

Sesame Street:
Your Childhood Neighborhood Localized Throughout Europe

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Abstract

Over the past five decades the Children's Television Workshop (CTW), now Sesame Workshop, has developed international co-productions based on the model used in the American educational children's television series, *Sesame Street*. The use of American production conventions including Muppet style puppetry, cartoon segments, musical numbers, and a set of core universal children's values embedded within the organizational mission statement are used in tandem with local cultural and regional features based on the relevant needs of the individual country that it is produced in. This study evaluates the individual CTW/Sesame Workshop co-productions in the countries of Germany, Norway, and Kosovo, in order to offer a diverse selection of the different successes and strategies utilized in development and production. This study focuses on the similarities in the educational content; leading characters; use of musical elements; use of guest performers; use and type of Muppet puppets; cartoon segments, and amount of in-country and out-of-country developed content. These case studies act as tools to examine the country specific materials used to accommodate the needs and values embedded within each society. By examining how each program has developed, adapted, localized, and where the future of their programming lies within their country-specific context, a comparative model can begin to be developed. In turn, associations between the localization strategies will be made in order to begin correlations in the hope of defining a metric system that will evaluate the success of the Sesame programming, specifically their co-productions.

Keywords: Sesame Street, Co-Production, Localization

1. Introduction

Shortly after *Sesame Street* debuted on the United States' National Educational Television (NET) network in 1969, international production teams and educational experts from around the world, including Brazil, Canada, Germany and Mexico approached the Children's Television Workshop (CTW) to use the Sesame model for creation of localized country specific adaptations of *Sesame Street* programming for the children of their nations.¹ Europe began to utilize the Sesame model and adapt it as their own approximately one year after the US premiere in the early seventies when Sesame researcher and producer, Dr. Lewis Bernstein, began negotiations with German public television network producers on what would eventually become *Sesamstraße*.² Shortly after, the model was applied to the Netherlands' production of *Sesamstraat* in 1976 and then in France's production of *Rue Sésame* in 1978.³ CTW celebrated ten years of a European presence by introducing *Barrio Sésamo* to Spain in 1979 with other productions in Norway, Portugal, Sweden, and Turkey to become successful entities in the decades to come.⁴ In response to the demand for Sesame programming Joan Ganz Cooney, Founder, stated, "[The Children's Television Workshop] thought the Muppets were quintessentially American, and it turns out they're the most international characters ever created".⁵ The facts presented in Cooney's epiphany is what makes the localization of CTW and

Sesame Workshop co-productions unique and relevant when examining country-specific educational programming. These comments raise an issue as to how each production is localized if the *Sesame Street* model is largely country-specific. For large regions, like Europe, it is feasible that the development and production of their country-specific material bears major similarities to one another. By examining three unique Sesame co-productions, Germany's *Sesamstraße*; Norway's *Sesam Stasjon*; and Kosovo's dual production of *Rruga Sesam* and *Ulica Sezam*, one can see how localized values are more regional and even universal in nature, thus establishing a series of universal values embedded within children's media.

Each Sesame co-production uniquely links itself to its locale while acknowledging the wider world through previously used conventions.⁶ As Lemish points out in her study, "localization already incorporates trends of globalization," which, for Sesame, encompasses the Muppets, any Sesame library cartoons or segments dubbed into the country-specific language, and the training used for programming.⁷ The differences between the use of these conventions are what Sesame Workshop Vice President Nadine Zylstra believes are country specific needs. Zylstra stated, "[The] research model is applied based on the educational need of each country, which in turn helps to determine our development process. Each curriculum is determined through a series of seminars, which define the educational objectives that in turn informs the formal research and the production itself".⁸ In this way, Sesame Workshop Assistant Vice President of Publicity, Beatrice Chow, explains that the conventions exist as guidelines by saying that, "Each co-production is developed with a lot of collaboration between [the] staff in New York and [the] local expert partners within a given country. In many ways, the Workshop provides the kitchen that allows each country the opportunity to decide what to cook".⁹ When developing a production, each country determines its own needs alongside of the US-based team.¹⁰ Sesame Workshop International Producer Estee Bardanashvili stated that, "The magic of Sesame [productions] is seeing what is important and relevant to each country and making content unique to its culture".¹¹ Bardanashvili continued by saying that, "Each co-production is at a different stage in their development and progress. Where some co-productions, like *Sesamstraße*, have been established for quite some time there are other co-productions that are still learning how to use the Sesame humor and style".¹²

