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Digital identities, connectivity & rights of migrant youth:
a relational perspective

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Dr. Koen Leurs
Department of Media & Culture,
Utrecht University

Conference on children's rights
in the migration crisis
and in the digital environment
Council of Europe ///
Estonian Institute of Human Rights
Tallinn, Estonia 3-4 November 2016

A group of young men posed for a selfie on Eftalou beach after reaching the island of Lesbos in a rubber boat from Turkey

m · 17h

"Refugees" aka invaders pose for selfies in Greece with their fresh haircuts and iphones...
dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3...

10 2

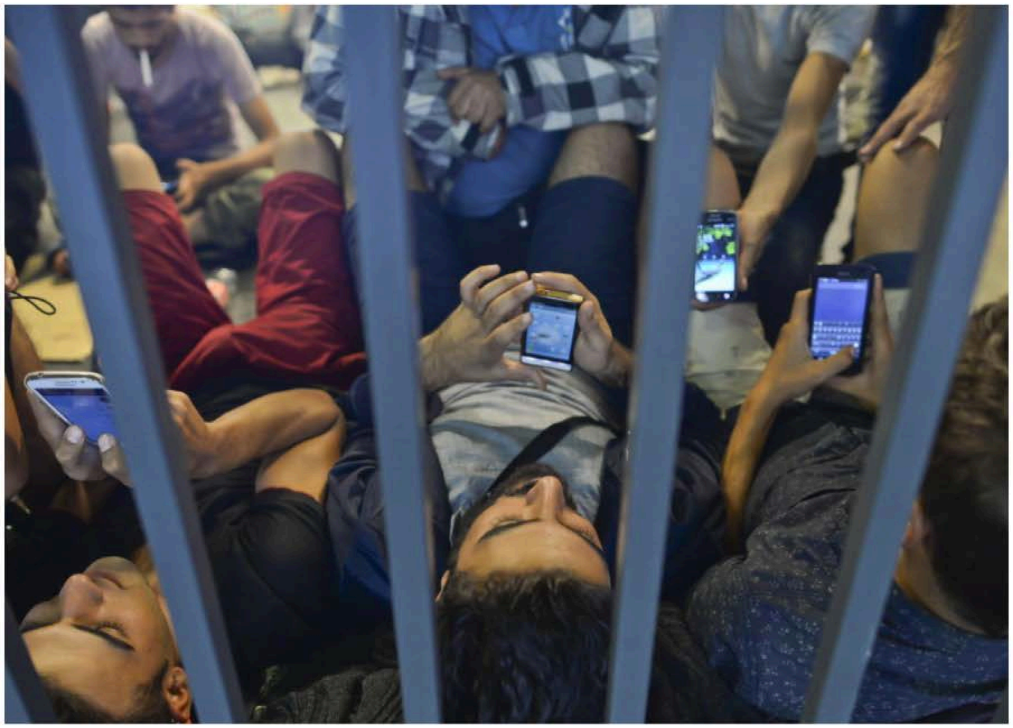
INDEPENDENT

Surprised that Syrian refugees have smartphones? Sorry to break this to you, but you're an idiot

You don't need to be a white westerner to own a relatively cheap piece of technology

James O'Malley | Monday 7 September 2015 | 15 comments

161K shares



Refugees at Budapest Railway station check their phones *Artur Widak/NurPhoto/REX*

"Hey, those people fleeing war in Syria aren't poor at all! Look, they all have smartphones!" is one increasingly tedious complaint that has been bubbling away on social media recently. Owning a mobile phone, it seems, should render one ineligible for help when trying to stop themselves and their families from dying in a war.

vistaprint

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Digital practices as human right claims

"Parties undertake to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her ***identity***, including nationality, name and ***family relations***..." (CRC, 1989, 8.1)

