Book Reviews

Editor: Maarit Jaakkola

Rikke Andreassen

Mediated Kinship: Gender, Race and Sexuality in Donor Families

Routledge, 2018, 190 p.

In *Mediated Kinship. Gender, Race and Sexuality in Donor Families*, Rikke Andreassen offers an innovative investigation of the intersections between social media and kinship in Denmark and other Scandinavian countries. She identifies social media technologies, reproduction technologies, and Danish liberal fertility legislation (p. 17) as a triangle of intersecting technologies that enable new forms of kinship. Through this lens, Andreassen conducts qualitative analyses of discussions in a Scandinavian Facebook group (“The Facebook Donor Group”), and 11 in-depth interviews with Danish members of the group. The group consists mainly of mothers of donor-conceived children, but also adult donor-conceived individuals (pp. 5-9). She goes on to analyse British media content about British single mothers and lesbian couples reproducing via Danish donor sperm (p. 24). Theoretically, Andreassen positions herself mainly within the tradition of queer kinship studies with an analysis of donor families as “balancing at the ‘edge’ of a happiness narrative” (p. 16). Families must “continuously negotiate their narrative and kinship in order not to ‘fail’ and ‘fall out’ of happiness” (p. 16). The book consists of an

introduction, a conclusion, and four chapters addressing the following themes: Creating family through contact with donor siblings (Chapter 2), the figure of “the missing father” (Chapter 3), constructions of Nordic whiteness in fertility narratives (Chapter 4), and community building on Facebook (Chapter 5). The themes are identified empirically in the rich material laying the ground for the book’s analyses. The chapters are written so they can be read independently, making the book wonderfully accessible.

Chapter 2 (pp. 26-63) sets out to explore the significance of the affordances of social media, with Facebook as a case in point, for changes in and negotiations of kinship and family. Facebook provides the mothers opportunity of quickly and easily identifying and establishing contact with children of other mothers who have used the same donor sperm, through the sharing of donor numbers. Andreassen convincingly shows how negotiations of establishing contact with donor siblings can be considered as efforts to align one’s family with a sense of happiness attached to ideal images of “the family”, primarily the heterosexual nuclear family. Her analyses demonstrate that the donor siblings are both constituted as

“happy objects” and “objects of threat”, depending on the family formation in question. For single mothers with one child, the donor siblings can secure the happiness of being family by providing their child with siblings. On the other hand, for lesbian couples, the donor siblings may be conceived of as a threat to the family. By forming kinship and intimacy socially, these families may downplay biological kinship in order to equalise the biological and non-biological mother. Where the constitution of donor siblings as “happy” or “threatening” orientates the mothers towards or away from them respectively, Andreassen notes that these seemingly oppositional directions “in fact mirror each other, as they both aim towards the same ideal and the same ‘happy end’ – namely ‘the family’” (p. 48). In this sense, the ability provided by Facebook to make contact with donor siblings displays both the fragility of the lesbian nuclear families in their alignment with the heterosexual nuclear family, as well as the efforts of single mothers to extend their families and direct them towards happiness, and being recognised as “real families” (pp. 61–62).

In Chapter 3 (pp. 64–97), Andreassen turns her gaze upon the figure of “the missing father” and discusses how it negotiates understandings of family and gender in Scandinavia. Empirically, the chapter takes at its point of departure from debates in the Donor Facebook Group of whether to choose an anonymous or an open donor. The debate revolves around what is in the best interests of the child, with most opting for open donors in order to provide the child with the opportunity to obtain knowledge about the donor in the future. However, as Andreassen interestingly shows, the presence of a social father seems to trump the child’s future need to know its genetic origin in the view of some contributors to the debate (p. 80). This “can be interpreted as reflecting a (heterosexual) norm, wherein much energy is invested in upholding men’s masculinity” (p. 81), insofar as it can be read as a protection of the social father and his fragility in being infertile. By contrast, where motherhood is primarily framed as a

self-sacrificing practice, the needs of the social father seemingly come to “outmatch the commonly agreed upon needs of children” (p. 81). Andreassen argues that “the best interest of the child” must be considered as orientated ideologically, towards norms of primarily heteronormativity and the nuclear family, that is, as having one mother and one father. Nevertheless, and maybe surprisingly for most readers, she finds that coupledness seems to trump heterosexuality when comparing lesbian families with single mother families (p. 66, 84f). She views this as pointing to the success of lesbian families of having assimilated into heterosexual nuclear family formation. The presence of two parents seemingly makes it easier to fill the perceived gap created by the figure of “the missing father” (conceptualized as a ‘fantasy echo’ by Andreassen), which she finds, is felt more strongly by single mothers, and thus positions them as more marginalised than co-parenting lesbian mothers. I find this observation extremely interesting, and it could have benefitted from more elaboration by Andreassen, for instance, by considering it in relation to the stigmatising, and heavily gendered, trope of “the lone mother”.