2. 44+ Years of Learning on the World's Longest Street

The idea for *Sesame Street* programming stemmed from studies run by the Carnegie Corporation of New York examining the effective use of television programming in elementary education.¹³ Former Chief Executive Officer and Sesame Workshop President, Gary Knell, stated that, "[Their] mission [was] to create innovative, engaging content that maximizes the educational power of media to help children reach their highest potential".¹⁴ Forty-three years following the first broadcast *Sesame Street* has garnered an estimated 74 million American "graduates" with roughly 8 million viewers per week.¹⁵ This begs the question as to the secret of the program's success. The format of the program centers around a style of puppets created by Jim Henson and a neighborly cast of human characters living within a culturally relevant area, often reflecting of the country-specific diversity and proffering a level of acceptance regardless of race, religion, sex, ethnicity, physical ability, mental ability, or creed.¹⁶ This same model has been utilized, at least to some degree, when the CTW or Sesame Workshop has worked to develop a co-production. In this way Beatrice Chow recognizes that the "essence of [Sesame Workshop's] work and mission is [to foster] the love of learning," but also that, "the goal of each program is to encourage and continue...serving the kids of each country based on their needs".¹⁷ Bardanashvili explains that, "[The workshop's] research methods for forming these co-productions are determined by examining the educational objectives and cultural sensitivities of each country, alongside of our country-specific experts, which helps [them] to become more aware when building curriculum objectives and creative workshops".¹⁸ These individualized missions in mind, a Sesame co-production is typically comprised of both locally produced content and what is considered a library clip, which is pulled from the Sesame Workshop archives to be redubbed or even re-filmed using a country's specific Muppets.¹⁹ In order to fill these country-specific needs, Sesame must tailor each program.²⁰ Pulling from library footage, co-productions will typically start out making about 30 percent of their own content and slowly graduating towards 50 percent of their own content, with the hopes of attaining around 70 percent, as exemplified by *Sesamstraße* in Germany.²¹ The Workshop staff also makes it clear that they do not go into a country and just create programming.²² Chow stated that, "Training international partners happens both in the home country and here in New York. There are at least a couple of back-and-forth flights. Through that and a continuation of workshops, the co-productions are trained to be Sesame experts. However, after the New York staff has trained a given country, they can then go on and train another Sesame co-production in another country. For example, our South African team runs workshops for the Nigerian team, since the two are geographically closer and South Africa has been successfully established for so long".²³ To that end, Bardanashvili continued by saying that, "If there is a need, the Workshop will fill it through

training. If they need a Muppet workshop, for example, the production team will do what is needed to make it look and feel right. Sesame Workshop strives for an in person essence when working with our co-productions. The staff doesn't just hand them a Sesame Street playbook or a guide to the Muppets".²⁴

For many at Sesame Workshop, this unconventional modeling has been viewed as successful as Nadine Zylstra believing that, "[e]ach country has its own edge. The Workshop tries to give each co-production an identity that is uniquely its own".²⁵ Zylstra continued by saying, "While each co-production needs good content for a strong show, the Workshop constantly asks how the programming fits into a larger context and how will it change children's lives. It can be hard to build programming that is globally competitive. Is the content always good in the beginning? No, but the Workshop does not dictate how the programs are created and run. That is what makes Sesame special".²⁶ Other Sesame Workshop staff like Global Education Director, Jorge Baxter, echoed this struggle when he said, "Something Sesame struggles with how to remain sustainable and relevant in ten years. Where is the equitability coming from? There needs to be enough growth to make an impact. Short terms goals are OK but our intention is to grow our reach. With co-productions like those in China, Brazil, and South Africa, the Workshop looks for unique elements and, of course, play to be successful".²⁷