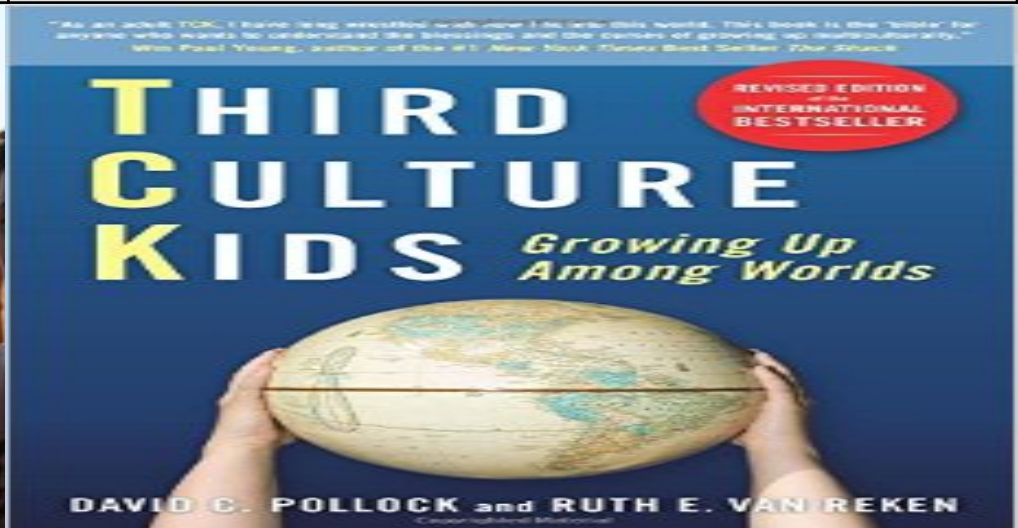
"The child shall have the right to freedom of expression … ***regardless of frontiers***, … ***through any*** … ***media of the child's choice***" (CRC, 1989, 13.1).

"All human rights that exist ***offline*** must also be protected ***online***" (European Council, 2014)

"When people perform digital acts in or by saying and doing 'I, we, they have a right to', they enact themselves as citizen subjects; they are making digital rights claims" (Isin & Ruppert, 2015, p. 69)

Thinking relationally about connectivity

Encapsulation	*Cosmopolitanism*
Transnational	International
Essence	Multiplicity
Homogeneity	Heterogeneity
Birds-of-a-feather flock together	Difference
Purity	Hybridity
Sedentary	Nomadic
Segregation & isolation	Integration
Radicalization	Public sphere
Continuity	Change
Migrants (refugees, guest labourers)	Expats



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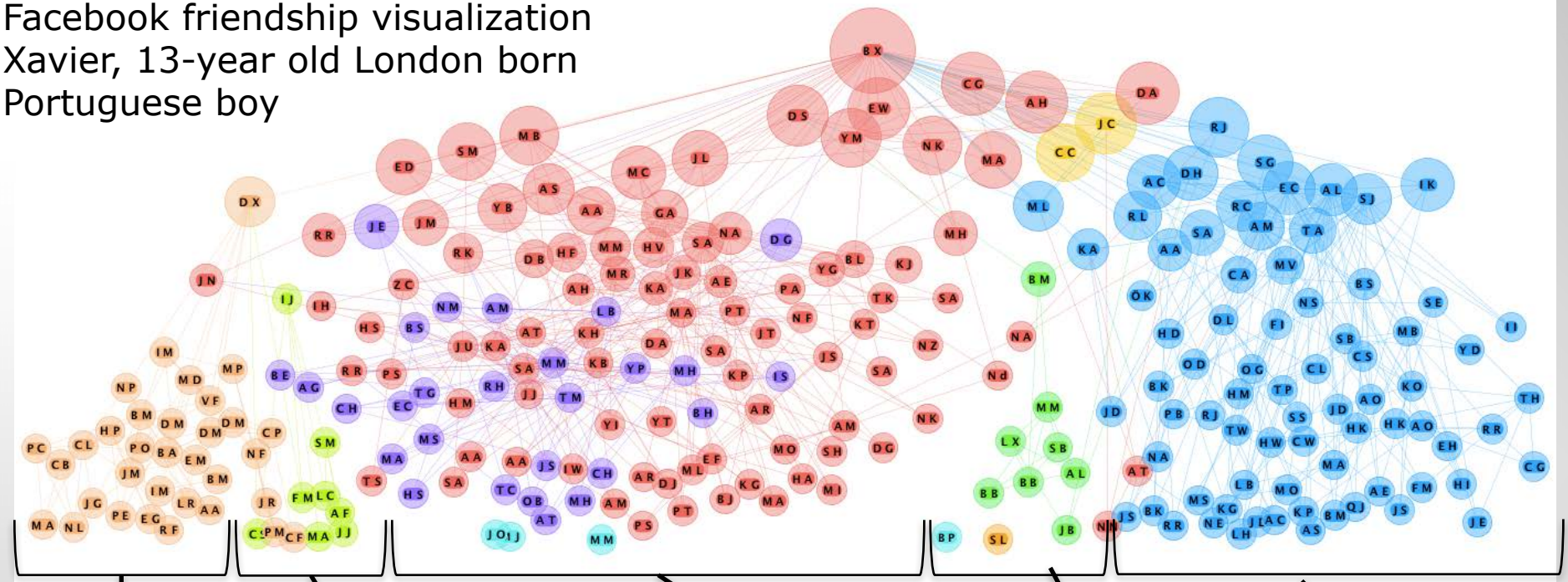
Young connected migrants

