks to address the dynamics of identification and positioning appearing *within the domestic context* (family/household), taking seriously the *home* as a core social entity and the *household* as unit of analysis, and second, it does so by using the *domestication framework*, which is rich in conceptual tools for addressing micro-social processes within household contexts, the relevance of media technologies in these processes, and the household’s relations to the public realm. In the next two subsections, the domestication framework and the empirical material will be presented.

### *The Domestication Theory Perspective*

Ever since Lull (1980) and Morley (1986) positioned the analytical perspective from within the (Western) home, the relationship and mutual impact between individuals, households and their domestic technologies have been widely documented. The *domestication theory* framework (Silverstone & Hirsch 1992, Silverstone 1994, Lie & Sørensen 1996, Berker et al. 2006) analytically encapsulates these dynamics. With reference to a Western cultural-historical development, the domestication theory states that modern households are part of – and constantly interact with – the transactional system of the formal economy. The household offers some sort of boundary between its private confines and public life outside – a “translative membrane” through which public ideas, discourses and influences are filtered. The *moral economy* of the household refers to the values and attitudes that the household unit (ideally) should navigate according to. These value systems become visible when attending to the articulated routine practices and negotiations taking place within homes, which frequently involve media technologies. Media technologies are particularly interesting and relevant in activating the moral economy. The reason for this is their *double articulation*; they are consumables in their own right (with public inscriptions), as well as facilitators of consumption of other products, services and public meanings (through mediation) – reaffirming their challenging relationship within moral economies.

The domestication framework also specifies the role of media (and mediated) rituals in synchronizing national and domestic temporalities (Williams 1990). The routinization of everyday life through TV scheduling, repetitive programming and cultural scripts (Silverstone 1994, Ang 1996) is part of the process of creating an *ontological security* (Giddens 1990), produced and consolidated within the home. At the other end, television can be seen as jeopardizing family life by bringing “foreign” elements into domestic privacy, threatening the safety and negotiated balance and harmony of domestic space.

The privileging of the *home* within the domestication framework is explained by it being the primary space in which everyday life takes place; where activities are planned, routines consolidated, and identities negotiated. This is also the place where actual television behaviour is performed, contested and made meaningful by the household members themselves. The home provides the social space for taming the wild (television and its content) and for cultivating the tame (Silverstone 1994: 174). Given these analytical premises, the idea is that technologies such as television must be *tamed* and *domesticated* before they can be truly accepted and prove their value within the moral economy of the household. This implies not only a simple translation, but also a spatio-temporal incorporation of technology and meaning into the daily routines of households.

Through these processes, the relevance of television (generally) and transnational television (specifically) becomes apparent, as well as the notion that understanding the *domestic culture and practices* of migrant households is fundamental to understanding individual and collective meanings and identifications. Whether households and their members, the practitioners of everyday life, have internalized the necessary familiarity and trust with domestic technologies and mediated content is still an empirical question. Nevertheless, the domestication framework offers concepts with which to explore and frame how migrant households consume media technology in a Western context. However, Silverstone (2006: 244) has called for careful attention to *cultural difference* when investigating domestication processes in diverse cultural contexts. The present article builds on that call for analytical sensitivity.

### *Migrant Households in Multi-ethnic Settings*

The empirical foundation for the article is based on ethnographically inspired interviews (Walcott 2008) with 20 migrant/ethnic minority households of non-Western origin, conducted in four different urban locations. The first two data sets stem from 2003-2004, while the last two sets were compiled in 2009. The household selections were based on *geographical location* rather than privileging certain ethnic groups or countries of origin. The locations chosen for interviews were immigrant-dense residential areas, and the migrant households had fairly similar housing conditions, spatial constraints and neighbourhood demographics as reference points – including the visual markers of assumed otherness – the satellite dishes. Eight households had satellite reception in addition to cable television, while 12 households only subscribed to cable. Most households were bound by cooperative agreements regarding obligatory cable-TV provision and two of the residential areas had restrictions on satellite dishes.

