

Producing screen content for refugee children in Europe: Authorship, authenticity, and remediation

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Jeanette Steemers (King's College London), Naomi Sakr (University of
Westminster), Christine Singer (King's College London)

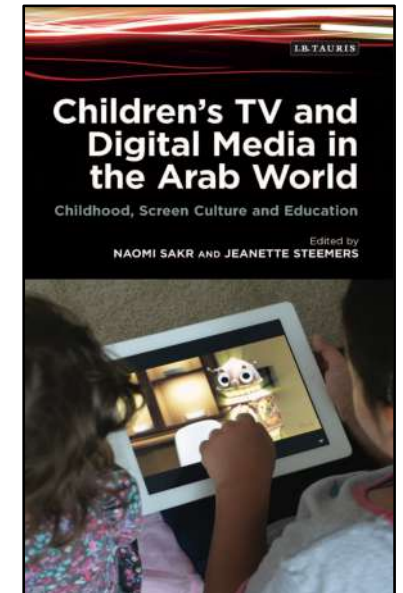
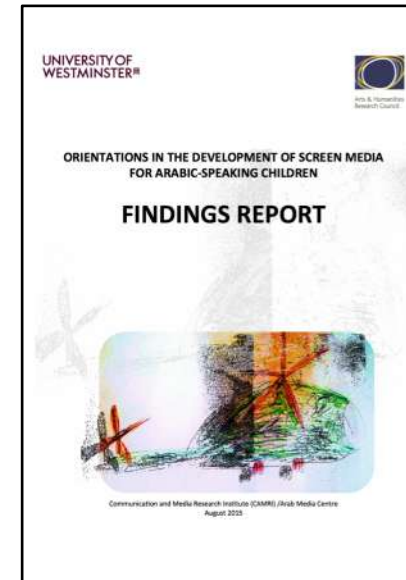


Arts & Humanities
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AHRC Project “Children’s Screen Content in an Era of Forced Migration: Facilitating Arab-European Dialogue” (2017-18)

- To alert Europeans to the **media needs, wants and experience** of Arabic-speaking refugee children
- To create **space for dialogue** between European and Arab stakeholders.
- To identify **effective regulation, financing, production and advocacy practice**
- To demonstrate how **children’s rights** are fundamental to children’s future participation as citizens
- To prompt **further research** into how screen media can help refugee children develop their identities in new environments
- www.euroarabchildrensmedia.org



“Children’s Screen Content in an Era of Forced Migration: Facilitating Arab-European Dialogue”

- Three international Workshops in Manchester, Copenhagen, and Munich (2017-2018) involving broadcasters, producers, academics, educators, children’s right advocates
- Symposium “Invisible Children: Children’s Media, Diversity, and Forced Migration” 14 September 2018, King’s College London



Workshop at CPH:Dox, March 2018

Research Background and Rationale

Asylum applications to selected European countries by top country of origin, 2015

