

CONTEXTS AND CONTRADICTIONS OF DIGITAL CHILDREN'S RIGHTS OF UNACCOMPANIED MINOR REFUGEES

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THE STUDY

- “Internet is the same like food” - Study in co-operation with the Children’s Charity of Germany (Deutsches Kinderhilfswerk e.V.)
- Qualitative empirical research in summer 2015 with 20 unaccompanied minor refugees aged between 15-19 years from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Eritrea, Iraq, Kosovo, Pakistan, Senegal, Somalia, Uzbekistan
- 17 Interviews & 1 focus group discussion including digital media in residential care, clearing houses and assisted living in three federal states in Germany

General findings (Kutscher/Kreß 2015)

- „Internet is the same like food“
- Vital importance of contact with family
- Medium of integration and appropriation of receiving society/culture
- Mobile phone as central medium of contact - without contract option
- Digital information services - unknown
- Problems of financing of internet access and computers
- Lack of media-related concepts in institutions
- Restrictive media policies in institutions
- New issues of data and youth protection
- Specific requirements of young refugees - „normal“ requirements of youth

Two Examples from the Interviews

Em: “what’s going with hip hop artists and so on (.) like a photo with friends [on Facebook] [...] sometimes I change my profile picture [...] writing a status (.) what’s going on about music or soccer or something like that”
(Em 186-192, translated)

Em: “we write and talk via Skype [...] during periods of war there is no connection [...] because I my I everything parents siblings miss them (.) then sometimes the whole @family wants to skype with me@ [...] we talk how are you what are you doing and so on”
(Em 48-64, translated)

Childrens' Rights Issues I

Right to be regarded as normal youth and to be protected

- “In cases where no parents or other members of the family can be found, the child [refugee] shall be accorded the same protection as any other child permanently or temporarily deprived of his or her family environment for any reason” (Article 22, UN CRC).
- Young refugees use digital media like everyone else
- „Common“ needs of youth vs. specific needs of young refugees
- Young refugees use digital media also in specific ways because of being a refugee

Childrens' Rights Issues II

Right to contact parents vs. restrictive conditions in institutions

- “A child whose parents reside in different States shall have the right to maintain on a regular basis, save in exceptional circumstances personal relations and direct contacts with both parents” (Article 10, UN CRC).
- Family as an important framework for young Refugees
- Doing Family via digital media
- Different challenges and limitations of getting or staying in contact:
 - Media availability of the family
 - Institutional restrictions, money, missing support
- Young refugees have the right to contact their family - Challenges to fulfil this right

Childrens' Rights Issues III

Right to the resources, skills and contributions necessary for the survival and full development of the child: Capabilities vs. Vulnerabilities

Article 20, 29 and 31 UN CRC

- Vulnerability
 - Family far away
 - Experiences and capabilities in the context of flight
- Coping
 - Accomplishment of integration in new society
 - Contact with and searching for family

Childrens' Rights Issues IV

Right to get appropriate access and support for participation in education (Art. 28 UN CRC)

- Shared PC/no or restricted internet access in child and youth welfare institutions
- Informal education and self appropriation by app usage - chances and problems
- Bonding/bridging/linking capital as mediating factors

Right of privacy, not to be economically exploited and to access mass media (Art. 16, 17 and 32 UN CRC)

- No mobile phone contract - prepaid phone cards
- No free Wifi Access in institutions → public hotspots - data as price for connectivity
- Media education

Contexts of Realizing Refugees' Children's Rights in a Digitalized Society

- Discursive contexts: Subjectivation as refugee/normal youth/victim/capable person
→ contradiction between vulnerability and coping
 - De-privatization: future freedoms of all - need to protect children/youth in a special way
 - Institutional conditions for social participation:
 - Material access
 - Individual capabilities
 - Social capital building: linking social capital
- **Challenges and Perspectives for Research, Politics and Practice (Kutscher/Kreß 2016a)**



Univer
Un

e.g. Apps

Media experiences
Availability of
Media/WiFi access

Individual: (media) literacy
Social: social capital
Environmental: Institutional
context

The Capability Approach as a Framework to Analyze Refugee Children's Freedoms and Factual Rights in the Digital Society

Commodities/
characteristics

Capabilities

Conversion
factors

Ways and
aims of use

Choice /
Freedoms

Language literacy, being
educated, integrated,
participating in society,
realizing job training ...

Functionings (Doings and Beings)



**THANK YOU FOR
YOUR ATTENTION!**

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