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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes results from WP3 (the focus group study) and WP4 (the Identity and Citizenship-study) drawing on previous deliverables (mainly D. 11, 13, 15-16, 17 and 19) and further developing earlier analyses. It begins by presenting results as to Arabic-speakers’ media uses, especially foregrounding the various ways in which they combine channels from the countries of origin with transnational and Swedish channels, and the high level of media literacy shown in their assessments of the channels they watch. After that, senses of identity and civic belonging are discussed, as well as the ways in which participants experience these belongings. Participants’ civic literacy is also emphasized, i.e. their ability to reflect upon and compare legal regimes and forms of governance in different countries.
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1. INTRODUCTION

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1.1 BACKGROUND

Sweden is the second smallest of the seven countries included in the Media & Citizenship project. At the end of 2008 (the year when the quantitative data was gathered) its total population amounted to 9,3 million. Approximately 14 percent of the population was foreign born and 18 percent was of foreign background, i.e. born abroad or born in Sweden of two parents born in other countries (Befolkningsstatistik i sammandrag 1960 – 2008). Statistics Sweden (SCB), the national statistics authority, registers neither ethnicity nor language, which makes it difficult to exactly establish the number of Arabic-speakers living in Sweden and Stockholm. Migration from countries where Arabic is the official/majority language was scarce until the 1970s, but increased rapidly from the 1980s on, and is since then mostly made up of refugees. Today, the majority of Arabic-speakers live in the three largest urban areas, Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmo (Foster, 2003). On the whole, people originating from 20 Arab states live today in Sweden, but the size of the different national groups varies greatly. An estimation of the number of Arabic-speakers living in Sweden, derived from the nationality of the migrants (or their parents), could be between 250 000 and 300 000.

In the Stockholm region there are some 59 000 people originating from 20 countries with Arabic as their official/majority language. The four largest groups are the Iraqis (some 33 600), Syrians, Lebanese, and Moroccans. The Tunisiens, Egyptians and Algerians make up rather small groups (1 000 - 2 000 people) and the 13 remaining groups are even smaller (statistic source: Födelseländer2008 Länet...). These figures should though be treated with great caution, because, on the one hand, they only include foreign born people, and on the other, it cannot be automatically assumed that everyone originating from the mentioned countries speaks Arabic, as significant minorities speak other languages in several of them.

As regards the legal status of migrants, the current Swedish citizenship regime combines the principles of jus sanguinis and jus solis, allows for dual citizenship, has a low requirement of time of residence and includes no language/civic orientation test requirement. Through the introduction of the dual/multiple citizenship and the greater prominence given to the jus solis principle, the 2001 Act on Swedish Citizenship entailed a liberalization of citizenship legislation. In comparison with other EU countries, the Swedish regime is rather liberal.

The committee which prepared the current Act on Swedish Citizenship (2001) had been instructed to take a stance on the language test issue. The committee did not advocate the introduction of such a test. However, Sweden is today one of very few European countries without such a requirement and pressures towards harmonization with the European norm could lead to the abandonment of this position in the future.

The regime of labor migration was considerably liberalized in 2008 (See Deliverable 17). Although both demographic, market economic and mobility/diversity arguments were stated as grounds for the new regime, according to some researchers (e.g. Hansen 2009 and Milani 2009), it is well in tune with an overarching EU policy which prioritizes liberalization and ‘flexibilization’ in the name of the market over human rights and the provision of welfare benefits.
1.2 SET UP OF THE RESEARCH

For the focus group component (WP3) of the overall study, the seven countries involved in this project shared a research design which comprised six focus groups with six participants each. However, when the focus group discussions were conducted, only 31 of the 36 previously recruited participants showed up. The group discussions took place in two libraries in central Stockholm in May and June 2009, and lasted between one and a half and two and a half hours.1 The distribution of the Swedish focus groups (SFGs) and focus group participants (SFGPs) was as follows:

SFG1: Females, age group 18-25 – June 17th, SFGP 1 – SFGP 4
SFG2: Females, age group 26-45 – June 8th, SFGP 7 – SFGP 11
SFG3: Females, age group 46-65 – June 13th, SFGP 13 – SFGP 18

SFG4: Males, age group 18-25 – June 16th, SFGP 19 – SFGP 23
SFG5: Males, age group 26-45 – May 29th, SFGP 25 – SFGP 29
SFG6: Males, age group 46-65 – June 15th, SFGP 31 – SFGP 36

An assessment of the make-up of the group of participants as a whole shows that the group was balanced with regard to gender and age. As regards country of origin, it comprised participants from eight different Arabic-speaking countries (including five of the seven largest national groups living in Stockholm): 15 from Iraq, 4 from Yemen and 1 to 3 from Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan each.

