

## Digital refugees? Displaced youth's lives in and against the digital border

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### Abstract

This presentation examines teenage refugees' engagement with digital technologies in the context of precarity, temporariness and racism in European cities. Specifically, the presentation will discuss how young refugees, especially those who are living under extremely unstable conditions, use digital technologies to ground themselves in symbolic and territorial urban spaces of hostility, exclusion but also solidarity. For most, digital media constantly remind them of the conditionality of their settlement and recognition in Europe – of the power of the digital border. For many, digital media become translators of the rules of engagement – reminders of the requirements of the digital border. And for some, they become technologies of self-making and resistance – evidence of the fragility of the digital border. Drawing on a multimethod qualitative study conducted in London and Athens with 63 young refugees of different background, the study that is presented illustrates how many of them use communication technologies to manage transnational lives, often in contexts of perpetual change, heightened vulnerability and continuous uncertainty for the future. Findings in the context of the interviews and asset mapping workshops conducted within the EC-funded ySkills project reveal that young refugees precariously balance digital risks and opportunities as they rebuild lives away from their original homeland but under conditions of perpetual surveillance. The presentation will more specifically show how digital technologies frame their lives in three ways: regulating connections locally, nationally and transnationally; mediating experiences before, during and after their uprooting; and managing literacies, these being digital, political and educational. Analyzing the significance of connectivity in young refugees' lives, the research reveals the radical yet bounded possibilities that these technologies present in supporting and limiting displaced youth's wellbeing and hopes of rebuilding lives of opportunity and dignity.

### Biography

**Myria Georgiou** is Professor in Media and Communications at the LSE. She researches and teaches on migration and urbanization in the context of intensified mediation. Adopting comparative and interdisciplinary approaches, she studies communication practices and media representations that profoundly, but unevenly, shape meanings and experiences of citizenship and identity. She is the (co-)author and (co-)editor of six books including *Diaspora, Identity and*

*the Media* (Hampton 2006), *Media and the City* (2013) and *The Digital Border* (2022, with L. Chouliaraki).