Editorial

Introduction to "Refugee Crises Disclosed: Intersections between Media, Communication and Forced Migration Processes"

Vasilki Tsagkroni [1] and Amanda Alencar [2,*]

[1] Institute of Political Science, Leiden University, 2311 EZ Leiden, The Netherlands; E-Mail: v.tsagkroni@fsw.leidenuniv.nl
[2] Department of Media and Communication, Erasmus University Rotterdam, 3062 PA Rotterdam, The Netherlands;
E-Mail: pazalencar@eshcc.eur.nl

* Corresponding author

Abstract

This editorial serves as an introduction to the *Media and Communication* thematic issue on "Refugee Crises Disclosed: Intersections between Media, Communication and Forced Migration Processes". This thematic issue presents an integrated look at forced migration through the spectrum of media studies and communication sciences. The eleven articles in this volume offer a comparative research approach on different focuses that involve cross-national, cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural frameworks, as well as multi-actor perspectives and methodologies. Altogether, the contributions featured in this thematic issue offer inspiring insights and promote innovative research on the way we perceive implications of media and communication in the field of migration. To conclude, a reflection on the presented research is also included.

Issue

This editorial is part of the issue "Refugee Crises Disclosed: Intersections between Media, Communication and Forced Migration Processes", edited by Vasiliki Tsagkroni (Leiden University, The Netherlands) and Amanda Alencar (Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands).

1. Introduction

Global forced displacements are bringing challenges and opportunities for communication between host and refugee communities on all cultural, social, political, and economic levels. At the same time, the media are playing increasingly important roles in refugee situations around the world. Refugees face complex information and communication challenges that may lead to social, economic and cultural problems (Leung, 2018; Leurs, 2017). Within this context, the use of digital technologies among refugees has been associated with potential for social inclusion and opportunity to enhance access to relevant information for their daily activities such as education, employment, health and well-being, and social interactions (Alencar, 2018). Despite the growing impor-

tance of new media technologies for refugees, much uncertainty still exists about the ways in which these communications affect various aspects of refugee lives in different contexts and points in time.

This thematic issue of *Media and Communication* focuses on research at the crossroads of forced migration and media studies and communication sciences. More specifically, the issue aims to develop further the debate on the topic by including research on a different humanitarian and refugee crises from an interdisciplinary perspective. The selected contributions benefit from a comparative research approach on different focuses that involve (but are not limited to) cross-national, cross-disciplinary (politics and media, humanitarian journalism, cultural identity and refugee migration, refugee economies and entrepreneurship-media business model,

etc.), cross-cultural approaches (across different refugee and host community populations), as well as studies that address multi-actor perspectives (across different actors involved in refugee crises and integration processes) and methodologies (qualitative, quantitative and critical studies). The following paragraphs provide a brief description of the eleven articles included in this volume.

2. Presentation of the Contributions in this Thematic Issue

Jay Marlowe (2019) opens this thematic issue with the article "Social Media and Forced Migration: The Subversion and Subjugation of Political Life", which aims to explore the role of digital media technologies in facilitating the formation and maintenance of refugees' political lives through their engagement in transnational networks. Based on digital ethnography with 15 resettled refugees in New Zealand, the author focuses on how social media interactions can foster and affect refugees' political practices, as well as the power dynamics involved in negotiating political identities in home and host countries.

Amanda Alencar and Vasilki Tsagkroni (2019) investigate integration as a two-way process. In their work "Prospects of Refugee Integration in the Netherlands: Social Capital, Information Practices and Digital Media" the authors analyze the newcomers' perspectives and experiences of integration and information in the Netherlands. Their article uses the theory of social capital, along with existing policies and refugee migrant interviews to reflect on the refugees' adaptation processes and explores the role of media in the integration act.

David Ongenaert (2019) takes the discussion to the way refugee organizations' structure their public communication strategies. His conceptual article "Refugee Organizations' Public Communication: Conceptualizing and Exploring New Avenues for an Underdeveloped Research Subject" identifies the gaps within the literature and highlights the scientific and societal relevance of a subject that has been until now relatively unexplored. The author adopts a historical perspective to point that although refugee organizations' public communication has increased, the focus remains limited and mostly text-focused, whereas production and reception dimensions have been ignored. Keeping this in mind, the article puts emphasis on the contribution of the holistic Communicative Constitution of Organizations perspective to exhibit additional approaches for future research.

Philipp Seuferling (2019) conforms the alleged newness of media practices forced migrants engage with. In his article "'We Demand Better Ways to Communicate': Pre-Digital Media Practices in Refugee Camps", the author analyses archival material from refugee camps (a heterotopian space) in Germany between 1945 and 2000, through which he scrutinizes the roles and functions of media practices in the camp experience among forced migrants, in a pre-digital media environment. The author argues that in the end, it this insight on the fight for media practices, that throws light and provide clarity and context to the functions and conflicts around media and communication within this heterotopian space of the refugee camp.

Alessandra Von Burg (2019) in her article "Citizenship Islands: The Ongoing Emergency in the Mediterranean Sea" proposes the concept of citizenship islands, based on the idea of nonplaces for noncitizens, to analyze the ongoing emergency in the Mediterranean Sea. Based on field studies in Italy (2016–2018), with a specific focus on the island of Lampedusa, interviewing migrants and refugees, the author highlights the importance of identifying new language and new research tools to effectively explore and theorize the migrant situation, moving beyond the existing discourses of citizenship, mobility and migration.