When it comes to participants’ educational level, the group had a clear bias as 19 of them had a university education and 9 had secondary school education. As regards occupational status, 15 participants were employed and 8 unemployed, 6 were students, 1 was retired and 1 was on maternal leave.

The focus groups unfolded quite smoothly and several participants expressed their appreciation of both the opportunity of discussing their media use, citizenship and belonging with other Arabic-speakers and the interest shown by researchers.

The Citizenship and Identity-study (WP4) included the acquisition and analysis of information about citizenship regimes, integration, immigration policy, and the situation of Arabic-speakers in Sweden; further analysis of focus group materials concerning citizenship and belonging in the light of this information; and a Public Engagement Event (PEE) attended by Arabic-speakers, media practitioners and analysts, and media researchers, where matters of media use and civic belonging were further discussed.2

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

After the background data on Arabic-speakers living in Stockholm and the account of the research set up, this report summarizes results from WP3 and WP4. Chapter 2 discusses the SFGPs’ media practices and chapter 3 accounts for their sense(s) of identity and civic belonging. Chapter 4 draws together and interprets results of the two previous chapters in relation to each other. Some concluding remarks are presented in chapter 5.

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1 Research assistants Degla Salim and Walid Al-Saqaf recruited participants, conducted and transcribed the focus groups and compiled a brief preliminary report, parts of which were used in the Swedish contribution to the Initial Country Based Analyses of Focus Group Data (D 11).

2 Research assistant Said Aljaffar made searches and compiled information about the mentioned matters, and assisted in the recruitment for, and planning and conduct of, the PEE.
2. ARABIC-SPEAKERS’ MEDIA USE

Results and analysis of the SFGs were reported in the (Swedish) National Report on focus Group Results (Del. 3.3). In the following I bring up some of the main conclusions of this analysis with a focus on Arabic-speakers’ media use.

2.1 PREFERRED MEDIA TYPES

On the whole, the SFGs revealed great richness and variation in participants’ patterns of media use. Television and internet were the preferred media types. The following precisions as regards media type preferences build upon focus group material and data from the questionnaire that the participants filled in on the occasion of the group discussions.

- Television was ranked as first news source by 15 participants and as second source by 14.
- Internet was ranked as first news source by 12 participants and as second source by 10.
- Television was ranked as first news source mostly among participants in the youngest and middle-aged groups.
- Slightly more members of the oldest group than of the two other age groups ranked the internet as their first news source. The preference for the internet and print media in these groups can be attributed to their belonging to a media generation that privileges the written word in combination with their high education level.
- The youngest, and especially the middle-aged group ranked television as the first news source to a higher extent than the oldest group. Even for these groups, factors such as age, educational level and media generation seem to be important, although not exclusive, reasons for their ranking of television and the internet as first sources.
- Other explanatory factors include specifically situated media practices, availability of time, availability or otherwise of preferred media output and participants’ individual evaluations of the performance and specific traits of different types of media.

2.2 PREFERRED BROADCASTING LANGUAGES

In the oldest and middle age groups the choice of Arabic language channels is deliberate while in the youngest groups some half watches these channels only when family members are watching them or when there is nothing else to watch.

2.3 PARTICIPANTS’ MEDIA WORLDS

All groups watch both transnational, country of origin (CO) and Swedish channels, but they combine these forming the specific patterns, which I call ‘media worlds’, that suit their informational and entertainment needs. Drawing on the preferred channels indicated by the SFGPs, I identified four main media worlds:

1) the transnational media world
2) the transnational/Swedish media world
3) the transnational/country of origin media world
4) the Swedish media world

An examination of the identified media worlds suggests that the transnational channels are the most watched ones, while the channels of the CO appear in only one of the media worlds, which only a few participants in the youngest and middle age male groups reported. The three other media worlds were rather evenly distributed among the participants.

- The transnational media world was reported by male participants rather evenly distributed across the three age groups.
- The transnational/Swedish media world appeared among both male and female SFG participants in the middle-aged and, especially, the oldest groups.
- The transnational/CO media world was reported by only a few males in the youngest and middle-aged groups.
- The Swedish media world appears across all but one of the focus groups, but is more frequent among the youngest and middle-aged women.