Through these precedents, concerns and efforts, Sesame Workshop has been able to reach children all over the globe vis-à-vis 155 different countries, with programs spanning from full out co-productions to dubbed versions of United States past programming.²⁸ Dr. Charlotte Cole stated that five different European nations were considered to be full co-productions in Europe: Denmark's *Sesamgade*, France's *Rue Sésame*, Germany's *Sesamstraße*, the Netherlands' *Sesamstraat*, Northern Ireland's *Sesame Tree*, and Spain's *Barrio Sésamo*.²⁹ As a production is being formed, studies are done to determine the program's effectiveness and reach. Cohen explained that within the Sesame model, there are both formative and summative research efforts being taken to ensure the quality of the programming.³⁰ From an international standpoint, studies have been conducted to determine the effectiveness of co-productions in specific nations such as Mexico in 1974, Turkey in 1990, Portugal in 1993, and Russia in 1998.³¹ The consensus drawn from these studies was that children who viewed the Sesame programming often gained basic skills faster through viewing.³² However, there have been cases in nations like Norway, where a co-production is developed and successfully running but is eventually pulled off the air. In those cases, Chow explains that, "Even though there are Sesame productions that are no longer being produced, it doesn't mean that the educational message or their true value wasn't achieved. Sometimes there is just a lack of funding to continue to make new episodes. However, they will often run re-runs of the episodes made for that country. On the other hand, some countries will use our global Sesame program, *3-2-1 Let's Go!*, as their gateway to Sesame material. It all depends on the needs of the country at the given time".³³ Bearing this in mind, one can look to the various co-productions in Germany and Norway, as well as the budding Kosovo initiative featuring both Albanian and Serbian programming and see where they display similar characteristics through the Sesame model or otherwise and where they display elements that make them wholly unique in and of themselves. When examining Germany's *Sesamstraße*, one can see that it is both a product of the Sesame Workshop, as well as an entity that is German through and through.

3. Germany: *Sesamstraße*

Sesamstraße began full out development and production following a series of test episodes, which ran in 1972.³⁴ The show premiered on January 8, 1973 through the Norddeutscher Rundfunk (NDR) network with resounding success.³⁵ During the first three seasons of *Sesamstraße* programming, material was largely dubbed cartoons and other segments from the United States, making it more closely resemble today's 30-70 model of content.³⁶ This quickly shifted in 1977 following the initial success with viewership when Studio Hamburg sought to further the German program by building its own version of the street to debut in 1978.³⁷ Over time, the *Sesamstraße* production team would introduce local characters like Samson the Bear and Tiffy the Bird, national animals of significance, that were used to replace the American entities of Big Bird (Bibo) and Oscar the Grouch (Oskar der Griesgram) as main characters. Other local German Muppets would be brought on over the next three decades including Finchen the Snail, Rumpel the Grouch, Wolle the Sheep, Pferd the Horse, and Wolf to accompany the growing amount of integrated local street content.³⁸ Other segments like the Bumfidel segments, featuring the silly antics of a young boy and the lessons to be learned from his Mother, would be added as experiments to try and lessen the use of the American library clips.³⁹ The question over Americanized identities is also brought into question in this regard. Germany both uses and sees Bert and Ernie, the much loved American Muppets, as their own whereas the initial implementation of the commercially successful Elmo, known to the US as a three year old red Muppet, was rewritten as a five to six-year-old to better suit the needs of the German viewing audience.⁴⁰ *Sesamstraße* targets both

an older audience and German culture, making the new implementation of five to six-year-old Elmo that acts as the announcer for new segments more culturally relevant and successful than his American toddler counterpart.⁴¹

