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Decision-making in Migrants' Journeys through Europe

The Role of Social Networks, Human Smugglers, and Institutional Actors

Master Sociology: Contemporary Social Problems

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Abstract

Recent developments have caused a high influx of migrants to Europe and to the Netherlands since April 2015, in a situational context that is rapidly changing due to the unprecedented nature of this flow of migrants. In light of these developments, it is important for the Migration Policy Department of the Ministry of Security and Justice to know how this migrant flow can be regulated, while at the same time ensuring the safety of these migrants. Whereas migrants' attempts to reach European soil are well-documented in academic research, just as their integration process after arrival in a country of destination, much less is known on the process in between. This thesis therefore aims at explaining migrants' decision-making process during their journey from European border countries to the Netherlands. In order to answer this question, the role of three potentially important factors in this journey is assessed: the role of social networks (and social media as part of them), the role of human smugglers, and the role of institutional sources. This has been done by conducting qualitative interviews with sixteen migrants who recently (over the past three years) migrated to the Netherlands. The results suggest that indeed, these three sources turn out to be the most important factors in explaining migrants' decision-making process, but sometimes in unexpected ways. Whereas previous research suggests that social media become increasingly important in the smuggling process, this could not be substantiated by the findings of this research. On the contrary, all migrants were said to have used ear-to-ear advertising in order to arrange the smuggling process, whereas many of them did have smartphones and access to social media. Another main finding of this research is that the Dublin rules appear to play a main role in all migrant journeys. Whereas migrants valued being physically safe, they seemed to be more anxious of putting their desired future at risk by getting fingerprinted in a country where they did not want to request asylum. Based on additional interviews with representatives of the Migration Policy Department, the International Organisation for Migration and the Dutch Police, the final recommendation of this research is to take these differences between physical safety and perceptions of security into account in designing policies aimed at a more effective and fair European asylum system.

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Preface

This thesis is written as part of my internship at the Migration Policy Department of the Ministry of Security and Justice. I would like to thank my colleagues there for their help and good advice during the process of writing this thesis, but most of all for an inspiring time as part of the Strategic Liaison Unit. I would also like to thank dr. Amy Nivette for her support and useful feedback throughout the process of writing this thesis. In addition, I am most grateful to all those migrants who were willing to share their stories with me and brought the topic of migration to life.

List of Abbreviations

COA	Reception and supervision of asylum seekers agency (Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers)
CPI	Corruption Perceptions Index
DMB	Migration Policy Department (Directie Migratiebeleid)
EMM	Expertise Centre on Human Trafficking and Human Smuggling (Expertisecentrum Mensenhandel en Mensenmokkel)
EMN	European Migration Network
EU	European Union
Frontex	Agency for the management of operational cooperation at the external borders of the European Union
IND	Immigration and Naturalisation Service (Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst)
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
KMAR	Royal Dutch Marechaussee
V&J	Ministry of Security and Justice of the Netherlands (Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Timeline of important events in the European 'migrant crisis' in 2015

23 June 2015: Hungary stopped receiving back 'Dublin-applicants'

13 July 2015: Hungary began building a fence along its border with Serbia

20-22 August 2015: Macedonia sealed its border with Greece

24 August 2015: Germany decided to voluntarily assume responsibility for Syrian asylum applicants who already gave their fingerprints in another EU country

2 September 2015: the Czech Republic offered Syrian refugees who already applied for asylum elsewhere in Europe to have their application processed in the Czech Republic

13 September 2015: Germany introduced temporary controls on its border with Austria

14 September 2015: Austria introduced controls on its border with Hungary

15 September 2015: Hungary closed its border with Serbia and started building a fence along its border with Croatia

17 September 2015: Croatia closed seven out of eight border crossings with Serbia

5 November 2015: Austria began building a fence along its border with Slovenia

11 November 2015: Slovenia began building a fence along its border with Croatia

28 November 2015: Macedonia began building a fence along its border with Greece

1. Introduction

1.1 General Introduction

The current era is one that is increasingly characterized by globalization, which is accompanied by the politically salient phenomenon of migration. In 'The Age of Migration', Castles, Miller and Ammendola (2005) set out to explain how international migration has become a phenomenon that is commonly believed to pose several challenges. The sinking of five boats in the Mediterranean Sea in April 2015 that were carrying over 2,000 migrants (of whom it was estimated that at least 1,200 died) painfully reminded European citizens and policy makers of these challenges. The debate around the 'migrant crisis'[1] (Nu.nl, 2015) and the challenges that this crisis is believed to pose for Europe, is often focused on tragic events like these. It has become evident that journalists seem to be mainly focused on trying to understand firstly what the conditions are that make people leave their country of origin, secondly why and how migrants reach European soil (the Mediterranean boat tragedies as described above are well-documented in the media), and subsequently how their arrival in countries of destination influences the receiving societies (NRC, 2016). Scholars alike have been preoccupied with how migrants' decisions to move elsewhere come about before migrants actually start their journey, as well as with their adaptation and integration strategies once arrived in the country of destination. What receives much less attention in the societal as well as the academic debate, is the journey that migrants make in between the point of entry in Europe to the country of destination. This is remarkable considering the fact that for the majority of the migrants, the countries at the border of the European Union are not the end point of their journey.

This hiatus in our knowledge of migration to European countries has been acknowledged by some academics (Kuschminder, De Bresser & Siegel, 2015; Schapendonk, 2011) as well as by the Migration Policy Department of the Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice (February 18, 2016). As Kuschminder, De Bresser and Siegel (2015) point out, virtually nothing is known on migrants' routes to the Netherlands from the point where they enter the EU, and further research is clearly necessary to assess how, when, and where migrants make decisions on how to proceed with their journey once they have reached Europe. Schapendonk (2011) in turn mentions that it is likely that throughout their journey migrants make different

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[1] I have chosen to use the term 'crisis', even though calling the migration situation in Europe a crisis is not uncontested. I have chosen to use it anyhow since it emphasizes the specificity of the migration context in Europe since 2015. I would like to emphasize that the situation is not simply a crisis because of the high numbers of migrants that came to Europe, but mainly because of the difficulties the EU and its Member States are facing in dealing with these migrants (and the precarious situations that result from these difficulties).

choices, based on different considerations, during different stages of their migration trajectories. He therefore stresses the importance of viewing migration as a process of moving, by which he means that research should not only focus on migrants' decision making process before migrating and their adaptation and integration after settling in a destination country, but that research should particularly focus on the process in between. Recognizing this gap in migration research, Schapendonk (2011) discloses migrants' strategies and decision-making process from Sub-Saharan Africa to countries bordering the EU. However, as mentioned before, these border countries are for many migrants not their destination. Hence, this research focuses on migrants' strategies, information gathering, and decision making processes during the often long journey that migrants still have ahead after they arrive in these EU border countries. The central research question that is posed in this thesis is therefore: *How can the decision-making process of migrants during their journey through Europe be explained?*

It is important to bridge this gap in migration research in several respects: insights into the decision-making process of migrants throughout their journeys may for example be used to provide migrants with more reliable and accurate information along their journeys. Along these lines knowledge on migrants' journeys may also aid in providing safer routes and possibilities along the routes for migrants. In this sense the answer to this question may eventually aid the Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice (Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justie, or V&J) in creating safer possibilities for migrants while travelling through Europe. For the Migration Policy Department of V&J, getting insight into migrants' journeys through Europe is moreover an objective in itself. In order to have an effective and fair European asylum system, the lack of knowledge regarding migrants' routes and decision-making process is a severe problem. Policy makers are highly aware of the fact that many migrants travel through safe countries in Europe where they could request asylum, but that they choose to travel onwards to for example the Netherlands. These choices reveal an ineffective asylum system at the heart of the European 'migrant crisis'[2]. Gaining insight into the decision-making process of migrants is therefore a prerequisite when designing new migration policies.

The question posed above will be answered by conducting qualitative interviews among migrants who have recently (over the past three years) travelled to the Netherlands. These interviews will be focused on every aspect of information-gathering and decision-making of

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[2] A cornerstone of this European asylum system is the Dublin regulation, which states that the country where a migrant first sets foot in is the country that is responsible for the asylum procedure of that asylum seeker. The fact that migrants travel through safe EU countries without requesting asylum therefore indicates the ineffectiveness of the asylum system. This issue is further elaborated upon on page 20.

migrants during their journey from the point where they entered Europe, until the point of destination in the Netherlands. As previous research has identified social networks as the main source of information in migration processes (Kuschminder, De Bresser & Siegel, 2015), this research will focus on the role of social networks in the information-gathering and decision-making process of migrants. Aside from the current era being an 'Age of Migration', it is furthermore commonly dubbed an age of 'digitalization' in which the Internet has been said to fundamentally change significant aspects of social, economic and political life around the world (Ackland, 2013). As this too may have its impact on migration (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014), the role of the Internet in general and social media in particular have also been taken into account in this research. Since the literature also points out that migrant smugglers and institutional sources can act as information sources (Kuschminder, De Bresser & Siegel, 2015; McGregor & Siegel, 2013), these will also be taken into account. Institutional sources may be   representatives of government institutions (police, border guards) or representatives of NGOs (for example the Red Cross).

1.2 Definitions and Outline

Before moving on to the theoretical framework, it may be enlightening to reflect on the concept of human smuggling. The United Nations (UN) has defined human smuggling as the procurement of the illegal entry of a person into a state of which the individual is not a resident, with the intention of obtaining a financial or material benefit (UNODC, 2016). Whereas this definition may prove to be useful in a legal sense, as well as for an extensive amount of scientific research, it is not particularly useful for this research. According to the UN definition, one cannot be engaged in the act of human smuggling if no national borders are crossed. Of course, human 'smuggling' may also have severe effects on migrants' journeys when it does not involve crossing a national boundary. Therefore, this thesis will also focus on forms of transporting people with the objective of obtaining a financial or material benefit when no national borders are crossed. While in a strict sense this is not 'human smuggling', it is considered to be of central relevance in order to give a meaningful answer to the research question as posed before.

This thesis will start with an assessment of the existing literature on the role of social networks, human smugglers and institutional sources in migration trajectories, and their implications for the main research question. The third chapter will elaborate on the methodological approach and data of this research. Chapter four discusses the results that followed from 16 migrant interviews, from which conclusions are drawn in chapter five. After

discussing the potential limitations of this research (chapter six) some policy recommendations are drawn from the results and additional interviews with practitioners in chapter seven.