The interviewees originated (either directly or indirectly through their parents) from a range of non-Western countries and consisted largely of families with children. Some respondents were born and raised in Norway, while others had moved to Norway later

in life. Many of the couples had arrived at different times, the men often arriving first. Other couples were of different ethnic origins (co-ethnic), either married to ethnic Norwegians or to persons from other countries. The interviews took place in the homes of the respondents to create a comfortable environment as well as to activate contextual clues for various media-related questions. The researchers observed the material surroundings as well as the social dynamics between household members.

The interviews were conducted in Norwegian. Some non-Norwegian speakers were supported by family members who translated questions and answers or gave them a voice by interpreting their actions/intentions. The interviews were conversational and followed certain thematic priorities, but they still allowed for respondent-initiated diversions. The visits normally took between one and two hours, and were recorded and transcribed verbatim later. Most of the themes addressed were related to experiences with domestic media technologies, such as PCs/Internet, television, radio and telephones. However, only experiences with television/satellite have been analysed here. Both families with and without satellite reception have been included in the analysis, and the households are referred to by the codes H1 to H20 and country of origin<sup>5</sup>.

### **Television Practices in Migrant/Ethnic Minority Households**

In the primary phase of the analysis, the case material was subjected to a vertical reading, which was developed further through a horizontal (theme-based) cross-case analysis (cf. Widerberg 2001). This has resulted in three foci of investigation: general and routinized television habits; the significance of transnational TV in everyday life; and the specific regimes enacted by parents to foster home-cultural learning among their children through transnational television.

#### *The Daily Flow of Television*

The households in the study articulated a range of different daily activities and media engagements. A common picture, however, is that television exhibited a strong presence in the homes, being firmly embedded in the routines and rituals of everyday life. Television can be seen as an *agent* (a family member of sorts), a *catalyst* for other (social, gendered and generational) practices and discourses, a *time-marker* separating regularized activities, and an *object of reassurance* that provides stability, predictability and comfort through repetitive scheduling. Being without television was not an option for these families. They would quickly replace old TV-sets with new ones if these were broken or damaged. This indicates a rather successful *taming and cultivation* (Silverstone 1994) of television as a *generic* object and medium.

Because most of the households consisted of families with children, *regulating* children's TV activities became a matter of concern. Most of the households enforced specific intervals for their children's television consumption. The most common children's programmes were watched on American and Norwegian channels, while similar content from the parents' countries of origin was lacking. Furthermore, external scheduling and the "watershed" policies of host-national television providers made regulation strategies easier for the parents, while 24-hour global television and a large supply of channels complicated these strategies. Television consumption was often supplemented with other

activities that the children engaged in, such as Tamil or Muslim weekend school, and library excursions or sport practice. Most parents seemed to embrace the idea of *balancing* television (and media consumption more generally) with other leisure activities.

The actual regulatory regimes of the families can display a practical “operationalization” of their *moral economies* (Silverstone 1994). These more or less consciously developed regimes signify parents’ outlook on life, their notions of “proper homes”, and the ambitions they have for their children. The parents appear to be the primary “carriers” of these moral economies, while the children seem to constantly challenge these through pro-technology discourses and arguments that may interfere with domestic normative boundaries. This accentuates the ambivalent relationship formed between households and communication technologies, both in terms of symbolic/cultural boundary transgressions (Morley 1999: 153), and the threat they pose in supplanting “superior” and alternative activities (such as playing outdoors).

The point so far has been to evaluate and stress the relative importance of television *taken as a whole* (Hargreaves & Mahdjoub 1997). The question now is: What role does *transnational television* specifically play in the everyday lives of these migrant households, and what meanings are articulated in terms of the relationship between children and home-cultural content? The next two sections will address these dynamics.

