



A study of the communication channels used by
migrants and asylum seekers in Italy,
with a particular focus on online and social media



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The present study provides a comprehensive analysis of the information and communication channels that migrants use upon their arrival in Italy, and which may help determine their secondary movements. The pages that follow present findings drawn from surveys and interviews and focus groups carried out in Italy with 686 migrants (including irregular migrants, asylum seekers, and migrants who qualified for refugee status, humanitarian protection or subsidiary protection) during the second half of 2017. These findings are followed by recommendations involving the development of more effective mechanisms for migration information dissemination and for awareness-raising campaigns for migrants within the context of the EU's Action Plan against Migrant Smuggling.

The study involved:

- The completion of **a survey** on the information and communication channels used by migrants along their migratory routes, with a special focus on the experiences related to their arrival in Italy and their secondary movements (i.e. journeys into other countries in Europe). For this purpose, research teams collected data pertinent to migrants' knowledge of Europe and Italy prior to their arrival to the continent. There was a special focus on the types of channels migrants trusted to receive and exchange information before and during their primary and secondary movements to and from Italy, and on the role of in-person and remote communications on their decisions to move.
- An **assessment** of the impact of social media and mobile applications (including the use of smart-phones), along with traditional information channels (e.g. face-to-face, word-of-mouth, diaspora, mass-communication mechanisms like radio, television and/or newspapers) on migratory patterns. For this the assessment identified:
 - the kinds of social media and mobile applications migrants used to obtain reliable information to engage in secondary movements;
 - the use of communication channels across gender and nationality;
 - whether and, if so, how online and telecommunication technologies influenced the evolution and the *modus operandi* of facilitators of irregular migration (i.e. migrant smugglers).
- An investigation into **the production and circulation of information** among migrants. For this special attention was paid to whether and if gender and nationality played a role in the production and circulation of information assessing. There were also careful assessments of the role of new and old channels of communication on migrant integration in host countries and in the maintenance of family ties and cultural identity. The mechanisms, strategies, and messages smugglers mobilise to market their services, and the social relevance of their activities within migrant communities were also recorded.
- The drafting of a series of **recommendations** seeking to provide insight and guidance on the design and development of contextualised migration information and awareness raising campaigns. With this in mind strategies to promote safe, legal and orderly migration are recommended. Furthermore insights are offered into how social media and other communication channels could improve the understanding of migration flows in real time.

Findings

- Italy is not a destination in migrants' minds. In fact, few migrants had planned for and many had not heard of Italy. Migrants' overall knowledge of Italy and Europe is, in fact, often limited and distorted: some had a better understanding of European countries than others, often through friends and families, including those in the diaspora.
- The decision to migrate cannot be traced to a single variable. Competing reasons appear simultaneously in the responses of those who were surveyed and interviewed. These included: socio-economic status, conflict, family issues, insecurity and the desire to improve one's life. Conditions in Libya were cited as a key trigger of migrants' decision to migrate. However neither Europe nor Italy were articulated as target destinations, but rather as locations far removed from the conditions in Libya.
- Smugglers do not sell specific destinations, rather they offer transportation services. Migrants do not perceive interactions with smugglers as being inherently negative. While many respondents describe tension and mistreatment, most were aware of the conditions related to clandestine journeys as a result of the prior legs of their migratory journeys, primarily to North Africa and the Middle East.
- Most migrants have no expectations concerning the countries in which they arrive – including Italy. Expectations begin to form following their initial contact with humanitarian staff and/or boat crews at the time of their rescue. Narratives concerning human rights, protection, and immigration relief are circulated by European actors themselves, rather than by smugglers, other migrants or diaspora members.
- The inability to work legally is the cause of significant anxiety among recently arrived migrants. For those who are the single providers for their households, and especially for those who have taken loans to cover parts of their journey, the inability to work to cover everyday expenses or smuggling fees is a frequent topic of conversation. Families often pay large fees upfront to cover travel expenses. Unable to make payments to pay off debt, relatives may lose mortgaged goods and/or real estate. The financial crises endured by families may in turn trigger additional migratory efforts.
- Racism and discrimination hinder the ability of migrants to integrate into Italian society. Even when in possession of documents guaranteeing the legal right to work, migrants often report being denied employment on the basis of their appearance, religion, or country of origin. These practices may also lead migrants to embark on secondary movements to locations they perceive as being less hostile and where the chances for integration seem clearer.
- Face-to-face and/or verbal interactions are preferred over all other forms of communication when it comes to making decisions pertaining to secondary movements. Migrants consult with friends and family members in their countries of origin and in the diaspora about their plans to move onwards from Italy, most often through ordinary phone calls. The use of apps for communication appears to be limited given the poor state of internet infrastructure in many of the migrants' countries of origin.
- Social media use is scant in planning secondary movements. Migrants' use of sites like Facebook indicates that while there is a degree of information sharing online, this does not include the information about secondary movements and/or their planning. Messages concerning the migratory journey in itself are quite limited—In fact, most images and messages involve, representations that seek to convey a sense of the migrant living leisurely and comfortably in Europe, even if this is distant from the truth.
- Migrants' communication with smugglers and/or those who could facilitate their journeys do not appear in "open" or public social media-based conversations – that is, those occurring in plain sight of all followers and/or friends. Rather, it appears that decisions to travel with individual facilitators or brokers are made

through personal interactions, direct phone calls, and text messaging via SMS and, when available, Whatsapp.

- The data collected showed that while ethnic and kinship networks are the source of vast amounts of information, these often involve wrong, inaccurate or incomplete facts. The dissemination of these faulty details often led migrants not to receive the assistance they would otherwise qualify for; to fall prey to scams and robbers; or to face exploitative and/or abusive situations. Shame and/or the fear of stigma may, in turn, lead many not to seek assistance or to remain hidden under conditions that perpetuate their vulnerability and risk.
- In sum, migrants face multiple challenges in Italy. Still, 70 percent of those surveyed indicated that they had no intention to leave the country. This suggests that many of them opt to remain undetected so as not to be removed, which pushes them deeper into conditions vulnerability - particularly to violence and/or exploitation. Twenty percent of surveyed migrants had no plans for the future (including moving to a secondary location) at the time of the interview, and only about 8 percent wanted to leave the country. Migrants indicated that the conditions in their countries of origin constitute the reason they are unlikely or willing to return.

Recommendations

a. The development of a grass roots initiative in Italy to involve community-based education that incorporates humanitarian staff into the diffusion of specific migration messages, but that simultaneously can provide real-time mechanisms for the collection of data on migrant decision-making processes.

Humanitarian staff and mediators working closely with migrants are their most trusted source of information, and can potentially constitute effective conduits of information. As an alternative to an online-platform (which would be rarely consulted by migrants), we propose relying on existing centres to carry out trainings on the challenges of the current migration system and that provide a thorough exploration of the options migrants can resort to in other locations – such as their countries of origin. These messages should be disseminated by the most trusted and reliable actors: the staff at humanitarian and reception centres.

DG Home **in collaboration with the staff at reception centres and civil society members working at informal settlements** could contribute to the facilitation of additional **targeted messages** concerning the need for safe, regular and orderly migration and the risks of irregular onward journeys. **These targeted messages can reduce the likelihood of migrants deciding to embark on secondary journeys. This strategy can be carried out relying on technology already available to migrants – e.g. their cell phones – which can be used to disseminate a single, common set of messages that can be developed with EU support and supervision.**

b. The creation of a communication strategy aimed at behavioural change that supplements data from social media with messages from trusted sources. Any strategies that emerge should take advantage of the existence of migrants' trusted sources in order to drive behavioural changes. Strategies that rely on personalised, small group, word-of-mouth communication are the most reliable forms of disseminating information. Harnessing the power of staff at reception centres will be a key aspect in the dissemination of any information conducive to generate change, as other mechanisms of communication like television, radio or newspapers have proven not to be sources of information consulted by migrants nor effective tools to engage with them.

Social media alone is not an effective way to communicate messages to migrants. Yet when combined with word-of-mouth communication from reliable sources, it strengthens the already existing ability of migrants to engage with information rationally and to make better informed choices. Further, if the information comes from well informed and documented sources, it will have the ability to counter the influence of poor, contradictory or erroneous information and/or sources of the kinds often accessed by or available to migrants.

c. Develop target group/specific initiatives. A review of the literature on migrant campaigns indicates that one of their shortcomings is their monolithic nature – that is, the fact that they assume most migrants have similar profiles and experiences that would be reflected in the messages circulated. This project revealed differences among migrants from different nationalities, but also differences within nationalities. Some migrants had friends and family members in their countries of origin or in the diaspora who could provide help or support, while others were often on their own and/or in some cases, consciously avoiding interactions with their families. In this sense, any messages at the core of any campaign must keep in mind different backgrounds and experiences.

d. Crafting a flexible, adaptable diaspora-specific campaign. Migrants rely on word of mouth information from other migrants and members of the diaspora, both in the country of arrival and potential secondary destinations. However, many times the information migrants obtain is erroneous, outdated, and leads migrants to lose legal benefits or protection. A campaign that recognises the strengths and contributions of the diaspora and provides it with clear, concise and accurate information that can be disseminated through short messages can have an impact on migrants' ability to secure improved ways to travel, to become better informed about the limitations or restrictions they may find upon their arrival to the destination country, and assist them in making a decision concerning their journey.

INTRODUCTION

The present study provides a comprehensive analysis of the information and communication channels that migrants use upon their arrival in Italy, and which may help determine their secondary movements. The pages that follow present findings drawn from surveys and interviews and focus groups carried out in Italy with 686 migrants (including irregular migrants, asylum seekers, and migrants who qualified for refugee status, humanitarian protection or subsidiary protection) during the second half of 2017. These findings are followed by recommendations involving the development of more effective mechanisms for migration information dissemination and for awareness-raising campaigns for migrants within the context of the EU's Action Plan against Migrant Smuggling.

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- The drafting of a series of **recommendations** seeking to provide insight and guidance on the design and development of contextualised migration information and awareness raising campaigns. With this in mind strategies to promote safe, legal and orderly migration are recommended. Furthermore insights are offered into how social media and other communication channels could improve the understanding of migration flows in real time.

The data collected highlight the diversity of the migrant population and its rapidly changing nature. For example, at the time of data collection, Bangladeshi and Tunisian migrants ranked at the top of the list of recent arrivals in Italy, a trend that was not

present at the time that the study was first proposed. The role of social media as a channel of communication also proved to be quite dynamic, as data began to show that the use of apps and online platforms varied among migrants: use was rather limited among some migrants, and almost non-existent among those who were nationals of countries where internet infrastructure was limited.

Anti-immigrant sentiment in Italy also meant that many migrants believed their possibilities for integration were limited: they either lacked authorisation to work legally or, even if in possession of documents guaranteeing them the right to work, reported often being denied employment opportunities on the basis of their appearance, religion, or country of origin. Migrants also indicated that education, while available, was not intended to incorporate them into the labour force. Furthermore, structural discrimination and the enduring heritage of racism further limited migrants' access to opportunities for advancement. Yet, rather than contemplating their return to their countries of origin, migrants opted to go deeper underground and enter the undeclared labour market, which often led them to face abusive employment and housing conditions.

These difficult experiences were not always communicated back to migrants' countries of origin. Part of this was the result of shame, but there was also the pressure many migrants felt to remain in-country to financially support their families. Facing an environment where their likelihood of securing stable employment is curtailed, but with notable pressure to deliver financially, migrants reluctantly opted to move into other cities, provinces or even countries, in order to fulfil the economic and social demands imposed on them. In the pages that follow, the report outlines the complexities of migrant life in Italy and the ways in which migrants communicate and make decisions concerning their movement.

Description of the population

Data was collected in five different regions in Italy through a quantitative survey carried out by a team of researchers at reception centres, informal settlements, and migrant transit locations. The data was supplemented through the completion of detailed ethnographic observations, accompanied by in-depth interviews and focus groups. This supplemental leg of fieldwork involved interactions with migrants, staff at humanitarian and/or reception centres, law enforcement, scholars, and ordinary citizens across Italy. A mixed-methods approach allowed to collect information on the state of migrants in Italy, and on the role social media in their secondary movements.

Fig. 1: Territorial distribution of interviews

Areas and typology of centres	Questionnaire interviews	In-depth interviews	Focus groups
Apulia, Province of Brindisi (CAS and SPRAR centres)	350	1	1
Apulia, Foggia (informal settlements)	100	2	1
Rome (transit centres)	50	5	1
Milan and Como (transit centres & informal settlements)	100	1	1
Ventimiglia (transit centres)	50	3	1
Total	650	12	5

Note: The total number of migrants participating in focus groups is 24.

A total of 686 migrants (including irregular migrants, asylum seekers, and migrants who qualified for refugee status, humanitarian protection or subsidiary protection) were interviewed during the second half of 2017. Figure 2 identifies them in terms of their migration status.