2. Theoretical Framework

A migrant's journey from his country of origin to a country of destination is characterized by a constant search for information. All migrants will at some point during their journey encounter a situation where he does not know where to go next, or how to get there. This makes that one needs to search for information on how to successfully proceed with the journey. This search is accompanied by a constant need to judge information and its sources on reliability and trustworthiness, which in turn may affect migrants' perceptions of safety along their journey. The current chapter will focus on the implications that existing theories and previous research have for the process of information gathering along migrants' trajectories. In order to make sense of this information in policy terms, the final part of this chapter will focus on a theoretical framework that also incorporates the implications this has for migration policies.

2.1 Sources of Information

The migration process is one that can be influenced by a variety of factors. As Kuschminder, De Bresser and Siegel (2015) point out, migrants' routes can be affected by factors ranging from weather conditions along the route to migrants' beliefs and aspirations regarding a country of destination. The authors name many other factors such as safety and conflict along the route, border surveillance, the availability (or absence) of smugglers, the socio-economic status of the migrant, conditions and experiences in transit countries and access to information and social networks. In this same manner, migrants' search for information is likely to be affected by numerous factors as well. As mentioned in the introduction, it is moreover important to recognize that (the influence of) such factors may be very different during different stages of the migration process. With regard to the search for information, there is for example much research on the importance of social networks for migrants in the phase *before* migrants actually start with their journey (Massey, 1990; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1997; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014), as well as on their importance once a migrant has settled in a country of destination (Vertovec, 2004). It is however highly likely that many of these information sources are not present *during* migrants' journeys. The current research is an attempt to find out what the role of for example social networks is during the migration process, and how this differs from the role of networks in pre- and post-migration phases.

Along these same lines of thinking, migrants' dependence on information from human smugglers will be very different during different stages of migrants' journeys. It is commonly

known that to get from Izmir (Turkey) to Lesbos (Greece), for example, virtually all migrants are dependent on (information from) smugglers (EMN, 2015). It is likely that smuggling plays a very different role once migrants arrive in Greece, but little is known about if, how, when, and why migrants depend on information from smugglers in Europe (April 18, 2016). The same goes for migrants' dependence on information from government officials during different stages of migrants' trajectories. Dependence on such institutional sources may vary as countries have different manners in which public services are organized.

For each of these sources of information (social networks, smugglers and government officials) I will discuss what is known about their role in the migration process, and what the implications are for the way migrants organize their journey. I will first turn to the role of social networks in the migration process.

2.2 Information from Social Networks

Whether a migrant has a concrete destination in mind or whether he is merely in search of an 'abstract elsewhere' (Schapendonk, 2011) where he or she can live safely, throughout a journey a migrant needs to gather information on how to reach this destination or objective. One way to get this information is through one's social network: the people you know can function as a source of information. In this sense, the social capital that is embedded within social networks (Bourdieu, 1986) may facilitate the process of migration. As mentioned, much research has been done on the role of social networks in the process of deciding to migrate (Massey, 1990) as well as on the importance of social networks once a migrant arrives in the country of destination (Vertovec, 2004), but much less is known about the role of social networks while migrants are travelling from their country of origin to the country of destination. A study by Wissink, Düvell and Van Eerdewijk (2013) suggests however that social networks and the social capital that flows from these networks are also important in transit phases of migration (defined as a place and phase in migration where migrants intend to move onwards). This evidence is a provisional indication that social networks do not only play an important role in pre- and post-migration phases, but are also important when migrants are still travelling towards their point of destination.

Migrants' social networks may consist of friends and family that are left behind in their country of origin. Theoretically, migrants could stay in touch with these people through modern communication technology, such as phones and the Internet. It is however unlikely that migrants use these as sources of information on a great scale, since the people at home will only to a very limited extent be able to provide useful information. Whereas these

contacts are highly important in pre- and post-migration phases (Vertovec, 2004; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014), they are expected to play at most a minor role during the process of migration. On the contrary, friends and relatives that migrants are travelling with are probably an important source of information, as well as other people (including other migrants) encountered during the journey. Gathering information from sources that a migrant personally knows will probably be the most desirable way of finding information on how to proceed with the journey, since these are often more trustworthy sources than strangers. In this respect, Tilly (2007) makes notion of the concept of 'trust networks'. Tilly (2007:7) explains that 'trust consists of placing valued outcomes at risk to others' malfeasance, mistakes or failures'. A trust relationship, then, is one in which people regularly take such risks. These are the kinds of relationships from which information is gathered that is deemed reliable, and therefore the kind of information with which migrants will most likely feel safe. In other words, migrants are probably willing to rely on information gained from strong ties within their trust network, and feel safe with this information. In the absence of strong ties within a trust network that can provide useful information on the remainder of the journey, migrants will rely on other sources of information.

2.2.1 Social Media in Migrant Trajectories

Over the past years, social media have transformed our means of communication by enabling information to spread much more quickly through social networks. Much research has been done on how the Internet in general (Hiller & Franz 2004; Kissau 2012) and social media in particular (Komito, 2011; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Withaeckx, Schrooten & Geldof, 2015) have transformed migration because it has become much easier to collect information before migrating, and to stay in contact with family and friends who are still in the country of origin after settling in a new country. In this sense, the Internet has not only made it easier to migrate because much more information on for example countries of destination is available, and there is much more and quicker contact with people in countries of destination; also the concept of being a migrant and living somewhere far away from 'home' has become much less intrusive because it is much easier to stay in contact with friends and relatives who stayed in the country of origin. Along these lines of thinking some have argued that the 'death of distance' that has been said to follow from the rise of the Internet (Cairncross, 1997) also takes place in migration because distance no longer limits communication between friends and family members that are separated by large geographical distances (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Komito, 2011). Whereas to my knowledge there is no literature on the role of social

media during migration journeys, Dekker and Engbersen (2014) (who make a solid case for the fact that social media transform the nature of social networks and thereby facilitate migration) offer some meaningful insights that may have interesting implications for the process of migration. They find for example that social media address weak ties that are important to organize the process of migration, and that social media establish an infrastructure of latent ties. In addition they state that social media offer unofficial 'insider' knowledge on migration that may aid the process of migrating. Whereas Dekker and Engbersen focus on the importance of these mechanisms for the process before migrating and after arriving in a destination country, it is plausible that a network of latent ties maintained through social media is also important *during* migrants' journeys. Such a network may be a very useful source of information on how to proceed with a journey, especially in the absence of the above mentioned strong, 'non-virtual' ties (or trust networks).

2.3 Information and Services from Human Smugglers

An interesting case in point where migrants place valued outcomes at risk to others' malfeasance (Tilly, 2007) is human smuggling. Migrants often have good reason not to trust smugglers, yet they do rely on their information and services in order to proceed with their journey: studies on human smuggling show that the overwhelming majority of irregular migrants are smuggled at some point during their journey (EMN, 2015; Europol/Interpol 2016). The role of trust in smuggler-migrant relationships is therefore an interesting one. In processes where a migrant makes use of a smuggler for his or her journey, trust is often required from the migrant as well as the smuggler. The smuggler needs to know that the migrant is someone who seeks a possibility to migrate elsewhere, and not an informant who will report the smuggler to the authorities. In addition a smuggler needs to make sure that a migrant will comply with the agreements made, for example paying a fee upon his arrival in the destination country (Campana & Varese, 2015). For the migrant much is at stake as well: an unreliable smuggler could mean a risk of exploitation or even risking his or her life. The migrant therefore needs to make sure that the smuggler is to be trusted, and will provide a safe passage without violence and exploitation.

In this sense, the smuggler-migrant relationship is an agreement between two parties and can in this sense be seen as a market transaction. Comparing the smuggling market with regular markets, though having essential shortcomings, has some interesting implications for trust and perceptions of safety. The agreement between smuggler and migrant, which often takes place in an illegal market, is in many respects similar to regular market transactions.

One of these respects is information asymmetry: one side has much better information on the transaction than the other (Akerlof, 1995; Campana & Varese, 2015). In the 'smuggling market', one where gaining reliable information is a difficult task, this usually means that the migrant is in a weaker position with less information (which again is similar to regular markets, where the seller often is in a better information position than the buyer). The smuggling market differs from regular markets in the respect that legal enforcement of agreements is impossible: after all, the smuggling market by definition is an *illegal* one. Because migrants do not have legal means at their disposal in order to enforce the agreements made, they will try to build in safeguards or guarantees in different ways (Campana & Varese, 2015).

An example of such a safeguard is an agreement between smuggler and migrant on payment methods. For instance, they can agree that the migrant will pay part of the service offered by the smuggler before the journey, and part of it after the journey (which will only be paid if the transfer is successful). A different strategy in order to guarantee the effectiveness and safety of the journey, is for a migrant to choose a smuggler that charges higher fees for his or her services. Just as in regular markets, a higher price for a similar good or service is an indication that the good or service offered is of higher quality (Gabor & Granger, 1966). This leads to the expectation that having money at one's disposal is an important factor in migrant journeys.

In addition, literature on migrant smuggling suggests that reputation effects are of vital importance (Bilger, Hofmann & Jandl, 2006; Van Liempt & Doomernik, 2006; Campana & Varese, 2015). The previously described illegal character of smuggling makes that it is difficult for smugglers to openly advertise their reputation, as is the practice in regular markets. The reputation of a smuggler therefore largely depends on stories of other migrants who report on the services of this smuggler to other potential clients (Bilger, Hofmann & Jandl, 2006). Returning to the potential importance of the Internet and social media in migrant journeys, these findings of previous research may have several contradictory implications for the use of the Internet for smuggling services. On the one hand, the Internet has proven to be a very efficient and successful way for sellers to show how trustworthy they are and to advertise their reputation (Bolton, Greiner & Ockenfels, 2013), which would lead to the expectation that also smugglers would use the Internet to advertise their services. On the other hand, advertising these illegal services on the Internet increase the chance of getting caught. It may also be the case that people tend to trust others less through the Internet – as Kwan and Ramchandran (2009: 289) point out, the virtual world lacks potential signals of trust like body

language, tone of voice and facial expressions. This could imply that the Internet is not used for smuggling market transactions, and that ear-to-ear advertising through non-virtual migrant networks remains the most important way of organizing smuggler-migrant market transactions.