Since the implementation of Muppets is a culturally dependent process, the Sesame Workshop *Sesamstraße* team collaborated with NDR in a decision to split the *Sesamstraße* programming to better target dominant age groups for the programming, both ages three to five and ages six to eight.⁴² They accomplished this by releasing a new *Sesamstraße* spin-off series in 2010, *Eine Möhre Für Zwei* (*A Carrot for Two*) in which local Muppets Wolle and Pferd face real-world problems, resembling the issues that six to eight year olds face, inside of their carrot-house forcing them to venture into the outside world for assistance (Hermesmeyer 2013). This spin-off series runs about twelve minutes in the evening block of programming, which contrasts the recurrent and longer *Sesamstraße* magazine segment, which runs in the morning block.⁴³ *Sesamstraße* displays other conventions of the United States Sesame model especially in regard to human characters. Consistently human actors are paired up with new Muppets to work in tandem for the new program development.⁴⁴ That being said, however, these are local actors working with localized puppets, thus making only the principle idea the same but the execution of the product vastly different. Understanding their use of American conventions, *Sesamstraße* exemplifies following the progression of usage percent of Sesame Street programming. Initially just dubbing *Sesame Street* programming into German, *Sesamstraße* has seen significant shifts in their programming from creating roughly thirty percent of their content to fifty percent which ultimately led them to their current model in which American clips are only seen a few times per episode.⁴⁵ This accompanied the new style of episodic filming centered on their website versus the previously filmed segments based on the story framing aspect.⁴⁶ Perhaps most indicative of *Sesamstraße*'s progress is when they began shooting the program in high definition in 2008 and implementing their website as an integral portion of creating an actual "sesame street".⁴⁷ Similar to the American program, NDR has also created a series of "Bert and Ernie's Songs," in which the loveable Muppets sing a German super-star's recent hit with re-tooled lyrics to suit a social learning message.⁴⁸ While this convention has been successfully used in the United States, Germany has implemented a system in which these segments are used as interim commercials and block filling music videos in between other programming, thus giving the brand more presence among regular programming.⁴⁹

Now on its 40th season, Sesame Workshop Vice President of International Television Distribution, Renee Mascara relates that *Sesamstraße* is largely self-sufficient in the eyes of Sesame Workshop and is broadcast on a public radio and television broadcast, Norddeutscher Rundfunk (NDR), as well as the children's channel, KiKA, a joint venture of the German national public television channels of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (ARD) network and their constituent broadcasters.⁵⁰ In this way, *Sesamstraße* is linked to a license fee as the mature German market seeks to cover its production and residual costs.⁵¹ Mascara explains that, "In cases like Germany, the license fee covers multiple costs, such as library materials, newly built Muppets, training, etcetera".⁵² In a "mature market, like Germany" Mascara explains, "The Workshop has worked with NDR to ensure that the Sesame model is aligned with our mission to use the educational power of media to help children everywhere reach their highest potential. Another production, like Kosovo, is newer to the training process, so their goals will be different than Germany's".⁵³ This acts as the defining factor between both of the long-running ideologies of *Sesame Street* and *Sesamstraße*, as well as the different approaches to early childhood education between the United States and Germany. Where *Sesame Street* provides a heavy focus on cognitive learning skills including literacy and numeracy, *Sesamstraße* opts to center their programming on social and behavioral learning.⁵⁴ It is only in the most recent stages of planning development that creative producers have debated about implementing a "Word of the Day" segment.⁵⁵ This divide acts as the defining factor that separates the two long-standing programs and their different successes. However, each nation's use of national symbols and locally created curriculum and material is both striking and relevant when compared to another Sesame co-production, like that of Norway's *Sesam Stasjon*.

4. Norway: *Sesam Stasjon*

Sesam Stasjon, which translates to Sesame Station in English, was the localized Norwegian co-production of the Children's Television Workshop *Sesame Street*.⁵⁶ *Sesam Stasjon* was broadcast on the NRK network, Norway's national television channel, from 1987 to 2006.⁵⁷ Following the classic Sesame co-production model, Norway ran American *Sesame Street* segments and other library footage throughout their first few seasons.⁵⁸ From their beginning in 1987, however, the NRK network started to negotiate with the Children's Television Workshop about a possible Norwegian co-production. Two years later, an agreement would be reached through the production of *Sesam Stasjon* beginning in September of 1990.⁵⁹ In order to maintain the integrity and quality of the programming, both Kermit Love, the renowned puppet maker known for creating the Muppets, and a group of Puppeteers traveled

to Norway to offer the Norwegian staff guides, models, and workshops for both those making and handling the puppets.⁶⁰ This amount of collaborative preparation alongside of two years of negotiations allowed *Sesam Stasjon* to be warmly received by local Norwegians following its premiere debut in 1991.⁶¹