### *The Relevance of Transnational Television in Migrant Domesticity*

Most of the families incorporated transnational TV into domestic routines and practices, creating functional as well as emotional space for homeland culture in their daily lives. Although many households claimed an interest in home-cultural information and entertainment, some families had experienced extended periods of time without access to such mediated spaces. However, a Gambian household (H10) had recently overcome a combination of topographic and regulatory constraints (signal reception and cooperative bans on outdoor placement of dishes), enabling them to set up a mobile satellite dish mounted inside the kitchen window. This contraption gave them access to a channel from neighbouring Senegal, which facilitated a *cultural reconnection* that added a new dimension to their life, in particular for the parents (cf. Nikunen 2011). Once reconnected with familiar culture and language, a potential disconnection would have been hard for the parents to accept: “Then I would sell my apartment and move to a house where I could watch – because it is very interesting. You hear your own language...”, the mother uttered convincingly. An Indian father without satellite reception (H9) had experienced a similar reconnection with his homeland. Being on extended sick leave, and recently separated from his wife, he spent long hours at home taking care of his three children. This situation had compelled him to subscribe to an Indian channel from the cable package. The new channel helped him to “rediscover” his homeland: “I never really cared before how things were going over there [India]”. But he was surprised and intrigued to see how fast India had developed, and he also tried to involve his children in these new discoveries.

Other households experienced some sort of *cultural disconnection* in relation to transnational media. This dimension materialized in various ways. A Turkish family (H11) received four free Turkish channels, but these channels were transmitted from broadcast stations based in other European countries, intended for the regional diaspora:

“They address matters from Denmark and Germany and Switzerland. It’s not Norway in a way”, the mother declared. Consequently, the parents felt *alienated and distanced* from its content, and experienced little community with the Turkish diaspora in these other countries. In a way this finding differs from the results of Aksoy and Robins’ study (2003: 92-93), which indicated a synchronization between migrants and everyday life in Turkey through routine exposure to Turkish television. Still, a feeling of ambivalence and even resentment was found in both studies, only differing in the sense that, in Aksoy and Robins’ case (2003: 102), migrants did not feel at home in the “we-ness” of *Turkish* broadcasting, while our respondents did not feel at home in the “we-ness” of *Turkish diasporic* broadcasting.

Another “forced” disconnection, experienced by a Zambian-Norwegian (H14) and a Gambian-Norwegian (H2) co-ethnic household<sup>6</sup>, was related to the *lacking supply* of African channels in their existing cable packages. Hence, Dudrah’s (2005) point of the strategic role of transnational TV stations in strengthening home-cultural identity formation becomes irrelevant to some groups of African origin. However, they (the men) engaged in private/individual consumption of home-cultural content through the Internet as compensation. A third facet of disconnection was an articulated *ambivalence towards homeland*, experienced in particular by a Somali-Ethiopian family (H18). The Somali mother found news from Somalia both straining and disturbing: “I don’t like news from Somalia that much, because a lot of war... and a bit difficult too”, a statement that signalled a need for her to distance herself from the traumas of her homeland.

In most cases, however, a sense of continuous *cultural maintenance* prevailed, with transnational television being “naturalized” over time through temporal and spatial incorporation. The *social dimension* of such “domestication” manifested itself in several ways. Some of the single households appreciated television as *companionship*. A divorced Iranian mother (H8) declared television to be her new marriage: “I’ve lived alone for twenty years and I think my marriage is with the television”. The separated Indian father in H9 claimed that the newly acquired Indian pay-channel gave him more company in the evenings: “Because I was suddenly alone, you know, I had nothing to do in the evenings. Hence I chose to watch Indian channels to pass time”. In these instances, television partly compensates for lacking human relations (Turkle 1984), introducing a new “family member” in the shape of familiar sounds and images.