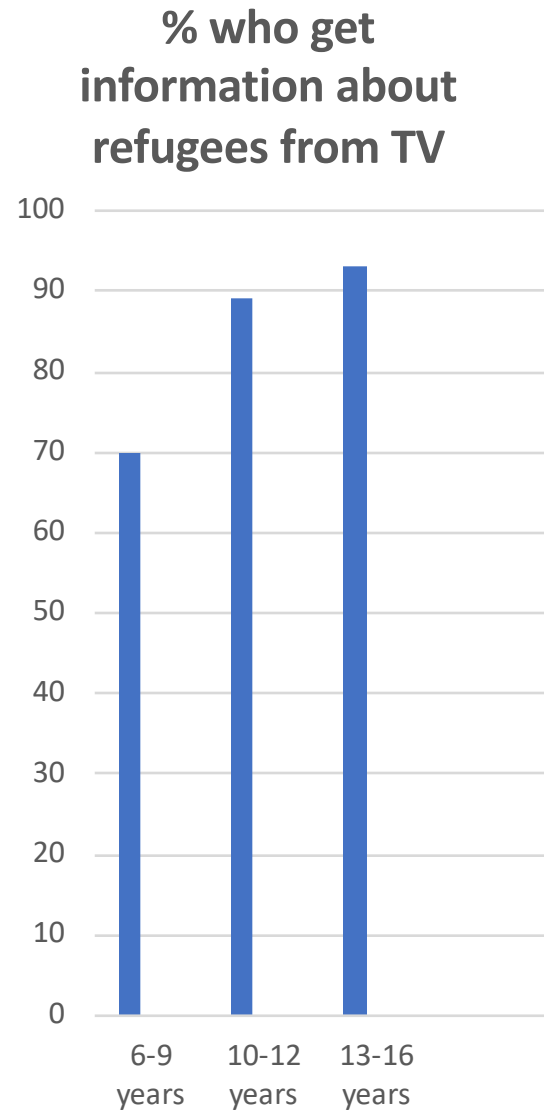
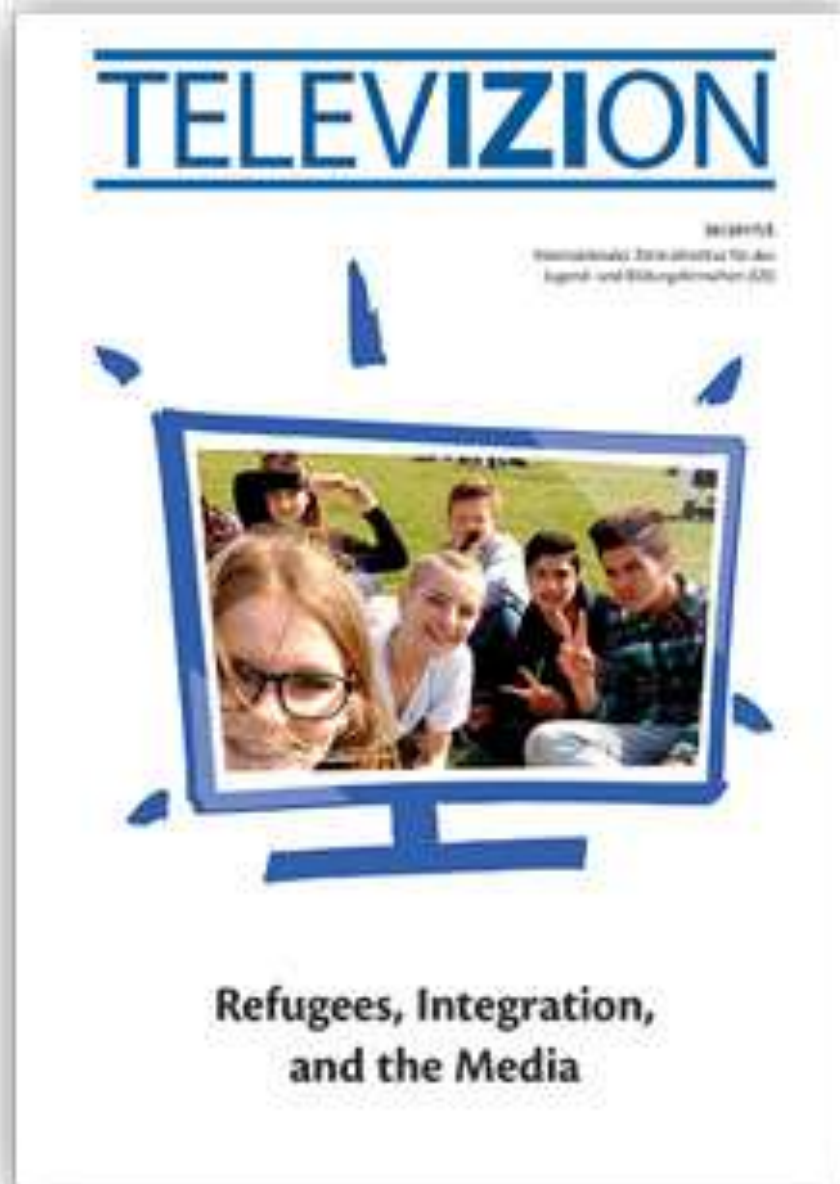
Syria was the leading source country of asylum seekers in 13 out of 30 European countries (i.e. EU-28 + Norway and Switzerland).

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Eurostat data, accessed June 22, 2016

Country of application	Top country of citizenship	% of all applications
Cyprus	Syria	43
Denmark	Syria	41
Finland	Iraq	63
Germany	Syria	36
Greece	Syria	29
Hungary	Syria	37
Latvia	Iraq	26
Luxembourg	Syria	27
Malta	Libya	53
Netherlands	Syria	43
Norway	Syria	35
Romania	Syria	45
Slovakia	Iraq	63
Spain	Syria	39
Sweden	Syria	33

Mass media coverage of the “refugee crisis”

- Absence of *personal* stories of children newly arrived in Europe
- Issues of authorship: lack of content made *for* and *by* refugees
- Marie Gillespie, Lawrence Ampofo, Margaret Cheesman et al, *Mapping Syrian Refugee Media Journeys: Smartphones and Social Media Networks*, 2016.