2.4 Information from Institutional Sources

In the absence of a social network to rely on, one would assume that migrants will prefer to rely on information from institutional sources over human smugglers. However, this is of course dependent on how trustworthy these institutional sources or government officials are perceived to be. It is a more difficult task to draw implications from the literature on the role of (representatives of) institutions in migrants' journeys, than to assess the role of networks and smugglers. Whereas a large amount of literature is written on government institutions and its effects on and interactions with trust, these explanations for why people trust government officials (or not) are always based on the assumption that the people who are (dis)trusting institutional sources are residents of a certain country. Residents have broad experiences with the government institutions of their country, and therefore their levels of trust in these sources are likely to be influenced by this broad array of prior experiences with institutions of this country. As for migrants, however, their trust in government officials and institutional sources in a specific country are much more likely to be influenced by the few encounters they had with government officials while transiting through this country, or on certain images of these authorities. In addition it is also plausible that migrants' trust in government officials is dependent on perceptions of such institutional actors in their country of origin. Statistics show for example that trust in the police in the Netherlands is significantly lower among non-western immigrants than among native Dutch citizens (Politie & Wetenschap, 2013). The literature is however inconclusive and sometimes contradictory as to why this is the case (Dinesen & Hooghe, 2010; Röder & Mühlau, 2012; Van Craen, 2013), which makes it difficult to draw implications on whether migrants would or would not trust government officials during their journey.

The literature on levels of trust in government and its effect on perceptions of safety may therefore only partially be applicable to migrants travelling through such countries. Factors like the level of corruption of a government for example will however probably have a negative effect on migrants' sense of trust in government officials and therefore their perceptions of safety, as much as they negatively affect feelings of trust and safety of nationals of that country. Research shows for example that many central- and Eastern-

European countries have higher levels of government corruption, and that this is correlated to low levels of trust in the police (Kääriäinen, 2007). The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), which ranks countries according to the level of corruption that is perceived to exist among public officials, shows a similar pattern: Southern and Eastern European countries have higher perceived levels of corruption than Northern and Western European countries (see table 1 below). Under the assumption that these higher levels of corruption will also be visible to migrants transiting through a country, the data collected by Kääriäinen and the CPI suggest that migrants will have less trust in government officials in countries like Slovenia, than in Northern European countries like Germany and the Scandinavian countries (Greece and Austria hold the middle ground).

Corruption Perceptions Index 2015	
Serbia	40
Macedonia	42
Turkey	42
Italy	44
Greece	46
Croatia	51
Hungary	51
Slovenia	60
Austria	76
Germany	81
The Netherlands	87

Table 1: The perceived level of public sector corruption on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean) in selected countries, sorted from high levels of corruption to low levels of corruption. Source: Transparency International (2015).

2.5 The Policy Context: Migrant Journeys and Agency Theory

To make sense of all this information in policy terms, it is interesting to ask how being able to (or having to) rely on social networks, smugglers or government officials affects perceptions of safety. Agency theory is an interesting starting point in this respect. For the literature on agency and migration, it is again the case that most of the literature is written on the role of agency *before* people migrate. This literature is focused on the extent to which migrants have the agency to decide whether or not to migrate, and to what extent they are forced to migrate because of structural factors. From this becomes evident the inherent contrast in this theory

between agency on the one hand and structure on the other. Agency is by Bakewell (2010: 1694) defined as 'the capacity for social actors to reflect on their position, devise strategies and take action to achieve their desires'. Whereas much of the research on agency is focused on explanations for why migrants decide to move, there is also some literature on the role of agency in the process of migration; especially on the topic of human smuggling.

The process of migrating is by some perceived as a rational process of decision-making (where costs and benefits are weighed against each other). This rational choice approach to migration is often applied to human smuggling as well: an act that is from the perspective of the smuggler perceived as one that is committed with the sole purpose of gaining a financial benefit. In this process the migrant is often perceived as a passive actor that is the bound to the actions of the smuggler. Van Liempt and Doomernik (2006) on the contrary argue that in many respects migrants are not passive actors, and do in fact have agency in the migration and smuggling process. They arrange large parts of their journey by themselves, they can choose between different smugglers and different sources of information. This may even more be the case for the migration process within Europe. As mentioned before, almost all migrants travelling from African or Middle Eastern countries to Europe by boat rely on smugglers. This suggests that during this particular stage of their journey migrants have no choice but to make use of a smuggler, and have little agency in this respect (other than the choice *which* smuggler they use). However, once arrived on Europe's mainland, many different land routes are possible, which may mean that it is to a lesser extent necessary to rely on smugglers for information and help in moving onwards.

Especially Giddens' theory of structuration (1984) seems important in this regard. Whereas much of the literature on migration and smuggling is for example focused on the importance of structures (Salt, 2000; Bilger, Hofmann & Jandl, 2006), and others tend to focus on migrants' agency instead (Van Liempt & Doomernik, 2006; Van Liempt, 2007), Giddens (1984) focuses on the analysis of both structure and agency, without prioritizing one or the other. An assessment of the available literature on the topic of migrants' journeys (Schapendonk, 2011; Schapendonk & Steel, 2014; Kuschminder, De Bresser & Siegel, 2015) suggests that indeed structure and agency are both of vital importance. As mentioned, whereas migrants' journeys are certainly determined by the existence of for example smuggling networks, they are to some extent also free to make decisions within these existing structures. As this research is an explorative assessment of migrants' trajectories within Europe, it will focus on both structure and agency. While it is evident that both play an important role, it is

interesting to assess what the implications of structure and agency in the migration journey are for migrants' perceptions of safety along their journey.

In sum, it is to be expected that migrants will feel most safe if they can rely on strong ties within their personal social network. When migrants need information regarding the remainder of their journey, but cannot rely on their social network for such information, they will have to resort to other sources of information. An assessment of the literature leads to the expectation that whether migrants feel safe with the information from government officials, is greatly dependent on levels of trustworthiness and corruption of these government officials. In the absence of information from social networks as well as from reliable government officials, migrants will use corrupt government officials and human smugglers as a last resort for information and help, and probably feel less safe.

As mentioned in the introduction, it is of scientific relevance to gain more insight into the decision-making process of migrants during their journey through Europe because virtually nothing is known about this process. This knowledge may serve the goal of designing policies to provide migrants with safer opportunities on their journey. The lack of knowledge on migrants' journeys and decision-making process is however also problematic in other ways. The current developments with regard to the European migrant crisis are a reflection of an ineffective European asylum system that is at the heart of this crisis. The general idea of such a common system is that all European countries share the same fundamental values, and that all European Member States must have a joint approach to guarantee safety to those in need of protection according to the fundamental right to asylum as established in the 1951 Geneva Convention of the protection of refugees (UNHCR, 2010). The cornerstone of this common European asylum system is the Dublin system that determines which EU Member State is responsible for the procedure of an asylum applicant, a system that has proven to be untenable under the high influx of migrants since 2015[3]. The ineffectiveness of the Dublin system has put pressure on governments of Member States to find alternate solutions in order to guarantee a joint approach to providing shelter to those in need of protection. For an exploration of these alternate solutions it is necessary to have insights into the routes of migrants through Europe, the decisions they make during their journey, and the rationale behind these decisions (February 18, 2016). Therefore, as mentioned in the introduction, the

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[3] In June 2015 Hungary stopped taking back 'Dublin-applicants', at which Germany decided in August to voluntarily assume responsibility for Syrian migrants that were not its responsibility under the Dublin Regulation. The Czech Republic in turn started to offer Syrian migrants the option of applying for asylum in the Czech Republic or continue their journey elsewhere in Europe, even though they had already applied for asylum in another Member State. In addition, several Member States helped migrants to move onwards towards other countries in Europe, which is an action that is at odds with the Dublin system.

aim of this thesis is twofold. After discussing the methodology, the findings of this research will be presented in order to bridge the gap in academic knowledge on migrants' decision-making process while travelling through Europe. The final chapter of this thesis will discuss the implications that these findings may have for European and Dutch migration policies.

3. Data and Methods

3.1 Research Design and Population

In order to gain insight into migrants' journeys and decision-making process, this research relies primarily on qualitative interviews with migrants who travelled to the Netherlands over the past three years. The choice has been made to focus on those who recently travelled to the Netherlands (over the past three years) as these people are most likely to accurately recall their journey and the decision-making process during this journey. In addition, the past year is characterized by what has sometimes been called the 'migrant crisis' of Europe: a rising number of migrants travelling to Europe as a consequence of increasing levels of political unrest and conflict in regions in the immediate neighborhood of the European Union. These circumstances make that many aspects of the journey through Europe are highly specific to the context of this 'migrant crisis'. For example, one needed only to read a newspaper to find out that a border between two countries closed at some point, and one needed only to follow the stream of people on a Greek island in order to find out where to register. Such circumstances make that the process of gathering information and planning a journey has been very different for migrants who travelled through Europe recently, than for those who came to Europe longer ago. Therefore, the choice has been made to focus mainly on those that migrated here over the past year, with the exception of one respondent who migrated to the Netherlands three years ago. As the migrant flow to the Netherlands over the past year consisted mainly of young Syrian men, these also make up the main part of the respondents in this research. It must be noted that there is also a practical limitation: Syrian people turned out to be a very accessible group, whereas I have not succeeded in getting in contact with for example Eritrean people, who are the second largest group of migrants to the Netherlands since 2015 (after the Syrians). Figure 1 on the next page shows the distribution of the country of origin of all asylum applicants in the Netherlands in 2015, which varies more than the sample in this research, which consisted of 14 Syrians, 1 Afghan and 1 stateless person (who resided in Syria before he decided to migrate).

Asylum applicants in the Netherlands in 2015 by country of origin
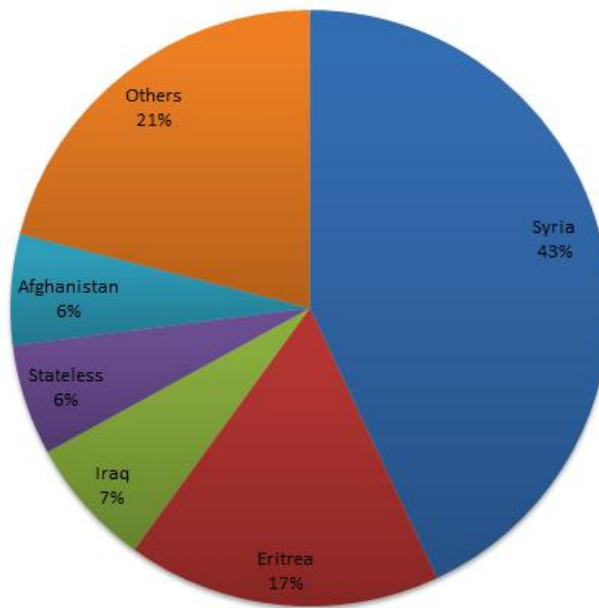
Figure 1: Asylum requests in the Netherlands in 2015 by country of origin. Source: IND (2015).