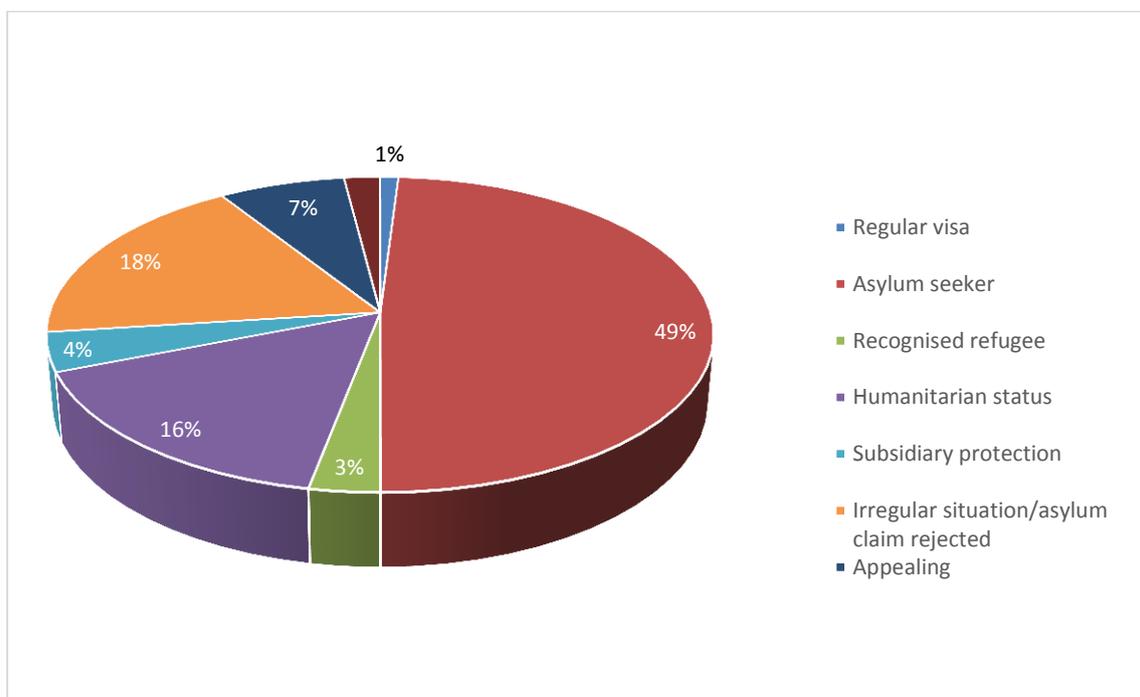


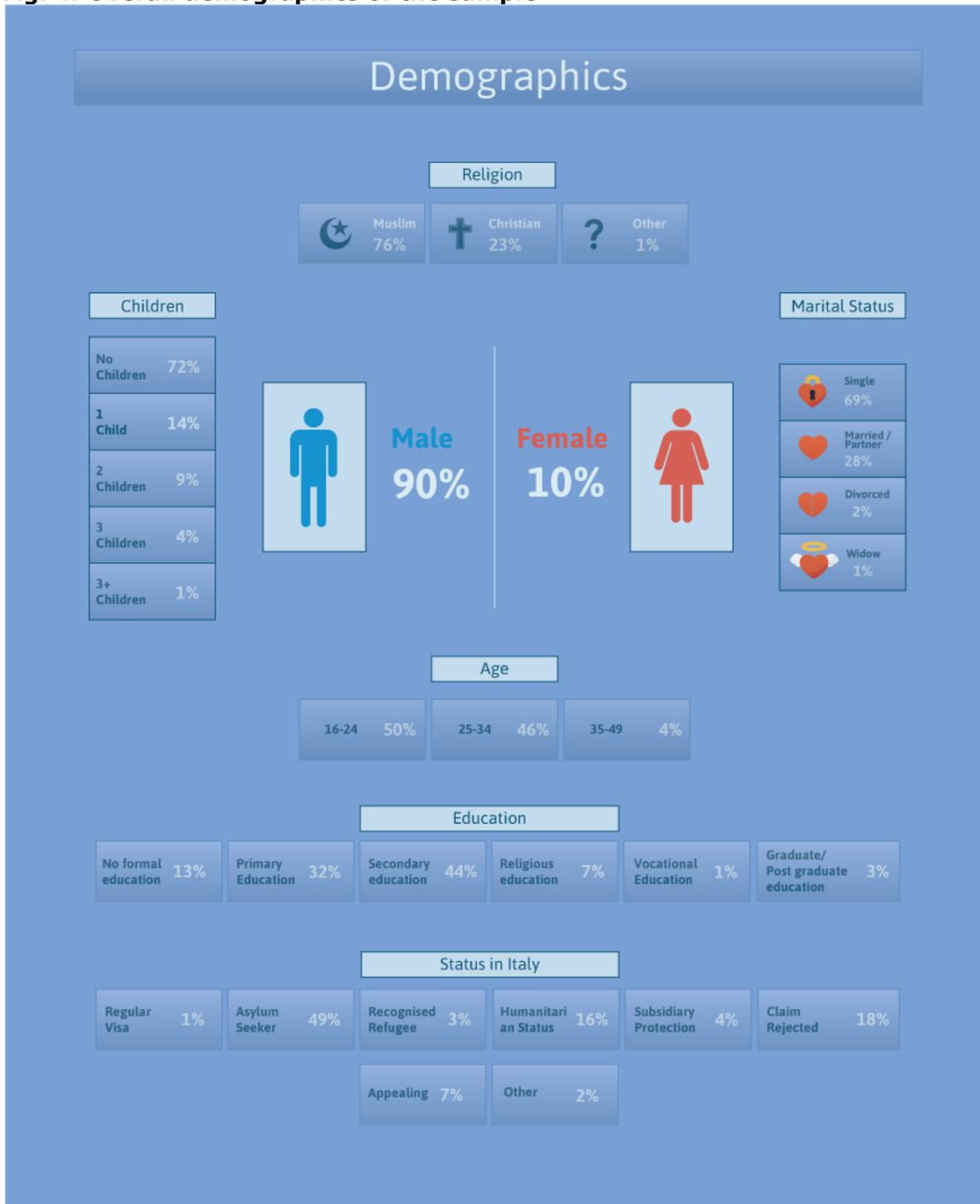
Fig. 2: Respondent's status in Italy

The design of the project called for the surveying of migrants from the top ranking migrant nationalities in Italy. Migrants were also required to have recently arrived to Italy. Only migrants who arrived in 2016 and 2017 were surveyed. Figure 3 outlines the breakdown of respondents' nationalities.

Fig. 3: Survey respondents by nationality

Rank	Origin country	Interviewees
1	Nigeria	90
2	Bangladesh	88
3	Gambia	85
4	Mali	60
5	Senegal	40
6	Cote D'Ivoire	33
7	Guinea	30
8	Eritrea	23
9	Ghana	22
10	Sudan	21
11	Others	158
<i>Total number</i>		<i>650</i>

Fig. 4: Overall demographics of the sample



Organisation of the Report

The report is divided into four sections.

Part I outlines the dynamics that precede the arrival of migrants to Italy.

Part II describes the experience of arrival in Italy, and how the conditions inherent in the Italian migration system shape the lives of migrants and eventually trigger their decisions to move to other locations within the country and elsewhere across Europe.

Part III describes the process of movement to other EU countries and the challenges migrants are likely to encounter.

Part IV outlines a social network analysis concerning the online communications of migrants, and what they reflect.

The last section includes recommendations for the development of more effective migration-related information dissemination strategies in the context of the EU's Action Plan against Migrant Smuggling.

PART I: DECISION MAKING PROCESSES

Introduction and context

Migrants reported multiple and complex factors as influencing their decision to leave their countries of origin. The survey indicates that 35 percent of respondents left their country of origin for economic reasons, while another 35 percent reported family disputes had led to their migration. However, when combined, 60 percent of all people interviewed refer to an overall lack of personal security (including conflict) and the accompanying need for protection had played a role in their migration.

In the sample, conditions in Libya were cited as pivotal in migrants' decisions to travel onward. While compounded by the individual circumstances that led to their first migration (i.e. the initial legs of their journey from their country of origin to a country different from their own) migrants arrive in Italy fleeing extreme insecurity in Libya and in an attempt to obtain protection. While migrants were prompt to describe the factors that triggered their decision to leave their countries of origin as a state of generalised precariousness, they systematically described Libya as a place of extreme danger. In surveys and interviews respondents indicated widespread insecurity, where ordinary people (migrants and citizens alike) constantly faced acts of violence by multiple actors. Most respondents indicated that, following the collapse of the Libyan regime, they had been able to retain a sense of normality that they lacked in their native countries. While references to wage theft and indentured labour were common, most respondents had also been able to remain employed in the informal sector or to receive in-kind compensation working for Libyan citizens or for members of their corresponding diasporas at carwashes, car shops, restaurants, etc. Several migrants expressed that they were also working for the smugglers who had brought them from their countries of origin, paying-off smuggling fees. In sum, although life in Libya was often difficult, many respondents had been able to earn a living, and to support their families back home.

Conditions, however, deteriorated rapidly as the result of the vacuum of political power in the country. Migrants attributed their growing sense of insecurity to the proliferation of criminals, militias and former-government actors organised in groups of different size and complexity engaged in criminal and violent acts. The violence had led to the closing of multiple businesses and loss of sources and places of informal employment. Migrants indicated that they were constantly harassed and victimised by groups of locals but also by members of their own diasporas. During focus groups for example, Bangladeshi migrants reported that Bangladeshis themselves were involved in the kidnapping of other Bangladeshis, profiled and/or identified as having families who could pay ransom fees.

In sum, while the deteriorating conditions in Libya proved one of the key factors in the decision to cross to Europe, most migrants did not have Europe in mind. Most of those interviewed had not considered the continent let alone Italy as a destination. In fact, it appeared that most migrants simply wanted to leave Libya as soon as possible for any available destination. That is what smuggling groups provided.

Migrants' Knowledge of Europe

Out of 650 respondents, only 178 or about 27 percent of all surveyed migrants had some knowledge of Europe. Among these respondents, Italy was the most commonly cited European country, identified by 67 percent of the people in the subsample. There was no indication that migrants had any awareness however of what arriving to Italy meant. In fact, even among those who were able to provide the name of a specific country, knowledge of its location and/or dynamics was scant. In fact, it appears that Italy merely constituted a destination out of the chaos in Libya. Smuggling brokers did

not appear to make any promises concerning arrival or conditions in specific destinations, and in most cases they limited themselves to provide transportation services. In other words, although smugglers mentioned “Europe” as part of their pitches to potential clients, migrants were simply hoping to reach a safe destination the moment they embarked on the boats out of Libya.

Fig. 5: Main destination countries of survey respondents who had some knowledge of Europe (n=178)



Note: the map shows the countries migrants wanted to reach at the time they left their country of origin.

Migrants lacked specific expectations about Italy. They also lacked knowledge pertaining to other European countries, including those they aimed to reach. During surveys and interviews, it was difficult for them to establish which country or countries they would have liked to reach once in Europe. Nationalities with the highest uncertainty about their final destination involved citizens from Mali (70 percent of the total), Senegal (70 percent) and Nigeria (67 percent). Moroccan migrants had a clearer sense of the country they wanted to reach – only 23 percent of them declared that they were travelling without any specific destination in mind.

Migrants who had friends or family members already living in Europe were more likely to identify a specific country. These responses were indicative of the presence of long-standing migration patterns and/or diaspora groups. For example, Nigerian and Bangladeshi migrants were more likely to identify Italy as a destination country, whereas among Moroccan and Malian migrants, France was identified as the favourite destination. Among Iraqis, meanwhile, Germany, the United Kingdom and Sweden ranked high.

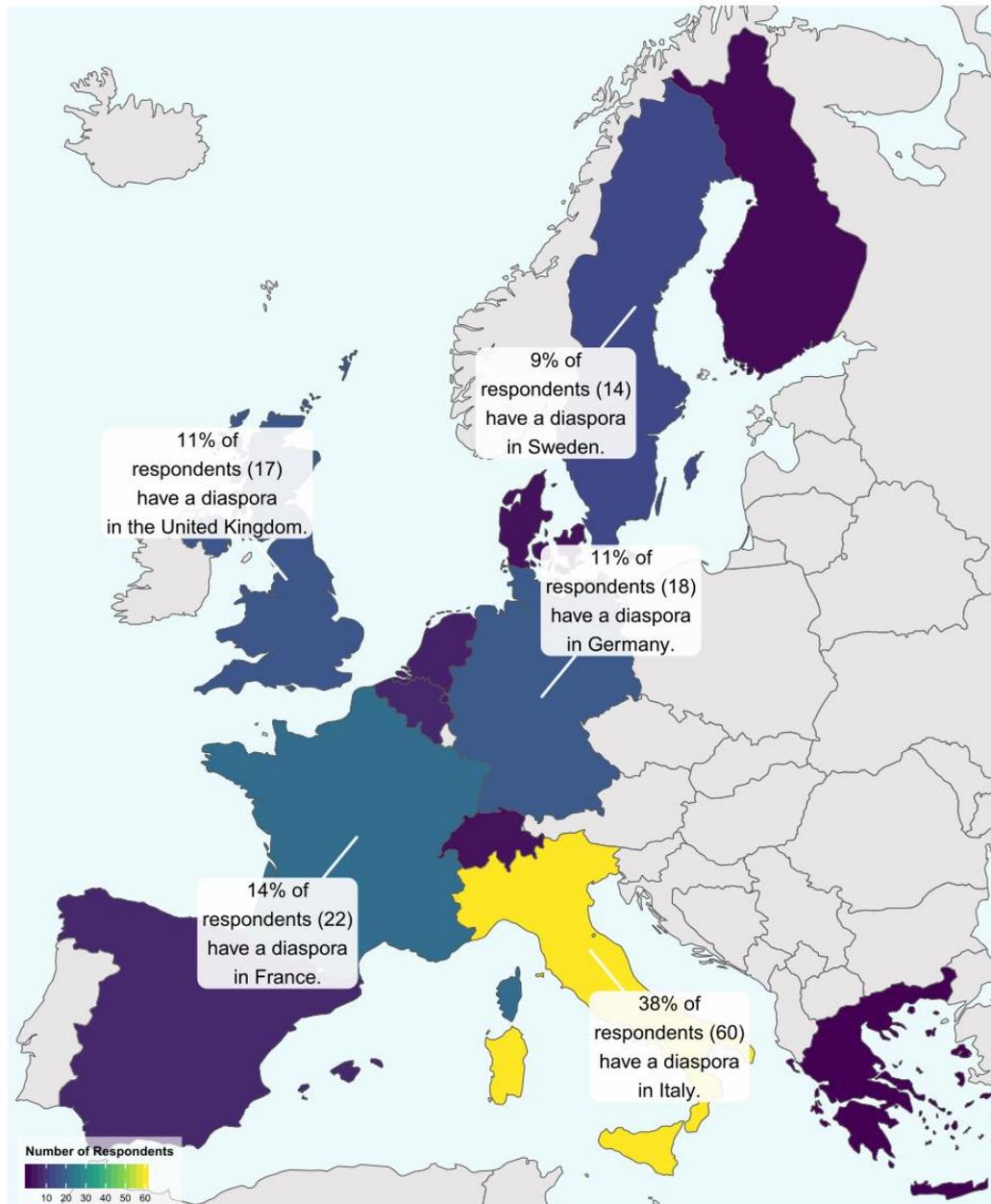
Fig. 6: Countries more likely to be identified by recently arrived migrants

Diaspora based in	Size of the diaspora by country of origin		
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd
Italy	Bangladesh and Nigeria	Gambia	Guinea and Pakistan
France	Morocco and Mali	Senegal and Guinea	Not identified
Germany	Iraq	Ghana	Mali
UK	Iraq	Gambia and Bangladesh	Afghanistan
Sweden	Iraq	Sudan	Not identified

However, survey data suggest that even those migrants with friends or family in Europe had limited understanding about their destinations. There was also little sense of the challenges connected with reaching destinations abroad. References to Europe, or specific references to countries in Europe appeared to simply be blanket-term designations.