Most of the households, however, consisted of several family members and the significance of *collective TV-time* was prominent in these households. Many families had special times set for social gatherings, watching series from original homeland in a ritualized fashion, often entwined with other social practices such as meals and entertaining visitors. Many of the younger children even preferred to watch television in the living room, with family around, although their own rooms offered a more private TV space. This concurs with Aksoy and Robins’ (2003: 101) position of downplaying the “ethnic” dimension and rather bringing forth more general (media) perspectives, i.e. that transnational TV engagement is primarily a non-ideological, social endeavour and not ethno-cultural or diasporic in motivation.

This cultural maintenance through television also showed *gendered variations* (Gillespie 1995, Hargreaves & Mahdjoub 1997, Andersson 2008). Men often talked about news, documentaries and sports as top TV categories. Staying up-to-date with the world beyond the confines of the host nation, the local community, and the immediate



home was emphasized. A Tunisian father (H17) claimed that the family had moved to the present location due to its acceptance of satellite dishes. Connecting with the world was a fundamental necessity for him, and he maintained that: “I cannot live without satellite-TV and the media”. A Pakistani grandfather (H19) also had a penchant for regular news updates. This was particularly compelled by the escalating unrest in Pakistan and his concern for relatives staying there. Hence satellite consumption was in this instance somewhat situationally contingent and amplified by external events.

Even though the fathers consumed a wide range of host-national programmes too, this need to let the world cross the boundary of the private home seemed indispensable to them. In addition to overcoming time-space constraints, some of the men looked for alternative interpretations as a *corrective* to Western media discourses on current events. The Pakistani father in H1 and the Tunisian father in H17 were both representatives of this strategy. However, the Pakistani father claimed a more ideologically founded need for balancing content. He also used this media-based knowledge as a “power tactic” in lunch-time debates with colleagues, to offer alternative insights (the *conversion* dimension of domestication, cf. Silverstone et al. 1992: 25). The Tunisian father’s news consumption was less ideologically motivated and rather reflected his poor English skills, which ruled out English-speaking global channels.

Many of the women, on the other hand, proved more specifically interested in drama and soap series from their home region. To some, music transmitted over a satellite connection was even more important than TV-series in this regard. Their apartments were in a sense converted into *nostalgic* and *feminized* spaces as they claimed their own temporalities when being alone. They redefined domesticity, in particular the living rooms, and created some form of *home cultural ambience* through satellite-mediated music and TV-series. The mother in the Moroccan family (H15) was highly immersed in early night Arabic series and music, according to her daughter: “My mother... around 7 pm there are some series that she just has to watch”. The daughter further described her mother as having poor Norwegian language skills, feeling isolated, and longing to return to Morocco. This intense longing was not shared by the other family members.

These gendered differences in media orientations towards home-culture portray men as somewhat preoccupied with *immediacy* while women appear more *nostalgic* in their consumption habits. At the same time, it is difficult to discern whether men and women experience a “travelling home” or a “bringing home culture here” effect through these practices. Aksoy and Robins (2003: 95), in their study, insist that such notions simply concern the *local availability* of things from the homeland, as Turkish television brings the ordinary, banal reality of Turkey to migrants. Morley (1999: 159), on the other hand, addresses Williams’ (1990) idea of *mobile privatization*: the idea of simultaneously staying at home while imaginatively going places. This apparent inconsistency addresses the fact that it is not only the *direction* of imaginative transport (which can only be stated empirically) that is central, but the general and profound strategy of creating (locally) a sphere of *taken-for-grantedness* or *familiarity* (Andersson 2008: 47).