The sample used for this research is also biased in terms of gender. Whereas around 60% of the asylum applicants are male (CBS, 2015), all respondents in the current sample are male. All respondents that were interviewed are now residing in the Netherlands, except for one respondent (Mehmet) who had Germany as his country of destination and now lives there. Also, except for one respondent everyone migrated to Europe over the past year (since April 2015). One respondent (Wajid) came to the Netherlands three years ago.[4] The distribution of asylum applicants in the Netherlands also shows more variation in terms of age than the current sample, as can be seen in figures 2 and 3 on the next page.

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[4] A list of the interview respondents can be found in appendix B.
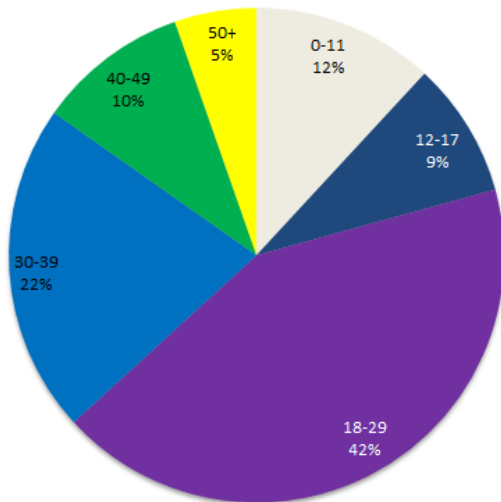
Age of asylum seekers in COA centers in the Netherlands

Age of respondents

Figure 2: Age of male asylum seekers in COA centers in the Netherlands on 31 May 2016 [5]. Source: COA 2016.
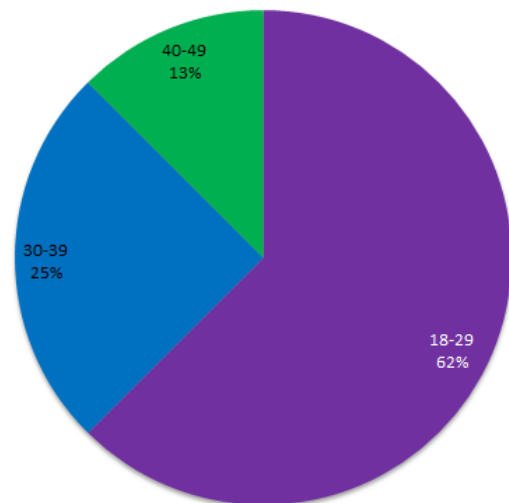
Figure 3: Age of respondents in this research.

Secondly, a number of expert interviews have taken place with several policy makers from the Ministry of Security and Justice (Migration Policy Department/DMB)[6], one practitioner from the IOM Netherlands (International Organisation for Migration), and one practitioner from the Dutch National Police (or, more specifically, the Expertise Centre on Human Trafficking and Human Smuggling). As mentioned in the introduction, the aim of this research is twofold. The first aim is to gain insight into the decision-making process of migrants travelling through Europe, which is done by taking the migrant as the unit of analysis. The final aim of this thesis is to advise the Migration Policy Department (of V&J) on this issue, by which the current migration policy and practitioners' view on it became the unit of analysis in the second part of this research. The interviews with migrants have taken place before the interviews with practitioners, in order to give the latter the chance to reflect on the preliminary findings of the migrant interviews.

As has been pointed out earlier in this thesis, very little is known on migrants' routes, choices, and processes that influence the decision-making on the journey that migrants make once they entered Europe. What is furthermore commonly acknowledged in the academic debate on this topic is that numerous factors potentially influence the choices that migrants make on this journey. Not only do migration policies, border surveillance and visa regimes of countries play a role in determining migrants' trajectories; but also weather conditions, the

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[5] The IND has not made the data on the age of asylum applicants in the Netherlands in 2015 public. For this reason, the numbers from COA on the age of asylum applicants that are currently (as of May 2016) residing in their asylum centres are used.

[6] An (anonymized) list of respondents is added in appendix C.

(in)availability of human smugglers, and the information that migrants have on all these factors play a role. Therefore, it is not only necessary to ask migrants what choices they made during their journey and at what stage (or place) they made them, but it is especially important to understand why these choices were made. In order to gain insight into these choices, and into all the factors and considerations that affect them, it is deemed necessary to make use of qualitative interviews. In addition, this research attempts to portray migrant journeys and decision-making processes against the background of the European 'migrant crisis'. Such a complex context may have several implications for migrants' journeys that cannot be foreseen (also because it is so recent and little research has been done yet), and it is therefore a context that is not easily captured in a quantitative design. Ideally this research is complemented by a quantitative study at a later stage, but this was considered unfeasible within the time scope of the current research.

As random sampling was not possible since finding respondents at all was very difficult, I have made use of the snowball method, by which one respondent is used to gain access to other respondents. The most often heard critique on such a snowball-method is that it may result in a biased sample as it targets contacts from the same group or having the same background (Van Liempt, 2007). One way of overcoming this problem is by using multiple access points, which has also been done in this research. In addition, bias is considered not to be very much of a problem for this research because people often knew each other from an asylum center, or from an emergency accommodation for asylum seekers. Despite the fact that some respondents knew other respondents personally, they still had very different backgrounds and stories. Only four out of sixteen respondents knew each other already in their home country.

3.2 Ethical Considerations

The deliberate choice has been made not to tape the interviews. This choice is the outcome of a consideration between documenting the given information as accurately as possible, and getting the most accurate and most truthful information from respondents. Several incidents and concerns have indicated that in this case the best choice was not to tape the interviews. The first respondent, who was willing to bring me into contact with other migrants, expressed his concerns about the kind of research that I was doing and the questions that I asked. Whereas he stressed that he trusted me, he did feel as if I asked some of the same questions that the IND (the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service) would ask as well. Many of the interviewees did not yet have a residence status as a refugee, meaning that they were

probably very careful in what they would say, as many migrants are aware of the fact that information on for example their country of origin is highly important for their asylum process and the decision the IND makes regarding a residence permit. The sensitivity of this kind of information has been pointed out in previous research (Van Liempt, 2007; Kuschminder, De Bresser & Siegel, 2015), and became evident throughout the interviews. I was also told by another migrant who translated several interviews for me that most migrants are fully aware of policies like the Dublin Regulation even before they start their migration journey, but if they are not they will learn about them on the way. He also explained how in Dutch asylum centers, people are told by others how the Dutch asylum procedure and Dutch migration law works. I was told that everyone knows what kind of information you should keep to yourself, and it was therefore also stressed that it is best if I do not tape the interviews, nor ask for personal information through which a person can be identified. This also means that the names used in this thesis are aliases, and not the real names of respondents. For similar reasons the word 'interview' was avoided where possible, because to many respondents this was associated with the IND interview for their asylum procedure. As explained by Van Liempt (2007), the context of IND interviews makes that many migrants are generally distrusting towards authorities when they recently arrive in the Netherlands. Also, the interviews covered sensitive topics like smuggling. As taping the interviews might only make respondents even more distrustful, the choice has been made not to tape the interviews in order to get the most reliable information. The decision not to tape the interviews also has a practical side: several interviews took place on COA locations (asylum centers) that did not allow the use of any kind of recording devices.

Before starting the interview, migrants were given a brief summary of what this research is about: their journey from their entrance in Europe to the Netherlands. In this short summary, I emphasized that I was interested in everything that made their journey come about. I invited them to tell about their journey in general, before I would start asking questions. This choice was made in order to avoid giving migrants the idea of an interrogation, and give it more the feeling of a regular conversation. During the interview I checked whether the conversation covered all the subjects from the topic list[7]. For about half of the interviews, I had help from a Syrian migrant who currently resides in an asylum center. He helped me with finding respondents, and he also told me that many people refused to give an interview because they were very distrustful. He nevertheless convinced five people to

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[7] This topic list can be found in appendix A.

give me an interview. For most of these interviews he also translated them from Arabic to English, as many respondents did not master the English language (and I do not speak Arabic). The fact that he convinced so many people to give an interview where I myself on most occasions did not succeed in arranging interviews proves the efficiency of the snowball sampling method. As Cornelius (1982) points out, when dealing with groups that are not easily accessible it is generally easier for those belonging to the target group to convince people to participate in research.

For ethical reasons, I have moreover chosen to treat the information given by respondents in a confidential and anonymous manner. This is also the reason why only the country of origin, country of destination and the age cohort (18-29 years old, 30-39 years old, and so on) are documented in this thesis. As most interviews were conducted in one asylum center in the Netherlands, some details of people's stories and their exact age could theoretically lead to identification of a person. In light of the aforementioned sensitivity of the information given, only some essential background characteristics have been displayed in the appendix.

Another important question to ask oneself when interviewing migrants is to what extent an interview may cause psychological harm to respondents. With exception to some migrants who stayed in transit countries like Turkey for the past years, all respondents were migrants who recently fled their war-torn home country (Syria in most cases) where they left their families and friends behind. They then started the long and difficult journey towards the Netherlands, after which they requested asylum and are now awaiting the decision whether they can stay in the Netherlands, whether their families will be able to come to the Netherlands as well, and when and where they will get a new house and start a new living. There is no doubt that such life-changing experiences cause some psychological distress for most of the respondents. Following Van Liempt (2007), I have tried to set the interviews in an open and flexible stage, leaving room for respondents to tell the stories that they want to tell, and especially to leave them room to avoid telling stories that bring up painful memories.

Even though an entirely different target audience, the methodological approach to the interviews with policy makers is quite similar to that of the migrant interviews. Although for different reasons, the choice has also been made not to tape the interviews (as some respondents pointed out they preferred the interviews not to be taped). Respondents also expressed the preference of being anonymous; therefore only information on the organisation and department that someone works for is given. For these interviews no topic list was used, but some questions were prepared (just like the migrant interviews, all interviews with

practitioners were semi-structured). However, as these practitioners each had very different positions and different expertises, these questions were different for each interview.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

I began with interviewing a policy maker from the Migration policy department (DMB) of the Ministry of Security and Justice. In this interview it was discussed what the information demand of the Ministry is regarding the topic of this research. During the course of writing my thesis, I had one more interview with this policy maker to reflect on the preliminary findings of the research and its implications for migration policy, and to discuss what additional information was required. After this initial interview I started with interviewing migrants, which has been continued until the point of saturation had been reached and additional interviews would probably not yield new information.