Facebook friendship visualization
Xavier, 13-year old London born Portuguese boy



‘Portuguese people living here, in London’

‘actually, they are all living in Portugal’

‘secondary school’

‘these are people that I cross on the street’

‘they are kind of primary school-ish’

Thinking relationally about identity

Migrant youth identities are dynamic, not fixed:

1) *Identifying with ones "**roots**" (Gilroy, 1993).
*"**shared** cultural codes which provide us, as "one people," with **stable**, **unchanging** and **continuous** frames of reference and meaning" (Hall, 1990, p. 223)

2) * Orientation towards new contexts "**routes**" (Gilroy, 1993)
* "a matter of '**becoming**' … identities undergo **constant transformation**" (Hall, 1990, 225)

Instagram J, 23-year-old young man from Syria living in the Netherlands

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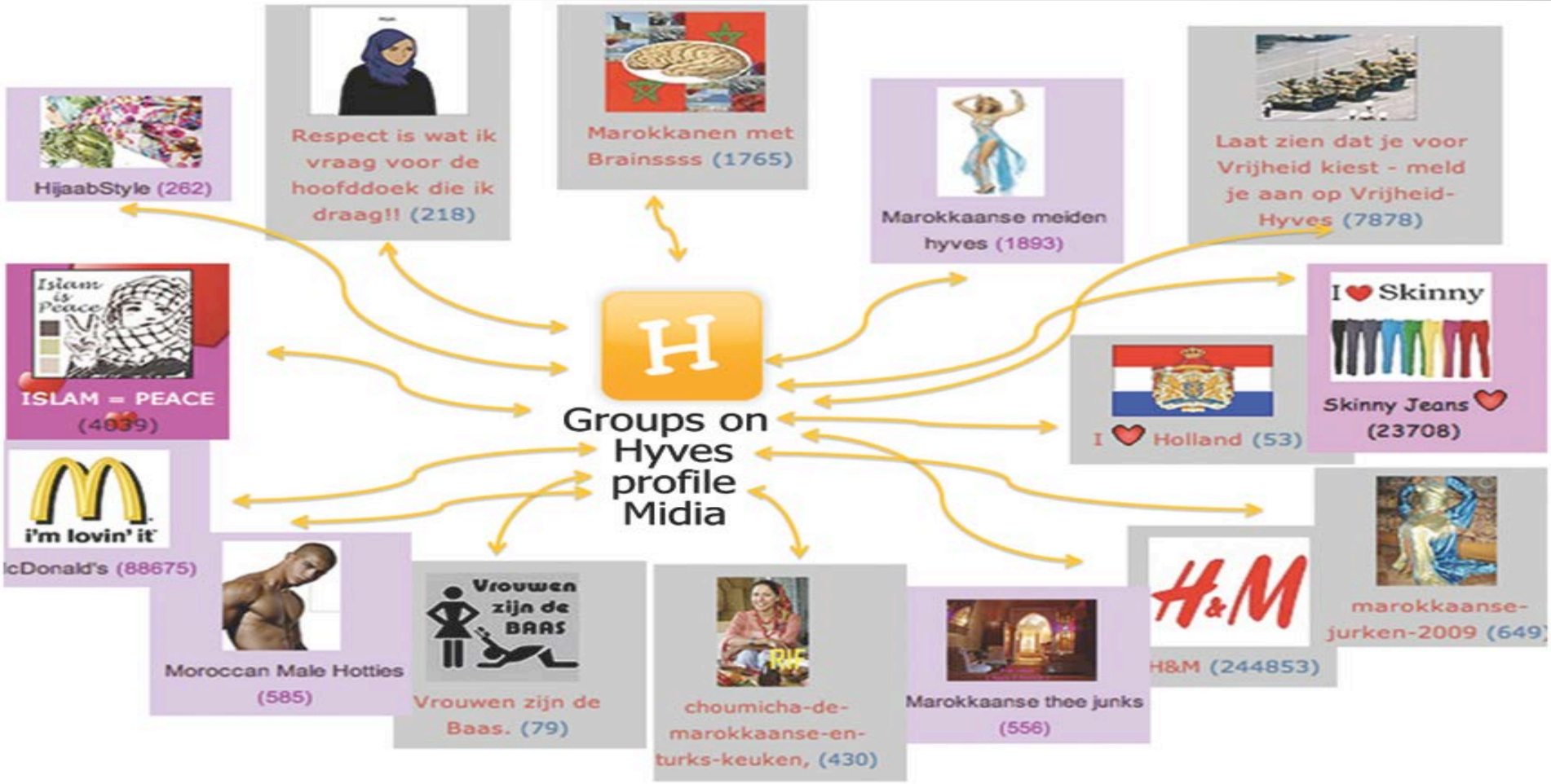
Intersectionality

How do age, race/ethnicity, gender, class, diaspora, nation, youth culture together impact upon identification / oppression?



Hyves social media profile Midia, 13 years old girl born in the Netherlands to parents who migrated from Morocco

Migrant youth' digital identities

Re-value ethnic heritage & marker of individuality:

Instagram J, 23, from Syria living in the Netherlands

Also used to inform and contest stereotypes:

"I love my country, say when my mum is cooking like really nice food, I might take a picture of it and put it up, and then people will see like your national food and delicacies… to show like you are happy and proud of it, and like ***inform people****, cos people* ***might stereotype it****"*