These findings also suggest diasporas often mobilise limited, erroneous or incomplete information that is then shared with migrants prior to and during their journeys, and upon arrival to their destination. In-depth interviews and focus groups also showed that while some relatives were initially willing to provide financial or other forms of support, these did not always materialise. While friends and family in destination countries were often supportive of the migrants' decision to embark on their journeys, they often lacked specific knowledge of the conditions of the journey or the challenges faced by new arrivals. Diasporas most often did not appear to have mechanisms in place that would ensure the safety of friends or family members in transit. Furthermore upon arrival, diaspora also lacked the ability to welcome, guide, or support new arrivals in the fashion these were expecting.

Fig. 7: Number of respondents who reported being aware of the existence of a corresponding diaspora (n=157)



While migration literature often refers to information sharing as a fundamental element of the migration journey, most surveyed migrants left their countries of origin with minimal detailed information about specific destinations or the conditions of the journeys. This led to migrants having to constantly develop their own mechanisms to stay safe, which in turn also means a significant level of improvisation. In short, their journeys were not dependent upon the knowledge acquired or transmitted prior to the journey. While many migrants may have access to friends and family members in their countries of origin and/or the diaspora who can provide the necessary information and resources, most migrants faced completely unexpected situations, the journeys and the overall migration experience proving very different from what they originally envisioned.

Decision Making

The leading cause for migrants to leave Libya was the security crisis afflicting the country. Many had lost their livelihoods following the closure of businesses and the departure of their employers, while many others reported during interviews having been the direct target of violence, in which case they had looked for options to leave Libya behind. Bangladeshi and Sub-Saharan African migrants indicated many of the violent acts they faced (harassment, intimidation, kidnapping) were tied to their ethnicity. Migrants report that the very fact that they were foreigners made them particularly vulnerable to specific forms of violence. They often employed terms like "militia" or "mafia", and even "terrorists" in reference to the groups that engaged in semi-organised acts of violence against them or people they knew (the terms however, are not indicative of the actual nature of the groups, rather, they appeared to be blanket terms used to designate the kinds of violence they encountered). It appears that current conditions in Libya fostered the emergence of multiple groups that preyed on the vulnerability of specific segments of the population – namely, irregular, non-Arab, non-Muslim migrants living in the country. The same conditions favoured the demand for smuggling services.¹

The decision to leave Libya was a collective process. Migrants reported talking with family members, employers and co-workers in Libya and in their countries of origin, mainly by phone, to consult them about leaving.² The survey and fieldwork indicate that most decision-making processes involved personal conversations. Use of online sources (i.e. social media or online content) was negligible. Migrants also reached out to smuggling brokers directly to get a sense of the cost and the difficulties of the journey, and once the decision to travel had been made, to negotiate payment conditions.

Migrants expressed minimal distrust towards smugglers and/or migrant brokers. They were aware of their existence and activities from their past migratory experiences. Most interviewed and surveyed migrants had in fact relied on smuggling brokers at some point during their journeys to and across Africa and the Middle East, so their activities and tactics were not foreign to them. While many migrants disclosed having been abandoned or scammed by people who claimed to be engaged in smuggling, these experiences were often described as chances that had to be taken as part of any migratory journey: in short, smugglers were seen as important agents of mobility, rather than solely as predatory criminals. Smugglers were easy to contact when in Libya through personal recommendations. Furthermore, decisions concerning travel with smugglers were typically not improvised. Most migrants described being engaged in careful negotiations that often included consultations with friends and family members. In sum, the decisions concerning clandestine travel to leave Libya were most often collective, careful projects that built on the recommendations and knowledge of many. Far from involving unknown, networked actors as mainstream narratives of smuggling tend to claim, migrants opted for smugglers with whom they could meet in person and enter into personal negotiations.

During qualitative interviews migrants indicated their decision to leave Libya was also tied to the smuggling debt they had acquired upon leaving their home countries, which on occasion involved high interest fees. Friends and family members often put

¹ Relevant to this point is the work of Julien Brachet on the impact of IOM migration enforcement initiatives in the Sahara, Tekalign Ayalew on the dynamics of transit through Libya from the horn of Africa, Mark Micallef on the role of militias in smuggling facilitation, and that of Paolo Campana on North African smuggling and its organisation.

² As noted continuously in this report, most people used landlines given the unavailability of cell/internet infrastructure and/or technology in their countries of origin. Very few migrants reported relying on apps or social media in planning their journeys.

pressure on migrants to embark on their journeys despite the risks these involved. While researchers have documented that most migrants count with the financial support of friends, relatives and members of the diaspora, only 20 percent of the migrants in the sample had financial assistance from family and friends, while 95 percent of all those surveyed indicated that they still owed portions or the entirety of their smuggling fees.

The Journey

Having opted to travel clandestinely, migrants' journeys were often characterised as tense and uncertain. Journeys would simply take place whenever smugglers had access to the necessary equipment and support. Migrants described having to wait for several days at safe houses before being transported to the locations from where they would depart. They were often held at safe houses and not allowed to leave. There were reports of many of them having no access to food and water. Migrants were also often unable to communicate with friends or relatives during their time at the safe houses, most likely so as not to attract the attention of criminal entities or state entities policing illicit activity. Smugglers' behaviour was often reflective of this same tension. They were often verbally abusive and relied on threats and intimidation, especially against those migrants who still had to pay their fees. Migrants also reported being harassed by other migrants and smugglers as a result of their ethnic origin or religious beliefs.

While migrants had a general sense of the risks the journeys involved, having not yet endured them themselves, they often minimised their families' and their own concerns about the impact on their personal safety of travelling on a rubber boat. In other words, migrants believed their journeys would be successful, different from the many others they had heard that involved tragedy or death. Conversely, journeys were harrowing, and migrants often experienced and witnessed violence. In total 95 percent of migrants declared their journey was harder than they expected. The information they had access to was false or often partial, and provided no details concerning how to prepare for the trip. Several migrants reported having second thoughts upon arrival to the embarkation point, however, smugglers would often force them at gunpoint to get on them. Migrants also described the number of people on board the dinghies far exceeding their capacity. Communication among migrants was essential in order to prevent the dinghies from capsizing. Some reported having witnessed people falling off the dinghies or dying while in transit, unable to hold on to their allocated space. A group of Bangladeshi men interviewed in Rome stated at unison that they would not wish their journey on their worst enemy - their boat went adrift and they were convinced that they would die.

Conclusions

In sum, most migrants did not have a specific destination in mind before departing from Libya. While those with friends and family in Europe might have had a better sense of their destination, few migrants had thought of Europe at the time of their journeys. Conditions in Libya – including those related to immigration enforcement efforts – also were an important factor triggering migration for Europe. Consultations on the feasibility of leaving Libya behind for other destinations were often held with other migrants, relatives and employers both in Libya and in the migrants' countries of origin. Many migrants faced, in addition to the security dynamics in Libya, pressures on the part of their families, who had come to rely on their remittances, or who having fronted smuggling and/or travel fees were still indebted to lenders. Smugglers in Libya were visible and accessible to migrants, and simply offered a way out of the country. To many migrants "Europe" simply constituted a location different from and out of Libya and its conditions, and therefore many migrants expressed having no particular expectations of any location they arrived to, as they were not aware of where it was or what it entailed. In that sense, smugglers and their services were often perceived as

benign. Most migrants were generally aware of the risks involved in clandestine journeys, and in preparation often worked hard to convince themselves that their journeys would be different from those of migrants who had experienced death or tragedy. And yet, their journeys were ultimately far more harrowing than what they had envisioned.

PART II: EXPECTATIONS AND REALITIES OF ITALY

Introduction

As mentioned in Part I, at the time they decided to embark on their journeys most migrants – particularly those with no friends or family members in Europe – had no specific destination in mind. As such their arrival in Italy was, to a vast degree, a result of happenstance. In other words, most surveyed migrants had not explicitly selected Italy as a destination. Furthermore, few had any awareness about the geographic complexities of Europe and lacked specific information about countries within the continent, even if they acknowledge having some familiarity with their names.

This section outlines the experiences of migrants upon their arrival in Italy, and provides examples of the challenges they face towards integration as non-Europeans, challenges which may motivate them to leave for other EU destinations. It also identifies the expectations migrants develop about Europe in the context of their interactions with fellow migrants, humanitarian/rescue staff, migration authorities, and ordinary people.

Rescue and Arrival

The survey identified the process of rescue and arrival to be a critical element in the emergence of perceptions concerning the destination country. This is also the moment when migrants first become aware of European narratives concerning protection.

Most migrants were rescued by what they described as “large boats.” Having been adrift for several days in some cases, the sight was reason for much rejoicing and relief. Some migrants indicated that communication was limited as a result of language differences, but that they received the help they required. It was also in this context that many reported hearing about Europe and Italy for the first time. The boat crews and humanitarian staff gave them, meanwhile, some sense of what they could expect once they arrived ashore. Migrants were assured they were safe and *en route* to a country where human rights were respected, and where they could obtain the help they needed.

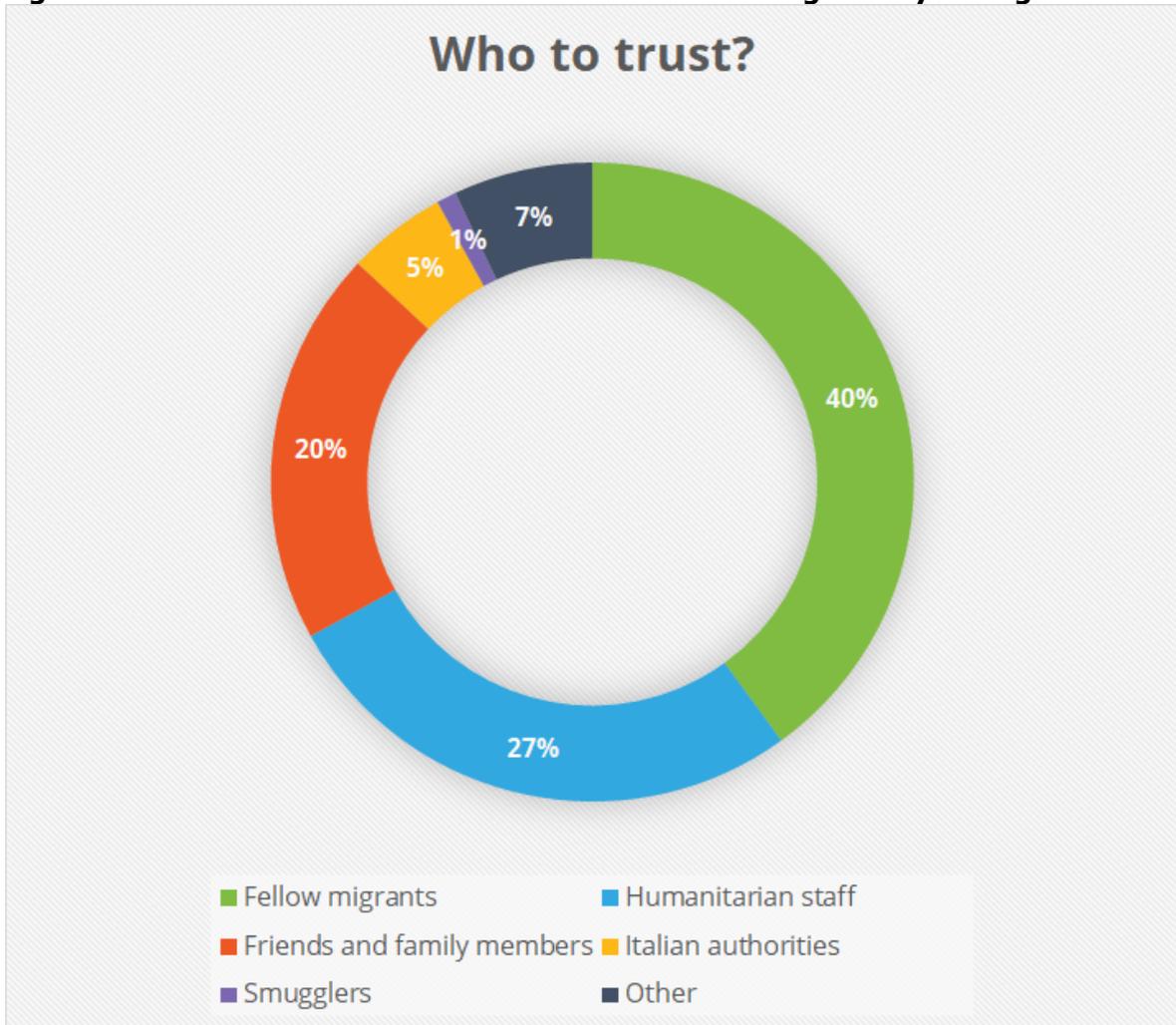
Upon arrival at the processing centres and as they were distributed to centres across Italy, surveyed migrants found themselves in a deep state of confusion. Some also expressed fear, having been transported in the middle of the night with no details on their destination. The initial confusion and uncertainty waned in the days and weeks that followed their arrival to their assigned centres. They gradually got used to the everyday life of the facilities where they were assigned.

Most migrants developed strong bonds with the people they travelled with, primarily as a result of the powerful experience of the journey, in addition to the distribution mechanisms that appeared to allocate people travelling together to the same centres. The survey indicates these first social relationships prove to be one of the most transcendental in migrants’ experiences in Italy, regardless of their eventual placement or location. Many migrants had spent several days, if not weeks together by the time they arrived ashore, and had come to rely on each other for emotional social, financial and even labour-related support, especially as the uncertainty of the first few weeks settled in.

