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Migrants et migrations en SIC

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## “YouTube helps us a lot.” Media repertoires and social integration of Iraqi and Syrian refugee families in Germany

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### Résumés

Français English

Cet article examine les répertoires médiatiques de 10 familles de réfugiés syriens et 10 irakiens (n=100) dans la ville d'Erlangen, en Allemagne. En nous fondant sur la théorie du répertoire médiatique (Hasebrink et Hepp 2017) et grâce à une approche qualitative combinant plusieurs méthodes de collecte de données (entretiens qualitatifs, groupes de discussion et dessins du répertoire médiatique), nous analysons comment les pratiques et dispositifs médiatiques cumulatifs des familles de réfugiés (répertoires médiatiques) sont reliés à leur intégration sociale et culturelle dans leur société d'accueil. Nos constatations indiquent que les répertoires des médias mettent en lumière diverses pratiques qui reflètent les efforts d'intégration des réfugiés dans leur société d'accueil. Les participants qui avaient surtout des réseaux et des répertoires centrés sur le domicile ont plus de mal à s'intégrer que ceux qui ont plus de contenu allemand et qui ont des réseaux basés dans la société d'accueil.

This article examines the media repertoires of 10 Syrian and 10 Iraqi refugee families (n=100) in the city of Erlangen, Germany. Based on media repertoire theory (Hasebrink and Hepp 2017) and through a qualitative approach combining several methods of data collection (qualitative interviews, focus groups and media repertoire drawings), we analyse how the cumulative media practices and devices of refugee families (media repertoires) relate to their social and cultural integration in their host society. Our findings indicate that younger refugees, which are more interested in German content had repertoires and networks that reflected such, while older refugees are still origin focused in both networks and content. These findings emphasize the importance of media repertoires in highlighting practices that can integrate or isolate refugees in different sociocultural contexts and their host societies.

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### Entrées d'index



**Mots-clés :** familles réfugiées, intégration, répertoires média, média social

**Keywords:** integration, media repertoires, refugee families, social media

**Notes de l'auteur**

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**Texte intégral**

## Introduction

- 1 A central task for host countries and local authority districts is the integration of individuals and groups into the social community. A collective identity (whether based on very general or specific characteristics) is a prerequisite for a functioning community and for social cohesion. The role of media and communication for integration of migrants and refugees can certainly not be overestimated (Algan et al. 2012). Not only are they consumed by groups to be integrated, but they are also a source of public opinion of the host country. Furthermore, government bodies and services use media and communication tools to get in touch with groups that will be integrated, one example is the Welcome App Germany. Much financial effort is taken to create apps that are designed as digital platforms offering help (maps, addresses and opening hours of governmental institutions etc.) to refugees and migrants. Definitions of integration indicate one thing in particular : integration should always be understood as being “normative”, since integration efforts of individuals, groups or organisations into an existing society are required, and expressed as desirable. However, digital processes create changes in transportation and communication possibilities; leading to manifold forms of social groups, formations and exchanges between individuals. This is why the question of cultural and social integration is more relevant than ever today. Hence, our study is based on a broad understanding of integration as a necessary, current process; based on communication, and connecting a variety of actors to each other within a social community.
- 2 The question of the media’s role in the social integration process of migrants is more relevant than ever (Geissler and Pöttker 2005 : 2009), considering extensive fragmentation processes, which can be brought on by recent changes heralded through digital media. Not only is the use of the current digital media world in its entirety by this target population still only partially explored, but the media literacy of migrants and refugees (concerning finding their way in the digital media world) is also a neglected field in migration research to date. So far, research has concentrated on specific devices, such as the smartphone in particular and specific phases of usage, e.g. the flight context and/or exclusively on young migrants (Arnold et al. 2017, Fiedler 2016, Harney 2013, Kaufmann 2018, Richter et al. 2016, Smets 2017). Despite most previous studies having focused on media use; the experiences, voices and opinions of the refugees themselves are still missing (Gillespie et al. 2018 :1). Since little is known about how refugees use media in their daily lives and what influence this has on their (social) integration, a holistic approach is taken in this research to solve this question. In recent years, digital technology has gained the potential to improve the settlement of migrants in the various areas of economic, socio-political, and cultural integration (McGregor and Siegel 2013 :5ff.).
- 3 Following the case study by Casado et al. refugees are put in the foreground and have their say through guided interviews. Our study aims at answering the following specific research question : How can the media repertoires of Arabic speaking refugee families in Germany and their implications for integration be characterised? From a theoretical perspective, our article will centre on the question of how the concept of media repertoires (introduced in communication studies by van Rees and van Eijck and elaborated by Hasebrink and Popp) can help enhance our knowledge about the mediatized daily life of refugees in Europe. Thus, the objective of our study is to give detailed insight into the media practices of refugee families during their first years in Germany. Our second research interest is concerning the level of integration, and how media, as well as mediatized communication, contribute to further integration. At present, there are serious challenges to integration with new refugee flows; the integration of groups and inclusion of individuals is slow. Furthermore, private as well as public communication rooms online, offer opportunities for hate speech, echo chambers and filter bubbles. Media repertoires are increasingly individualized : fragmented media repertoires already exist within the German society and refugees’ repertoires could possibly be



even more fragmented because of language differences. In order to work on these overarching issues, we empirically explore the actual media repertoires of refugees.