However, these media worlds do not constitute mutually exclusive categories, e.g. those watching mainly transnational channels may also watch country of origin and/or Swedish channels. Nor are media worlds static, as they change over time depending on a series of factors.

2.3.1 Factors shaping the composition of media worlds

- **Individual preferences and different senses of belonging** (as Iraqis, Yemenis, Swedes, etc.) play a role.
- **Specific changes in participants' living conditions** play also a role (having got children, having acquired a satellite dish).
- **Current living conditions and channel availability** have also an influence on channel choices, e.g. the language spoken at home (for those married with non-Arabic speakers), the use of Swedish channels as support in the process of learning Swedish, and the constraints on channel choices imposed by the packages made available by cable distributors.

2.4 MEDIA LITERACY

The SFGPs expressed a high level of media literacy as they were clearly aware of what the different national and transnational outlets offer, and evaluated this output while also explaining the reasons for their preferences and accounting for the ways in which different channels (and even other media) fitted with and complemented each other within their overall patterns of media use.

Different channels and media types are combined in different media worlds so as to provide either variation of genres and formats or variation of political strands. Although concepts such as 'neutrality', 'objectivity' and 'truth' were used by some SFGPS, many of them expressed a belief that all media, whether in the Arab or the Western world, are driven by different kinds of interests. Many participants recounted that they therefore watched different channels and compared the news.
Their assessments of the different media they used were informed by their knowledge and experience of Arabic- and Swedish-language media, and by political, and in a few cases, even religious arguments.

2.4.1 Assessments of Media Performance

Arabic language television in general was criticized partly because of its perceived overall workings (it was seen as promoting escalation of conflict rather than understanding between nations), and partly on account of its partiality. On the other hand, individual SFGPs praised different specific channels for their perceived merits. No unambiguously positive evaluation was expressed with regard to Al-Jazeera, which many SFGPs though watched: it was trusted by some and distrusted by others.

As already mentioned, channels from the SFGPs’ countries of origin did not appear in any prominent place in participants’ media worlds. While in some cases this depends on practical factors such as lack of access to these outlets, in other cases these channels were explicitly rejected and sensed as unreliable news sources, but credited nonetheless for fulfilling emotional needs (e.g., viewing the streets and landscapes from ‘home’).

Swedish channels’ performance was criticized: coverage of the Arabic community in Sweden was seen as scarce and problem-centred, and their news on the Arab world were seen as scarce and fragmented by some SFGPs, while others stressed the merits of journalistic investigative programs and the usefulness of watching these channels to keep in touch with Swedish debates.
3. IDENTIFY AND CIVIC BELONGING

3.1 IDENTIFY: THE BOND TO THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Participants across all age groups expressed a clear sense of a bond to the CO, no matter whether they also regarded themselves as Swedes or not. Other insights derived from the analysis of the focus group material include:

- No idealization of CO (war, lack of respect of human rights, administrations’ malfunctioning, etc. were recurrently brought up).
- These problems do not in any way weaken the bond to the CO.
- Nor do the perceived advantages of living in Sweden: there were recurrent expressions of participants’ gratitude to Sweden for having given them shelter and appreciation of a series of features of the Swedish system and way of life, e.g. the democratic and welfare system, respect of human rights, calm and safe life, etc. Some mentioned even the respect of Arabic speakers’ culture and religion, which was contested by other participants.
- The bond to the CO seems to be anchored in both the beginning and the end of individuals’ lives. Reference to CO as the place where they had been born and raised, where their families live today. etc., i.e. the formative years. Some participants underlined that they wanted to die in their country of origin and that many migrants they know want to be buried there.
- Most participants do not see a return to the CO as a realistic alternative.
- Stories of “failed returns”.
- Awareness that their children and grandchildren will not have the same sense of belonging to the CO as they have.

3.2 IDENTIFY: TRANSNATIONAL BELONGING

A sense of belonging to a transnational Arabic community was both asserted, rejected and ambivalently felt across the focus group discussions. For some SFGPs, this belonging was based on a political analysis, as they stressed a shared sense of oppression among Arabic countries, while other participant viewed the common language and history as the ground for Arabic unity, although he questioned whether this unity actually existed.