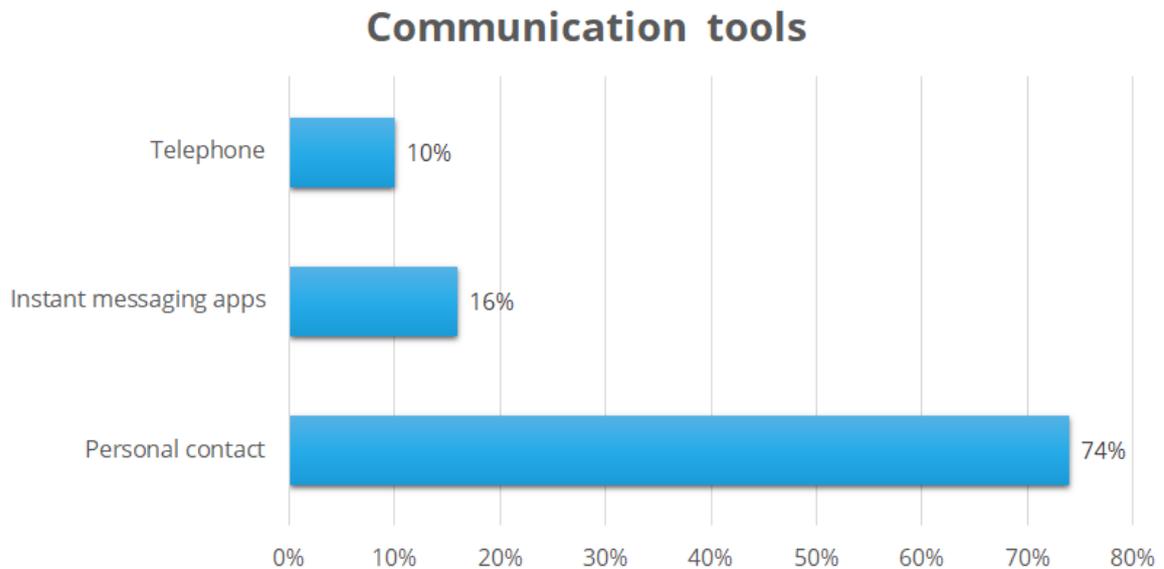
Alongside travel companions, the staff at their centres – and in particular, cultural mediators – was systematically identified as fundamental sources of support and information. In fact, they were ranked, second only to fellow migrants at 27 percent as the most important and trusted sources of information in the arrival and post-

arrival stages. As the chart below indicates, 40 percent of the survey respondents indicated that fellow migrants were the most trusted sources of information. The authorities and smugglers were among the least trusted sources of information.

Fig. 8: The most trusted sources of information among surveyed migrants



As shown in Fig. 9, migrants had a strong preference for personal, face-to-face interactions. Moroccan and Guinean nationals were the most likely to report reliance on personal interactions as part of their decision making (100 percent of those interviewed). They were followed by Nigerian migrants at 84 percent. Iraqi migrants on the other hand were more likely to rely on instant messaging in contacting their trusted sources when compared with migrants from other nationalities.

Fig. 9: How do migrants contact the most trusted sources of information?

Expectations

From focus groups with migrants, and in-depth interviews with staff at multiple centres across Italy, it is in this initial phase that the beliefs and expectations of migrants regarding Europe – and more specifically, Italy – begin to take shape. Through interactions with staff, co-travellers and migrants who have already been in-country for some time, recently-arrived migrants start to become socialised into the possible forms of protection that they may have access to, as well as the conditions that they may encounter in Italy.

It appears that most migrants arriving in Italy did not have clear, or rather specific expectations prior to their arrival concerning specific categories of migration relief or protection. In fact, the majority were unaware of any opportunities available to them as a result of being new arrivals. However, the first few weeks in the country appeared to be a critical timeframe for the emergence and consolidation of expectations, and the internalisation of specific narratives concerning Europe and Italy. According to the survey, these were the most commonly reported expectations among migrants who had arrived within the last year:

- *The possibility of acquiring refugee, humanitarian or subsidiary protection.* Through interactions with staff, cultural and legal mediators, and by relying on the feedback of friends, migrants become socialised into discourses concerning the Italian migration and asylum system. They soon become aware of the prevalence of specific narratives that might prove more effective in pursuing asylum claims. Migrants often share their experiences and receive feedback and potential options from the staff at the centres, who often cite specific examples of success and failure. Recently arrived migrants in turn often compare these to their own experiences. Migrants spend significant amounts of time and resources to access support in preparation for migration-related hearings that may allow them to stay in Italy.
- *The possibility of becoming employed.* Multiple migrants spoke about their employment expectations, which were frequently based on their past experiences as migrants while travelling from their countries of origin, and/or once they arrived in Libya. In the course of their journeys, the lack of employment restrictions, along with the state of the economy of the countries through which they transited often meant that they could access jobs that even if not well remunerated, at least allowed for their survival. Bangladeshi and

Senegalese migrants, for example, explained that in the course of their journeys they had always been able to find employment, especially in the informal sector ("it had always been like that, I thought it would also be like that here" one Bangladeshi migrant indicated. "We always work, we find work wherever we are.") As such they expected to be able to find employment opportunities immediately upon their arrival to Italy. Employment regulations and restrictions for recently arrived migrants and the penalties connected with violating them came as a surprise to most migrants and constituted a constant source of anxiety to those who believed that employment would be an inherent right.

- *The possibility of having access to decent/dignified housing.* This expectation emerged post-arrival and was based on the conditions migrants faced at the different centres where they were housed. Migrants were aware that facilities and services varied widely from reception centre to reception centre, as a result of their communications with acquaintances and/or other migrants through calls, text messages and face-to-face interactions. Some migrants expressed being very pleased about the locations they were assigned to – as in the case of Nigerian, Guinean and Bangladeshi migrants interviewed at a centre in the outskirts of Rome where they were even allowed to grow their own vegetables. Other migrants indicated not feeling safe at the locations they or their friends had been assigned to. Two young Nigerian migrants described how friends in a centre near Rome had witnessed fights between Muslim and non-Muslim Sub-Saharan Africans.
- *Italy as a country for migrants.* Most migrants had no specific destinations in mind at the time they embarked on their journeys. If at all, their journeys were described as attempts to reach safety. It was difficult for most migrants to articulate what they expected from the country prior to their arrival. The interactions with humanitarian staff, mediators and other migrants, along with occasional encounters with Italian citizens, gradually shaped migrants' understandings of Italy and of the way they were perceived in Italian society. Focus groups revealed migrants believed the initial messages that they would be welcomed by a country and people that respected human life, and where they would be unlikely to experience or witness the violence that they had seen in Libya or in their countries of origin. These notions were repeatedly communicated to migrants upon their rescue by ship crews, humanitarian and reception centre staff. Yet, as shown in the following section, everyday social interactions often proved difficult.

In sum, while the majority of surveyed migrants arrived in Italy with no expectations, these began to form immediately after their rescue, and through the interactions with rescue teams, humanitarian staff and migrants already on the mainland. Narratives of Italy as a country that welcomes migrants, and that was respectful of human rights and humanitarian law circulate at this stage, and gradually shape some of the understandings of migrants concerning Italy, Europe and the asylum system. Most migrants have no expectations of the kind of system that awaits them. They start to experience increasing levels of uncertainty as months go by, which in some cases may play a role in their decision to consider secondary movements.

The realities of migration

During the first few weeks following their arrival, migrants start to realise that many of the initial messages about being welcomed in Italy are not necessarily reflective of the conditions that they face. The survey revealed how most migrants feel conditions in Italy are far from conducive to integration, but rather isolate them and increase their precariousness. Migrants' experiences also reveal how the protection system plays a role in their vulnerability, particularly as they are unable to become employed legally upon their arrival, which increases the likelihood of them opting for informal employment with poor pay and labour conditions. This section describes the challenges migrants encounter in the weeks and months that follow their arrival.

Lack of employment eligibility and its implications

Surveyed and interviewed migrants report a widespread climate of uncertainty that arises from their inability to earn a living through regular employment, despite the more limited employment restrictions recently introduced in Italy for asylum seekers.³ For many, as noted above, the ability to work had traditionally been seen or perceived as a given in the context of their experiences. Finding the contrary constitutes a constant source of anxiety, especially among those with families who depend on them financially and who expect them to become employed immediately upon their arrival. A Bangladeshi migrant disclosed:

“There are times I do not want to call my family anymore, because they want to know if I am working and when I will start sending money. I keep telling them that it is not like it was in Libya, that here there are limitations. It is hard for them to understand that I cannot get a job.”

The concerns over the inability to earn a living are further compounded in the case of migrants who took out loans in order to finance their journey. The ineligibility or difficulties to become employed has additional implications, like having to pay even higher interest rates on the loans, or the potential loss of the goods deposited as collateral. About 95 percent of the survey's respondents still owed money borrowed to finance their journeys. In short, the inability to work increases the financial vulnerability of migrants' families and their likelihood of becoming prey of abusive lenders.

Box 1: On debt vulnerability

A Bangladeshi migrant was concerned about the future of his elderly parents. “I am concerned because I am an only child, and my parents took a loan for me to get to Libya. I was paying it off but then I had to leave [Libya] because of the security conditions there and now here in Italy I am told I can't work. So the interest on the loan keeps compounding and we are behind on the payments.”

Some migrants, for example, reported having mortgaged their family's home or land in order to cover their journeys, and their inability to work might translate into the family losing their only form of capital. In short, even if temporary, the lack of employment eligibility often leads migrants and their families to enter into highly exploitative and potentially violent relationships with their creditors in their countries

³ According to the latest developments in the Italian legal migration framework, these employment restrictions are limited to the first two months as of the filing of the asylum application and are not applied during the appeal phase. See: *Circolare del Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali* del 26 luglio 2016 n. 14751.

of origin. Furthermore, this may lead other family members to opt for migration as a way to pay-off debt.

The prevalence of informal and/or undeclared labour and its consequences

Among those surveyed, 115 migrants or 16 percent of the total sample were employed. Only seven migrants – under 1 percent of the sample – reported having a stable job.⁴ The need to provide for themselves and their families ultimately leads many recently arrived migrants into the informal labour market, where they often face poor working conditions. Migrants often enter the informal or undeclared labour markets even when eligible for employment as a result of employers' reluctance to hire them due to their ethnic origin or religion. Migrants report engaging in street vending, flyer distribution, agricultural labour, and domestic or sex work with the hope of generating a living salary. Reports of migrants facing wage theft (working without ever receiving remuneration) were common in interviews and surveys conducted in the south of Italy. A Senegalese migrant in Foggia, for example, worked informally for an Italian tomato grower for six months under the promise that he would be paid at the end of the crop season – which he never was.

Inability to access reliable information to obtain protection/migration relief

The inability to secure a decent income upon their arrival in Italy is not the only challenge experienced by migrants. A constant source of disappointment and anxiety is their inability to adjust their immigration status and access any kind of protection. While upon their adjudication to specific centres migrants may receive some legal assistance concerning their individual cases, interviews reveal the information they receive is often incomplete, and in some cases altogether inaccurate. Most migrants soon realise that the reasons that led them to leave Libya and/or their countries of origin do not provide the grounds for asylum. Legal mediators indicated, in interviews, that migrants frequently pay large sums of money to individuals who claim that they can assist them in building a case in front of the *Commissione Territoriale*.⁵ Scams of this nature are common, and leave migrants in an increased state of vulnerability, as they accumulate debts trying to get their claims approved. Other migrants, lacking access to quality legal assistance, are also often misinformed by fellow migrants or by people in the diaspora, and enter a long, often counterproductive cycle of filing petitions that are likely to be denied, all with the hope that they will eventually be allowed to stay in the country. These applications are often carried out with scant or no professional support, which reduces the likelihood of success.

The prevalence of false, inaccurate, wrong information

The surveys and interviews revealed that while trusted actors in the migrant experience, friends, acquaintances, members of the diaspora, as well as humanitarian staff often provide inaccurate or altogether mistaken information to migrants. Many interviewed migrants reported receiving bad advice from friends, relatives and community members, and on occasion regretted having followed it. Migrants realise that, while bound by ties of kinship and friendship, their countrymen and women are not necessarily invested in their success. Others noted that some information benefits the person who gives it, rather than the one who requests it.

⁴ This number is unlikely to be reflective of the dynamics of employment among recently arrived migrants. The sanctions imposed for becoming employed without authorisation are likely to hinder reporting.

⁵ The commission in charge of recognizing and/or granting status or protection to migrant applicants.

Box 2: A case of bad information

A Bangladeshi man reported having lost his eligibility to qualify for asylum when he abandoned the centre he had been assigned to, following the advice of a family in the Bangladeshi diaspora already residing in Italy. He stated: "They told me the centres were like prisons, that they were not good places for people to live in and that I would never receive the help I needed [if I stayed there]. They said that I would be better off if I just moved in with them, and so I did." His decision had ultimately led him to lose the timeframe he had to file an asylum claim. The family who had told him about the conditions at the shelter had indeed welcomed him, giving him a job as worker at one of the supermarkets they owned. However, the man had to work long hours, had no days off, and had not been paid a full salary once. He had also begun to show signs of depression and anxiety. He also feared that seeking assistance would translate into him being identified as being in the country irregularly and lead to his deportation.

Conclusions

In sum, migrants leave Libya and arrive in Italy with few if any expectations. However, they soon realise that the narratives of Italy and Europe as a welcoming place that they had become acquainted with are distant from reality. Employment restrictions limit their ability to support their families; while often fleeing from violence and conflict, their experiences do not always result in the granting of asylum. The experiences described in this section point to a tendency identified throughout the fieldwork: the information shared among migrants in transit, migrants in the destination country and by the diaspora, is often incomplete, inadequate and/or altogether mistaken. Examples of migrants making decisions on the basis of this information and finding themselves in situations of extreme precariousness and facing potential removal were common.

Employment restrictions upon arrival are a cause of great anxiety. The inability to work legally leads many to become employed in the informal economy and often to face abuse and poor working conditions. Many migrants reported being paid poorly or not being paid at all, even after months of work. For those who borrowed money in order to pay for their journeys, the inability to keep up with payments often translates into their families facing harassment by lenders, or altogether losing the collateral placed as guarantee, which often includes families' only source of capital (the family home or plot). While leaving Italy may be a possibility amid these challenges most migrants expressed their desire to stay in the country in an attempt to rebuild their lives, some aware of the protections conferred to them by international law, and hoping for a positive outcome to their asylum claims. For others, these conditions combined with other factors like the presence of friends and families in other locations, eventually played a role in their decision to leave for other cities in Italy or other European countries. The following section describes these cases.