- Dave, 17-years-old, "*born here in the UK, my parents were born in Nigeria*"

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Digital identities & intercultural learning

"*what do we have today, we have a multicultural society, so sometimes Facebook can be good, cos* ***you can learn each others culture****, other religions and stuff like that, from it*" (Chenise, 21-year-old "*mixed-race*" young Londoner)

"*I like to kind of engage with people from different backgrounds cos it makes you* ***open-minded***" (Sarah, 17-year-old woman, born in London, "from Pakistan")

Henry, 18-year-old '*Half French half Japanese*', young Londoner: '*It helps me to be more of an* ***all-round person***'.

But migrant youth also have to negotiate racism, discrimination, hate and bullying on social media on the basis of religion, race and gender differences.

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Jo, ‘hacktivist’, from Damascus

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Thank you

-Migrant youth are young ‘connected migrants’
-Digital identity & connectivity are human right claims
-Migrant youth digital identities combine roots & routes
-’Information precarity’ possible obstacle to integration
-Practices are ‘digitally divided’

See also:

Leurs, K. (2015). *Digital Passages. Migrant Youth 2.0. Diaspora, Gender & Youth Cultural Intersections.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press (free open access download)

www.koenleurs.net / k.h.a.leurs@uu.nl / www.twitter.com/koenleurs