4 This article will first conceptualize our theoretical framework, discussing concepts and the state of research regarding integration, refugee and migrant media usage and media repertoires. We then move on to detailing our methods and sample. Finally, our results are noted in five distinct sections, which correspond with themes that were highlighted in both our interviews, as well as theory and surveyed research; reflecting our research question. They are as follows : basic media usage, media timing, constraints and motives, language and media repertoires, sociality and media repertoires, and finally; media, cultural values and integration. One small note before the main theoretical framework is introduced : in many spheres the terms migrant and refugee are used interchangeably and this is both harmful and erroneous. In Germany, authorities very clearly distinguish between refugees and people with “Migrationshintergrund” (migration background). Migrants are those who willingly chose to migrate to a different country in hopes of better opportunities, while refugees are by definition “fleeing armed conflict or persecution” (United Nations). All of our participants are registered with the city of Erlangen as refugees; meaning that they are on a temporary visa with unsure settlement status in Germany. While we cannot technically investigate the background of all of our participants to verify if their escape was forced or not; for our research we consider all participants as refugees due to their registration status. In our theoretical framework, however, we consider literature on both migrants and refugees, as the integration process of both populations can have many similarities.

## Theoretical Framework and State of Research

5 Adapting to life in a new country is best understood as a process involving different phases related to specific needs and attitudes to resources and institutions. Concerning refugees, Mwarigha (2002 :9-10) identifies three overlapping phases of integration. In the first phase, typical basic needs such as food, shelter, orientation in the new city and first contact with the new language are satisfied. In the interim phase, other needs of newcomers include access to various local systems and institutions, such as community services, legal services, long-term housing, health services and employment-specific language teaching. Finally, in the final phase, refugees seek to participate equally in the economic, cultural, social and political life of the country. In this phase, the needs of individuals are more diverse and learning how to overcome systemic obstacles to equal participation can be seen as a common process for many refugees in this (final) phase (Caidi et al. 2012 :500). Once they have become accustomed to their host country, become economically and socially active, and find their place in society, refugees may develop a greater interest in becoming more fully integrated. This is expressed through political participation or active civic engagement (Caidi et al. 2012 :500). Adequate access to necessary information on housing, employment opportunities, citizenship, health or education is a fundamental component for the social inclusion of migrants, as they need to make informed choices. When it is difficult for immigrants to navigate within an unfamiliar (information) environment, accessing and receiving available information becomes a complicated and frustrating process (Caidi et al. 2012 :499). To which extent this process can be supported by media is the current focus of a growing field of research.

6 One study looking at media usage in Swiss migrants by Bucher and Bonfadelli found that there are commonalities and differences between the media usage of youths with and without Swiss origins. Both types of youths have a deficit in their print media usage; however, those with a migrant background are more likely to utilize digital media. This is because electronic devices, dedicated solely to children, were found to be more common in migrant homes than in Swiss ones (Bucher and Bonfadelli 2007 :142). Additionally, the authors noted the importance of transculturality in media and its social usage by both migrant and non-migrant youths; meaning that media are not the product of a single culture any more but merge elements of multiple cultures.

7 Looking at the media usage of migrants from Turkish and Russian origins in Germany, Trebbe et al. devise six categories for migrants : 1) young and single with high integration status, 2) well integrated and educated employed individuals, 3) young, employed and well-integrated singles, 4) religious married individuals with potential for integration, 5) poorly integrated women without education, 6) religious old men without potential for integration.



After dividing their participants into these categories, they observe and analyse their media usage. They conclude that the higher the integration potential for an individual, the more affinity they would have for German media. While this study provides interesting insights on the media habits of migrants, it does not address their media usage in its entirety or the refugee population.

8 Until recent years, there were not many studies on media usage of the Arab Diaspora in Germany. Rinnawi, however, conducted one study that assesses the media used by both older and younger generations of the diaspora. He finds that the older generation (or what he calls the ‘first generation’) primarily uses television media, while the younger individuals, who grew up in Germany and are computer-proficient, tend to utilize the internet more (2012 :1464). While his study addresses a large gap in knowledge about media usage, it does not analyse how this media usage contributes to the diaspora’s integration into mainstream German culture. Hepp et al., on the other hand, explore the use of diasporic media. They define diasporic media as media created by and for migrants, which mainly deals with issues that are specifically interesting for members of these communities (2012 :176). While their study does not address the entire Arab Diaspora (participants were from Moroccan, Russian or Turkish communities), it manages to relate how and why some diasporas in Germany use these specific media channels (2012 :178). Hepp et al. find that individuals use diasporic media for one of five reasons : information (discussion boards, news websites), entertainment (online radio, gaming websites), engagement (blogs, mailing lists, social web groups), commerce (online shops) and faith (video platforms, web portals). Their study identified three types of migrants; A) origin-oriented migrants have one-dimensional communicative networks, with a composition of mostly local and origin-orientated ones. They are active communicatively but only in an origin-oriented manner. B) Ethno-oriented migrants have a more multi-dimensional network : they can integrate communicatively in the migration country and in the diaspora. However, this sometimes leads to feelings of unsureness about where they belong. C) World-oriented migrants have the furthest reaching communicative networks. These were respondents who felt their cultural identity belonged to more than one nation (2012 :180).

9 These user typologies are therefore of interest for the social integration of refugees, because from the perspective of communication science, the question is of whether and how the media contributes to the affinity towards, and integration, into the national culture of the host country; through offering the possibility of participation in social contexts, lifestyles and social events. Moreover, these results also indicate that looking at media usage of a single medium is not enough to understand the significance of media for migrants (ibid). This insight adds to the need for our investigation of other types of digital media used by refugees. However, the typologies provided by these previous studies assist us by providing empirical categories for the relationship between media usage and integration.