“Whenever refugees come to us, they said they usually die or something. Because they want to come here because ... we have good streets or not as much war or ... there are almost no bad people here”.

Lola, aged 8

What kind of children's content focused on forced migration exists in Europe, how much, who makes it, for what age groups, and how effective is it?

Overview of the material

- Content targeting children focused on forced migration rare in Europe
- Commissioned and funded mainly by Public Service Broadcasters (e.g. ZDF – Germany, DR - Denmark, BBC – UK, NPO-Netherlands)
- Mostly documentaries

Overview on the material

- Documentary films about flight, settling in and children's lives (often *about* rather than *for* children)
- Factual/news content for secondary school children
- Drama series for pre-schoolers
- Drama series for tweens (8-10 years)
- Documentary drama series for teenagers



***Apple Tree House* (UK, Cbeebies, 2016-)**



***4ever* (Belgium)**

Representing flight and questions of authorship

- Directors/producers: Mainly European-born, often without first-hand experience of forced migration
- Target audience: mainly European-born children



Ayham: Mein neues Leben (2017)



Representing suffering

- Representations of suffering children aim to trigger empathy and humanitarian action
- Susan Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2004): European audiences limited in their ability to understand the pain experienced by victims of war and conflict
- Dangers of “oversaturation”: “*How many more documentaries about newly arrived kids playing football can we watch?*” (US Workshop participant, 2018)
- Potential advantages of “outsider” filmmakers (Piotr Cieplak, 2010)

Representing flight

- e.g ***Ferie på Flygtningeøen*** (*Vacation on refugee island*, 2017, Denmark); ***Hello Salaam*** (2017, Netherlands); **BBC Newsround** (2016, UK)
- Issues around “the politics of pity” (Lille Chouriakali): Victimisation and “othering” of refugee children, ethics and privacy
- “*We could do it differently, sure, we could do it in many ways. [...] I think it’s really important that we address it. I think it’s an obligation on society, because it’s been such a huge problem for the last five years*” (Danish academic, 2018)



“Show the diversity don’t name it”

- Dramas that focus on effective storytelling and children’s everyday activities
- Subversion of stereotypes in terms of who can do what
- Linguistic Diversity/ “soundscapes”



Apple Tree House
Three
Stones
Media for
CBeebies,
2016-)

JoNaLu (ZDF,
Germany, 2018)



Dschermeni (ZDF, Germany, 2017)



“Children, not victims”

- Strong characters who are strong-willed, charismatic, and master challenges
- *“When I see her [Layla], I remember things from my past and growing up, what I wanted to become and the fights with adults or other children”* (Swedish producer, 2018)
- *“I know that Jens said that he always tries to make films about children who don’t see themselves as victims. They are defining themselves as children and not as victims”* (Danish film educator, 2018)



Tro, Hab, Afghanistan: Laylas Melodi (Faith, Hope
Afghanistan: Layla’s Melody,
2014, Denmark)

Cultural Exchanges

- Focus on positive representations of cultural traditions and religions
- *e.g. Hassan og Ramadanen (Hassan and Ramadan):* Importance of online strategies – an urgent priority at DR Ultra – up to 100,000 views per episode on YouTube.



Hassan og Ramadanen (Hassan and Ramadan, DR Ultra, Denmark, 2017)

Focus on similarities rather than difference

- Focus on not only differences but also similarities between newly arrived children and children from the host community
- Focus on children's everyday lives
- ***My Life: New Boys in Town*** (Drummer TV for CBBC)
- ***Ayham, mein neues Leben*** (Ayham, My New Life, SRF, Switzerland, 2016)
- ***Berlin und Wir*** (ZDF, Germany, 2018)



Berlin und Wir (Berlin and Us, ZDF, Germany, 2018)
– International Emmy 2018 for Factual



Summary

- How can and should flight be represented?
- Dangers of the “politic of pity”
- “Counter-narratives”: Strong child characters, showing diversity but not naming, fostering cultural exchanges, focusing on similarities and connections (e.g music, sport, friendship) - also certain points of critique
- Persisting gender gap
- Issues of distribution: the “YouTube Syndrome”