

# Policy Communities Seeking to Empower Children through Media: A Comparative Case Study

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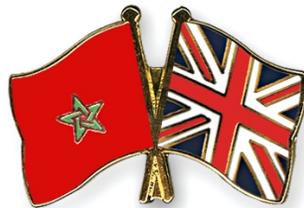
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# Outline of presentation



- What does the CRC say about children's rights and media policy?
- Who cares about implementing policies mandated by the CRC?
- How might the formation of policy 'communities' differ between countries?
- How have national policy communities been formed in
  - a) the UK; b) Morocco?
- What prospects are there for regional policy communities, e.g.
  - a) European Broadcasting Union (EBU); b) Arab Council for Childhood and *Development* (ACCD)
- Conclusion



**EBU**



# Media Policy Obligations to Children

## Article 17

States Parties ...*shall ensure* that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health.

i.e. **provision, protection, participation**

The United Nations  
Convention on the  
Rights of the Child



# Policy communities – expanding or stunted?

Despite world summits, policy on children and media is ultimately made **nationally**

In some countries, policy-making involves a continually **expanding** '*community of key stakeholders*' – academic researchers, child advocates and industry lobbyists, among others'.

Elsewhere the existence of such a community is often more **fragile**, with organic growth **stunted** by a range of political and economic factors.



# Our research tests the 'bottom up' vs 'top down' model

## Bottom-up policy communities 'continually expanding'

- freedom to create civil society organisations, trade associations, lobby groups
- stakeholders free to pursue own interests
- no constraints on research with child audiences

## Top down communities 'fragile - organic growth stunted'

- Supposedly representative bodies tightly controlled, under government licence or patronage of ruling elites
- Media stakeholders expected to pursue predetermined interests
- Credible audience research neglected because results may be inconvenient to power holders

# Emergence of policy community in the UK

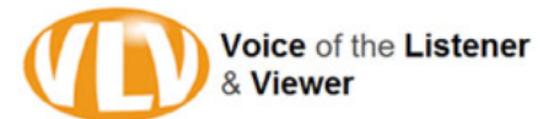
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- ‘Continually expanding’ in response to emerging issues – domestically-produced content; media literacy (Ofcom) and internet safety.
- Some issues e.g. quotas, content funding are more industry-driven with little interest from the public
- Ofcom provides evidence, but limited power to intervene in broadcasting, and virtually no power over online services.
- Interventions by ‘policy entrepreneurs’: Anne Wood (Save Kids Content); Oli Hyatt (Animation UK)



Save Kids' Content UK

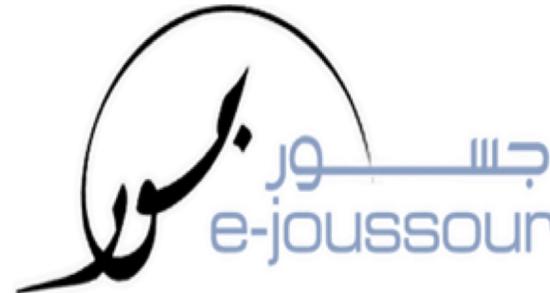


# Emergence of policy community in Morocco?

- ‘Parallel dialogue’ resists government co-opting of civil society after King’s new 2011 constitution.
  - Child advocacy focused on issues not perceived as media related, e.g. early marriage, child labour, street children, etc.
  - Two regulatory bodies operate in different spheres
  - Updated legislation aimed primarily at protection
- BUT**
- Regulators facing need for cross-over
  - Interest in new audience research methodologies
  - Media literacy initiatives



ROYAUME DU MAROC  
LE PREMIER MINISTRE



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Portail de la Société Civile Maghreb/Machrek  
Maghreb/Machrek Civil Society Portal



# EBU policy community formation

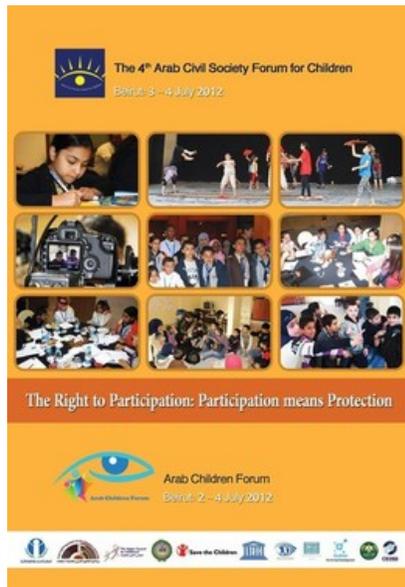


- Since 1950 an alliance of public service media organisations in 56 countries in Europe and beyond; influenced Arab States Broadcasting Union (1969) and has been ‘a hub for the transfer of media policy’ (Strandgaard Jensen)
  - “*Public service media is the bedrock of democratic societies*” Noel Curran Director General but little emphasis on children’s media and policy
    - TV Children and Youth Experts Group meets once a year – HODs of children’s departments.
    - Item Exchange “Make one, take all”
      - 1997 Eurovision Youth Documentary Exchange (10-12 years)
      - 1997 Eurovision Children’s Drama Series (8-11)
      - New – Preschool Documentary series
      - EBU Youth News Exchange
    - 2003 Junior Eurovision Song Contest
- Prominence of PSBs limits scope for action; PSBs in decline in Europe.



# Arab Council for Childhood and Development

- A private regional initiative, with heavy emphasis on media
- Founded 1987; regional civil society forum launched 2005
- Media commitments made at gathering in Alexandria, 2005



- 2010: Arab media and childhood conference in Cairo
- 2012: Civil Society Forum focus on participation, includes NGO-made documentary film about children participating
  - all other partners are state bodies
- 2014-16 *Strategic Plan* includes **Media Observatory** as one of six components
- 2016 *Performance Review* highlights media workshops and journalist pledges
- Prominence of government bodies limits scope for action



# Conclusion

- Communities in democratic settings such as the UK, are not as robust and expansionary as assumed
- In bottom-up communities industry stakeholders and industry motives often take precedence over children's interests (UK)
- In top-down communities, protection issues defined by elites and vested interests, usually take precedence over audience interests & literacy (Morocco)
- Not surprising there are few representatives from Arab countries in 'world nexus of creative leaders'. Western agendas are more pervasive on the world stage.
- Regional policy communities are limited in scope for action through governments (Arab Council for Childhood and Development) and weakened public service broadcasters (European Broadcasting Union)
- In most countries regulatory initiatives and policy communities are interdependent, but largely national in orientation.
- In a globalised marketplace of different providers and platforms both national and international policy communities struggle to keep pace with developments.