10 For our study we attempt to address the entire spectrum of media usage in Arab refugee families in Germany. Therefore, we utilize the holistic framework of media repertoires (Hasebrink and Popp 2006, Hasebrink and Domeyer 2012). Hasebrink and Hepp (2017 :363) describe the idea behind it as such :

11 “From the perspective of the individual, media repertoires are composed of media-related communicative practices by means of which individuals relate themselves to the figurations in which they are involved. From the perspective of figurations, media ensembles are characterized by the media-related communicative practices of the actors involved in the particular social domain under analysis. Both perspectives are therefore necessary if we want to understand cross-media practices in everyday life.”

12 This concept implies three main principles for analysis : (A) User centred perspective : the media repertoire approach asks which media a specific individual uses, instead of inquiring which audiences a particular medium reaches. (B) Entirety : this approach stresses the need to look at the whole catalogue of media utilized by an individual and not single mediums, which avoids faulty information that might be extracted from specific medium usage. (C) Relationality : how different media are connected to each other is extremely important since this reflects that media repertoires are premeditated and significantly structured configurations of media, not just the sum of media used. The concept of media repertoire offers a subject-centred perspective on how individuals engage with different media in their everyday lives. As such, this concept allows for a qualitative analysis of how participants organise and situate their media usage, and which social meanings they attach to these practices.



# Methodology

- 13 In order to explore family media repertoires and how they relate to their integration processes, an analysis of ten Syrian and ten Iraqi refugee families in the city of Erlangen, Germany, was conducted (see table 1).<sup>1</sup> The methodology consisted of a qualitative approach combining in-depth interviews with parents, focus groups with their children and media repertoire drawings. In these visualizations children place themselves in the middle, and show in concentric circles, how important (near to them or far away) certain media are. Hence, we can compare their description of how often, and in what context, they use certain media, e.g., books, TV, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and YouTube, as well as what level of importance they attach to each device. We additionally probed both adults and children about the role of digital and non-digital media in identity building, such as presenting oneself on Instagram, and communicative network structure; asking the family members how they use (social) media to get in contact with various individuals and groups (relatives, German acquaintances, government agencies, classmates, doctors, travel possibilities, sports groups, etc).
- 14 The analysis of the data was conducted according to Mayring's qualitative content analysis approach (2). Initially, a coding agenda (deductive codes) was developed based on the theoretical frameworks of media repertoires of Rees and van Eijck, as well as Hasebrink and Hepp. After a pre-test was conducted, the coding agenda was refined, redundancies were removed and inductive codes, those which arose from the sample, such as use of public places like libraries, were added. The analysis, however, showed that some codes, such as "role models for media use" did not apply because the children simply did not mention relevant information. Our final coding agenda is composed of six sections : access and participation barriers, attitudes and behaviour, selection and decisions, family media rules, media literacy, and social integration in Germany. These sections are based on additional literature, not just media repertoire theory. For example, codes dealing with social integration are based on Esser's work, while those dealing with media competencies are based on Erstad and Amdan. A pre-test was conducted by all coders to establish intercoder-reliability. For the following analysis, focus is on (reasons for) the selection of certain media within social contexts (media repertoires) and on social integration in the host country. For analysis we used the computer assisted qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA.
- 15 Currently, asylum procedures in Germany take about seven months on average. The fact that the procedures take so long is mainly due to complicated old cases. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) decides on new applications within two months (Die Bundesregierung). In 2017 a total of 198,317 applications were filed. The largest number of people came from Syria (24.7%), followed by Iraq (11.1%), Afghanistan (8.3%), Eritrea (5.8%) and Iran (4.3%) (BAMF). In 2016, the countries of origin were the same, but with a different percentages : Syria (36.9%), Afghanistan (17.6%), Iraq (13.3%), Iran (3.7%) and Eritrea (2.6%) (BAMF). Our interviewed families have been living in Germany from one to just under four years and indicate "Aufenthaltsgestattung" (temporary residence permit for the duration of the asylum procedure) as their legal status. The study sample consisted of married couples or single parents (aged between 20 and 53) and their children, who are either in last year of kindergarten, primary school or high school. The 20 families consisted of 100 people in total. However not everyone was interviewed (due to health, age, or other appointments) and some younger children participated only vaguely in the interviews. It is important to note that seven children in our sample were disabled, which influences their media repertoires and access. This is assumed to be because of Erlangen's standing as a medical hub in Bavaria, which attracts asylum seekers with specific disabilities. Moreover, four families in our sample still resided in refugee housing; with shared toilets, computer and common rooms, while 16 others were allowed to relocate into private apartments.
- 16 We used a convenience sample to recruit these families with the assistance of the Refugee and Integration office of the city of Erlangen. All families which agreed to be interviewed (without any incentives offered) were selected for the study, and the interviews continued until theoretical saturation was reached; meaning that no new insights appeared from the interviews or focus groups. While convenience sampling is not representative of target populations, it serves useful for pilot studies and proved beneficial in providing a varied collection of insights from various different family settings, such as single parents, families with disabilities, and families still living in communal, government sanctioned refugee housing. While our results might not be applicable to the majority of refugees living in Europe, or even Germany, as our respondents were of a specific socio-economic status given the amount of modern media



devices they possessed; they however, provide a detailed and diverse snapshot of the media repertoires of refugee families in Erlangen, and the relationship their media practices have to integration efforts.