The notes that were made during the interviews were typed out within one hour after the interviews, in order to document everything that was said as accurately as possible[8]. As the interviews were not taped, it must be noted that the quotes in the next chapters may not be verbatim. The information that resulted from 16 migrant interviews and 6 expert interviews with government officials have been analyzed by making use of NVivo 11 (QSR International, 2016). The analysis entails organizing the texts resulting from the interviews into smaller parts: the results have been given labels, which in NVivo means that they are coded into 'nodes' (topics). The analysis follows the approach of constant comparison analysis as developed by Glaser (1965). This approach entails that the initial data collection and analysis is based on a first understanding of the phenomenon (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011), in this case the theoretical framework as posed at the start of this thesis. On the other hand the constant comparison analysis leaves room to identify new concepts based on the data collection. In practice, this means that the coding of the data for this research is largely consistent with the topic list used for the interviews, supplemented by some additional nodes (topics) that resulted from the interviews. While testing the expectations as posed in the theoretical framework, this research also encompasses the findings of some new issues that may provide a basis for new theories. The results of the migrant interviews will be discussed in the next chapter, to be followed by a policy chapter in which also the results from the expert interviews are incorporated.

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[8] Interview notes can be viewed upon request.

4. Results

The results of the qualitative interviews with migrants will be presented in this chapter. I will first discuss the role of social networks (and social media) in migrants' journeys, then move on to the role of human smugglers, and conclude with the institutional actors that may play a role. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the role of agency in migrant journeys.

The map below shows the routes of respondents. It must be noted that respondents were only asked which countries they travelled through, not which routes they took within these countries. Countries through which migrants have passed are labelled, and some important locations (or hubs) where many migrants reported to have travelled through are marked by yellow stars. The numbers on the lines represent the number of people who travelled that particular part of the journey, and a thicker line represents a higher number of people who travelled through these countries.

Figure 4: Map showing the routes of the 16 migrant respondents of this research.

As can be seen on the map above, almost all migrants who travelled over the past year took basically the same road, with the exception of some who travelled through Croatia and Slovenia as Hungary closed its border (for an elaboration, see the timeline on page 7). The one person who did not start his journey in Syria, travelled from Afghanistan through Iran (the rest of his journey is visible on the map).

4.1 The Role of Social Networks

The findings of this research with regard to social networks mostly reflect the findings of previous research. As expected, social networks mainly seem to play an important role in deciding *whether* to migrate and *where* to migrate, much more than that social networks play a role during migrants' journeys to these destination countries. Especially Syrian respondents mentioned that if you told people at home (in Syria) that you were thinking of migrating elsewhere, people would start telling you all kinds of facts and stories of people whom they know have migrated. Through modern communication technology it has also become much easier to get access to the stories of these people and to get into contact with them. Whereas many respondents had close friends or relatives who already lived in the Netherlands with whom they were in contact to find information on the migration process, I was also made aware that people look up information on the Internet regarding the migration process and potential countries of destination. Sayd for example said that he Googled countries in Europe and their asylum policies, watched YouTube videos of the Netherlands, and decided that the Netherlands was the country where he wanted to go. Ahmed told me that there are numerous Facebook pages and websites with information about migrating to Europe. He told me about the popularity of Facebook pages where Syrian migrants share their stories, and that these play an important role in planning the migration process. He also told me that these Facebook pages and websites have things like infographics that show a map and the route from Syria to countries in Europe, and that these infographics have steps that tell you what to do where. However, he also mentioned that he found these websites useful before he left Syria, but that he did not use them on his journey because then he preferred to rely on people that he could ask for help. Especially in the context of large numbers of migrants travelling to Europe since the summer of 2015, situations changed quickly, so Ahmed explained how people preferred to rely on information from people whom they met on the way, rather than on information gained prior to departure. Many respondents did report staying in touch with their friends and family at home during their journey (whenever they had Wi-Fi connections) through WhatsApp and Facebook, but as was pointed out by Nabeel, staying in contact with family at home is especially important once you arrive in the Netherlands. In accordance with previous research (Vertovec, 2004; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014), this research finds that social media mainly play a role in facilitating migration as they make it easier to remain in contact with those left behind, but that they do not play a vital role during the migration journey (other than staying in contact with friends and family in the home country). One important exception is the role of social media in migrant smuggling, to which I will later return. It must however

be noted that many migrants reported having used their social network and social media for planning their journeys. In this sense, social networks and social media are not necessarily consulted by migrants during their journey, but they do play an important role in planning this journey. The network of latent ties and the unofficial insider knowledge that results from it (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014) is therefore important in planning the journey.

There are some unexpected ways in which social networks and connections at home are in fact important during the migration journey. Yusuf for example told that he travelled with his aunt, uncle and three year old cousin, which made it at some points during the journey very difficult to keep travelling. He explained that he and his family spent a lot of time figuring out how to cross the Hungarian border from Serbia (which Nabeel mentioned is the most dangerous part of the journey), as they were unable to walk long distances with his three year old cousin. They decided that the best option would be to take a taxi, but this was not possible as they had run out of money. They ended up staying in Belgrade for eight days, waiting for a money transfer from their family members at home. Examples like these show that whereas contacts at home may not be the primary source of information during the migration journey, they can be of vital importance in order to be able to continue.

In addition, the results confirm the expectation that 'trust networks' (Tilly, 2007) originating from strong ties play an important role in the migration process. Whereas about half of the respondents were young men who travelled by themselves, the other half reported that they travelled with a close friend or relative(s), with whom they travelled the entire journey (some others started the journey with friends or their family but lost them on the way[9]). Almost all of the respondents reported that if they could, they would rely on information from the friends and relatives they travelled with, or from friends, relatives or acquaintances of theirs. Nasr for example told that he left Syria by himself, but that he found his cousin in Izmir (Turkey) incidentally, with whom he then travelled all the way to the Netherlands. Not surprisingly, having close ones by their sides was reported by migrants as being a huge relief to their often difficult journeys. Social networks and trust gained from these networks moreover turned out to be crucial in smuggling processes, which will be discussed in the next section.

4.2 The role of Human Smugglers

The similarities that have been found in previous research between regular market transactions and the smuggling market (Campana & Varese, 2015) have been found in this

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[9] One respondent (from Afghanistan) reported having to leave his wife and child behind in Iran, and another told how he had to leave his family behind in Turkey.

research as well. As expected, migrants reported the difficulty of gaining reliable information on a smuggler and on whether he or she could be trusted or not. Often, the only guarantee that migrants have is that a friend or an acquaintance has made use of a smuggler before, and that they reported that with them everything went well. However, when asked whether this recommendation by a friend meant that they trusted the smuggler, migrants often stated that they did not trust the smuggler, but that they had no choice but to make use of their services. While previous research suggests that it is very common for migrants to have all kinds of strategies in order to guarantee the quality of the agreements made, this turned out not to be the case for most of the migrants in this research. According to the literature it is for example common to have a third party act as a guarantor to witness arrival in the destination country, to pay part of the price to the smuggler upon arrival (not before departure), or the guarantee of a second or third trial if the smuggling trip is unsuccessful (Bilger, Hofmann & Jandl, 2006; Van Liempt & Doomernik, 2006; Campana & Varese, 2015). The evidence from the current research suggests that during the high influx of migrants from Europe since 2015, such practices may have become much less common. Wajid, who is the only person that I spoke to who did not migrate to Europe over the past year, but who actually came three years ago, was the only one who told me about making the agreement with a smuggler that his father would pay the smuggler upon his arrival in Italy (where he went by boat from Egypt). Some of the other respondents (who all travelled to Europe over the past year) reported that sometimes the police in Turkey would stop them from going into the sea by boat, and then the smuggler would arrange a second attempt to get into the water the next day (one person actually explained having to try eight times). However, such guarantees on a second try were not made if a boat did not make it to Greece. For most of the migrants, reputation effects seemed most important in ensuring the quality of the agreements made, as almost all respondents relied on a recommendation by a friend (or in some cases, a friend of a friend).

Whereas previous research suggests that social media are commonly used by human smugglers to advertise their services (EMN, 2015; Europol/Interpol 2016), this cannot be substantiated by this research. The findings of the current research seem to confirm the opposite expectation that the importance of trust in smuggling market transactions and the risk of detection make that the Internet is not the best medium to advertise and sell smuggling services. Almost all of the migrants who participated in this research reported that they did not think that advertising smuggling services on the Internet or social media plays an important role. Only two respondents mentioned that they had sometimes seen smugglers offer their services on the Internet, but both of them emphasized that they could not imagine

making use of these services as it is much easier to trust someone that you have found in real life. When I asked Tariq how he chose his smugglers and how he knew whether he could trust them, he answered:

'You just follow your heart.'

Upon being asked what he meant by that, he explained that you never know whether someone can be trusted, but that you can try to tell from how someone looks and behaves. This suggests that indeed signals that are only present in the non-virtual world are important in gaining trust. In sum, this research suggests that despite the prevalence of Internet and social media usage among migrants (all respondents owned a smartphone and had Facebook), ear-to-ear advertising in non-virtual migrant networks remains the most important way to organize smuggling practices.

There is however one example that shows how social media can nonetheless be important in migrant journeys and smuggling practices. The previously mentioned example of Yusuf who travelled with his uncle, aunt and his three year old cousin and had to stay in Belgrade for eight days, mentioned how they struggled there to find a smuggler that could help them cross the Serbian-Hungarian border. During their stay in a hotel, they met another Syrian family who would make use of a smuggler to get them across the border. He then exchanged contact information with this family, and asked them to let him know through WhatsApp if they arrived safely in Hungary, which they did. Yusuf and his family then decided that it would be safe to make use of this smuggler, and they went with him as well.

An interesting aspect of migrant journeys through Europe is the role of 'human smugglers'. As mentioned briefly in the introduction, it must be noted that smuggling in this research is a rather different concept than is common in criminological or migration research. This has everything to do with the nature of the current 'migrant crisis' in Europe, where there are some smugglers operating who help people across national boundaries (for an overview of the physical borders in Europe, see the timeline on page 7), but where there is also an enormous amount of people making excessive financial benefits out of the stream of migrants that are travelling through Europe. Many of the respondents made use of taxis, but in many occasions they did not refer to these people as 'taxi drivers', but rather as 'smugglers' or simply 'bad people' (whereas these taxis were often used within countries, and were therefore not smugglers in a strict sense). In fact, calling them 'taxi drivers' would indeed not do justice to what these people are. They are not regular taxi drivers, they are taxi drivers charging excessive amounts of money because they know there are plenty of people in need of a taxi.