PART III: SECONDARY MOVEMENTS

Introduction

Among surveyed recent arrivals, the migrant experience in Italy is characterised by a high degree of uncertainty and disappointment. Attempts to establish a sense of normality are often met with bureaucratic challenges, employment restrictions, discrimination and xenophobia, limited possibilities to regularise stays, and the ever present risk of criminalisation and repression. Combined, these factors play a role in the decision of many migrants to embark on secondary movements within Italy and in other EU countries. Simultaneously, some of the conditions may also set the stage for migrants to decide *not* to move, pushing them further underground and into even more dangerous conditions. This section describes the outcome of the surveys and the field observations concerning these trends.

The reasons not to leave

While reports on migrant mobility from the mainstream media and some pro-migrant advocacy groups suggest that migrants move onward almost as soon as they arrive in Italy as a result of unwelcoming conditions and preconceived notions and destinations, the survey identified a more nuanced view. About 70 percent of migrants surveyed expressed the desire to remain in Italy, while 20 percent reported having no plans concerning further movement at the time of the survey. Only 8 percent expressed the desire to embark on secondary movements, a number similar to those whose decisions to migrate and/or reach other countries pre-dated the journey to Italy.

The fact that over two thirds of interviewed migrants indicated that they had no intention or willingness to move is even more remarkable if one considers that the majority had no prior knowledge or expectations concerning the country before their arrival. It suggests that despite challenges, migrants consistently find important reasons to remain in Italy. Some of the reasons are economic. For example, despite the widespread uncertainty concerning employment for migrants in Italy some migrants reported having managed to find and secure jobs (even if only in the informal sector). These jobs allowed them to support their families in their countries of origin and/or in Italy. Others, while recognising employment opportunities are scarce and low paid, indicated they enjoy better conditions in Italy than the ones they faced in Libya or in some cases their countries of origin.

Other migrants identified ongoing asylum claims as a principal reason for not leaving the country. Asylum processes may extend for several months or even years, and migrants expressed their willingness to remain in Italy for the duration of their process hoping for a positive outcome. Many migrants whose asylum claims were denied had appealed and were waiting for a decision. Many migrants showed a fairly good knowledge of the policies and practices of the EU asylum and protection system, probably as a result of the time spent after arrival in the Italian migrant reception system, during which they gradually familiarised themselves with the relevant legal rules. For instance, the survey shows that almost 90 percent of migrants were aware that they could not ask for asylum in another EU country if they had filed a claim in Italy. This suggests that for many of them, the decision not to move is tied to the delays in the Italian protection system.

Many respondents identified newly-formed affective ties as a reason not to leave. Migrants indicated that, in the course of the months that followed their arrival, they made or strengthened ties with friends, relatives and people in the diaspora, started romantic relationships or even began to build families. These personal relationships often tied them to Italy. Some had plans to get married, learn Italian to better communicate with their children in school, and learn a trade that would allow them to

better provide for themselves and those around them. Building new ties had given many a new outlook on life, even if their economic conditions were grim.

Migrants frequently reported that they lacked knowledge about other countries or locations they could move to, and that they preferred to face uncertainty in Italy rather than moving to another country where they would have to start over. Several reminded the research team during interviews that since they had no expectations about a location other than improved living conditions and the ability to work – hopes many had fulfilled upon their arrival to Italy – Italy worked for them.

About 20 percent of surveyed migrants indicated that they had no plans concerning movement. Respondents, for example, cited pending what they believed were strong asylum claims in Italy, and feared returning to their countries. Others had travelled with their children and spouses to Italy but had since become unable to provide for them, despite having qualified for protection, and therefore found themselves unable to decide where to go. Others had never been fully able to secure any kind of support or protection and were in a state of limbo. They were unable to move onward due to a lack of resources but knew that they could not really go anywhere else; they also feared being deported in the event they made themselves visible.

Box 3: Changing, unreliable information leading to failed moves

A Nigerian man, father of two infant children was interviewed in Como. When asked about his plans he stated:

“I don’t have plans. I know if I want to move again. I have the *permesso di soggiorno*, but people do not hire blacks. When we first arrived I worked in Sicily for a few months in the agricultural fields but the season came to an end. I called a friend who lived here and he told me that there was a lot of work with his boss at a factory and to come here with my wife and kids, and he also offered me a room at his house. But as soon as I arrived the factory shut down, so now it’s not just me, but also my friend the one who is unemployed and he is asking me for rent money so that all of us can stay at the place and not get evicted. And I am really desperate, because nobody wants to give me a job and I have no idea of what to do. So moving is the last of my plans right now.”

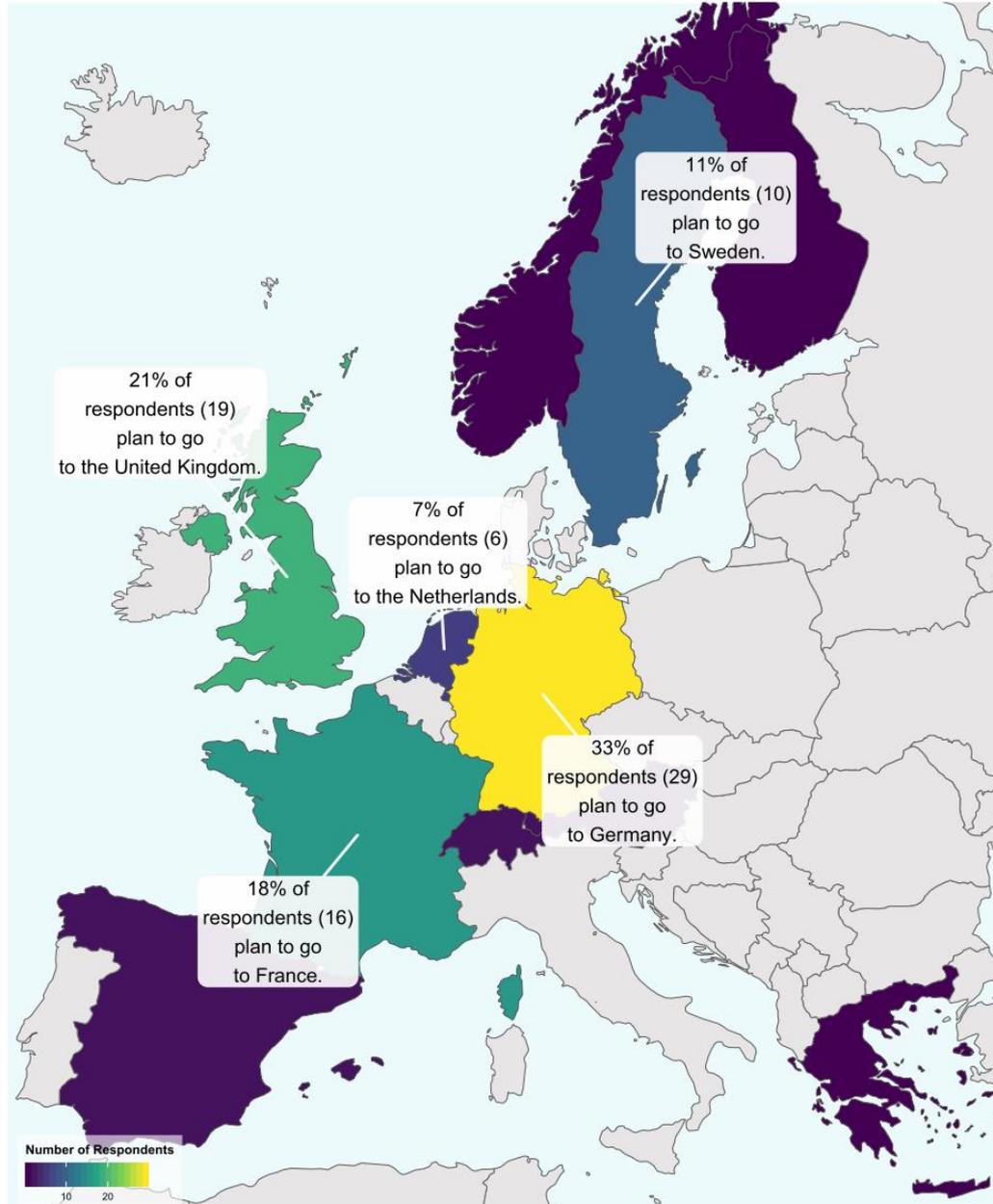
A Senegalese migrant in Foggia described a similar level of precariousness and the inability to plan a further move given a lack of the most basic resources:

“I have no family to go back to in Senegal. I came here after spending months in Libya, but things here are harder than they were there. But I have been here since I arrived because I can’t think of where else to go. I worked picking tomatoes but they never paid me. And I am begging outside this supermarket now because there are simply no jobs for people like me. Now that the growing season is over I don’t know what to do. I am stuck at the ghetto. Plans? I have no plans. All I want right now is to get enough money to ride the bus to the ghetto. Nobody has bought a single one of my bracelets today and I just want to go back home.”

The reasons to leave

Figure 10 shows the main countries where migrants planned to move to from Italy. Germany is the preferred destination by the several nationalities represented in the survey. The United Kingdom was second, and the main choice of Iraqi migrants, while France is mostly chosen by French speaking migrants coming from Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Senegal and Morocco.

Fig. 10: Main countries were respondents plan to move on from Italy (n=89)



Only a small group of migrants had the specific intention to migrate to other locations in Europe. Among the different nationalities, all Syrians and half of Iraqis fell into this category. Among migrants considering to move were those with hopes for better employment opportunities and improved living conditions. They were also more likely to have friends and family members in other countries.

On the move again

Our qualitative fieldwork identified the cases of many migrants on the move who decided to engage in secondary movements aware of the limited possibilities for protection in Italy, restricted employment options, and the inability to secure affordable and dignified housing. These movements often relied on interactions built through contacts with other migrants, the diaspora, and people at the shelters and centres where migrants congregate. In most cases, migrants embark on journeys across Italy that are often the result of improvisation and much luck. Migrants emerged in the interviews as resourceful individuals who, relying on word of mouth, the occasional forays for information via the internet, informal work, the pooling of resources among themselves and a great deal of improvisation, travel across Italy and into other EU countries.

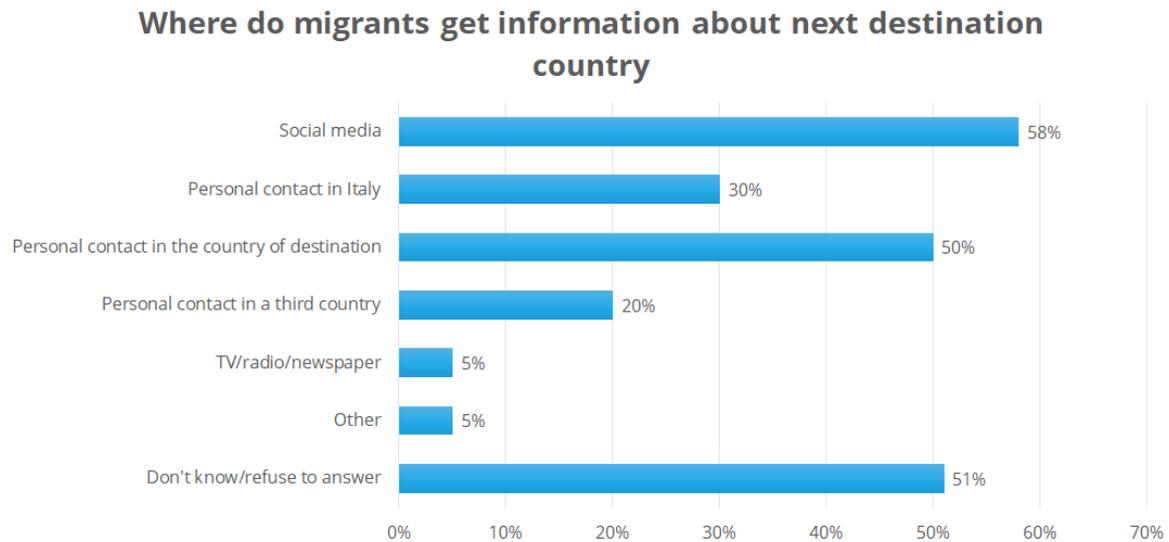
How do these journeys take place? Compared to the initial decision to move – that is, the one made in the migrant’s country of origin– those who decided to keep moving to other countries appear to be more resourceful and available to deal with uncertainty than those who do not; they seem to have access to more accurate information and sources. Many also draw on the experience of their first journey, which is often used as a point of reference in evaluating the risks of a potential secondary journey. Migrants indicated that if they were able to survive Libya and cross the Mediterranean alive, they should be able to reach other destinations in Europe, notwithstanding regulations and border and immigration controls. Migrants constantly stated during qualitative interviews that their journeys could not be worse than the ones they had endured across Africa or the Mediterranean, and that they had “nothing left to lose.” When personal-safety issues connected to environmental exposure or border crossings (mountainous paths or atop of trains) were brought up, migrants often dismissed them. They knew other people who had been injured or even died during an attempt to reach another country, but they were confident they were unlikely to encounter the same outcome. The posters and warnings in the Como and Ventimiglia train stations and tunnels warning migrants about the potentially lethal consequences of attempting to cross into Switzerland or France on trains did not appear to serve as deterrent to migrants.⁶ During fieldwork, the research team witnessed groups of migrants walking towards the mountains in both Ventimiglia and Como, organised in small groups, at the same time others were being returned by the French and Swiss authorities to Italian territory following attempts to cross the border. Most of these returnees, were likely to try to cross again.

Decision making as part of secondary movement: data collection

As stated above, efforts on the part of the state and authorities to deter migration appear to have minimal if any impact on deterring migrants from attempting to engage in secondary movements within Europe. Figure 11 outlines the sources of information among migrants considering secondary movements. While about half of respondents did not identify the source of the data they used to plan secondary movements, the collected responses provided important insights into how and where migrants collect information about potential destinations.

Also when planning secondary movements, migrants primarily rely on personal contacts in the country of destination (50 percent) and on those within Italy (30 percent). A smaller portion of the sample (about 20 percent) also reported relying on information from personal contacts residing in third countries.

⁶ At least 20 people have died in the last two years while attempting to cross into France from Ventimiglia. See <http://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/7501/border-rejection-violence-and-death-in-ventimiglia>

Fig. 11: Where do migrants get information about the next destination country (n=91)

Note. Bars and percentages indicate multiple sources of data were used in decision-making processes.