17 We acknowledge that our methodology has some weaknesses, such as findings that stress priority of integration due to the sample only including refugees who still have an uncertain status, and often still live in refugee centres. Another limitation of our study is that some findings might have been lost in translation when transcripts were translated from Arabic to English.

18 The guided interviews took place from the 25th of February to the 2nd of March 2018. In order to reduce possible cultural, linguistic and spatial barriers, and to ensure that the participants were comfortable to communicate, an Arabic speaking researcher (with previous experience in working with refugees) interviewed the parents in their shared accommodation or their own flats. Most parents spoke Arabic, with Turkish, English, Kurdish or beginner German as their second language. The children, who were mostly proficient in German, were also interviewed at home, but in German and separate from their parents by a different (German) researcher. This enabled a comparison of information provided by both parents and children, in addition to observations of the participants' living space (PlayStation in the children's room, selection of DVDs or books on the shelf). Some families with children that were disabled, or younger than four and who were not able to articulate their responses, were not interviewed but appear in Table 1 as the interviewees sometimes referred to them in their answers.

**Table 1. Characteristics of interviewed refugee families**

Family	Country	Native Language	Age (Gender)
1	Syria	Arabic	32(f), 10(m), 9(m), 5(m)
2	Syria	Arabic	33(m), 27(f), 6(f), 0(m)
3	Iraq	Arabic/Turkish	28(m), 26(f), 2(f), 1(f)
4	Syria	Arabic	47(m), 40(f), 22(f), 21(m), 17(m), 13(m), 2(m)
5	Syria	Arabic	41(m), 31(f), 16(f), 15(m), 12(m), 7(m), 0(f)
6	Syria	Arabic	35(m), 33(f), 8(m), 5(m)
7	Iraq	Kurdish/Turkish/Arabic	40(f), 38(m), 13(m), 7(m)
8	Iraq	Arabic	53(m), 31(f), 15(f), 15(f), 10(f), 8(m)
9	Iraq	Kurdish/Arabic	n.a.(f), 35(m), 14(m), 9(f), 1(f)
10	Iraq	Arabic	26(m), 20(f), 3(f)
11	Iraq	Arabic	51(f), 17(f), 16(f), 13(m), 12(m)
12	Iraq	Arabic	34(f), 11(m), 6(m)
13	Iraq	Arabic	n.a.(m), n.a.(f), 13(f), 11(f), 9(f), 1(f)
14	Syria	Arabic	40(m), 15(m)
15	Syria	Arabic	33(m), 33(f), 12(f), 7(f), 2(f), 2(f)
16	Iraq	Arabic	25(f), 24(f), 5(m), 3(m), 1(m)
17	Iraq	Arabic	46(m), 43(m), 19(f), 17(m), 11(m), 7(m)
18	Syria	Arabic	32(m), 24(f), 7(f), 5(m), 1(f)
19	Syria	Kurdish/Arabic	42(m), 41(f), 15(m), 13(f), 11(m), 8(m), 0(m), 0(m)
20	Syria	Arabic	39(m), 35(f), 14(m), 13(f), 9(m), 6(f)



# Results

19 The findings will not be presented separately, but clustered around thematic categories. A sharp distinction between specific media practices and levels of integration does not match the complexity of media repertoires that articulate the hybrid positions of refugees. As a result, the findings are clustered around the following thematic focal areas that reflect the research questions : characteristics of basic media usage (section 4.1) are firstly mentioned to give a general sense of the media repertoire of our participants and this understudied population sample. Media timing, constraints and motives (section 4.2) highlight the other side of popular usage; pinpointing why certain gaps in media repertoires exist, whether regarding content or certain devices. Language (section 4.3), and sociality (section 4.4), on the other hand, proved to be pivotal contextual factors of the media practices embedded in refugees' media repertoires; and hence, should be explored thoroughly. These contexts were displayed through various situations where the participants used media, as well as how they made sense of it. Finally, since the objective of the study is to observe social and cultural integration, our last section deals with what role media plays in this process, as well as the role of existing and new cultural values (section 4.5).

## Basic Media Usage

20 Initially, we observe the media devices, channels, genres and content accessed by the participants; noting how their access has changed since their move to Germany (the host country) when possible. The interviews indicated that, the most used media devices by far are mobile phones and smart TVs. This is followed by tablet, laptop and game console usage. Books were mostly mentioned by children, whereas adults only mentioned them as needed for their German language courses. Magazines were understood by interviewees as free advertising magazines, which were sometimes utilized. Buying newspapers and magazines was more common in the home country, this is assumed to be due to the language in which the magazines are published. One woman specifically mentioned magazines on women's health and issues, which she used to buy. Only in rare individual cases audio stories or CDs were mentioned. In regard to the cinema, only children visited the movie theatre under school supervision.

21 Both adolescent and adults' usage changed with their move to Germany. This is reflected in their communicative or entertainment-related media practices. For example, landline phones played more of an important role in the home country, which may have something to do with the natural increase in mobile phone communication in the last two to four years, but also with applications such as WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger, which families now use to keep in touch with relatives and friends in the home country instead.

Father, 35, from Iraq : In Germany it's more frequent, there [at home] we don't need internet, we used to live together, so we didn't need internet in order to communicate.