Rashid Gabdulhakov (2019), in his article "In the Bullseye of Vigilantes: Mediated Vulnerabilities of Kyrgyz Labour Migrants in Russia" investigates the gendered dimensions and biases shaping discriminatory discourses and practices that move beyond physical borders and permeate virtual and social environments simultaneously. As the author shows, these gendered practices are further normalized by structural actors in the host country, contributing to creating barriers when it comes to seeking social justice among Kyrgyz migrants who are 'forced' to leave home in search of better economic opportunities.

Anne van Eldik, Julia Kneer and Jeroen Jansz (2019) examine the intersections between social media engagement and urban identification through survey interviews with 324 migrant and non-migrant young people in the Netherlands. In their article "Urban & Online: Social Media Use among Adolescents and Sense of Belonging to a Super-Diverse City", the authors look into possible differences between the ways in which adolescents with both migrant and non-migrant backgrounds make use of social media and the effects of these digital practices for creating a sense of belonging to the super-diverse environments where these adolescents currently live in.

Annamária Neag (2019) brings an original and novel methodological contribution with the article "Board Games as Interview Tools: Creating a Safe Space for Unaccompanied Refugee Children", in which she critically analyses the potential of board games as a creative method for working with unaccompanied refugee children and that can complement more traditional approaches in gathering diverse and rich data. As part of her fieldwork with 56 young people hailed from Eritrea, Afghanistan, Morocco, Somalia, as well as from other Middle Eastern, African or South Asian countries, the author provides some insights into the production of media literacy educational materials that can promote critical literacy skills among refugee children.

Julia Kneer, Anne van Eldik, Jeroen Jansz, Susanne Eischeid and Melek Usta (2019) present an interven-

tion study named "With a Little Help from My Friends: Peer Coaching for Refugee Adolescents and the Role of Social Media". The authors assess the impact of a specific peer-coaching (Peer2Peer) for refugee adolescents has on different factors of well-being for both sides: refugee adolescents and their local peer coaches. Through their analysis the authors highlight the importance of training on social media, through which language barriers can be reduced and relationships between local adolescents and refugee adolescents can be developed.

Adina Nerghes and Ju-Sung Lee (2019) shift the attention away from refugee migrants' use of digital media and focus on the role of traditional and new media in shaping public perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers during the European 'refugee crisis'. Their article "Narratives of the Refugee Crisis: A Comparative Study of Mainstream-Media and Twitter" contributes a systematic investigation of refugee debates and narratives from 21 mainstream news channels and Twitter, following Aylan Kurdi's death. The authors emphasize that while both social media spaces exert complementary roles in reporting refugee stories, they may vary greatly in the kind of information that is disseminated.

Yijing Wang and Vidhi Chaudhri (2019) offer a conceptual study that brings together economic integration and contributions from businesses. In their work "Business Support for Refugee Integration in Europe: Conceptualizing the Link with Organizational Identification" the authors address business support of refugee (economic) integration as a manifestation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and contend that such efforts may enhance employee organizational identification. The authors propose a conceptual model to theorize this relationship among refugee support (as a CSR effort), CSR communication and organizational identification with respect to business firms explicitly claiming their support for refugee integration in Europe.

Melissa Wall (2019) concludes this thematic issue by offering a commentary on the presented research. The author discusses the concept of social navigation in relation to the ongoing uncertainty and precarity that refugees face when experiencing displacement and adaptation into a new environment. In the commentary, Wall highlights the ways in which the papers in this thematic issue contribute to enhancing the debate about the complexity of refugee issues and the role of media and communication.

3. Conclusion

This thematic issue of *Media and Communication* introduces a variety of empirical and theoretical works on the core ongoing debate on forced migration, examined under the scope of media studies and communication strategies. All eleven articles provide fruitful insights on the topic and propose additional approaches to understand the phenomenon and motivate leading-edge future research. The findings presented here have gener-

ated many questions in need of further investigation. If the debate around new refugee communications is to be moved on, interdisciplinary, comparative research, that breaks the boundaries by moving beyond the notions of country and culture, as proposed here, could be the key to do so.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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About the Authors

Vasiliki Tsagkroni is a comparative politics scholar. Her area of research is political communication and the use of marketing and branding in politics, focusing on the interaction between communication strategies and political parties. Since 2012 she has joined the Institute of Political Science at Leiden University. She has previously worked as a Lecturer at Erasmus University Rotterdam and University of Bournemouth. She is the Treasurer and Membership Outreach Officer of the Greek Politics Specialist Group (GPSG) of Political Studies Association (PSA).

Amanda Alencar is a digital migration scholar specialized in the study of media and social media in Europe and Latin America, with a focus on how communication technologies are shaping refugee mobility and integration processes. She is Assistant Professor in the Department of Media & Communication at Erasmus University Rotterdam. Amanda was a Marie Curie Fellow at the University of Amsterdam, where she studied the intersections between TV news and migrants' acculturation in the Netherlands, Spain, Ireland, and Brazil.