Unlike other international Sesame co-productions, the local team of experts working on *Sesam Stasjon* decided to set the universe of their plotline in a Norwegian railway station nearby to a local town versus setting it directly in a *Sesame Street* style neighborhood.⁶² The physical development of the exterior set was built around the Lørenskog train station, which was provided through collaboration with the NSB Norwegian Railroad.⁶³ Local architect Paul Due's original design of the railway station from 1901 would be modified to include an iconic tower and Muppet friendly access in August of 1991.⁶⁴ These modifications allowed for the inside of the station to be open to the public when the cast and crew were not in production, which in turn encouraged children and their parents to interact one-on-one with the set itself, creating a deeper bond to the production overall.⁶⁵ This access to the station was furthered when *Sesam Stasjon* would hold special live events featuring their live actors, a suited copy of their full-body puppet Max Mekker, as well as other walk-around copies of the *Sesam Stasjon* hand Muppets.⁶⁶

Though development and production of *Sesam Stasjon* was similarly as extensive as *Sesame Street* and *Sesamstraße*, the program was to be viewed differently than that of its American and German counterparts.⁶⁷ *Sesam Stasjon* intended to have continued viewership by formatting their program to look more like a mini-series versus episodic.⁶⁸ This format intended for those children viewing the program to tune in regularly so as not to miss details necessary to follow the plotline of the program. The primary and most noteworthy example of this production tool is when the Muppet, Alfa, enters a promotional contest with the hopes of her own television program being aired on a local network.⁶⁹ This would ultimately result in a typical episode of *Sesam Stasjon* to be split with roughly fifteen to twenty minutes of Norwegian programming and ten to fifteen minutes of American dubbed programming, hitting a 60/40 to 70/30 percent ratio of Norwegian content to American content.⁷⁰ The use of Muppets, a local railway station, and story-driven plot were furthered as the program continued to develop with the NRK network deciding to shoot episodes in which Alfa, a hand-operated Muppet, would be able to play with her friends. In order to accomplish this, actors in look-alike walk-around suits were created for the various clips.⁷¹ This increases in relevance as Norway adapted a Sesame standard of having local Muppet characters as primary focal points of their programming.

From the beginning of *Sesam Stasjon*, a loveable yellow female Muppet resident, named Alfa, was used as the primary character.⁷² Modeled in the same style of America's Big Bird and Germany's Samson the Bear, Norway introduced a large blue male Muppet named Max Mekker. Max Mekker is highly localized in that the word "mekker" in Norwegian directly translates into tinker or handyman, which is Max's given profession at the train station.⁷³ He also boasts the unique feature of speaking totally in rhyme.⁷⁴ Another loveable favorite was Bjarne, a pink male Muppet who operated the ticket booth at *Sesam Stasjon* and suffered from strong summer allergies.⁷⁵ The latest addition to the *Sesam Stasjon* cast was Py, a red Muppet with yellow hair who had hatched out of an egg, which arrived at the station.⁷⁶ The addition of Py to the cast was in direct response to the success of the Elmo character in the United States in that Py panders to the ages of three to five year olds, the same audience targeted by Elmo in the U.S..⁷⁷ This model would continue to drive success until its end in 2001.

From 1987 through 1998, *Sesam Stasjon* produced and aired 198 different episodes. *Sesam Stasjon* was discontinued after the NRK network opted to end production.⁷⁸ In a television interview Kalle Fürst, of the NRK Department of Children, explained that the network opted to end production due to a finite number of resources, loss of viewership and ratings, and a desire to develop new Norwegian children's programming.⁷⁹ Following this decision, the course of action had the NRK network pay a sizeable fee to the Children's Television Workshop in order to terminate their contractual agreement through 2006 early in 2001.⁸⁰ By 2003, the train station utilized for the program would be converted back to Paul Due's original design.⁸¹ While actual creation of programming ceased in 2001, episodic re-runs would continue to be shown until then end of 2004.⁸² In this way, *Sesam Stasjon* exemplifies what Chow meant by stating that, "Even though there are Sesame productions that are no longer being produced, it doesn't mean that the educational message or their true value wasn't achieved. Sometimes there is just a lack of funding to continue to make new episodes".⁸³ With programs like *Sesam Stasjon* that are no longer running, the Sesame Workshop is able to determine where it was successful and which areas need improvement from both a cultural and production point of view. The end of *Sesam Stasjon* and the various successes of *Sesame Street* and *Sesamstraße* are key determinants when creating initiatives like *Rruga Sesam* and *Ulica Sezam* in Kosovo.