22 This statement is a prototypical example of increasing frequency of digital communication, which cannot be considered from our perspective, as banal transnationalism, as coined by Aksoy and Robins. It clarifies that the majority of communicative networks are origin focused. Our interview partner could ideally have created networks in the host country to visit without needing the internet infrastructure.

23 Concerning the most common tools and media providers, Facebook (Messenger) and WhatsApp – be it text, video or voice messages – are the most popular. Almost all interviewees mentioned both most frequently. They are closely followed by YouTube, then free Google games (like car games, planes, building squares), Google Translator and IMO. Twitter, Instagram, Skype and Viber also make communication and information reception possible. According to respondents, their use has recently increased, but they indicated this to be a general increase and not directly related to their change in location; hence, not necessarily a change in media practices due to flight. Among children, YouTube, Facebook (Messenger), WhatsApp, Instagram, Viber, Snapchat, Google (Translator), Netflix, Google (Maps), Spotify and Amazon were the most commonly stated applications. The use of speech assistants, such as Alexa or Siri was uncommon; with many participants preferring to type on their devices instead.

Concerning media channels, Arabic channels such as Al Jazeera, France 24, MBC Iraq,



Deutsche Welle, al-Hadath and Russia Today were frequently mentioned. There are differences to media outlets regularly accessed in their home countries, because not all channels stated here are broadcasted there presently. Children, on the other hand, only noted KiKa (a German children's channel) and Nickelodeon.

- 25 The consumption of media genres has not changed significantly as a result of the relocation : those who enjoyed watching football before continue to enjoy watching it in the host country, while those with interests in history still maintain their activities albeit with different methods or topics.

Mother, 51, from Iraq : Earlier I used to have books, now I use the phone and Google to search for the historic cities in Germany.

- 26 What was noted in our sample is that changes in preferences (especially among children) were much more likely a result of maturing. These changes also differ in terms of gender : e.g. fashion and make-up videos on YouTube among the girls. However, what has transformed for almost all respondents, is that in addition to a consistently strong interest in what is happening in their home country, due to ongoing violence and unrest, is there is also a clear interest in news from the host country. Nevertheless, there are still exceptions :

Father, 46, from Iraq : I used to watch news related to Iraq a lot but now it lessened.

- 27 Differences in preferences among participants can also be partially attributed to certain social backgrounds and contexts :

Father, 47, from Syria : On YouTube I watch cooking programs because I used to work in a restaurant.

- 28 Genres that occur most commonly in almost all interviews are news (about home and host country), sports news (especially football) and family programs or cartoons. Surprisingly, cartoons are not only watched by children, but parents too; as a method of improving their German language skills. Nevertheless, adult participants' media repertoires are strongly influenced by their original usage in their home country. They enjoy watching Arabic movies and series such as El Kabeer Awy or Bab al-Hara.

Mother, 24, from Syria : Bab al-Hara reminds us of how our country was.

- 29 Furthermore, participants noted utilizing online resources that share information about prayer programmes in Erlangen and other useful resources for Arab or Muslim migrants and refugees, such as the Facebook page "Arab Women in Germany". For other participants, since their relocation to Germany, the media has served as a means of escapism :

Mother, 34, from Iraq : Because there is a lot of pressure in our lives, and sometimes I have a breakdown, so we watch comedy dramas to help us forget.

- 30 This need for pleasure and diversion is met through entertainment and competition shows. Other genres mentioned include action, crime thrillers, (animal) documentaries, historical dramas as well as American, Turkish, Kuwaiti and Korean films and series.

- 31 Concerning children's print media, the most mentioned genres were vampire and adventure books, fairy tales, Pixie books, Greg's diary and Donald Duck comics. For younger children, handheld devices such as mobile phones and iPads were often used to play finger painting games or children's music.

- 32 Regarding frequently utilized media content, participants named several mobile and console games across several genres (strategy, fighting, sport or puzzle games), such as Words Crush, FIFA (online), Minecraft, Call of Duty, Clash of Titans, Candy Crush, Clash of Clans, GTA5, Gangster New Orleans, Car Racing, Fortnite, Pixel Gun, Clash Royale, Master Legends, Truth or Duty, Brain Physics or Digger Machine. Younger participants named the children's news program Logo, Tom & Jerry, the Lego Movie, Ninjago, Batman, Superman, Spiderman, Disney movies, Hexe Lilli, The Little Prince, Wickie, Pokémon, Bambi, Minions, Adventure Stories, Horseland, Princess Sophia, Barbie, Yakari, Spongebob, Friends, Peter Hase, The Voice, Krass nass! and Alvin & the Chipmunks. What is common among most of the children's selections is that movies or series are of either German/European or American origin. This might also be an indication of continued behaviour, or media usage, since Arabic children's channels also offer programming that is predominantly imported from the U.S., or from Europe, and then dubbed into Arabic. Other video media younger participants frequently utilize includes YouTube tutorials on various topics, including computer games (especially Minecraft), and the



MaroWeltShow. Since parents often spoke worse German than the children, translation applications or other research tools proved to be helpful for the school children.

Daughter, 11, from Syria : If I have to learn something or if I need help, there's nobody here to help me, so then I look it up on my tablet and that helps me a lot.