Chapter 4 explores constructions of race in fertility narratives, with a specific focus on whiteness. It represents a welcoming contribution to the field of critical race and whiteness studies in a Nordic context, where Nordic whiteness still stands out as an under-researched field. Besides the interviews, the chapter contains analyses of British media material about the so-called “Viking Invasion” of Danish sperm in the British fertility market, and sperm banks’ online sale of donor sperm. Situating her analyses within a Nordic context of silencing race through a displacement of racism as only concerning the past (p. 101), Andreassen finds that white Danish mothers reframe race within a vocabulary of sameness and similarity (p. 100f). In their preference for white donors, they do not articulate race, but rather emphasise the wish to have children who resemble themselves. This observation makes Andreassen argue that they effectively align sameness with race, and con-

sequently racialise the child as white (p. 101). In her exploration of British media discourses Andreassen identifies a more direct verbalisation of whiteness as attractive when choosing donor sperm, mostly articulated through the figure of “the Viking”, who is imagined as strong, tall, blond, blue eyed – and desirable (p. 108). Additionally, Andreassen suggests that “Nordic” has reemerged as a racial term, being interwoven with “specific racial understandings of whiteness, characterising the (white) Nordic population as superior, both physically and aesthetically” (p. 110). This does not only work to reinstall a racialised imaginary of a superior Nordic whiteness, it also effectively makes Denmark mono-racial in its suggestion that all Danish men are white (Ibid). The strength of Andreassen’s choice to analyse constructions of race through the commerce of donor sperm is twofold. First, the genetic material’s direct effect on the way whiteness is construed in the analysed material makes it evident that “it is exactly the idea that biology (manifested in physical whiteness) determines the aesthetics that are at play in the purchase of sperm” (p. 109). In this sense, race cannot be reduced to an aesthetic category as has been argued elsewhere (Ibid), nor does it make sense to differentiate between “biological” and “cultural” understandings of race (p. 128-129). Second, the sperm banks construe whiteness as a commodity one can choose when buying donor sperm online, and thus enables it to travel according to consumer preferences, in this case from Denmark to the UK. In this process, Andreassen argues, whiteness accumulates value, in its alignment “with ‘Vikings’, conferring it with a ‘pure’ and ‘authentic’ whiteness” (p. 131). This is further reflected in the British media stories on the theme. In conclusion, Andreassen suggests that the rather explicit re-installment of biological conceptualisations of race interweaves with the sperm banks’ construing of fixed, material, racial categories to choose from when buying sperm online (p. 131-132).

Lastly, in Chapter 5 Andreassen in her own words provides “a more optimistic read-

ing” (p. 135), focusing on how the Facebook Donor Group enables the formation of an intimate online community for its members. Through the sharing of stories and knowledge, she demonstrates how the group creates a sense of belonging for its members (pp. 143-146). Andreassen also considers the significances of the specific affordances of social media for community building, and argues convincingly for an approach that considers the intersection of these with the context and situatedness of the users. In this sense, the Facebook Donor Group is a result of a looping effect between the Facebook platform and the users’ need for a community shaped by their everyday practices of caring for their children and creating alternative families (p. 149). Andreassen also considers the group within the framework of constituting a counter public (pp. 157-159). Interestingly, she finds that not only does the group empower the (mostly) women involved by offering a space for developing new scripts of the idea of family, it has also had the effect of actually challenging the sperm industry. The industry has reacted negatively to mothers being able to identify donor siblings through the group and thereby obtain extended profiles about the donors – a service that sperm banks charge money for, by selling sperm from donors with extended profiles at a higher price than for that from anonymous donors.

It is indeed the meticulous and inspirational analyses of the rich empirical material that make the book original. They provide new, solid and very inspiring insights into the field of intersections between kinship and social media, which as far as I know have not been studied much in a Scandinavian context, making the book highly recommendable for every scholar with an interest in this field of research.