Almost sixty percent of all surveyed migrants considering secondary movements obtained information concerning the country of destination (cities, weather, tourist attractions) from social media. Yet, on the basis of the qualitative interviews and the social media analysis described in section 4, it appeared that migrants come across this information in the context of everyday engagement with their social networks online. In other words, there was no overall evidence of targeted research or searches among the surveyed population. Migrants simply report an ordinary, casual engagement with the posts on social media of the people in their immediate networks or groups. In social network analysis terms, the information migrants receive through social media comes mainly from what is known as strong and weak ties,⁷ and is constituted primarily by status updates, photos that depict the life at destination countries (as showed below in section 4), news or reporting from destination countries; religious images containing prayers or blessings; notes on local or European sports teams; songs or music videos from popular culture; and inspirational quotes. There was virtually no evidence of migrants sharing information on routes, travel strategies, or other details concerning secondary movements. Qualitative interviews however suggest that some of the data concerning these journeys and interactions with those who facilitate them may be shared via direct messages, which are not visible on migrants' personal profiles or "walls".

When it comes to decision making, it is also important to keep in mind that despite its increased use as indicator of social interaction and behaviour, social media posts must be interpreted with caution. Critical network analysis scholars have raised concerns over social media data ranging or altogether absent degree of reliability and quality, and have warned against their use as an indicator of decision making.⁸ While migrants are exposed and may engage with social media posts, they do so critically, posts

⁷ See Social Network and Social Media analysis section for further details.

⁸ See Ruths and Pfeffer: Social Media for large studies of behaviour. Via <http://sciencemag.org/content/sci/346/6213/1063.full.pdf>

becoming one reference among the many factors that constitute the decision to move to a secondary location. It is likely that migrants come in contact with deceptive or misleading information concerning the destination country, especially if said information is shared by people in their networks who they consider to be trusted sources. Yet again, most information available and disseminated by people within surveyed migrants' networks provide minimal if at all any data on specific programs or opportunities, routes or services available to migrants. In sum, these networks most often circulated images concerning everyday ordinary life.⁹

Qualitative data and ethnographic observations indicate that most migrants prefer personal communications when making the decision to embarking on secondary movements. These communications often involved face-to-face interactions, but also conversations carried out over cell phone. Bangladeshi migrants stated that their conversations often involved no use of applications or social media or online platforms, given the limited technical infrastructure of their country, which means they simply relied on actual calls and text messaging.

Most surveyed and interviewed migrants owned a cell phone prior to their arrival, although this was not always a smart-phone. Once in Italy, 80 percent of the surveyed respondents reported using a smart-phone regularly and 97 percent of them considered owning one as being important or very important as part of their experience as migrants in Italy and in the context of planning secondary movements. The following chart outlines the use of smartphones among respondents.

How do migrants use their smart-phones

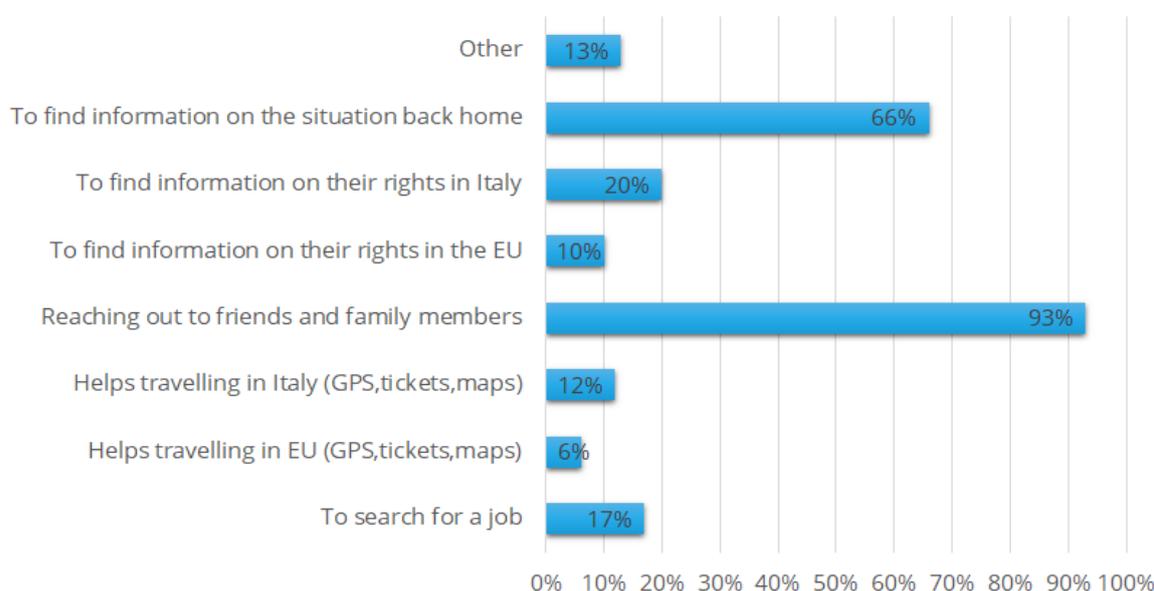


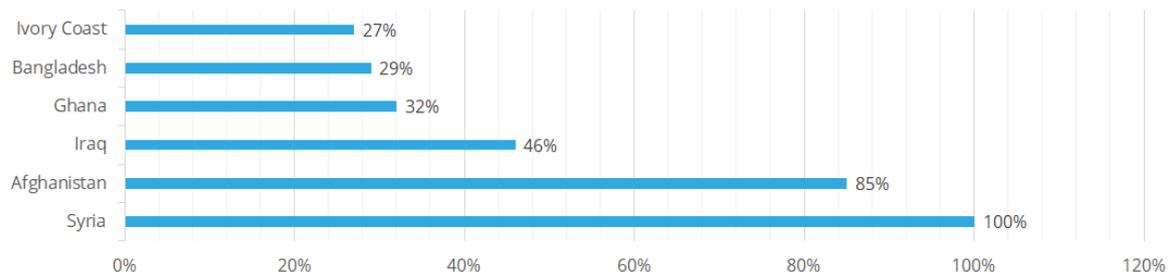
Fig. 12: Smart phone use via quantitative survey

As the prior figure shows, most migrants use smart-phones to reach out to friends and family members and to get news on their countries of origin. Qualitative fieldwork shows that the percentage of migrants that use their smart-phones to find information to plan secondary journeys is low, although it varies across nationalities. For example, Syrian migrants reported using their smart-phones to find information or to plan their onward journey 100 percent of the time, while the percentage for Afghan migrants

⁹ For additional information, please refer to section four on network analysis.

was 86 percent, and Iraqi migrants 46 percent. Among the arrivals during the first quarter of 2017, migrants from Ghana, Bangladesh and Cote d'Ivoire were among those who reported using their smart-phones to find information or to plan their onward journey (Figure 13).

Main nationalities using smart-phones to find information or plan their onward movements



Conclusions

Migrants are resourceful and manage to get significant amounts of information, while relying on growing networks of friends and acquaintances. Many of these groups are built upon arrival to Italy. Immediate social networks prove critical for migrants' survival, as almost immediately upon their arrival in Europe, restrictions concerning labour eligibility and opportunities, housing and protection become a constraint and may even prevent their integration into Italian society. This occurs even though technically migrants are eligible to work after having resided for two months in the country. While outside of the scope of this research, migrants expressed being discriminated and often denied employment opportunities even when in possession of valid employment authorisation.

In this sample 70 percent of respondents had no plans to leave Italy. Some opt to stay with the hope that their claims for asylum are approved; others have built social and familial ties, and for many others the conditions, even when precarious, are a step ahead of what they experienced in their countries of origin. Another 20 percent lacked plans to move forward and were uncertain about the future that expected them in Italy. About 8 percent of migrants drawing on the knowledge they acquire from their new networks, and perhaps coming to terms with a hostile environment for migrants, opt to embark on secondary movements. In these trips personal communications still play a central role in planning and decision making, and while present, social media use is a rather supplemental source of information and communication. More specifically, while migrants engage with social media images and messages, they do not necessarily rely on them as their main source of data concerning their decision-making. Furthermore, there was in fact no evidence that social media posts available to and shared by migrants contained information on specific groups, opportunities, programs or alternatives for newcomers, or information on secondary-movement processes. Finally, smart phones are important tools for communication and data gathering, their use differ across nationalities – for example, while Syrian migrants often rely on smart phones to gather and plan their journeys, Bangladeshi migrants used them almost entirely to conduct regular calls only. Migrants do, however, survey social media to learn about their friends and families' experiences in Europe. These posts, however do not contain much information that could support secondary movements, rather posts depicting daily life and activities. Critical social network researchers have warned about the reliance on social media as indicators of decision making processes. In the following section we further explore the role of social media in migrants' experiences, and further delve into the kinds of information they post and the kinds to which they have access.

PART IV: SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS

Introduction

This section addresses the Social Network Analysis (SNA) and Media Analysis parts of the study, focusing on Facebook use which is the social media platform most commonly used by migrants. Relying on a sample of 21 individuals from two of the best represented migrant nationalities in the sample used here – Nigerian and Bangladeshi migrants – the current section analyses the use of Facebook and the structure of online network ties among migrants recently arrived in Italy.

Echoing the results of Lot 1 of this study,¹⁰ data show that social media while used extensively, social media was not the primary source of information used by migrants concerning countries where they would undertake secondary movement to.¹¹ Face-to-face interactions, regular text messaging and messaging apps were instead far more popular among migrants in transit when communicating. Much as in Lot 1, social media proved to be an important tool for migrants to become aware of the day to day activities of friends and family and at times of those of the diaspora. Facebook is widely used by migrants to keep in touch with friends and families (what in SNA terms is known as strong ties) and newer, impromptu connections (known as weak ties). The information posted however, did not include information and data concerning migratory processes, and was in fact often limited to chronicling, often rather superficially, the daily lives of migrants and their contacts or online “friends.” This section of the report, analyses migrant Facebook profiles to better understand the extent of social media use by migrants in transit and the kinds of information they contained.

Drawing from publicly accessible data from the Facebook profiles of a sample of ten Nigerian and eleven Bangladeshi migrants, this section offers data on two aspects related to migrants’ arrival in Italy and possible secondary movements:

- Information on migrants’ Facebook posts.
- The geographical location of migrants’ Facebook friends to observe how migrants’ personal ties are clustered by country. Social Network Analysis (SNA) has been applied to visualise and measure the structure of these ties.

This convenience sample was identified at reception centres for migrants (*CAS – Centri Accoglienza Straordinaria*) in the Apulia region of Italy (Nigerians), and through informal settlements in the cities of Ventimiglia and Como (Bangladeshis). All individuals in the sample are frequent Facebook users. Individuals within each group of nationalities knew each other in person and were at the time of data collection Facebook “friends”.

Facebook has privacy filters in place that present challenges when it comes to data collection. Due to these restrictions and also for ethical considerations, data collection was limited to profiles set as “public” by users –meaning profiles that are accessible without restrictions.

¹⁰ “How West African migrants engage with migration information en-route to Europe”, September 2017

¹¹ As outlined by the authors of Lot 1, scant access to the internet in the country of origin, the digital divide, high traceability of online interactions, as well as trust issues are among the reasons why social media appears not to be the main vehicle through which migrants receive and exchange information concerning their journeys.

Findings

Qualitative analysis of Facebook profiles

All 21 individuals in the sample are male, and their estimated age¹² ranges from eighteen to 30 years of age. They are all active Facebook users; this can be seen in the frequency of shared public posts, and by the number of their Facebook friends. Several new posts are posted each week by all individuals in the sample, with variations from a minimum of one post a week to several posts a day. Most publicly available posts include pictures, music videos, or short comments about daily, ordinary life events in Italy (weather, outings, visits to touristic spots, meals, visits with friends, etc.). The migrants whose profiles were analysed have numerous Facebook friends: an average of 1759 friends (min 1239 and max 2465, with n=4) for Bangladeshi, and 836 friends (min 336 and max 1545, with n=9) for Nigerians.

Data suggest that most Bangladeshi migrants increased their Facebook use while in transit and while in Italy. Lack of internet access and reliable infrastructure in Bangladesh was the main reason given for the patterns of social media use. Most Bangladeshi migrants reported using Facebook to stay in touch with friends and family, as well as to create new connections.

The type and amount of information displayed on Facebook profiles varies from person to person. Some share information about their education, current jobs, and interests. Among those who share information about their education, the majority claims to have a university-level education. With regards to employment, they claim to be "self-employed." Information about hometown and current location appear to be more precise, and in most cases it is supported with pictures. Most Nigerians reside in Apulia (Bari and Canosa di Puglia) and come from Delta (Warri, Asaba, Agbo) and Edo States (Benin City), whereas all Bangladeshis claimed to be originally from Dhaka. Even among people that display little to no information about themselves, the relationship status is frequently displayed as single. None share information about religious and political affiliations. Most people are part of public Facebook groups, on topics ranging from entertainment (football, music, comedy), spirituality, online dating, news on their home country, etc. A few are part of university networks and family groups. Quite relevant to this study is the fact that none of the people whose profiles were examined appear to be part of groups that offer information about migration related issues.

Generally, among those whose profile was set as "public", there were scant data about the journey to Italy and from Italy toward other destinations. If information on these topics is being shared, it is not publicly displayed and was therefore not accessible for the present analysis. However, Facebook posts provide some insights into how migrants portray their experiences online.

References to distress or fear concerning migratory journeys or the initial arrival are rarely displayed on Facebook, though successful journeys or arrivals were often announced with religious messages of gratitude. These posts receive a high number of "likes" and congratulatory messages, mainly from other co-nationals who appear to live abroad and in the migrants' countries of origin.

Of the two groups, Bangladeshi migrants were the only ones who had public posts involving their journeys. A sense of tedium is often communicated through some of these pictures. They frequently post selfies and group pictures with other migrants in what appear to be camps or transitional zones where they await the opportunity to reach another destination. Bangladeshi migrants' Facebook profiles also include a

¹² Based on publicly available data on Facebook.

large number of group pictures - Bangladeshi migrants of approximately the same age on what appears to be a journey.