## Media Timing, Constraints and Motives

33 Parents often do not use media during the day because they are preoccupied with household chores, language courses or their children. Hence, most of their media consumption is during the evening, such as watching movies. If all the children's needs are met and there are no German courses to be visited, media usage typically increases due to boredom. In their home country, however, participants stated that their media usage was normally lower if an individual was working; something most of them would like to but are not able to do now. One participant, a single mother, noted her fondness for her smartphone because of her inability to socialize with other individuals (or her children) and lack of activities in Erlangen compared to Damascus :

Mother, 32, from Syria : I prefer the phone because no matter how much I talk with my children they shorten the talk and go to their games, and the city here is small, it doesn't have many places you can go and visit.

34 Other participants also noted that media sometimes serve different functions back home. One interviewee stated that while they had more free time to partake in media offerings, in Syria television viewing still served as a social function between him and other members of his community : a ground for discussing social and political events.

Father, 35, from Syria : In Syria there was a lot of free time, and my friends always come and spend the day with me or I go to them. TV was the centre of attention... we open the news, and everyone discusses the events concerning the news.

35 Furthermore, another participant who had frequent gaming habits in Syria, playing up to five hours of FIFA on the weekend noted that his behaviours changed once he moved to Germany,

Father, 40, from Syria : Now, I don't have the desire. I used to watch series and other things, and now all my worry is the language, opening the phone to learn a sentence is better than playing. I like to do things on my own without the need to use a translator.

36 Some other participants also noted that reading the free Sunday newspaper additionally assisted in learning the language while helping to "kill time" on Sunday.

37 The weekend almost always means family time; however, more social time with the family also mean more time for media consumption, since children usually do not have to do any homework. This is especially true during spells of bad weather (our interviews were conducted in winter), where children's media consumption increases again. They describe it as a "time filler". When asked what they would do if they had to spend a weekend without any media devices, the children gave various responses but primarily said that they would find it boring. However, they also noted that they would have the ability to go outside more and play. These sorts of responses tend to stress the fundamental embedding and importance of media use in everyday life,

Father, 33, from Syria : We wake up at nine or ten in the morning, we do the housework and go out, when we come back we sit in front of the TV or use the phone, and the kids sometimes go out and play football. This is how our weekend is spent.

38 Our interviewed families maintain contact with their relatives in their home country almost daily via various communication channels. In their home countries, the exchange of information was direct through face-to-face communication. However, due to several constraints such as the current size of flats in Germany (which cannot accommodate meetings of larger groups), or the location of family members back home, real life meetings can no longer take place. Not only do spatially and culturally changed situations contribute to the altered use of media, but also the passage of time. Some children were too young to use mobile phones or gaming consoles in their home countries, however; now they can. Moreover, adults might not have had access to these devices back home simply because a few years ago they were not available in their local areas in Syria and Iraq.



39 Technical constraints also influence usage : families in shared accommodation without Internet access or with limited data packages are increasingly using TVs instead. For those who are living in shared refugee housing, the computer in the common room was not used. In flats with several rooms, the television is located in the living room; stressing the social importance of certain media practices once again. While iPads, on the other hand, are frequently used in the children's rooms; reducing the possibility of parental control.

## Language and Media Repertoires

40 Language fosters integration and also acts as a predictor of media repertoires; showing that children in particular have already integrated well, even though there were frustrating phases at the beginning in which they hardly understood anything : e.g. at school. Children mainly watch German content, while adults often still lean towards Arabic content. Nevertheless, even adults watch cartoons in German, as they are suitable for learning the language due to their simplicity. When families had experienced longer stays in Turkey, some of them also watched films and series in Turkish. In general, the interviewees stated that (especially the younger) children often speak German to each other but Arabic with their parents. One interviewee said that this was also the recommendation of the kindergarten teacher, since otherwise children could forget the Arabic language, which they would undoubtedly need if they were to return to their home country.

Mother, 33, from Syria : Both, for example my son Zaid doesn't differentiate between Arabic and German, he says some words in Arabic and German, and my big son Basim knows Arabic and German, for example he speaks with us in Arabic and with his younger sibling in German.

Father, 28, from Iraq : My daughter's language is not very good, we speak Arabic at home, German in Kindergarten, English and Turkish on the phone.

41 Language also has the ability to restrict an individual's media repertoires. One child stated that his mother wanted to borrow Arabic books from the library, but there were none. Hence, an individual can have an entire form of media removed from their repertoire (books and print media) simply because they are not fluent in a specific language. Some children, for example, turned away from Arabic books and websites because they cannot write in Arabic, since they had not begun school in their home country.

42 Furthermore, learning German was seen as important by most respondents, not only as it provides access to more media offerings, but also because it was seen as more "prestigious"; the only way to achieve good grades, a good job and a good reputation in the new country. Moreover, attempting to speak multiple languages leads to an increase in media usage in certain cases, as the following examples show :

Father, 35, from Syria : I already listen to the news in Arabic, I just re-hear it in German so it becomes easy for me.

Mother, 24, from Syria : Yes, the usage increased because there is a new language we have to learn, the phone and YouTube helps us a lot.

## Sociality and Media Repertoires

43 Socialization and social contexts play a great role in the selection of media and the overall media repertoires of participants. For example, many respondents speak of a greater spatial proximity with friends and family in their home countries. Back home it was more common to meet (in person) on a regular basis with other individuals instead of relying on digital communication channels like WhatsApp or Facebook.

Mother, 33, from Syria : We didn't care much for it because the family was around us, our friends as well. We were comfortable and we didn't have the curiosity to know about what's happening outside the country.