*Asta Smedegaard Nielsen
Postdoctoral Researcher
Department of Culture
and Global Studies
Aalborg University, Denmark*

Veronique Wavre

Policy Diffusion and Telecommunications Regulation

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Perhaps surprisingly, Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries have some very similar media policy challenges to Nordic countries. The first joint challenge is related to low population density in both regions – and to the need to create sustainable communication systems to cover vast areas and to provide access to very few people. The second is related to the fact that all these countries are designing their media policies in some relation to European media policy – even when they are not members of the European Union (EU). This is the first reason why Veronique Wavre's book *Policy Diffusion and Telecommunications Regulation* could be useful for a Nordic reader.

Perhaps the second reason would be that the book would improve your understanding of the Arab Spring, a series of uprisings in MENA countries in 2011. Although the debate of the true role of new technology and social media in this process is still going on, there seems to be a wide assumption about how the policies behind the rapid growth of new media in the MENA region largely originated in Europe. This is mostly because the close and long-standing link between the two neighbouring regions. However, Wavre has been able to show that the process of policy diffusion was not that simple and straightforward at all – and some influences came also outside of Europe.

The study itself concentrates on regulatory reforms in three countries, Egypt, Jordan and Morocco, between 2000 and 2014. It analyses policy changes in two subsectors of telecommunication, universal service obligation

[USO] and spectrum management by using 52 expert interviews and a large selection of policies and policy related documents. Perhaps the most innovative part of the entire study is the method based on state-level and sector-level variables, which the author successfully uses for analysing policy adoption in these specific countries as well as for comparing them to each other. It makes it possible to examine very complex policy processes in a systematic way and to also present the results in a clear and simple form.

The author first presents her theoretical framework and research design, then discusses the overall regulatory trends in the MENA region and describes the context of the universal service obligation and spectrum management before presenting the three country cases. However, the contextualisation of these two telecommunication subsectors could have been a bit more extensive. For example, the origin of the concept of USO (p. 70) could have easily been more thoroughly explained (Nuciarelli et al., 2014). In addition, the author has ended up claiming that the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) standards were developed by the European Union (p. 77). As a matter of fact, the EU itself had very little to do with the actual GSM development process, which happened in the GSM group and was co-ordinated by European governments (Manninen, 2002).

One of the author's main arguments is that the more vulnerable a governance system is to international or regional policy developments, the more likely it is to adopt a policy which originates from an external source. The

vulnerability of the country in turn depends on how open and interconnected both its administration as well as the market are. The first case study, Jordan, is a prime example of an open and interconnected government and market in the sample. Jordan has followed the basic EU regulations in its policies even when they have been clearly inadequate to the domestic context. This is especially the case with the USO, as Jordan has limited the universal service obligations to fixed line telephone following the USO baseline defined in the EU directive.

However, the minimum services at the community level should not be understood as the “European USO”. It is true that any specific requirements concerning mobile or broadband services have been deliberately left out of the EU Universal Services Directive (2002/22/EC, amended 2009/136/EC) but at the same time it allows the member states to use both fixed and wireless mobile network solutions for USO provision. In addition, the text of the directive also suggests that the users should be able to access the Internet via the USO connection, but without setting any minimum bitrate.

For example, in 2007 Finland was able to allow the telecom operators to offer USO services also on mobile networks. The updated policy led into relatively rapid decrease of fixed line telephone services, as they were replaced with mobile networks especially in northern and eastern parts of Finland. New 3G provided both phone and mobile broadband services – and also created the technological basis for the introduction of broadband Internet from home as part of the Finnish USO in 2010. (Ala-Fossi et al., 2018.) Currently, there are only about 150,000 landline phone subscribers left in Finland, and Telia is planning close its landline phone services this year.

The scope of the USO was also debated in Jordan when the author conducted her interviews in 2014, but despite some opposing views, the Jordan Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) decided still not to include mobile and broadband services. This may be easier to understand with

the fact that the former state monopoly, the Jordan Telecommunications Company, is still the only landline telephone operator. So, a narrow USO definition protects its existing landline telephone business from competition with the mobile operators. On the other hand, it means also that the mobile operators do not have any obligation to invest in expanding their networks to cover the most distant locations.