All the men in the sample appear in pictures that portray them as well-kept and happy, perhaps in an attempt to communicate to their friends and followers the level of "success" they enjoy in Italy and their access to a better quality of life. Public posts communicate a well-crafted message of their life in Europe as involving sophistication and a certain level of wealth. The men in the profiles appeared well dressed, often in multiple "selfies" taken at touristic points of interest across Italy, next to exotic or expensive vehicles, or with Italian nationals that they described as their friends.

Social Network Analysis of Facebook friends

Data on city and country of residence¹³ were collected from the Facebook friends of thirteen individuals in the sample. Nine out of ten Nigerians, and four out of eleven Bangladeshi migrants had publicly-accessible friend lists. These data provide a snapshot of migrants' online network ties in the country of destination (Italy). Although Facebook privacy restrictions preclude retrieving the content of conversations among Facebook friends, data on their geographical location, if set as public by the users, allows for a breakdown of the composition and geographical extension of migrants' online ties. It is possible to measure where migrants have contacts and who can potentially provide information, resources, and support at different stages of the migration process.

Facebook allows for the maintenance of strong ties and contact with family and friends in the home country. Yet it also facilitates the creation of what is called in social-network analysis *weak ties*, which allow for the acquisition of impromptu information and immediate access to real-time information from other networks or sources. Facebook is also one of the best social-media sites for developing a pool of new latent ties, as simply "liking" a page provides the user with access to its content.

The current analysis mostly focuses on the power of latent and weak ties, which are frequently found in friend networks on Facebook. Migrants habitually use Facebook to expand their contacts: the data collected shows that on average migrants who use Facebook have a large network of friends that grows rapidly over time.¹⁴ Weak ties are "stronger" than strong ties when it comes to providing new resources and novel information.¹⁵ Strong ties play the most important role in providing primary and daily information from habitual sources. For this reason within social groups with strong ties, information and resources tend to saturate over time – that is, information and sources begin to be replicated, and the user of the profile tends to have access to the same data over and over. This may in fact allow for the recirculation and sharing of wrong, inaccurate or incomplete information ("fake news" or sources of dubious quality). Weak ties introduce novel opportunities and fresh information into a person's social circle.

Migrants' friends' networks and their location

Using a procedure that combined manual and automatic extraction of public Facebook data, it was possible to calculate the whole population of friends for nine Nigerians and four Bangladeshi migrants, whose profiles were analysed. This amounted to,

¹³ This information is specified by the person in their profile under "live in."

¹⁴ Two data collection sessions on 22 November and 22 December showed an increase in the number of Facebook friends for all people in the sample ranging from +2% to +10%.

¹⁵ See Mark S. Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology*, 78, no. 6 (1973).

respectively, $n=7347$ and $n=7034$ friends.¹⁶ Out of this total population, only around 62 percent of Nigerians and 40 percent of Bangladeshis displayed information about their current location,¹⁷ reducing the total number of friends whose whereabouts were known to $n=4563$ Nigerians and $n=2814$ Bangladeshis.

Information was collected on the current residency (city and country) of a random sample of about 40 percent of these individuals. The final sample analysed is $n=1850$ friends for the nine Nigerians, and $n=1151$ friends for the four Bangladeshis. Data from this sample has been collected to proportionally represent each of the thirteen individuals' Facebook friends.

The network graph below (Network 1) is a two-mode network drawn with the Social Network Analysis program "Gephi" that displays the Facebook friendship ties of nine Nigerians migrants.¹⁸ They have friends located in 75 countries around the world.¹⁹ In this network, green nodes (without labels) represent the nine individuals of the Nigerian sample, whereas yellow nodes represent the 75 countries where their Facebook friends currently reside.

Between person x and country y an edge is drawn if person x has at least one Facebook friend in country y . If person x has more than one Facebook friend in country y , the thickness of the edge increases accordingly, showing the strength of the tie between the two nodes. All edges are undirected, and they only connect green nodes (individuals) with yellow nodes (countries).

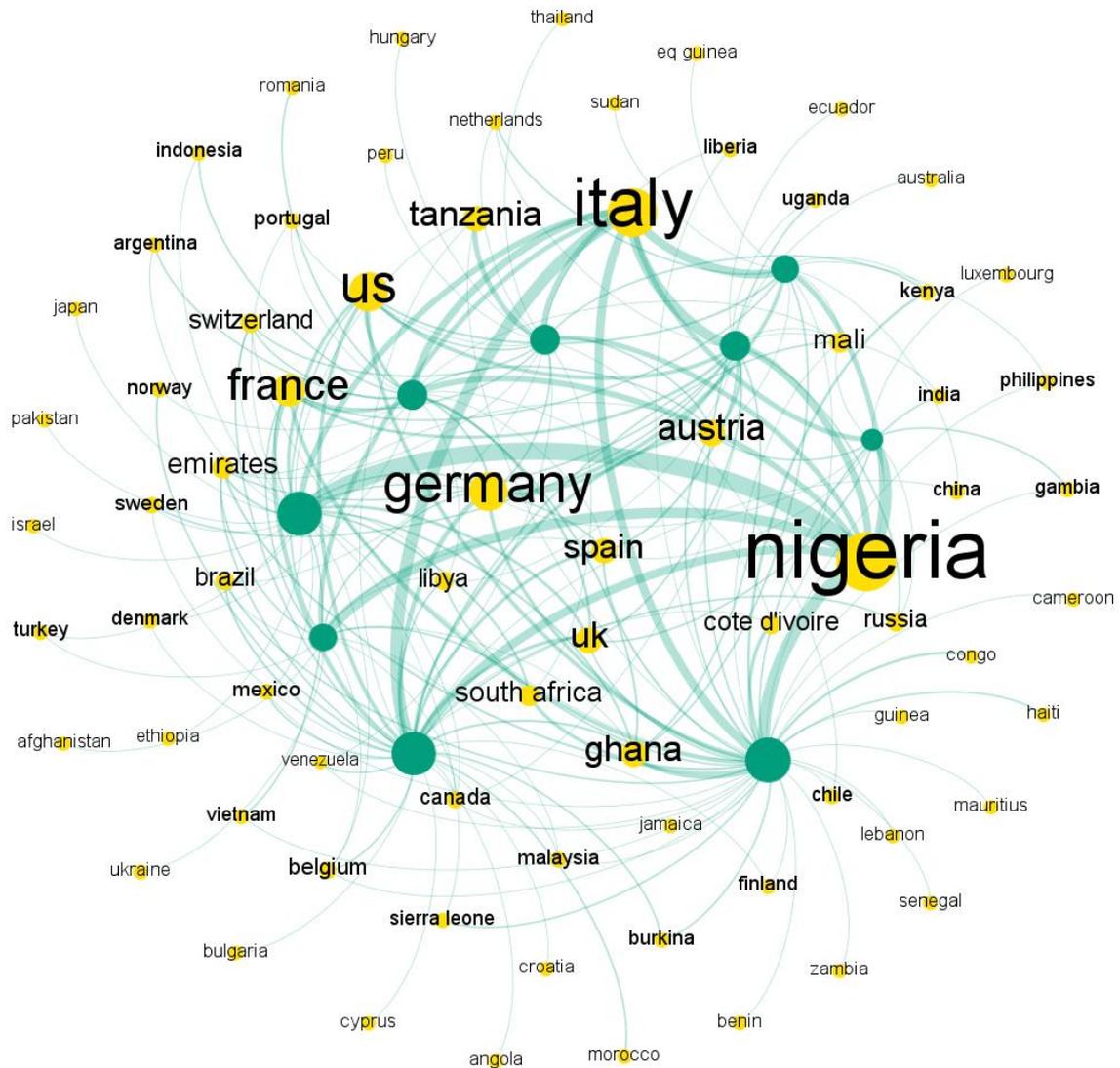
¹⁶ Nigerians ($n=9$): mean of 836 friends for each individual; min 336; max 1545. Bangladeshi ($n=4$): mean of 1759; min 1239; max 2465.

¹⁷ It is impossible to calculate the precise estimate without manually checking each individual profile. However, these are estimates based on how many of these individuals shared a self-description of themselves on their Facebook cover page.

¹⁸ Given the smaller size of the sample ($n=4$) and the lower number of friends residing in European countries other than Italy, the Bangladeshi network is not represented as a graph.

¹⁹ In Social Network Analysis, two-mode networks are networks whose nodes belong to two disjointed sets, and whose ties are between nodes of one set and nodes of the other set.

Fig. 14: Network 1 – Two-mode networks of Nigerians’ Facebook friends (n=1850; countries=75; individuals=9)



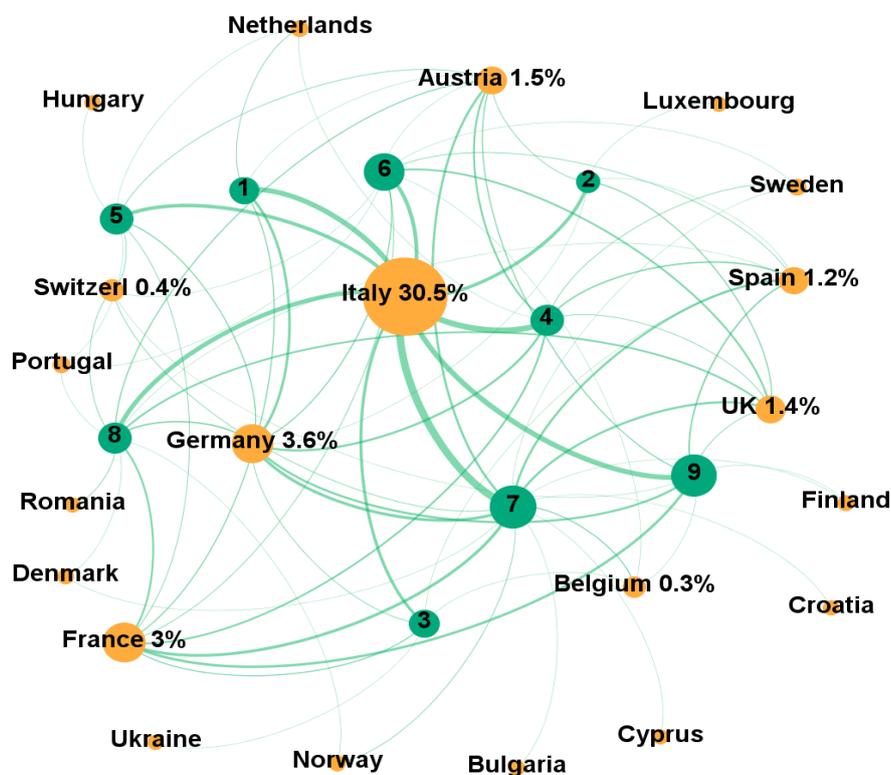
Over 90 percent of all Nigerians’ Facebook friends (n=1850) are currently located in African (48 percent) and European (43 percent) countries (see Figure 15). Among those living in Nigeria, 40 percent reside in the following cities: Benin-City, Lagos, Asaba, and Warri. Next comes Tanzania, Ghana, South Africa, Cote d’Ivoire, and Libya. Within Europe, 30 percent reside in Italy, mostly in Rome, Milan, Bari/Canosa di Puglia, Bologna, Turin, and Verona (see Network 2). For the most part these Facebook friends are Nigerians who have migrated to Italy.

About 5.7 percent of all friends live in the United States, as indicated by the bigger yellow node in the network graph. The percentages of Nigerians’ friends who live in Eastern and Middle Eastern countries are, respectively, 1.5 percent and 1.2 percent. Almost all of them live in the United Arab Emirates.

Fig. 15: Distribution of Nigerian migrants' friends by region (n=1850)

Region of the World	Countries	Number of countries as a Percentage of the total	Number of Friends	Percentage of main nationality of Friends
Africa	25	33.33	896	48.43 (Nigeria 40.7)
Europe	21	28.00	798	43.14 (Italy 30.5)
US, Canada, South America	13	17.33	105	5.68 (US 66.7)
East	11	14.67	28	1.51
Middle East	5	6.67	23	1.24 (Emirates 97)
Total	75	100	1850	100

The network below (Network 2) is the same two-mode network redrawn (node positions have been rearranged) to show only the 21 European countries of the full network of 75 countries. The percentages shown are calculated with reference to the full network (n=1850) as the graph below is a subset. Italy is the most central node with over 30.5 percent of the total network of Facebook friends currently residing there. Other relevant countries are Germany (3.6 percent of the full network), France (3 percent), Austria (1.5 percent), the UK (1.4 percent), Spain (1.2 percent), Switzerland (0.4 percent), and Belgium (0.3 percent). Percentage values lower than 0.3 percent are not shown.²⁰

Fig. 16: Network 2 – Section of Network 1 showing only Nigerians' Facebook friends residing in European countries (n=798; countries=21; individuals=9)

²⁰ Rescaled according to the 43% (n=798) of Facebook friends that reside in the 21 European countries, the percentages are as follow: Italy (70.4% or 562 out of 798), Germany (8.3%), France (7%), Austria (3.4%), UK (3.3%), and Spain (2.8%).

Results for the Bangladeshi community show that most Facebook friends currently reside in Dhaka (61 percent). Within Italy (19 percent) most friends live in the cities of Rome, Milan, Naples, and several Sicilian villages.

Aside from this similar pattern of friends residing in the home country and Italy, the structure of Bangladeshis' and Nigerians' online social ties are quite different. Other than Italy and Bangladesh, countries found among Bangladeshi migrants include Malaysia (3.3 percent), Saudi Arabia (2 percent), India (1.8 percent), the United Arab Emirates (1.2 percent), South Africa, and Pakistan (both 1 percent). European countries are underrepresented among Bangladeshis' Facebook friends, with only a few individuals residing in Germany (0.8 percent), Belgium and France (0.35 percent), Albania and in the UK (0.2 percent). Bangladeshis' friends were men in 95 percent of the cases, whereas Nigerian migrants displayed gender balanced networks of friends (that is, 48 percent males, 51 percent females). The average age is similar for both groups, with almost all Facebook friends being the same age (that is, between the ages of 20 and 40).