Problematic sides of being, or being seen as, an Arab were brought up by two women. On the one hand, a SFGP referred to the ascribed ‘terrorist’ identity which is increasingly being attached to the Arab identity, on the other hand, a SFGP in the youngest group stated her ambivalence to one aspect of Arabness: the norms that young women are expected to respect.

This identification with the pan-Arabic community seems to be sustained almost exclusively through media practices and personal relationships, as the SFGPs expressing this sense of belonging reported that it was not supported by participation in pan-Arabic organizations or activities.
3.3 CIVIC BELONGING

The focus group discussions of notions of citizenship showed a high degree of civic literacy and reflexivity on the part of participants as they extensively compared citizenship regimes and regulations in different countries and also reflected upon the state’s, society’s and their own responsibilities for integration.

Although a number of broad notions of citizenship appear in the material as widely shared across the groups, in other cases no single ‘average’ understanding of these concepts emerges from either the material as a whole or the different groups. In these cases I have tried to give a sense of the variety of views that were expressed.

As already mentioned, FGPs, especially in the two oldest groups, expressed a strong identification with their countries of origin. Most of them stated also that they felt as Swedes as well, while a few (e.g. in the female middle-age group) declared that they never would feel as a Swede. But even the latter saw themselves as citizens of Sweden.

In comparison with the identification with the CO, the sense of belonging to Sweden is expressed in more reasoned terms, stressing for example the experienced advantages of the Swedish society and a wish to contribute to society and thus ‘pay back’ for having received a shelter in the country.

In most of the cases, also, the strong identification with the country of origin doesn’t seem to hinder a identification as (Swedish) citizen. A few women in the oldest and youngest groups rejected identifications in terms of national cultures, asserting instead their belonging to a community of peers (people with whom they share values and concerns).

In some cases the FGPs (female youngest and middle age groups) accounted for ascribed identities (as a stranger, a non-Swede) which hamper a full identification as a Swede.

On the whole, formal citizenship was understood not only as a set of rights and obligations, but also as a status allowing the FGPs to live in a democratic and egalitarian society. Some also stated that Swedish citizenship is easier to obtain in contrast with several Arabic countries.

Dual citizenship was especially mentioned in the oldest male group, where several FGPs expressed great appreciation of it, underlining that this possibility does not exist in many other countries, and especially valuing the freedom of choice that wishful citizens are given today (having one or two citizenships).

A sense of European civic belonging appears considerably more weakly and was mainly related to the right of vote in European elections, as the outcome of these is assumed to influence the politics of the Union on matters such as the environment and relations with Arabic countries. Participating in the European elections was thus construed as a way of influencing global politics.

Working, paying taxes, learning Swedish and respecting the law were considered aspects of integration, which was regarded as a reciprocal process and defined as adapting to, or as taking from, Swedish culture, without giving up one’s own. However, discrepancies between what the law stipulates and demands, and what society expects from immigrants were underlined.

FGPs expressed great ambivalence in relation to matters of inclusion and exclusion. They appreciated the legal system which ensures the equality of all before the law, but reported also a series of instances of discrimination, and while some saw Sweden as a multicultural society, another participant sensed this statement as ‘wishful thinking’. Views on this matter differed widely in the oldest male group. While some argued that children are given teaching in Arabic and that mosques are allowed and receive state funding,
others brought up the existence of racism. Group rights were discussed but not advocated, as FGPs stated their alignment with Swedish law and their preference for cultural integration rather than legislation, while underling that Swedish law allows the practice of Islam.

In the middle age female group, some of the FGPs accounted for a way of life which shows broad similarities with what in theory has been labeled as the weak version of multiculturalism (Grillo 2007), which allows for difference in the private realm while assimilation is expected in more public areas of life. These women accounted for their living different lives in different human environments.

Several respondents in different age groups felt respected when they practiced their religion (prayers, wearing the hijab), while a male in the oldest group believed that inclusion was conditioned: when arriving at the refugee camp you have to pass a sort of "exam": Are you a terrorist? How many wives do you have?

When it comes to the labor market, abundant examples of exclusion/felt discrimination were given across the groups, but it was also noted that not getting a job is not always a matter of discrimination, and that a preference for those born in the country is also usual in the FGPs’ countries of origin. Discrimination on the labor market was also qualified in the sense that it varies across institutions and specific decision-makers.