Egypt did not have an open market or an open government between 2004 and 2014 and that is also why policy diffusion there remained at much lower level than the two other countries in the sample. According to the author, before 2014 Egypt hardly had any USO policy which would have been implemented – or which would have been inspired by any European example. In addition, any policy diffusion in spectrum management has also been limited. While Egypt may have designed its spectrum policy without much direct European influence, it has recently taken very similar spectrum policy positions as Finland. This should not be totally unexpected, because both Egypt and Finland have been very active in their efforts to promote development of domestic mobile services.

In 2012, Egypt was behind the proposal to release the 700 MHz band from broadcast TV for mobile use in ITU region 1 (El-Moghazi et al., 2014) and Finland became the first in Europe to clear that band for mobile use. Three years later at World Radiocommunication Conference 2015, Finland and Egypt voted together for releasing the entire UHF band for mobile – against the joint proposal of (other) EU member states. (Ala-Fossi & Bonet, 2018.)

Wavre finds that Morocco lays between the two other contrasting examples of high and low policy diffusion. Its USO policy is obviously inspired by “the European model” but Morocco has also adopted some ideas from Latin America, especially from Peru. In spectrum management, she found that Morocco had followed the French development of spectrum policy and regulation more closely than developments in any other European countries or at the EU level. Although

the author does not try to explain this phenomenon, this may have something to do with the administrative traditions coming from the colonial period as well as the widespread use of the French language in Morocco.

I usually prefer reading printed books over texts on computer screen. However, the hard-copy of this work turned out to have one perhaps a bit annoying characteristic. The publisher has decided to include bibliographies both at the end of each of the ten chapters as well as a one cumulative bibliography of all chapters at the end of the book. This arrangement takes up over forty pages or about 20 percent of the entire volume. The most likely reason for this is that besides the entire book, the publisher is selling also each of its chapters online as separate, downloadable articles. But whatever media platform you may end up using, the content of this book would be still worth of your attention.

Marko Ala-Fossi
University Lecturer and Adjunct
Professor
Faculty of Information Technology
and Communication Sciences (ITC)
Tampere University

Morten Michelsen, Mads Krogh, Iben Have & Steen Kaargaard Nielsen (eds.)
Tunes for All? Music on Danish Radio
Aarhus University Press, 2018, 357 p.

With its extensive overview of radio's place within musical life in Denmark, *Tunes for All? Music on Danish Radio* forms a meaningful contribution to the interdisciplinary field of radio studies and helps to remedy the relative lack of scholarship on music radio. The absence of studies on music radio, which can be seen by comparison to studies on talk

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radio and to studies of music's connections to other media, is surprising given its integral role within radio broadcasting. As the book indicates, music has occupied approximately half of broadcasting time since the emergence of Danish national radio in 1925 (the Danish Broadcasting Corporation or Danmarks Radio, DR).

Nearly a century of music and radio in Denmark are included in the book's purview. The book pays attention to myriad of ways that music and radio have intertwined. The book emerges from an extensive multi-year research project, RAMUND – A Century of Radio and Music in Denmark: Music Genres, Radio Genres, and Mediatization. Running from 2013 to 2018, and involving 11 researchers from four Danish universities and the Royal Danish Library, the project has been responsible for three anthologies, of which *Tunes for All?* is the second. The two other collections are *Stil nu ind... Danmarks Radio og musikken* from Aarhus University Press (2018) and *Music Radio: Building Communities, Mediating Genres* from Bloomsbury (2018).

Although the book studies music radio by way of a clear focus on Denmark, it offers numerous connections to other geographic and national contexts and to the larger constellation of nations, music, and public radio. At numerous moments while reading the collection, I found myself recording compelling points of comparison to public radio and music in Canada. Some examples of this include the ways that commercial radio practices are employed by public radio stations in recent decades and the emergence of stations or channels within the larger broadcasting corporation that serve to target youth audiences through popular music.

There are a total of ten chapters in the book which work to strike a balance between “macro-social changes” and more precise and detailed analyses in order to study the “intricate network of sounds, technologies, people, and materialities that make up music radio” (p. 13). In advance of these ten chapters is an ambitious and lengthy introduction, within which a series of authors from the RAMUND project outline key components of the collection.