For both the Bangladeshi and Nigerian communities, friendships with people from the same country of origin are much higher than friendships with people of European origin. For the most part, Nigerians and Bangladeshis had friends from their own nationality who were in Italy and other European countries, and had few friends of what is often considered European nationalities and/or origin. These data provide insights into the degree of homophily (vs. heterophily) in migrants' egocentric Facebook networks. Homophily is the extent to which social ties between similar people occur more often than chance alone would predict. In this context, status homophily grounded on compatriot affinity proves key in the Facebook friends' network of both communities – in other words, most friends of Nigerian migrants are other Nigerian migrants. The same for the Bangladeshi sample

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Part I: Decision making and migrants' knowledge of Europe and their destination

- Most migrants did not have a specific destination or country in mind before departing from Libya. While some might have had a better sense of the European countries they wanted to reach as a result of better information access or the existence of familial or social ties, overall migrants' knowledge of Europe is limited.
- The decision to migrate cannot be traced to a single variable. Socio-economic status, conflict, family issues, overall insecurity and the desire to improve one's life all feature as part of their decision.
- Conditions in Libya – including those related to immigration controls from Europe – trigger migration to Europe, even if Europe as a destination is not clearly understood. Migrants were simply seeking to reach a destination safer than Libya.
- Smugglers do not sell specific destinations, but rather transportation services. Interactions with smugglers are not seen as inherently negative, as most migrants have relied on their services during their journeys in the past. While smuggling facilitators are often depicted as being unpleasant, migrants are used to interact with them from their past experiences. Smugglers are also perceived as necessary, even benevolent actors in the migration process and as part of migrants' attempts to reach safety.

Part II: Expectations and realities in Italy

- Most migrants have no specific expectations about the countries that receive them – including Italy. Some may have expectations about employment opportunities, the possibility of staying in the country of arrival and the availability of housing. **Specific messages concerning protection, human rights or asylum, however, are not formed prior to their arrival, and they are most often communicated by boat crews and humanitarian staff and consolidated through interactions at processing facilities, reception centres and places of residence. Messages of protection appear to be attributable to European actors, rather than to the diaspora, other migrants or smugglers.**
- The inability to work is the cause of significant stress among recently arrived migrants. For those who are single household providers, and especially for those who have taken loans to cover legs of their journeys, their inability to keep up with payments may put their relatives back home in difficulty. All too often these are unable to cover expenses and may face the loss of their collateral or even opt to migrate themselves to pay off owed money.
- Racism and discrimination hinder the ability of migrants to integrate into Italian society. Even when in possession of the legal right to work, migrants consistently reported being denied employment opportunities on the basis of their appearance, religion, or country of origin.
- Wage theft, as well as, verbal and physical abuse on the part of Italian citizens were commonly reported by migrants, even by those who have the legal right to work. Acts of violence and discrimination were commonplace.
- **Wrong, inaccurate, and incomplete information is frequently shared with migrants by other migrants in transit, migrants in destination countries or by the diaspora.** This may lead migrants to make mistakes that compromise their ability to obtain or qualify for protection. It may also push some into accepting employment or housing options that are exploitative or abusive.

- **Migrants prefer face-to-face, personal communications in the course of decision-making processes.** Social media and online platforms are used only sporadically as sources of information. Migrants gather information from trusted sources, which include friends, family members, and in particular, the staff at reception centres and in humanitarian organisations.
- **Smugglers as well as Authorities – or any other official or authority body – are the least trusted sources of information among migrants.**

Part III: Secondary Movements

- About 70 percent of surveyed migrants do not wish to leave Italy. They have developed, even if precarious, mechanisms to support themselves. Many have friends, family members, or even their own families, all of which are ties that are likely to stop them from considering secondary movements. Many others prefer the level of uncertainty they face in Italy to the uncertainty that they experienced in Libya and sometimes in their countries of origin.
- **Only 8 percent of respondents expressed the need/desire to embark on secondary movements.** Those who arrived in 2017 appear to be more likely to wish to leave Italy than those whose arrival took place in 2016.
- Those who are planning to move have multiple reasons: the lack of employment eligibility or opportunities; limited possibilities for asylum claims to be approved, and overall conditions of racism, harassment and discrimination.
- **The majority of those who decide to move had that intention from the start of their journeys.**
- Most migrants have cell phones and consider these to be important tools for day-to-day interactions.
- Migrants use social media and apps, but use varies across nationalities. For Bangladeshi migrants, for example, smart phones were used mainly for phone calls, when Syrian migrants reportedly use apps and Facebook to plan multiple details concerning their journeys. But in general, social media was not used much more than for keeping abreast of general developments at home, abroad, in politics and sports. Most migrants preferred personal communications and use social media as a supplemental source of information and communication.

Part IV: Social Media and Social Network Analysis

- This section involved a subsample of the larger survey and interview data, and involved migrants between the ages of 20 and 40 who had Facebook profiles that were public and had no restrictions concerning access to friends and preferences.
- Migrants use Facebook for reasons other than communicating or accessing information about migration journeys. In fact, **information about journeys themselves remains absent from the publicly-available posts among Nigerian migrants; only Bangladeshi migrants opted to upload pictures of segments of their journeys.** It is speculated that migrants may stop posting during the most difficult phases of their journeys. They also post images or text to announce their arrival in European destinations.
- Social media is not used to collect information concerning migratory journeys. Not a single migrant surveyed and/or interviewed indicated relying on social media for that purpose. Among those whose accounts were analysed in search of material concerning migration there was no indication that they collected migration related data. None of the profiles analysed were affiliation to any migrant group or association.
- Most posts involve carefully curated self-representations of migrants during their time in Europe, often shown accompanied by other migrants. Pictures show migrants in cities across Italy, at tourist sites, dressed smartly, and often thanking friends, families for their trust and support. These were common

elements in the sample. **Shame or fear of stigma may prevent the diffusion of images of stress, detention, illness or despair.**

- **Migrants who have Facebook use it to expand their online contacts.** Immediate networks (those constituted by friends and family members with whom interaction is continuous) may “saturate” – that is, provide the same information consistently which comes from identical sources. Facebook accounts indicate migrants often expand their networks, which allows them access to new data and information, but none were identified as related to or used for secondary movements.
- **Social Network Analysis of online migrant network ties (via Facebook) shows that migrants from Nigeria have a high percentage of contacts in Europe** (43 percent of all Nigerian’s Facebook friends claim to be currently in Europe, especially in Italy), **whereas European countries are less represented among the Facebook Friends of Bangladeshi migrants.** This can be explained by the increase in Facebook use by Bangladeshi migrants only upon their arrival to Italy.
- For both the Bangladeshi and Nigerian communities, **in-group friendships with people from the same country of origin are much higher than out-group friendships with people of European origin.**

The study also showed that campaigns, messages, or narratives from actors perceived as official are the least trusted forms of information among migrants. Migrants are very much aware of the anti-immigrant climate that permeates across Europe, and know of the attempts to deter them from migrating, becoming employed, exploring training options, or engaging in secondary movements. In this sense, campaigns or websites that are perceived as coming directly from the EU authorities are unlikely to be found to be supportive of migrants’ efforts to improve their quality of life.

Based on the research described here and on the literature examined in preparation for this report, below are some of the challenges that campaigns designed to raise migrants’ and potential migrants’ awareness of the risks of irregular migration and associated issues have encountered:

- Increased awareness of the risks inherent to clandestine or irregular migration has not shown to have an impact on migrant behaviour. In other words, migrants are aware that there are risks on their journeys, and hardly require additional evidence of them. At the same time, migrants attempt to separate the images and stories they hear about and the experiences of other migrants concerning death and tragedy from their own.
- Messages are too general and do not target a particular population or experience. Most campaigns assume that migrants’ reasons to migrate are the same across populations. Campaigns that mobilise blanket-statements to raise awareness over the risks of irregular migration are often disregarded by migrants and their families and are not taken into account in decision-making processes. Furthermore, campaign messages often reflect stories that far from reflect the dynamics faced by migrants.
- Campaigns criminalising or making negative references to migration, employing moralistic undertones or relying on fear mongering are, if visibly appealing, hardly a deterrence. Culturally, migrants have been exposed to similar images about migration within their own countries, and while videos, songs, training courses and pamphlets may increase the visibility of a specific campaign, migrants do not find their own dynamics reflected there. Campaigns run the risk of their target audience dismissing or trivialising the risks inherent in the journeys.
- Campaigns are almost universally perceived as coming from government authorities. This immediately eliminates their credibility.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations based on the report's findings:

a. The development of a grass roots initiative in Italy to involve community-based education that incorporates humanitarian staff into the diffusion of specific migration messages, but that simultaneously can provide real-time mechanisms for the collection of data on migrant decision-making processes.

Humanitarian staff and mediators working closely with migrants are their most trusted source of information, and can potentially constitute effective conduits of information. As an alternative to an online-platform (which would be rarely consulted by migrants), we propose relying on existing centres to carry out trainings on the challenges of the current migration system and that provide a thorough exploration of the options migrants can resort to in other locations – such as their countries of origin. These messages should be disseminated by the most trusted and reliable actors: the staff at humanitarian and reception centres.

DG Home **in collaboration with the staff at reception centres and civil society members working at informal settlements** could contribute to the facilitation of additional **targeted messages** concerning the need for safe, regular and orderly migration and the risks of irregular onward journeys. **These targeted messages can reduce the likelihood of migrants deciding to embark on secondary journeys. This strategy can be carried out relying on technology already available to migrants – e.g. their cell phones – which can be used to disseminate a single, common set of messages that can be developed with EU support and supervision.**

b. The creation of a communication strategy aimed at behavioural change that supplements data from social media with messages from trusted sources. Any strategies that emerge should take advantage of the existence of migrants' trusted sources in order to drive behavioural changes. Strategies that rely on personalised, small group, word-of-mouth communication are the most reliable forms of disseminating information. Harnessing the power of staff at reception centres will be a key aspect in the dissemination of any information conducive to generate change, as other mechanisms of communication like television, radio or newspapers have proven not to be sources of information consulted by migrants nor effective tools to engage with them.

Social media alone is not an effective way to communicate messages to migrants. Yet when combined with word-of-mouth communication from reliable sources, it strengthens the already existing ability of migrants to engage with information rationally and to make better informed choices. Further, if the information comes from well informed and documented sources, it will have the ability to counter the influence of poor, contradictory or erroneous information and/or sources of the kinds often accessed by or available to migrants.

c. Develop target group/specific initiatives. A review of the literature on migrant campaigns indicates that one of their shortcomings is their monolithic nature – that is, the fact that they assume most migrants have similar profiles or experiences that would be reflected in the messages circulated. This project revealed differences among migrants from different nationalities, but also differences within nationalities. Some migrants had friends and family members in their countries of origin or in the diaspora who could provide help or support, while others were often on their own and in some cases, consciously avoiding interactions with their families. In this sense, any

messages at the core of any campaign must keep in mind different backgrounds and experiences.

d. Crafting a flexible, adaptable diaspora-specific campaign. Migrants rely on word of mouth information from other migrants and members of the diaspora, both in the country of arrival and potential secondary destinations. However, many times the information migrants obtain is erroneous, outdated, and leads migrants to lose legal benefits or protection. A campaign that recognises the strengths and contributions of the diaspora and provides it with clear, concise and accurate information that can be disseminated through short messages can have an impact on migrants' ability to secure improved ways to travel, to become better informed about the limitations or restrictions they may find upon their arrival to the destination country, and assist them in making a decision concerning their journey.

ADDENDUM

Methodology

The study adopts a mixed-method design.

- It began with a literature review of all the identifiable studies and data on migrants' secondary journeys. This survey further focused on the literature that analysed the role of modern communication channels in facilitating irregular migration, and allowed for the identifying and mapping of all sources of information (official media, relatives, friends, smugglers) and communication channels (social network) used by migrants throughout their journeys in Europe.
- The qualitative analysis of twelve in-depth interviews and five focus groups (see figure 1 for its territorial distribution) were combined. This was added to the quantitative survey of 650 migrants for a total of 686 interviews. The data collected was representative of the different migrant nationalities arriving in Italy in the period between January and June 2017. Fieldwork was conducted between August and November of 2017.
- Social Network Analysis (SNA) of Facebook profiles was carried out. A convenience sample of 21 individuals, ten Nigerians and eleven Bangladeshi migrants was selected to compare two of the largest communities of migrants in Italy at the time of the fieldwork.
- Initial plans to create a Facebook page for the research project had to be discontinued for two main reasons. Early in the research it became clear that most migrants lacked or declined to provide details concerning their Facebook accounts. And even in the event that they had accounts, Facebook's privacy settings limited researchers' ability to access and download specific data for social network analysis – in short, the strategy had a low pay-off for Social Network Analysis because creating a specific Facebook page does not allow researchers to fully access the user's network data. The only way to access these data was to ask study participants to download their own network data, using specific applications and procedures that are not widely used by the public, and to forward them to the researcher. This option involved a level of technicality that is challenging even for an expert in the field. For this reason, conversations with DG Home staff were held to minimise the impact of the missing data. Profiles were subsequently collected using a different approach in the context of the qualitative and ethnographic fieldwork.

Sampling method and statistics

A sampling framework was designed that was scientifically robust (i.e. representative) and adapted to the population to be sampled. A non-random snowball sampling was used to collect the data, as access to all migrants residing in centres and informal settlements was logistically impossible. This method involves the recruitment of respondents through previously-interviewed subjects or acquaintances. The method is prescribed as an efficient recruitment tool for hidden populations, or when subjects are difficult to locate as was the case with migrants residing in informal settlements. Many respondents were also selected by the interviewers based on their personal relations or knowledge with the interviewee. To attenuate the possible biases of the sample reached through the snowball technique, the sample was stratified using the basic demographic characteristics (origin, age and sex) of the population of migrants entering Italy in the period January-June 2017.

Limitations, difficulties and mitigation

- Concerning the survey, collection errors were minimised through the use of a computer assisted personal interviews (CAPI) device. Pilot interviews tested the difficulty and the duration of the questionnaire. Interviewers had prior experience using the data collection device, and most importantly, they all were professional researchers or professionals employed in the reception centres.
- The bias of the snowball method was mitigated by choosing a diversified set of informants and recruiters. However, some bias related to the non-random selection of the initial sample and to the collection of potentially redundant information within the same social network remains.
- Omissions and fragmented information: respondents may mislead or withhold information vital to this research. Yet multiple entry points in the field activities and data triangulation strategies helped increase the validity and reliability of findings.
- Limited time for research: an in-depth study of this kind required the combination of survey research with more ethnographic methods (e.g. participant observation). The limited time (7 months) for carrying out this study prevented such an inquiry. That said, the team's extensive social networks in the field and the team's expertise have, it is hoped, furnished unique insights into this severely underexplored topic.

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