Father, 33, from Syria : In Syria we didn't use these means a lot, we didn't need it, and we used to use landline telephones or go visit people directly, but now judging that we live far, we have to use these means in order to communicate with them.



touch with their networks from their home countries, the older ways of socialization are still preferred :

Father, 33, from Syria : I was living in reality, I didn't need to watch. There, the news goes from person to a person, a friend can come and tell you about the events happening.

45 Almost all respondents (older than primary school age) stated that there is now an extremely high level of reliance, if not dependence, on mobile phones and the Internet. The mobile phone is often mentioned as participants' favourite device because it fulfils several functions; one of which is enabling communication with their relatives back home and newer contacts in Germany. Hence, socialization is the central aspect that makes both the mobile phone and internet communication the favoured device by many. Chats are often used in a group setting by younger participants (e.g. school class WhatsApp group), while calls are used to communicate with individuals. In addition, the mobile phone also offers a media viewing function in the form of YouTube or Netflix.

Father, 40, from Syria : The phone is considered a mini version of TV for me.

46 In comparison to mobile phones, other media devices provide a variety of different functions than socialization : game consoles have the biggest "fun factor", tablets are often operated by the younger ones who use them for entertainment and learning programs, and laptops are often for school work. Furthermore, adult participants watch TV for relaxation and entertainment purposes, which according to one interviewee, is because the news programmes on TV provide more succinct information than the mobile phone itself; proving that even though mobile phones are favoured for being multifunctional, their core purpose is socialization, not information retrieval or entertainment.

47 In the same vein as phone communication, other media usage is also based on socialization, and their usage is somewhat communal. Online games are played with friends, siblings regularly watch cartoons together or with their parents, phoning relatives is always a group activity. Family co-orientation is mirrored by the conditions of media use : what is being watched or played, for example, is what the father or brother watches or plays. The iPad is taken along to visit relatives to entertain and distract younger children. If there are special media devices at a relative's house, they are often used on the weekend : such as a gaming console. Sometimes parents leave their mobile devices to their children, who might not have their own, to play games. Video calling relatives in their home country frequently occurs as a group activity, and is somewhat of a ritual where family members pass the mobile phone around. For younger and disabled children, iPads or televisions are often left on for long periods of time to provide company or help them fall asleep. A few children reported reading for themselves in the evening or (very few) getting something read aloud by their siblings or parents. One mother stated that she read koranic verses for her children in the evening or explained stories of the prophet.

48 An additional observation from our sample is that changes to the social context can have abrupt effects on media consumption and repertoires. One child reported that he used to play PlayStation with his older brother regularly; however, this stopped once his brother found a full-time job. Another interviewee reported a change in her media repertoire : going to the cinema under school supervision, which she had yet to do with her parents due to their lacking German language skills. Therefore, the social context of school had additionally supplemented her media repertoire. She also had to read German literature for class, while still watching Arabic movies with her parents as not to forget her native language : all social contexts which instigate media consumption and supplement her repertoire.

49 In the sample, there are a small number of families who shun the communal usage of movies and computer games. Nevertheless, within these families, media devices have a socialization factor instead of the content itself. One participant related her experience of how her husband and children would alternate devices to make space for each other, and how they would share devices on the weekend :

Mother, 33, from Syria : When their father is watching the news, they go and play with other things, and when the children watch cartoons the father uses Facebook. On the weekend the TV is always on.

50 Another participant noted how her children would share their devices among each other :

Mother, 32, from Syria : They often exchange roles in the use of devices when one uses the PlayStation, the other uses the iPad to follow videos from YouTube and vice versa.



## Media, Cultural Values and Integration

51 During our interviews it was apparent that for most parents it is important to teach their children traditional cultural values, as well as the Arabic language. This is partially why some families were reluctant to have their children watch Western movies and media. Some young participants also claimed to have seen 'impolite' posts on Instagram as a result of this upbringing. Nevertheless, while some children expressed their distaste for certain kinds of mild sexual content, highlighting their parents cultural influence, most (if not all) children and young adults had mostly (if not completely) rejected all types of Arabic media. Children and teenagers would not utilize books, or websites in Arabic because they could not write in Arabic, with some not having even attended school in their home countries, while others having completely forgotten how to type in their native language. Hence, while parents hope to instil certain cultural values in their children, they ignore that the linguistic aspect of their culture is already beginning to escape them through their literacy, and sometimes even diction.

52 Enculturation can be understood as the adoption of knowledge, skills, cultural ideas, values, norms and lifestyles, as well as the acquisition of cultural competences such as language skills. This process is reflected in the language combination used in all families, as well as the functional interweaving of media use and language acquisition; where cartoons, tablet apps or mobile games are used for learning German. Here we also note a role reversal through which children take the authoritative role; because when parents, who often have a low to medium German language level, do not understand something, they turn to the children (or media translation tools) instead. News is also often used in language learning. Therefore, the motivation to watch more German coverage is because of language acquisition and not necessarily out of genuine interest in the content.

53 Researching for certain topics can also be a form of enculturation. Whether this research is concerning information on German laws, Islam in Germany, job opportunities, politics, elections or cleaning tips is irrelevant; what is important is that it is in German. Several participants research the wars in their home countries and try to get more information on refugee issues in German. This can be done via Google News, main German broadcasters, Facebook Groups or official institutions.