The Introduction's section on “Music Radio Research,” by Morten Michelsen, provides a lengthy overview of research on music radio, highlighting particularly influential fields, authors, and concepts. A noted influence is the growth of popular music studies

into a distinct field of study in the 1990's, one that involved a number of researchers whose main interest was pop music radio (p. 15). A key critical concept that bound radio research to the study of popular music was that of Adorno's culture industry, as Adorno “ascribed radio the same characteristics that he saw in popular music [such as a regression in listening], so that medium and music in many ways apparently merged” (p. 21). Michelsen also references Anglo-American perspectives that shaped the study of music radio, such as Social History and Cultural Studies, pointing to Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff's 1991 book, *A Social History of British Broadcasting, Volume One 1922-1939*, which included two “substantial chapters” devoted to music and radio (p. 23). Included also is the contribution of radio and broadcasting scholars Michele Hilmes and Kate Lacey who argued for an opening towards transnational concerns. The book cautions that this overview of research is working to establish a basis of discussion as opposed to defining a rigid research field and this is an important point to make. Most of the literature cited comes from English speaking countries like Canada, Australia, the UK, and the US and further affinities with music radio institutions and practices across the globe are important to keep in mind as research on music radio grows.

The rest of the Introduction specifies the book's mode of inquiry and introduces a history of DR and issues of cultural hierarchies, taste and value, national identity, and the formation of genres and audiences. A few highlights of this history include a 1963 channel expansion due to “so-called radio pirates in international waters” who challenged the state monopoly in broadcasting (p. 38). In 1992 DR began to follow a commercial radio format logic “in order to survive as a mediator of pop music” after Danish parliament had discontinued the DR monopoly on broadcasting and enabled the emergence of community and commercial radio (p. 43). The Introduction ends by noting that the following ten chapters “bring perspectives from various traditions of sociology, anthropology, music and media studies to bear on the study of Danish music

radio and particularly the relation of DR to Danish musical life” (p. 52).

Across the ten chapters that follow the Introduction are excellent examples of music’s important relationship to DR. A number of chapters (such as Iben Have’s third) make use of the LARM Audio Research Archive, LARM.fm, one of the largest digitized radio collections in the world (p. 132). This is an admirable and inspiring use of an exceptional resource that highlights the importance of large-scale digitization projects and archival work, and brings to mind the work of the Radio Preservation Task Force in the United States (and what some of the potential outcomes of that ambitious project will be). Other chapter topics include the use of music in sports-based radio (Chapter 4), questions of musical diversity within the Danish Broadcasting Corporation (Chapter 5), and the role of orchestras in public music radio (Chapter 7). Mads Krogh’s discussion of genre and format in Chapter 1 informs readers about the role of listener feedback in shaping the introduction of format radio through the practice of listening to music samples and rating each one (pp. 80-81). The chapter complicates the distinction between music genres and radio formats by indicating how perceptions and ideologies that shape our understanding and use of genre have been implicated in the formation of formats.

In the second chapter, Katrine Wallevik provides details and descriptions of the research process behind interviewing the Head of Music at P3, the youth-oriented popular music station of DR. Through this ethnographic account, the “chapter suggests that the practice of programming music for contemporary public service youth radio should be seen as a mesh of complex processes involving humans, things, politics, corporations

and technologies of all kinds” (p. 93). The author’s discussion of the scheduling software, Selector, is very telling with respect to the limits and structures within which music is coded and organized. For example, through Selector, songs can be coded by mood, from “suicidal” to “ecstatic.” Wallevik adds personal insight to state that software might be redesigned to perform “better as a tool to handle issues of gender diversity” (p. 123).

For readers less familiar with DR and Danish music, slightly more context might have been provided with respect to the demographics and cultural geography of Denmark. Are there, for instance, close relationships – perhaps beneficial partnerships or issues of competition – with other nearby countries and their musical and cultural work? Are there ways that the airwaves spill over borders and complicate the relationship between nation, music, and radio? What forms of popular music are listened to, both today and historically, and are there connections to the international music industries? It is not that these elements or questions are absent from the work but some readers may wonder if they could be more prominent.

Tunes for All? effectively introduces and analyzes the assemblage of institutions and radio practices that have constituted musical life in Denmark. Its title may suggest that this is a book tailored only to those who research radio in Denmark, but there are numerous inspiring connections that a much broader readership will make to the study of music radio in other geographic, national, and cultural contexts.

Brian Fauteux
Assistant Professor, Popular Music
and Media Studies
University of Alberta