This vague distinction was illustrated by the fact that when asked the question 'Did you also make use of taxis during your journey through Europe?' Husam responded: 'Yes, I made use of a smuggler to travel through Hungary'. Several others mentioned that they had a feeling that the taxi drivers were corrupt. On the situation in South/Eastern-European countries Sayd explained:

> 'You would pay the bad guys [taxi drivers] 100-200 euros, and they were all working together these bad guys. They would just drop you off at the next taxi who would then make you pay 100-200 euros again. They are all really bad people and they are working together like mafia people.'

Sayd also mentioned that he was certain that the governments, mainly in Serbia and Macedonia, know exactly what is going on and that they even control practices as described in the quote above. He mentioned how he thought the governments of these countries do nothing against practices as described above, as they also make money out of it. Three others (Ahmed, Nasr and Zahir) also mentioned that they were sure that representatives of the government were involved in smuggling practices from which they made a financial profit.

Another interesting finding is that money played an important role for almost all respondents. As is generally known, the entire process of migrating requires quite a lot of money: the entire journey from countries like Syria to countries within the EU is estimated to cost between €2.000 and €7.000 (EMN, 2015). Several respondents also mentioned that they walked long distances and got themselves into dangerous situations because they did not want to take a taxi because this was too expensive. Others, who had more money at their disposal, travelled much faster and in a more comfortable manner as they had enough money to pay for a taxi. It is moreover important to recognize that smuggling practices concentrate in certain 'hubs' where almost all migrants pass through. The situations in these hubs illustrate a contrast between different practices during different stages of migrants' journeys. On the situation in Izmir (Turkey) Sayd explained:

> "You can just sit there on the streets and someone will approach you and ask you if you need a boat to Greece. So that's what we did, we paid 1300 euros to go to Greece by boat."

Later on in his journey, when he got off the ship from Mytilene (Lesbos, Greece) to Athens (Greece)[10], smugglers would approach him again immediately and ask if he wanted to go to the border of Macedonia. Once in Macedonia he travelled by foot and public transport, until the border between Serbia and Hungary where people approached him again, telling him that

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[10] The transfer on this ship is provided by the Greek government.

they knew where there was a hole in the physical border somewhere. Again he explained how he had to pay them and they would help him cross the border. Once in Austria the situation was different: from there 'everything was better'. Sayd explained that he could just use the public transportation system, and government officials and police would show him the way. After Hungary he was not approached by smugglers anymore.

4.3 The role of Institutional Actors

Institutional actors turned out to play an important role in migrants' journeys as well. All of the respondents received help from police officers, military staff or representatives of NGOs at some point during their journey. What is notable is the expected contrast between (South)Eastern and Western European countries: where migrants reported receiving a lot of help from government officials especially in Austria, they also made notice of incidents of intimidation by government officials in Serbia, Macedonia and Hungary. For example, Nadeem explained how the police in Serbia would push all the migrants into the trains, and would surround them as to leave people no other choice than to get into the train. Yasir told that there was a lot of military personnel, especially in Serbia and Macedonia, that would tell you where to go as they wanted you to leave their country (this was mentioned by many other respondents as well). He explained how especially in Serbia and Macedonia the presence of so much military personnel frightened him because of experiences with the military in Syria. These experiences stand in contrast with the experiences in Austria and Germany, of which migrants reported that they were helped very well. Whereas several respondents mentioned too that Austrian government officials helped them because they just wanted everyone to leave the country, they did feel as if they could trust the police there, whereas they did not trust the police (and other government officials) in Serbia, Macedonia and Hungary. These findings seem to confirm the expectation that higher levels of corruption (as measured by the CPI index and trust in the police among the country's citizens) is paired with higher levels of distrust in government officials among migrants.

However, there is a complicating factor for trust in governmental actors among migrants while travelling through Europe: the Dublin system, which determines the country that is responsible for the asylum procedure of asylum seekers entering the European Union. In order to do so, fingerprints are taken from all asylum applicants and irregular border crossers in the first EU country that they set foot in, as to prevent that migrants apply for asylum in more than one country. In practice this means that if a migrant's fingerprints are taken in an EU country that is not the Netherlands, then they can be sent back to this country when applying

for asylum in the Netherlands. When Bahir mentioned the Dublin system in the interview that I held with him, I asked him whether the Dublin system is something that every Syrian migrant is aware of. He laughed, and said:

> *'Yes, every Syrian migrant is an expert in migration law. (…) It is not something everyone in Syria knows, but once I decided to go I would talk to people about migrating, and then people tell you about things like Dublin.'*

From the other interviews, it was indeed clear that everyone I spoke to was aware of the Dublin system and its implications for the asylum procedure. Just like Bahir, some respondents mentioned how they were told about the Dublin system by people in their country of origin. Others did not find out about it until they were told by people on the way, and still others knew about it from the aforementioned Facebook groups and websites. Ahmed, who told me about the infographics that these Facebook pages sometimes have, told me that for example for Hungary the infographic says that you should be careful in Hungary and that you should not get fingerprinted there. Husam also told me that he knew about having to be careful in Hungary through these Facebook groups. He explained that there are people who tell stories about the fact that the Hungarian police will take your fingerprints and put you in jail if they find you, so that you had to stay away from them. Khaled in turn mentioned that he had a friend who wanted to go to Western Europe, but who got caught in Hungary where her fingerprints were taken. Khaled explained how people tell these stories to each other, and that this is the reason why everyone is afraid of being fingerprinted, especially in Hungary. He also explained how the news travelled fast that in August 2015 Germany decided to process asylum claims of those fingerprinted in other countries anyhow, so that his friend could go to Germany anyway (where she now lives). In this sense, there is some sort of 'reputation effect' for institutional actors just like there is for smugglers: it is mainly the stories and experiences of others (that become widely accessible through social media) that cause distrust in government officials in certain countries. A policy maker from the Migration Policy Department of the Ministry of Security and Justice (June 2, 2016) confirmed that this effect takes place. He mentioned how all kinds of stories about Hungary and the Hungarian police were circulating and were also present in the media, which to his opinion were highly exaggerated representations of Hungarian government officials. A representative of the IOM confirmed that such stories are circulating among migrants, and the IOM observes too that a lot of incorrect information is present among migrant groups, and how such stories travel very quickly.

For the same reason, respondents mentioned that they did not want to go to refugee camps as they would have to give their fingerprints there. Munahid explained how he and his uncle (whom he travelled with) were pulled off a train in Germany by the police, who then sent them to a refugee camp. Overnight they escaped from the camp because they did not want their fingerprints taken as they wanted to go to the Netherlands. Almost all respondents mentioned being afraid of government officials in general during their journey, due to this fear of being fingerprinted. When I asked Ahmed if he ever felt unsafe during his journey, he answered:

'No, I was not afraid. I was just afraid that I would have to give my fingerprints'.

Whereas many other migrants also expressed feelings of fear and unsafety during their journeys (Wajid told me how during his seven day boat trip from Egypt to Italy he 'saw death many times'), the 'fear of being fingerprinted' was mentioned as the main issue for almost all respondents. This is striking especially in light of the fact that most of the migrants incorporated in this research migrated during what has been called the period of 'the bankruptcy of Dublin'. Whereas many of the Dublin principles were not effective during the high influx of migrants over the past year (as becomes evident from the events as listed in the timeline on page 7), migrants did fear their consequences. Almost all respondents had also expressed their determination to go to the Netherlands, or at least some country in (North)Western Europe. Whereas most of the migrants had planned to go to the Netherlands ever since they left Syria, others made the decision when they were in transit or when they were in an EU border country (and there was Mehmet who had Germany as his country of destination and now lives there). One exception is Husam, who had the UK as his first choice, Norway as his second, Finland as his third and the Netherlands as his fourth desired country of destination. But it was very clear that none of the respondents wanted to request asylum in countries in Eastern or Southern Europe, of which the fear of being fingerprinted is a logical result. The finding that most respondents in this research deliberately chose the Netherlands as their preferred country of destination either before they left their country of origin or early in their journeys, is also interesting in light of the fact that previous research finds that migrants are in search of 'abstract elsewheres' (Van Liempt 2007; Schapendonk, 2011; Kuschminder, De Bresser & Siegel, 2015), without knowing exactly where they want to go. Previous research suggests that most migrants end up in for example the Netherlands by accident. This research on the other hand finds that most migrants had a strong desire to request asylum in the Netherlands (or another (North)Western-European country), due to

which the government was the enemy in all countries that were not the desired country of destination, leading to a great amount of distrust in representatives of the government. This fact also highlights the importance of (representatives of) NGOs: almost all respondents reported that they received help from members of the Red Cross. They also reported having more trust in these NGO representatives as they had the feeling these people were only there to help them, and would not hand them over to government officials who might subsequently take their fingerprints. An exception is the refugee camps, where NGO representatives also play a vital role, but where migrants were sometimes afraid of having to give their fingerprints.

4.4 Agency in Migrant Journeys

The results of this study show that both structure and agency play an important role in explaining migrants' decision-making process on their journey through Europe, but the extent to which migrants had the feeling they were in control of their own journey varied over different stages and different aspects of their journeys. Whereas almost all respondents told me that they did not trust smugglers, they made use of their services anyway, because they felt they had no choice if they wanted to go to the Netherlands. They did however have agency in the sense that they could choose *which* smuggler they used. Often, this meant that they made use of a smuggler that was recommended by a friend. This recommendation did however not mean that migrants felt safe: even if a smuggler was recommended, migrants still distrusted him. The fact that migrants use a smuggler during some stages of their journey shows that they had no agency in this respect, as many of them mentioned that they did not want to rely on a smuggler but had no other choice. Having 'no other choice' also meant that in some countries, Hungary for example, migrants chose a smuggler above government officials. As migrants did not want to get caught and have their fingerprints taken, they preferred to rely on smugglers rather than on help from government officials. Of course, it could also be stated that the smugglers provide migrants with agency, as they enabled migrants to move on towards their desired country of destination.