5. Kosovo: *Rruga Sesam* and *Ulica Sezam*

As the Sesame Workshop staff works alongside of local educational and media experts to develop a Sesame program in Kosovo, an underlying message of peace is also in the works. Sesame Workshop producer, Basia Nikonorow, explains in the documentary *The World According to Sesame Street* that, “a Sesame project could aid in the peace process”.⁸⁴ Cultural and political tensions have surfaced as the Sesame Workshop staff try and find a way to combat instilling years of ethnic tension and violence in the children of Serbian and Albanian locals living in Kosovo.⁸⁵ Alongside of their local partners in Kosovo, Sesame Workshop has partnered with USAID to help fund the program.⁸⁶ As the Sesame Workshop developed the program, both Albanian and Serbian staffs were oftentimes put at odds with one another and in tense situations.⁸⁷ Producing the program brought about questions of ethnic tension over infinitesimal details such as whether the street sign logo should feature both the Albanian and Serbian titles for the show or keeping them as separate entities altogether.⁸⁸ Because of the separate cultures clashing within the nation, it was decided early on that no Muppets would be used until a more appropriate platform of potential use could be determined.⁸⁹ Instead, *Rruga Sesam* and *Ulica Sezam* utilizes existing segments from the international Sesame Workshop library, combined with local live action films as substitutive elements to the local Muppets.⁹⁰ The local live action films run about two-minutes long and showcase a glimpse into the lives of individual Kosovar children.⁹¹ This way, different backgrounds, cultures, ethnicities, and religions can be accurately displayed and exposed through the eyes of age-comparable children in Kosovo.⁹² Though steps have been taken towards creating a message of peace and harmonization in Kosovo, it has not been without its challenges.

During the initial planning stages, difficulties surged when the fragile peacetime for Kosovo was interrupted with resurgent ethnic violence leaving the producers and creative team hesitant and, in some cases, unable to continue with planning and production.⁹³ The Sesame producers began to face what could be considered an ultimate challenge in producing a children’s television program in a political warzone.⁹⁴ Even in this turmoil, however, Sesame Workshop was proud to allow Director Carol Leister to give their first annual update for the program stating that, “Season One of *Rruga Sesam* and *Ulica Sezam* has been dubbed into Albanian and Serbian and is being broadcast nationally in Kosovo on RTK, the public broadcaster. In addition, *Ulica Sezam*, the Serbian version, is broadcast on three regional stations, TV Here, TV Most and TV Puls...Season Two is currently in production and set to launch in October 2006”.⁹⁵ This development is encouraging as new outreach programs of the initiative are in the works. From 2005 to 2006, Sesame Workshop pared the *Rruga Sesam* and *Ulica Sezam* programming with UNICEF to help create and develop a series of children’s books in tandem with the storyline for local pre-schools.⁹⁶ It remains clear that, *Rruga Sesam* and *Ulica Sezam* have set a standard as the first co-production used as an educational media initiative of its kind to meet the wide age and educational gap amongst the children of Kosovo through localized content.⁹⁷ Robert Fuderich of UNICEF’s Head of Office in Kosovo stated that, “With *Rruga Sesam/Ulica Sezam*, [UNICEF and Sesame Workshop] aim to fill in the big educational gap at early ages ...Furthermore, the new season of Sesame Street will reinforce the message to children and parents from different ethnic communities in Kosovo that there are children ‘on the other side of the hill’ who speak a different language and have different cultural traditions and beliefs”.⁹⁸ It is in this way that *Rruga Sesam* and *Ulica Sezam* act as examples of both the Sesame Workshop mission and the potential for new localized programming for the twenty-first century worldwide.