54 Integration in groups, away from German courses, school or kindergarten, takes place through sports clubs, youth clubs or computer courses. However, the process is sometimes facilitated with digital media communication, such as WhatsApp or Facebook groups. Several men in our sample hoped that they would find work at some point in the near future, which they believe would significantly accelerate integration and language acquisition. A small number of individuals felt rejected in their host country, which hindered their integration attempts :

55 *Father, 47, from Syria : I also used to work a lot with Germans but now my language became weaker because Germans are scared of Arabs and Muslims.*

56 *Father, 40, from Syria : I try as much as possible to create relationships with Germans, but here the society is pressured, everyone works and ends up not having time. Here, Germans don't give their time for foreigners like us.*

57 On the other hand, children already have several German contacts through their school social circles. Therefore, their integration is facilitated through direct face-to-face, or digital media communication (WhatsApp groups). Overall, children seem to be already well integrated, and although most children miss their relatives in their home country, they now seem to have grown quite attached to Germany.

58 *Son, 8, from Syria : I love Germany. That's why I want to stay here and I never want to go back to Iraq again, because it's not beautiful, it's broken.*

## Conclusion

59 The findings show, among other things, that almost all families have highly digitised media repertoires, which enable them to receive media content from their home country. Almost all children owned their personal smartphones (or tablets) or had access to their parents' devices. The children who go to school use their mobile devices on buses and during breaks. Those families who do not have good internet access seem to be very dissatisfied. While children are increasingly drawn into German language online communication via WhatsApp groups of their school classes and Internet research activities for school projects, the use of social network



sites by adults is often of an isolated nature. German-language content or German sources play only an educational role, with the main interest being the improvement of language skills and not the actual content.

60 Our research also highlights changes in mobile media usage after the interviewees' arrival in Germany; probably attributed to the changing socio-cultural environment. This greatly depends on the age of the participants, for example, the younger they were when coming to Germany, the less likely they are to use mobile media to stay in touch with their former friends and family. Additionally, most children and adolescents tend to consume German media content more often than Arabic content. In the rare cases they do consume Arabic media content, it is in the presence of their parents, who state that they obligate or entice their kids to bring them closer to their roots.

61 Compared to the study by Hepp et al. (2012), our findings indicate that refugees utilize diasporic media for all five reasons that they specified (information, entertainment, engagement, commerce and faith). These reasons were reflected throughout different media offerings and devices in respondents' media repertoires. For example, phones and social media were primarily used for engagement with home and host networks, while television and sitcoms were used for entertainment purposes. However, unlike Hepp et al., we also note that refugees utilize local media options (non-diasporic) for a number of the aforementioned reasons, but primarily to strengthen their language and assist in their integration efforts.

62 Nevertheless, refugees from our study fall in line with the migrant typology provided by Hepp et al. We observed that most older respondents (the parents) were origin-oriented; focusing on their connections in their home country and having trouble establishing new ones in Germany. While preference to remain connected to older networks might be typified instead as banal transnationalism, as coined by Aksoy and Robins (2003), it is the reluctance and trouble in forming networks in the host country that typifies them as origin-oriented. Only a slight few were ethno-oriented establishing connections with Germans and other members of the diaspora in the host country as well. On the other hand, the children, who were better socially integrated, could be typified as ethno-oriented; with better established local networks but a more observable cultural identity struggle.

63 These children will now grow up in a multicultural environment, with their parents often sticking to Arabic media content/services and their home networks until they have become better integrated. It will be interesting to study what kind of language and media practices the children develop in this situation. Our study further shows that official apps developed by government agencies to assist these populations are hardly used. Urban authorities surely have to look for other mobile media channels in which they can better reach refugees. One sure way to spread messages to children and adults alike would be through cartoons, as this was the one medium that most parents said they watched in German with their children.

64 Refugees who first arrive in their host country are in a precarious social situation, and their media repertoires can provide both an emotional relief or means of escapism, as well as assist in their integration or isolation. Our study highlighted such media practices, which in addition to fulfilling various functions in the lives of the refugees (entertainment, information seeking, etc.) emphasize integration potential and efforts; with refugees focusing on their home networks and Arabic content struggling to integrate, while others with more German content and local communicative networks in their repertoires seemingly better included in their host society.

65 Whether individuals build their media repertoires in certain ways because of their interests; for example, do younger participants have primarily heavier German media repertoires because of their interest to integrate into the host society or because of their surrounding socio-cultural contexts (such as having more German friends and being exposed to more German than Arabic media earlier in life). One essential finding from our study is that media repertoires of refugee families highlight practices that indicate their integration or isolation efforts in the host society. Hence, the importance of media repertoires for integration in different socio-cultural contexts needs to be reconsidered. This is especially true since affinity for German media and potential for integration are related, as was indicated by Trebbe et al. (2010). Moreover, guidance on more conscious media practices needs to be included as a building block in integration and enculturation efforts.

66 An outlook to future research might centre around how the media practices in refugee families develop over the years. For example, does German media content become more influential over time, or does Arabic content still primarily remain the number one choice for the older generation? This does not necessarily need to be only reflected on the media content level, but also on certain practices : e.g. do their preferences still lie in communicating daily



with relatives back home through videoconferencing apps such as Skype (active media usage) to occupy their time, or do they now prefer to browse German YouTube videos (online consumption) instead? Furthermore, additional research prospects can centre around the legal and normative rules of conduct in the digitised public spheres that assist (or hinder) integration. Finally, another research pursuit can analyse how content and new technologies can be combined in order to foster integration.

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