Some respondents went to great lengths in order not to have to make use of smugglers. For Khaled this meant that he avoided using smugglers or taxi drivers once he was in Europe: he only used public transport and walked long distances. For Husam this meant planning his entire trip into every detail:

"I actually prepared all the routes already when I was in Turkey. Because you can't trust the people you meet on the road, not the smugglers but maybe also not the people you meet. So I didn't want to walk any step without knowing where I was going. That is why I had planned everything, every tram I had to take, every bus stop, every train."

He showed me his notebook, in which he wrote down exactly which way he had to go and where he had to take which bus, tram or train:
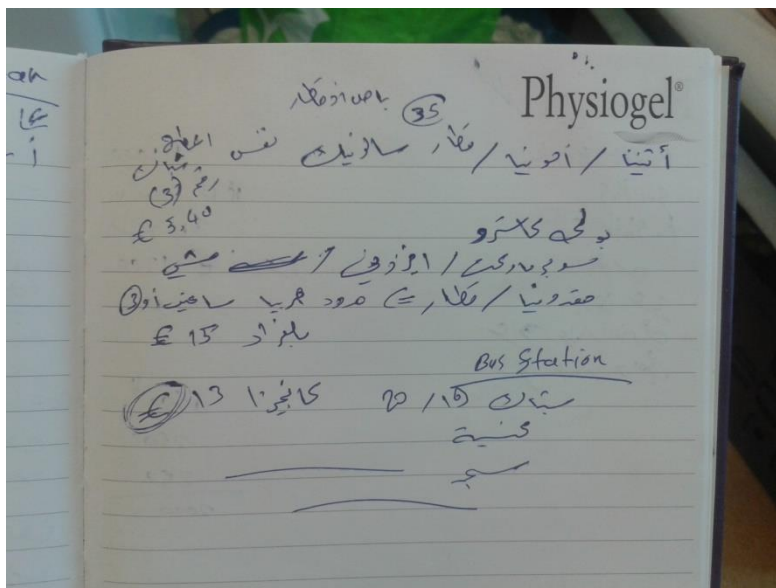

Figure 4: Picture of Husam's notes on how he had planned his journey.

This example illustrates that Husam, who travelled alone or with people he met on the road, felt safe because he had planned the entire trip and did not have to rely on other people for information. On the other hand, many other respondents told me that they were not afraid of not being able to find the way. Nadeem, who travelled in August 2015, explained that in Greece "you just follow the human chain of people". Like many other respondents, he told me that he had not planned his journey in advance, but that he just asked people on the way. People reported that they had help from other people and other migrants, from representatives of NGO's (mainly the Red Cross) and from volunteers. Whereas for smuggling services a recommendation from a friend, relative or acquaintance appeared to be very important in order to trust a smuggler, people did not seem to have a problem with relying on information from strangers when asking the way for example.

With regard to the aspect of being able to choose one's country of destination, migrants did unanimously state that this was very important for their perception of safety. One of the most important findings of this research may be that almost all respondents in this research

had a strong desire to migrate to the Netherlands. Not to Europe in general, to Greece, Hungary, Austria or Germany (with the exception of Mehmet), but to the Netherlands. As mentioned, the Dublin principle made people very anxious of being forced to request asylum in a country that was not the desired country of destination. In this sense, the structure of the Dublin system is a threat to the agency of migrants in the sense that Dublin rules may prevent migrants from 'achieving their desires', which is defined by Bakewell (2010) as a core characteristic of agency. These findings illustrate a difference between a perception of physical safety versus what I will call security: having the guarantee that you can build up a new life in the place where you *want* to build a new life, and not somewhere else. In this sense, it is important to make a distinction between the narrow concept of physical safety versus the broader concept of security. Migrants mentioned how they fled refugee camps in for example Germany. Whereas the conditions in these camps were safe, actually much better than the average conditions throughout the rest of their journeys (where sometimes they were deprived of food and water), migrants still reported have feelings of anxiety while being in such camps. They did not fear for their personal safety, but they feared being forced to make an asylum request in Germany, making them unable to travel further to the Netherlands and request asylum there. The idea of not being able to request asylum in the country where either their friend(s) and/or family live, or where they simply thought to have the best chance of a good future, made these migrants feel very uncomfortable. In this sense there is a difference between perceptions of physical unsafety and perceptions of insecurity, both of which may cause feelings of stress and anxiety.

5. Conclusion

This thesis has investigated how the decision-making process of migrants during their journey through Europe can be explained through sixteen migrant interviews. This has been done in order to gain insight into how to improve migration regulation so as to improve conditions for the migrant, as well as benefit the effectiveness of Dutch and European migration policies as a whole. The findings of this research suggest that the three sources of information as identified in the theoretical chapter of this research (social networks, human smugglers and institutional sources) indeed turn out to be the most important factors in explaining the decision-making process of migrants, although sometimes in other ways than expected. Whereas social media were expected mainly to play a role in facilitating migration in phases before people leave their country of origin and after they arrive in the country of destination (as found in previous research), social media turned out to be important during migrants' journeys as well. Facebook pages and websites where migrants share their stories were found to be an important source of information for migrants in order to plan their journey.

Whereas under normal circumstances strong ties within a person's 'trust network' are often an important source of information, this unsurprisingly turned out not to be the case for migrants travelling through Europe. Whereas people did either stay in contact with close friends or family at home, or they travelled with a close friend or family member, these people were more important for their emotional support than for information and decision-making on how to proceed with the journey. However, information from strong ties (and weak ones, to a lesser extent) was in fact important in the smuggling process. Almost all respondents relied on (a) recommendation(s) from a friend or an acquaintance when choosing a smuggler. Whereas previous research found social media to be important in this respect as well, this could not be confirmed by the current research. On the contrary: the migrants who were aware of smuggling services being advertised on the Internet were certain that these would not commonly be made use of by migrants, as the Internet makes it difficult to assess whether a smuggler can be trusted. Additionally, the concept of building in guarantees to ensure the agreements made between migrant and smuggler was found in this research to play a much smaller role as previous research suggests. Reputations based on ear-to-ear advertising are therefore concluded to be most important in smuggling practices to and within the European Union over the past year.

Also with regard to other practices than smuggling, ear-to-ear spreading of information seemed to be the most prevalent way of gaining information for migrants during their journey

through Europe. This is obvious from the prevalence of the Dublin principles in migrant stories, which caused severe feelings of anxiety in migrants, in some cases even leading them to avoid refugee camps. This fear of the Dublin system is notable as many of these principles were not effective during the time when most of the respondents migrated. This shows that stories told by other migrants, whether through social media or in real life, are very persistent.

Another interesting finding with regard to smuggling is the importance of a 'grey' market in migrant journeys. Whereas those who help migrants across the Mediterranean Sea can clearly be labeled human smugglers, those facilitating migrant transport within Europe and even within Member States of the European Union are in a strict sense not human smugglers. However, migrants did see these people as smugglers, and so too did policy makers of the Ministry of Security and Justice (April 11, 2016; June 2, 2016). Also notable is the (expected) finding that migrants tended to trust government officials more in Western and Northern European countries than in (South)Eastern European countries. Especially in Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary, migrants were highly distrusting towards government officials. For most migrants, this also highlighted the importance of (representatives of) NGOs in these countries, as these were trusted more by migrants than government officials.

There is no clear conclusion as to which of these three sources of information (social networks, smugglers or institutional actors) was most important for migrants' journeys and their decision-making process. For all migrants, all three were the main way of achieving their goal during at least one stage of their journey. For example, whereas smugglers turned out to be the main source of information and the main way to move forward in Hungary, the government played an important role in Austria. Social networks were most important in providing migrants with information on the fact that Hungary had closed its border, meaning that migrants needed to take a different route. Perhaps the most important conclusion of this research is the role of the Dublin rules and their effect on migrant journeys. The fear of being fingerprinted (and its consequence: not being able to request asylum in the desired country of destination) was the thread running through almost all migrant stories. However, also with regard to this aspect, all three factors were found to be essential in explaining migrants' decision-making process during the journey through Europe. Knowledge on Dublin principles and its implications for the journey was gained through social networks (and sometimes social media), this knowledge was the source of fear for government officials in Hungary, and it was for many the reason to make use of a smuggler in this country. In this sense, all three factors are important during different stages of migrant trajectories.

6. Discussion

6.1 A Context of 'Crisis'

The most important thing to bear in mind when considering the conclusions of this research, is the specificity of the context of migrant journeys that are incorporated in this research. Except for one respondent, everyone migrated during the 'migrant crisis', which started in April 2015 and was characterized by a high influx of migrants to Europe and the difficulties that the EU was facing to regulate this flow of migrants. Member States of the EU received over 1.2 million asylum claims in 2015, which is double the number of 2014 (Eurostat, 2016). This influx of migrants led governments of several EU Member States to help migrants move onwards, illustrating the failure of the Dublin system during this European migrant crisis. This also led to the fact that migrants could travel from EU border countries to the Netherlands in very short time periods, for most migrants this journey only took around 2 weeks. The specificity of this context has important implications for the research question as posed in this research. When asked how they could find the way, migrants would answer that they only had to follow the stream of people, which is very different from the situation when people migrated to Europe a couple of years ago. Also with regard to the finding that social media usage for smuggling practices is not common, the specificity of the context of the migrant crisis must be taken into account. All respondents reported that they had no trouble with finding smugglers as they could be found anywhere; the only problem was whether they could be trusted. It may be the case that in other contexts (other places in the world, or Europe in times where the migrant flow consists of less people), social media is more common as it is difficult to find smugglers in other ways. The finding that the one respondent who migrated three years ago was the only one who made use of some kind of guarantee in order to enforce the agreements made with a smuggler, suggests that the finding that people do not make use of such guarantees might also have something to do with the specific circumstances of this migrant crisis (this would also explain why previous research has found that such guarantees are very common in smuggler-migrant agreements, and that social media are used for smuggling practices). Ideally, some more interviews would have taken place with migrants who came here longer ago in order to examine which findings are specific to the recent context, and which findings are characteristics of the European migration issue in general. It is therefore suggested that assessing these differences should be the topic of future research.