### *Home-cultural Upbringing through Transnational Television*

In this final section, the analysis addresses whether home cultural (ethnic/diasporic) content – mediated through transnational channels – is endorsed and promoted by

parents as part of an “ideology” of reproducing identification with their original home culture. The main picture being formed, however, is that of fairly disinterested children and youth, who prioritize global and host-national television content at the expense of media from their parents’ home culture. However, in some households ethnic television was *encouraged* by parents and used as a way to convey cultural history/stories, rituals and practices. In a fairly “successful” middle-class Pakistani family (H1), the father believed it was essential for his children to learn about their home culture (as with the Pakistani family in H19), thus making travels to Pakistan less “odd” for them. Hence, home-cultural content was in a sense used for *pragmatic cultural training*. According to the father, this would stimulate the children to “get to know our culture through stories, movies, drama, right – how they talk to the elderly, how men and women behave towards each other”. Another approach involved making home-cultural media part of the bedtime routine. In the Turkish household (H11), the 4-year-old son had a small tube TV in his room. Every night the family would watch short episodes from a large selection of Turkish children’s DVDs together as a substitute for books. In this way, home-cultural media content was incorporated into the context of producing *sociable and comforting* family moments.

Other families had a more *ambivalent relationship* to mediated cultural learning. In the Tamil family (H7), where Tamil television was watched at their friends’ places or by renting movies, the father reluctantly endorsed such cultural training. He still emphasized that they as parents did not “force culture” on the children, but demanded that they knew the language. He was also sceptical of how cultural practices were portrayed in movies, as they would diverge from real-life practices: “We watch Tamil movies so they [the children] know how things are. It is not really...the society in the movies is not... it is somewhat different, right, it is a bit sad, but it is the only way we can teach them, how to marry... it is different from Norwegian society.” The children also engaged in cultural activities with the fairly large local Tamil community, possibly reducing the need for the children to be “culturally raised” through television.

In a Pakistani family (H16) with no satellite reception, the young Norwegian-born mother firmly pointed out that her children got enough “learning” by being together with their parents and relatives and through visiting Pakistan. She was even more negative than the Tamil father to the fictional portrayal of their culture through movies. This addresses yet another difference from Aksoy and Robins’ study, specifically the notion of a “de-mythification” of culture through synchronization with homeland realities. In our material, it is not only *too much reality* that can be problematic, but also the *reality-twisting* mediation of culture. Such notions may differ across media genres, but it still illustrates the importance of contextualizing media consumption. While movies from the homeland might be experienced as “fun and entertaining” to parents, the same content acquires a different label when children are involved (cf. Helle-Valle & Slettebakk 2008), possibly implanting “a cultural image” that is not in line with what the parents want their children to experience.

Finally, there were examples of families deliberately *avoiding home-cultural media* for their children. The Iranian/Former Soviet Republic co-ethnic household (H6) represented this position. The family had no relatives or network from their home countries living nearby. The parents’ main project was their son, specifically easing his inclusion into Norwegian society. They tried to avoid him being “half-half” or having “one heart

here and heart there”, as the father put it. This implied making few connections to their respective homelands, in particular regarding cultural codes and ideas. Norwegian rules and values were promoted instead. They were frequent users of local library services, often borrowing TV documentaries and movies supporting the son’s learning process. This example, along with that of the Somali mother mentioned earlier, indicates a different rationale – that of a *home-cultural distancing* through media (in)activity.

These cases illustrate the inadequacy of analytical perspectives that take for granted “natural” or “automatic” allegiances to homeland, to diasporic networks, or to ethnic/diasporic media. The three approaches used by parents regarding the mediation of home culture to their children (endorsement, scepticism/ambivalence and avoidance) reflect how such media are inscribed into local household projects and moral economies. Transnational television is thus negotiated and “domesticated” to fit these various domestic cultures.

### **Concluding Discussion on Television Practices and Domestication Processes**

The present article has addressed the increasingly problem-oriented and *culturalized* migration discourses existing in the Nordic countries, where urban immigrant-dense areas are portrayed as particularly challenging spaces. The “migrant television consumer” is stereotyped as a *kind* that uses satellite television to disconnect from host-national media and public sphere. Empirical studies, however, have shown that the relationship between migrants and their media is signified by diversity, situatedness and complexity (Gillespie 1995, Aksoy & Robins 2003, Karim 2003, Christiansen 2004, Georgiou 2007, Nikunen 2011). The present article has built on the knowledge produced in these studies, paying attention to the experiences and perceptions of migrant/ethnic minority households through three foci of investigation: their general and routinized television habits, the significance of transnational television in everyday life, and the specific TV regimes enacted by parents to foster home-cultural learning among their children.

