

A Photographic Look on the Socio-Educational Inclusion of Young Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

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Abstract : From a theoretical and interdisciplinary approach to visual ethnography and visual anthropology, this small scale, in-depth study explores the potential of photography as a participatory ethnographic method for a deep-understanding of the socio-educational integration of young refugees and asylum-seekers in the host society as regards their daily experiences, their needs, desires, expectations, and future goals. Qualitative data is collected by the author by observing 12 young participants in the age group 12-24 years per week for 12 months. The data consists of field notes, participatory observation, in-depth interviews with professionals, and the use of visual participatory ethnographic methods. Therefore, the young participants build their stories through the implementation of two participatory photographic methods - the 'photo-diary' and the 'photo-elicitation' - that permit them to analyse and narrate their social and educational experiences from their perspectives, thus collaborating in the construction of knowledge during the different stages of the research. Preliminary findings show the high resilience and social adaptability of young refugees and asylum-seekers to achieve their goals and overcome structural and socio-cultural barriers. However, the uncertainty of their administrative situation during the asylum submission and the lack of specific resources might impact negatively on their educational pathways and the transition to the labour market. Finally, this study also highlights the benefits of participatory photographic methods in ethnographic research, which impacts positively the well-being of these young people, helps them to develop critical thinking, and it also allows them to access information more respectfully when narrating painful experiences.

Keywords : photo-diary, photo-elicitation, resilience, strategies, visual methodologies, young refugees and asylum seekers

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