In a similar fashion, the concept of 'domestic smuggling' is an interesting issue for future research. As pointed out by migrants as well as policy makers, the context of the migrant

crisis shows that human smuggling does not only happen between countries, but also within them. This is a fact that has been recognized by some states as well, as has become clear by Denmark prosecuting its own citizens for giving undocumented migrants a ride to the Copenhagen train station (Witte, 2016). Whereas the concept of 'domestic trafficking' is widely used in the literature (see Kotrla, 2010) for example, no such theoretical framework exists for human smuggling. In trafficking, the act of coercing and exploiting people is considered illegal. However, what is illegal in human smuggling is crossing an international border in an illegal fashion. 'Domestic smuggling' is in this sense not considered human smuggling, and was (until recently, as the example from Denmark suggests) not illegal, which is probably one of the reasons that this topic is not documented well in academic research. The findings of this research demonstrate the need for research and the development of a theoretical framework on this topic.

6.2 A Qualitative Research Design

It must also be noted that whereas the choice for a qualitative research design was made because it does justice to the complexity (and limited scientific knowledge to date) of the issue that is explored in this research, some practical limitations have also been taken into account. It was considered not to be feasible to do a survey because of the dependency on online tools, which would have made the issue of gaining trust even more problematic. Considering the fact that in some circumstances it may be very convenient for migrants to lie to the Dutch authorities about their country of origin or on their travel route, it was considered highly improbable that migrants will give a truthful answer to such questions in an online survey. As gaining trust from migrants and convincing them to participate in an interview took quite some time and effort, doing a paper and pencil survey would probably have yielded too few respondents within the time scope of this thesis. Whereas the qualitative design was therefore considered to be the best option for the scope and time-frame of this thesis, it does leave several questions unanswered. It is therefore highly recommended that future research is supplemented by quantitative research on for example the scope of social media usage, and the different routes that migrants take from the point of entrance in the EU to their destination. A quantitative comparative research would also yield additional important insights: for example a comparison between those who migrated during the current migration 'crisis' and those who migrated before, or a comparison between migrants of Syrian origin and those of other origins. In this sense, the current research should be viewed as an explorative attempt to

gain more insight into a lacuna in academic research that very little is known about. Eventually, this research should be complemented by research with a quantitative approach.

The qualitative design also has some implications that may be more difficult to solve. For instance, the information that was gained during the interviews varied significantly between different respondents. Whereas some had a lot of knowledge on the topography of Europe and knew exactly where they were during their journey, for example, others had no idea which European countries they travelled through, and had made an assessment on which countries they had travelled through based on stories of others. Some interviews took hours because respondents remembered many details of their trip (and were willing to share them with me), while I have also met people who could not tell me anything about the greater part of their trip because they were so tired and sick that they only vaguely experienced the journey. For all respondents goes that they were asked to recall memories of their journey, but it may of course very well be the case that they have forgotten about important aspects of their journey or that some of their memories may not be adequate. The only solution for this issue may be to follow migrants when they are still travelling, but this also has its practical limitations, as well as implications for the validity of the data gained (as the presence of a researcher may influence the journey and the decision-making process of migrants).

6.3 Sample Bias

It is moreover important to recognize that this research is, naturally, biased towards those who made it. All the stories about the dangers that migrants encountered on their way to the Netherlands (or Germany) conceal the stories of those who did not make it and those who have been left behind in countries of transit because they could not or did not want to make the dangerous journey to the Netherlands. Whereas the sample in this study is biased towards young men, the flow of asylum seekers into the Netherlands in 2015 consisted mainly of young men as well. Less than a quarter of first asylum applicants in the Netherlands in 2015 were female, and also less than a quarter were children or older than 60 (CBS, 2015). Additionally, those who migrate are often wealthier people (De Haas, 2008), as migrating requires a lot of money. It is therefore likely that behind the stories of those who made it to Europe and to the Netherlands are many more stories of people who thought the journey was too dangerous and people who could not afford to move elsewhere. It is important to keep these things in mind when considering the policy recommendations based on this research.

In addition, it must be kept in mind that this research is conducted mainly among Syrian migrants. This may pose some limitations to generalizing the findings of this research towards

other groups: Syrian refugees are for example highly educated relative to other migrant groups (UAF, 2016), which for instance may have implications for the way they search for information regarding their migration journeys. It may very well be the case that other groups make less use of the Internet and social media as a source of information, for example.

7. Policy Recommendations

The insights in migrants' decision-making process gained from this research have several implications for more fair and effective Dutch and European migration policies in general, and for policies to provide migrants with more reliable information and safer journeys in particular. Perhaps the most important finding of this research is how the Dublin system (or the perception of its implications) turns out to be a structure that is an important impediment to migrants' agency, which in turn is a threat to their perception of safety. In this sense, the findings of this research highlight a situation that is undesirable both for governmental actors as for migrants. The predominance of avoiding to get fingerprinted in migrant stories reveals not only an ineffective European asylum system, but most importantly it shows how migrants are forced into unsafe situations, as it leads them for example to flee refugee camps and sleep on the streets. Practitioners often mentioned that migrants 'travel through ten safe countries and request asylum in the 11th' (2 June, 2016; 6 June, 2016), and in this sense they are not forced to make the unsafe journey to other countries in Europe. However, as explained in the previous chapter, it is important to recognize the difference between physical safety and perceptions of security.

This finding has important implications for Dutch and European migration policies, which are based on providing migrants with physical safety rather than this more abstract search for what I have called security (having the guarantee that you can build up a new life in the place where you want to build a new life*).* Even though by law governments are only obliged to provide migrants with physical safety, the findings of this research suggest that ignoring this desire for a more abstract sense of 'security' may have its complications. For instance, a European migrant relocation system that does not take at least some preferences of migrants into account is unlikely to be successful. As one of the most important policy goals of the Dutch (Rijksoverheid, 2016a) and European (European Commission, 2016) policy is to tackle irregular migration, it is necessary to meet migrants' demands up to some extent. As the numerous examples of people avoiding the Dublin system in this research show, migrants will go to great lengths to reach the preferred country of destination. This also means that they will resort to illegal ways of reaching the preferred country of destination if there are no legal means to do so. Creating such legal routes may therefore be the most effective way to regulate the stream of migrants to European countries in general, and to the Netherlands in particular. A selection process at the outer borders of the European Union may in this sense solve a large part of the challenge of irregular migration. If the characteristics of migrants are assessed in

Greece, then those with a viable reason to go to a certain country, may be given access to this country by a legal air route, instead of a long, unpredictable and unsafe journey by land.

The prevalence of the Dublin principles in migrant stories, during a time where most of its rules were not effective, moreover shows that a lot is to be gained from providing migrants with reliable information. Since this research shows that many decisions of migrants during their journey through Europe are made based on information from their social network, it is essential to tackle narratives based on incorrect information. Providing migrants with more reliable information can be done for example by spreading correct information through NGOs, which are often trusted more by migrants than government officials, or through social media like Facebook, which are widely used by migrants to plan their journey.

Making a distinction between the narrow concept of safety and the broader concept of security also has implications for other policy measures. One focal point of EU and Dutch policies in reaction to the high influx of migrants is providing shelter in the regions around conflict prone countries like Syria, for example in the relatively safe countries of Jordan and Turkey (Rijksoverheid, 2016b; June 2, 2016). Many migrants explicitly mentioned that they saw absolutely no future for themselves in these transit countries. Many respondents mentioned that they had tried to build up a life in Turkey, but that they had no chance of getting legal employment there. Migrants mentioned similar experiences for countries like Egypt and Lebanon where they saw no future for themselves, which inspired their strong desire to move to Europe. This aversion towards staying in countries of transit is also likely to result in illegal migration if ignored by policy makers. Again, it highlights the importance of recognizing the difference between a providing migrants with physical safety (which may also be doubted to be provided in certain transit countries), and providing them with security in the sense that migrants see some kind of perspective for their future. In order to make shelter in regions close to countries of origin an effective measure to counter irregular migration, it is a prerequisite first to create some kind of perspective for migrants in these countries of transit.

These policy recommendations can be summarized by the conclusion that it is important to recognize that it is impossible to regulate migration to, and especially within, Europe without taking the motives of migrants into account. The rationale behind the decision-making process of migrants leads to the realisation that there is an important difference between perceptions of one's own physical safety on the one hand, and perceptions of security about one's future on the other. Acknowledging this difference and taking it into account in policy making will likely result in a more effective, fair, and safe European and Dutch migration policy.

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Appendix A: Migrant Interview Topic List

- Age

- Country of origin

- Travel route (and transit countries)

- (Desired) country of destination

- Travel company

- Finding the way

- Role of social networks

- Role of social media

- Role of human smugglers (and use of taxis)

- Role of institutional actors (government officials, police, military, NGOs)

- Public transport

- Refugee camps

- Dublin system and fingerprinting

- Identity documents

Appendix B: List of Migrant Respondents

Alias	Interview date	Status	Age	Country of origin	Country of Destination
Sayd	03-03-2016	Conducted in person	18-29	Syria	The Netherlands
Tariq	03-03-2016	Conducted in person	30-39	Syria	The Netherlands
Zahir	03-03-2016	Conducted in person	40-49	Syria	The Netherlands
Nasr	03-03-2016	Conducted in person	18-29	Syria	The Netherlands
Bahir	06-04-2016	Conducted in person	30-39	Syria	The Netherlands
Nadeem	06-04-2016	Conducted in person	30-39	Afghanistan	The Netherlands
Yusuf	06-04-2016	Conducted in person	18-29	Stateless	The Netherlands
Amir	17-04-2016	Conducted in person	18-29	Syria	The Netherlands
Ahmed	20-04-2016	Conducted in person	18-29	Syria	The Netherlands
Khaled	20-04-2016	Conducted in person	18-29	Syria	The Netherlands
Munahid	20-04-2016	Conducted in person	18-29	Syria	The Netherlands
Yasir	23-05-2016	Conducted by phone	40-49	Syria	The Netherlands
Wajid	25-05-2016	Conducted in person	18-29	Syria	The Netherlands
Mehmet	25-05-2016	Conducted in person	18-29	Syria	Germany
Husam	27-05-2016	Conducted in person	18-29	Syria	The Netherlands
Nabeel	28-05-2016	Conducted by phone	30-39	Syria	The Netherlands

Appendix C: List of Practitioner Respondents

Organisation	Interview date	Status
Ministry of Security and Justice (DMB)	18-02-2016	Conducted in person
Ministry of Security and Justice (DMB)	11-04-2016	Conducted in person
Ministry of Security and Justice (DMB)	02-06-2016	Conducted in person
Ministry of Security and Justice (DMB)	06-06-2016	Conducted in person
Dutch National Police (Expertise Centre on Human Trafficking and Human Smuggling)	13-06-2016	Conducted by phone
International Organisation for Migration (IOM)	17-06-2016	Conducted by phone