The analysis has shown how television becomes embedded in multifarious ways in the everyday domestic culture of migrant households. The material and symbolic significance of TV is evidenced through its role as a participant in household practices, providing regularity, predictability, sociality/companionship and comfort. It is also disputed and negotiated and potentially challenges domestic boundaries, family coherence, and the stability of moral economies. It proves to be significant both as a mediator of meaningful content in itself, as well as marking temporal/spatial shifts between TV (and non-TV related) practices. Finally, television reveals domestic power relations through issues of access and regulation, in particular in families with children.

The issue of transnational television shows how gendered, generational and ethnic diversities in interests and in meaning production guide domestic television practices. Satellite-mediated TV provides access to homeland culture, but this does not imply a complete and unconditional domestication/consumption by the targeted audience. There are different approaches, such as cultural maintenance, cultural reconnection, and even cultural disconnection related to transnational broadcasts. At the same time, mediated home-culture can be endorsed, evaluated with scepticism, or avoided altogether when children are involved. In other words, these tactics and reflections are in line with the no-

tions of taming, cultivation and incorporation proposed by the domestication framework. Media and technology must accord with the moral economy of the household to become fully accepted (Silverstone et al. 1992, Silverstone 1994). Still, any such equilibrium is conditional and fragile, constructed of negotiated and stabilized tensions between a diversity of domestic interests and positions.

Although the domestication framework was originally developed for typical “Western” audience contexts, it emerges as equally relevant for the purpose of studying migrant television practices. This concurs with Aksoy and Robins’ (2003:99) proposition that migrant media activities should be studied using the same (media) theories that are applied to “ordinary” (national, sedentary) audiences. In this way, *a priori* assumptions about inherent differences in media practices based on ethnic origin can be avoided. The domestication framework is also attentive to the role of households and their internal dynamics rather than focusing on individuals, peer-groups (e.g., youth) or specific communities (e.g., diasporas) as the primary social entities, which is common in research on media and migration. This resonates well with Anthias’ (2012) argument for intersectionality, acknowledging that migrants potentially inhabit many different spaces and localities that affect their experiences and practices.

The domestication perspective further addresses the interrelationship between the micro-social (private/home) and the macro-social (public), and the key issue of maintaining boundaries between these realms. Domestication, however, is associated with an epistemology of methodological nationalism (Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2002). It is therefore crucial to analytically disconnect the domestication perspective’s conceptual alignment of national *imagined communities* (Anderson 1983) and daily household experiences. This implies not taking for granted that the public/national constitutes a natural and synchronized extension of the private/domestic (in geographical terms).

Consequently, this attention to the “practicing of television” reveals the embeddedness of TV in everyday life and its multifaceted role in creating a sense of belonging that is not only tied to ethnic identification and media consumption, nor only to a host-nation media environment. This is in line with Georgiou (2006:94), who states that *all media* that people consume in everyday life become cultural referents necessary for harmony and ontological security (Giddens 1990). Thus, whether television-mediated culture is associated with “familiarity” or with “alterity” should be left open to empirical investigation. What seems certain, though, is that the multi-dimensionality of television, or the *total experience* that TV provides (as an object, medium, or set of practices), is essential to many households for (re)creating a space of stability and taken-for-grantedness (Andersson 2008: 41) – a home. The domestication theory offers an analytical framework that allows for these household dynamics to be properly articulated, including the embedding of television within household moral economies.

---

### Acknowledgements

Thanks to Kjersti Lillebø for fruitful cooperation and to Jo Helle-Valle and Terje Rasmussen for constructive comments.