6. Conclusion

Having examined the Sesame Workshop programming in the United States, Germany, Norway, and Kosovo it is clear that their initiatives exist to assist children throughout their nation, region (in this case Europe), and across the globe to acquire basic skills and tools to function within their society.⁹⁹ Though some programming has remained sporadic and, in some cases, came to an end due to contract difficulties, it is clear that each program strives to become locally successful. With the use of local artists, actors, educators, and production staff creating a street, train station, or other physical space that is unique to each given country with Muppets or filmed segments that are unique to each country, it is clear that each serves a purpose and has a place within their country’s given context. As Director of Global Education Jorge Baxter stated, “If a co-production is localized, it has a core of educational curriculum with a level of brand equity and trust that makes the wholesome brand from the country specific topics, to local celebrities, to Elmo”.¹⁰⁰ It should be noted that each program, while founded upon the same principle of educating children and fostering a love of learning, is unique in terms of its age range, its targeting tools, and its localized material. As Beatrice Chow stated, “The goal of the program is to encourage and continue to foster a love

of learning while serving the kids of each country based on their needs. Every message is given to fill a need".¹⁰¹ Here too, Sesame Workshop believes that the idea of Sesame programming is universal and can be implemented by training a country on the tools of the trade.¹⁰²

As each nation determines their own needs, their specific programming and proverbial to-do list will be set for development. It should also be noted that Sesame Workshop's mission is not one limited to the West. With that in mind, Estee Bardanashvili stated that, "The research methods for forming these co-productions are determined by examining the educational objectives and cultural sensitivities of each country, alongside of country-specific experts, which help us become more aware when building curriculum objectives and creative workshops".¹⁰³ That being said, it is clear too that there is no hard and fast rule for measuring the success of Sesame Workshop programming. Nadine Zylstra stated that, "The challenge is finding consistent metrics across countries. [The Workshop] defines each co-production's success on an individual basis".¹⁰⁴ It then becomes incumbent on people like Jorge Baxter to develop metric systems, which examine the synergies at regular global levels. Baxter stated that, "Some content must be easily applicable and universal. This universal messaging has a certain delivery, tone, and setting which can be applied locally, make an impact, and address a struggling issue. However, it must be locally situated in an effective way. Relevance is key".¹⁰⁵ While no formal universal metric systems are in place, Baxter and others at the Sesame Workshop look at key points like effectiveness, examining the educational benefits, reach, engagement, educational impact, organizational learning, and capacity building; and efficiency, both by human resources and funding to determine how successful they are in a given nation.¹⁰⁶ These metrics can be applied to universal values of tolerance, acceptance, and a love of learning shown in the Sesame programming studied here and, arguably, worldwide.¹⁰⁷

With this in mind, as the Sesame Workshop programming is expanded across Europe and the world at large familiar characters will grow and evolve to encompass a global mission: to speak different languages, reflect different cultures, all the while relaying *Sesame Street's* universal ideology of compassion, self-worth, and acceptance.¹⁰⁸ This being said, Sesame programming will fluctuate in and out of various nations depending on the need.¹⁰⁹ Though rooted in the American tradition of *Sesame Street*, different models are used in different nations to reach out and build mutual respect and understanding through educational programming. *Sesame Street* diplomacy was intended and does make a difference locally, domestically, and internationally.¹¹⁰ It is clear that these highly localized productions are successful in their own right, and while unable to be compared to anything else, will be largely defined by the changes made to their societies in the coming generations.

7. Acknowledgements

This author wishes to acknowledge the generous funding from the Dr. John C. Keshishiglou Center for Global Communications Innovation, the James B. Pendleton Foundation, and the Roy H. Park School of Communications' Department of Media Arts and Sciences at Ithaca College to both attend the National Conference of Undergraduate Research at the University of Wisconsin La-Crosse, research at the Sesame Workshop in New York, NY and at Norddeutscher Rundfunk in Hamburg, Germany.

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