Exclusion was also felt in the context of everyday life exchanges with acquaintances, on the street or in the supermarket, where e.g. comments on FGPs’ accent or proficiency in Swedish were experienced as marking them as outsiders.
4. MEDIA USE, IDENTITY AND CIVIC BELONGING

Transnational subjects as news media users have been conceptualized in previous research as sharing a number of traits:

- specific ‘cultural-geographic orientation’
- dual or multiple senses of belonging (no necessarily in conflict)
- a marked ‘dispersal of news sources’ and usually television as main news medium
- a critical stance toward the priorities of PSB in countries of settlement (CS), wish e.g. more robust global news and a less strong national filter (Carøe Christiansen 2004).

The analysis of the Swedish focus group discussions clearly supports this characterization.

National identities remain powerful, as Tomlinson (2004) notes, even in the era of globalization, due to their institutionalization in social life in the modern era. Thus, no matter the challenges that the multi-ethnic make-up of contemporary societies poses to the hegemony of the national state, national identities continue to reproduce as the result of “deliberate cultural construction” (Tomlinson 2004: 25) via regulation and socialization (e.g., legislation, educational system, media). The media, especially television, play an important role in this respect, as they continuously offer to audiences a myriad of national/cultural identity positions such as ‘Arab’, ‘Swede’, ‘Iraqi’, ‘immigrant’. The orientation of participants toward these positions as expressed in the focus group discussions constitute one of the foci of the following analysis.

In the analysis below FGPs’ assessments of their media practices and the channels they watch are interpreted in the light of their senses of identity and civic belonging, showing that the latter do not always influence media choices in any direct way.

4.1 COUNTRY OF ORIGIN CHANNELS

- Arabic channels in general are watched for keeping in touch with the CO and for obtaining news and entertainment.
- However, channels of the CO do not have any prominent presence in the identified media worlds of participants.
- In some cases, this is due to the lack of access to these channels.
- In other cases, the absence of preference for these channels seems to depend on participants’ evaluations of their performance.
- Some Arabic speakers in the youngest male group reported not having any special bond to these channels and a few of them said that they filled a particular need, that of alleviating their longing for the country.
- They did though not see the channels of the CO as reliable news sources because they are state-controlled. This critique of the CO channels expresses a rejection of the identity position ‘subject of an authoritarian regime’ offered by the channels.
• Thus, in this case, the bond to the CO, which was the most strongly expressed in the focus groups, does not influence the choice of news source in any direct way.

4.2 TRANSNATIONAL ARABIC CHANNELS

• The sense of belonging to the CO appeared as strongest among the middle-aged and oldest groups, but it does not seem to influence these groups’ channel choices to any remarkable extent, as these groups tend to prefer transnational, mainly pan-Arabic channels.

• Transnational, mainly pan-Arabic channels are prioritized by most participants, even though the sense of belonging to a pan-Arabic community appears as a more diffuse and contested bond than the one to the CO.

• Although there was no unambiguously positive assessment of the transnational channels, they were appreciated and watched by most participants.

• In relation to these channels, participants oscillate between acceptance and rejection of the identities on offer depending on political allegiances, country of birth, etc.

4.3 SWEDISH CHANNELS

• Many participants believed that these channels provide biased and one-sided coverage of the Arabic community in Sweden and of Arabic countries.

• At the same time, several of them mentioned good examples of programs and even whole genres in the public service television.

• In assessing the Swedish channels this way, participants are rejecting the identity position of the Arab migrant as ‘problem’ or threat’ and the macro-position of Arabs/Muslims in the world as ‘threat’.

• Participants nevertheless watch these channels out of a sense of civic belonging and participation (the need to keep in touch with events and debates, etc.)
5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This report has summarized the main results from WP3 (the focus group study) and WP4 (the Citizenship and Identity-study). In doing so, I have drawn on previous deliverables (mainly D. 11, 13, 15-16, 17 and 19) and further developed the interpretation of earlier results.

Television clearly appears as participants’ preferred medium, tightly followed by the internet. Preference for the latter was reported in all age groups, including the oldest. Although FGPs in all groups watch both transnational, country of origin and Swedish channels, each one combines the channels in specific patterns, which I have designated as ‘media worlds’, fitting individuals’ informational and entertainment needs. Four main media worlds were identified in the analysis: the transnational media world, the transnational/Swedish media world, the transnational/country of origin media world, and the Swedish media world. From the make-up of these media worlds it can be seen that transnational channels are the most watched ones, while the channels of the CO are those which appear most seldom among participants’ preferred channels. It has to be noted that these media worlds do not constitute mutually exclusive categories, as those chiefly watching transnational channels may also watch Swedish or CO channels. Also, importantly, media worlds are not static, they change over time depending on factors such as specific changes in participants’ living conditions, channel and technology availability, etc.