## Notes

1. In the present article, the term "migrant" implies both 1st-generation immigrants and 2nd- and 3rd-generation migrant descendants.
2. Transnational television entails channels and programmes mediated via satellite technology (and in a few instances cable systems), originating from non-Western TV stations, or stations based in Western countries that represent various diasporic groups.
3. Accompanied by media articles such as: "The satellite dish is the enemy" (11.03.2009) <http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/politikk/--Fienden-er-parabolen-5566518.html>
4. In particular areas such as Rosengård in Malmö, Sweden, and Nørrebro in Copenhagen, Denmark.
5. Country of origin is used as a simplifying label in the article and does not signify an essentializing or complete categorization of household origin and/or present national status.
6. In both households, the men were of African origin and the women of Norwegian origin.

## References

- Aksoy, A. & Robins, K. (2003) 'Banal transnationalism: the difference that television makes', in Karim, K.H. (ed) (2003) *The media of diaspora*. London: Routledge.
- Algashi, S. (2009) 'Iranian-Norwegian media consumption: Identity and positioning', *Nordicom Review* 30(1): 67-82.
- Algashi, S., Eide, E. & Eriksen, T.H. (eds) (2012) *Den globale drabantbyen. Groruddalen og det nye Norge*. [The global satellite town. Groruddalen and the new Norway]. Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk.
- Anderson, B. (1983) *Imagined communities: Reflections of the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Andersson, M. (2005) *Urban multi-culture in Norway. Identity formation among immigrant youth*. Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press.
- Andersson, M. (2008) 'The matter of media in transnational everyday life', in Rydin, I. & Sjöberg, U. (eds) *Mediated crossroads. Identity, youth culture and ethnicity*. Gothenburg, Sweden: Nordicom.
- Ang, I. (1996) *Living room wars: Rethinking media audiences for a postmodern world*. London: Routledge.
- Anthias, F. (2012) 'Transnational mobilities, migration research and intersectionality. Towards a translocational frame'. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 2(2):102-110.
- Berker, T., Hartmann, M., Punie, Y. & Ward, K. (eds) (2006) *Domestication of media and technology*. Berkshire, England: Open University Press.
- Carlbohm, A. (2003) *The imagined versus the real other. Multiculturalism and the representation of muslims in Sweden*. Doctoral dissertation. Dept. of Sociology, Lund University <http://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordOid=20977&fileOid=1693275>
- Chamberlain M. (ed) (1998) *Caribbean migration*. New York: Routledge.
- Christiansen, C.C. (2004) 'News media consumption among immigrants in Europe. The relevance of diaspora', *Ethnicities* 4(2): 185-207.
- Dudrah, R. (2005) 'Zee TV: Diasporic non-terrestrial television in Europe', *South Asian Popular Culture* 3(1): 33-47.
- Echchaibi, N. (2001) 'We are French too, but different', *Gazette* 63(4): 293-310.
- Eide, E.C. & Nikunen, K. (eds) (2011) *Media in motion. Cultural complexity and migration in the Nordic region*. Surrey, England: Ashgate.
- Fuglerud, Ø. (2001) *Migrasjonsforståelse [Understanding migration]*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Georgiou, M. (2006) *Diaspora, identity and the media. Diasporic transnationalism and mediated spatialities*. Creskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Georgiou, M. (2007) 'Transnational crossroads for media and diaspora: Three challenges for research', in Bailey, O.G., Georgiou M., and Harindranath, R. (eds) *Transnational lives and the media. Re-imagining diaspora*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Giddens, A. (1990) *The consequences of modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gillespie, M. (1995) *Television, ethnicity and cultural change*. London: Routledge.
- Hacking, I. (1999) *The social construction of what?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hargreaves, A.G. & Mahdjoub, D. (1997) 'Satellite television viewing among ethnic minorities in France', *European Journal of Communication* 12(4): 459-477.
- Helle-Valle, J. & Slette-meås, D. (2008) 'ICTs, domestication and language-games: a Wittgensteinian approach to media uses', *New Media & Society* 10(1):45-66.
- Karanfil, G. (2007) 'Satellite television and its discontents: Reflections on the experiences of Turkish-Australian lives', *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 21(1): 59-69.
- Karim, K.H. (ed) (2003) *The media of diaspora*. London: Routledge.