In assessing the performance of different channels, participants showed a high level of media literacy: they were clearly aware of what the different national and transnational outlets offer, and evaluated this output with regard to both content and style while also explaining the reasons for their preferences and accounting for the ways in which different channels (and even other media) fitted with and complemented each other within their overall patterns of media use. Many FGPs stated that they believed that all media, whether in the Arab or the Western world, are driven by different kinds of interests. They also recounted that they therefore watched different channels and compared the news.

Assessments of different outlets were shaped by participants’ knowledge and experience of Arabic- and Swedish-language media, and by political, and in a few cases, even religious arguments.

Arabic language television was criticized because of its perceived overall workings and its partiality. On the other hand, individual SFGPs praised different specific channels for their perceived merits. CO channels were in some cases explicitly rejected and sensed as unreliable news sources, but credited nonetheless for fulfilling emotional needs (e.g., viewing the streets and landscapes from ‘home’).

Swedish channels, in turn, were criticized. Their coverage of the Arabic community in Sweden was seen as scarce and problem-centred, and their news on the Arab world were seen as scarce and fragmented by some SFGPs, while others stressed the merits of journalistic investigative programs and the usefulness of watching these channels to keep in touch with Swedish debates.

The most strongly expressed sense of belonging was the one to the CO. This appears across all age groups, no matter whether participants also regarded themselves as Swedes or not. CO were though not idealized. In contrast, a belonging to a transnational Arabic community was felt much more ambivalently: it was both asserted and rejected. This identification with the pan-Arabic community seems to be sustained almost exclusively through media practices and personal relationships, as the SFGPs expressing this sense of belonging reported that it was not supported by participation in pan-Arabic organizations or activities.
When notions of citizenship were discussed, participants showed a high degree of civic literacy and reflexivity as they extensively assessed citizenship regimes and regulations in different countries against each other and also reflected upon the state’s, society’s and migrants’ responsibilities for integration.

Although the identification with the CO was the one which appeared most strongly, most SFGPs also expressed that they felt as Swedes as well, and a few declared that they would never feel as a Swede. But even the latter saw themselves as citizens of Sweden.

In comparison with the identification with the CO, the sense of belonging to Sweden is expressed in more reasoned terms, stressing for example the experienced advantages of the Swedish society and a wish to contribute to society and thus ‘pay back’ a debt of gratitude for having received a shelter in the country. Some participants accounted for ascribed identities (as a stranger, a non-Swede) which hamper a full identification as a Swede.

A sense of European civic belonging appears considerably more weakly and was mainly related to the right of vote in European elections, as the outcome of these is assumed to influence the politics of the Union and thus global politics as well.

FGPs expressed great ambivalence in relation to matters of inclusion and exclusion. They appreciated the legal system which ensures the equality of all before the law, but reported also a series of instances of discrimination, and views differed as to whether Sweden is a multicultural society. Abundant examples of exclusion/felt discrimination in the labor market were given across the groups, but it was also noted that not getting a job is not always a matter of discrimination, and that a preference for those born in the country is also usual in the FGPs’ countries of origin. Discrimination on the labor market was also qualified in the sense that it varies across institutions and specific decision-makers.

One of the most salient findings of the research as a whole is the complexity that emerges from the analyses of the ways in which experienced belongings relate to media choices and patterns of media use. This relationship may be plain and direct in some cases, e.g., when participants’ original nationality and geo-cultural orientation leads to the choice of Arabic-language media and channels conveying abundant information about CO. In other cases, however, the information provided by state-controlled channels from these countries is clearly rejected as unreliable, and the identity positions on offer (as ‘subject of an authoritarian regime’) are concomitantly turned down, despite the strong identification with the CO, as participants only use these channels for satisfying emotional needs. In a similar way, most SFGPs are very critical of Swedish channels, which they nevertheless watch in order to keep in touch with events and debates, out of a need of civic participation, but they clearly reject the identity position as ‘problem’ or ‘threat’. Finally, participants’ preferred transnational channels even though the identification with the broader, pan-Arabic community appeared in the discussions as diffuse and contested in comparison with the strong identification expressed toward the CO.
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