- Lie, M. & Sørensen, K.H. (eds) (1996) *Making technology our own? Domesticating technology into everyday life*. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Lillebø, K. (2006) 'Home is any given day. Karrikalkun, Reggae Thanksgiving og forhandlinger om kulturelt rom i USA' [Home is any given day. Curry turkey, Reggae Thanksgiving and negotiations on cultural space in the US], *Norsk antropologisk tidskrift* 17(1): 22-32.
- Lull, J. (1980) 'The social uses of television', *Human Communication Research* 6(3):197-209.
- Morley, D. (1986) *Family television: Cultural power and domestic leisure*. London: Comedia.
- Morley, D. (1999) 'Bounded realms: Household, family, community, and nation', in Naficy, H. (ed) *Home, exile, homeland. Film, media, and the politics of place*. New York: Routledge.
- Morley, D. (2000) *Home territories. Media, mobility and identity*. London: Routledge.
- Nikunen, K. (2011) 'Satellite living: Transnational television and migrant youth, in Eide, E. & Nikunen, K. (eds) *Media in Motion. Cultural Complexity and Migration in the Nordic Region*. Surrey, England: Ashgate.
- Parks, L. (2012) 'Technostruggles and the satellite dish: A populist approach to infrastructure', in Bolin, G. (ed) *Cultural technologies. The shaping of culture in media and society*. New York: Routledge.
- Roald, A.S. (2001) 'Parabol tar emot og skärmar av' [The satellite dish receives and shuts off], *Innvandrere och Minoritet* 2: 31-33.
- Roald, A.S. (2004) 'Arab satellite broadcasting – the immigrants' extended ear to their homelands', in Malik, J. (ed) *Muslims in Europe. From the margin to the centre*. Munster: LIT.
- Silverstone, R. (1994) *Television and Everyday life*. London: Routledge.
- Silverstone, R. (2006) 'Domesticating domestication. Reflections on the life of a concept', in Berker, T., Hartmann, M., Punie, Y., & Ward, K.J. (eds) *Domestication of media and technology*. Berkshire, England: Open University Press.
- Silverstone, R. & Hirsch, E. (eds) (1992) *Consuming technologies. Media and information in domestic spaces*. London: Routledge.
- Silverstone, R., Hirsch, E. & Morley, D. (1992) 'Information and communication technologies and the moral economy of the household', in Silverstone, R. & Hirsch, E. (eds) (1992) *Consuming Technologies. Media and information in domestic spaces*. London: Routledge.
- Slettemeås, D. & Lillebø, K. (2010) *Parabolens betydning for identifisering og tilhørighet blant innvandrere i Norge* [The significance of satellite television for identification and belonging among immigrants in Norway]. SIFO professional report no 4/2010.
- Tufte, T. (ed) (2003) *Medierne, minoritetene og det multikulturelle samfund. Skandinaviske perspektiver* [Media, minorities and the multicultural society. Scandinavian Perspectives]. Gothenburg, Sweden: Nordicom.
- Turkle, S. (1984) *The second self: Computers and the human spirit*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Volcic, Z. (2006) 'Media, Identities, and immigrants: Arab satellite television in Italy', *Medij. Istraz* 12(2): 63-77.
- Walcott, H. (2008) *Ethnography. A way of seeing*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.
- Widerberg, K. (2001) *Historien om et kvalitativt forskningsprosjekt* [The history of a qualitative research project]. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Williams, R. (1990) *Television: Technology and cultural form*. London: Routledge.
- Wimmer, A. & Glick Schiller, N. (2002) 'Methodological nationalism and beyond: Nation state building, migration and the social sciences. *Global Networks* 2(4): 301-334.