



Co-funded by the Horizon 2020 programme  
of the European Union



[www.h2020mirror.eu](http://www.h2020mirror.eu)

# MIRROR

## Migration-Related Risks caused by misconceptions of Opportunities and Requirements

Grant Agreement No. GA832921

### Deliverable D8.1

<b>Work-package</b>	WP8: Analysis & Field Studies for EU Perceptions and Media Impact
<b>Deliverable</b>	D8.1: Working Paper: Theoretical Framework for Migration Process Analysis
<b>Deliverable Leader</b>	UNIVIE
<b>Quality Assessor</b>	K&I
<b>Dissemination level</b>	public
<b>Delivery date in Annex I</b>	M12, May 31, 2020
<b>Actual delivery date</b>	May 29, 2020
<b>Revisions</b>	1
<b>Status</b>	Final
<b>Keywords:</b>	Migration Communication Model, migration decision-making, migration network, broadcast feedback, media and information literacy

**Disclaimer**

This document contains material, which is under copyright of individual or several MIRROR consortium parties, and no copying or distributing, in any form or by any means, is allowed without the prior written agreement of the owner of the property rights.

The commercial use of any information contained in this document may require a license from the proprietor of that information.

Neither the MIRROR consortium as a whole, nor individual parties of the MIRROR consortium warrant that the information contained in this document is suitable for use, nor that the use of the information is free from risk, and accepts no liability for loss or damage suffered by any person using this information.

This document reflects only the authors' view. The European Community is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained herein.

© 2020 Participants in the MIRROR Project

**List of Authors**

<b>Partner Acronym</b>	<b>Authors</b>
UNIVIE	Maria Gruber, Jakob-Moritz Eberl, Fabienne Lind, Hajo G. Boomgaarden
FREUNDE	Ina Pervan-Al Soqauer
AGENFOR	Serena Bianchi, Sergio Bianchi

## Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Executive summary</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Terminological and conceptual clarifications</b> .....	<b>7</b>
3.1	Mixed migration and the continuum of voluntary and forced migration.....	7
3.2	Migration as a process .....	7
3.3	Migration as an active decision.....	7
<b>4</b>	<b>Migration networks and social capital</b> .....	<b>8</b>
4.1	The non-static nature of migration networks .....	8
4.2	Migration networks and social capital in the context of social media .....	9
<b>5</b>	<b>The role of different types of feedback</b> .....	<b>9</b>
5.1	Personal network feedback .....	10
5.2	Narrowcast feedback .....	10
5.3	Induced broadcast feedback.....	11
5.4	General broadcast feedback .....	11
5.5	Embedded broadcast feedback.....	12
5.6	Feedback communication, modern ICTs, and the migration process .....	12
<b>6</b>	<b>Developing a migration communication model</b> .....	<b>13</b>
6.1	The mediating role of perceptions .....	14
6.2	Aspiration and ability .....	15
6.3	Macro-, meso- and micro-level influence .....	17
6.4	The importance of information and information processing.....	17
6.5	Media and information literacy and the migration communication model .....	18
<b>7</b>	<b>Conclusions</b> .....	<b>21</b>
7.1	Discussion .....	22
7.2	The Migration Communication Model and the MIRROR field study .....	22
<b>8</b>	<b>References</b> .....	<b>23</b>

## **1 Executive summary**

The following deliverable presents a theoretical framework for migration process analysis that should guide the work within the MIRROR project. The deliverable combines leading strains of theory from the field of migration studies to relevant insights from the field of information and (political) communication and brings together existing research on perceptions of irregular migrants and the role media for perceptions of migration decision. It is thus based on background-information gathered through comprehensive interviews with experts in the field as well as on a thorough review of the literature in the intersection of media and migration studies. At the heart of this deliverable is a new migration-communication model (MCM), presented by the authors, that highlights the roles of migration networks, social capital, different types of feedback communication, as well as media and information literacy in contemporary migration processes. This model adds to the previous literature and aims at a better understanding of the driving factors behind irregular migration as well as the role of social media and ICTs in these processes. It accordingly considers a host of moderating and mediating factors stemming from the migrants' very subjective ways of identifying the need for information, their capability of actually finding it, their way of evaluating its usefulness and credibility, and their effective use of the information in their migratory decisions itself.

## 2 Introduction

Just after food and shelter, the smartphone evolved into a “21st-century migration essential” during the 2015 migration movements (Brunwasser, 2015). New media and information and communication technologies (ICTs) have profoundly reshaped migration processes, shaped public discourse (Kaufmann, 2016), and soon found their way into the scholarly debate on contemporary migration. Already in her 2008 epistemological manifesto, Diminescu pointed out that due to migrants’ abundant use of modern ICTs, the “paradigmatic figure of the uprooted migrant is yielding to another figure: the connected migrant” (Diminescu, 2008, p. 565). In a similar vein, Dekker and colleagues in 2018, referring to Syrian refugees who accessed information through social media and smartphones before and during their migration, introduced the term “smart refugees” (Dekker et al., 2018).

In 2018 scholars point to the emergence of digital migration studies as a new interdisciplinary field spanning not only, but also from migration and information to media and (political) communication studies (Leurs & Prahabkar, 2018). However, at the same time, it was stressed that migration studies often still refrain from drawing on the work of media and communication studies, and *vice versa* (see Leurs & Smets, 2018).

Taking this shortcoming as an encouragement, the theoretical framework at hand aims at strengthening the interdisciplinary nature of studying the role of media and information in migration decision-making processes. While recent research in this emerging field has mainly focused on the specific role of media use before or during migration and the extent to which new media enable (see, e.g., Gillespie et al., 2016; Zijlstra & van Liempt, 2017) or even encourage (see, e.g., de Haas, 2010; Schapendonk and van Moppes, 2007; Timmerman, De Clerck, & Hemmerechts, 2014a) migration, the links between (potential) migrants’ media use and resulting perceptions from a communication science perspective have been largely overlooked. By addressing this gap, our theoretical framework presents a more nuanced approach.

We take the migration studies’ theory of migration networks (see, e.g., Boyd, 1989; Massey & España, 1987) and Bakewell and Jolivet’s (2016) closely related thesis of ‘broadcast feedback’ as our starting points. Based on these, we seek to theoretically tackle and systematically link the concepts of migration-related media use, different feedback mechanisms, information, perceptions (of potential destination countries and migration routes), and migration aspiration. By adding the concept of media and information literacy, we also take up the interdisciplinary question of how new media and ICTs influence not only access to media and the ability to process information but also the emerging perceptions and thus the aspiration for migration. The integration of these yields a comprehensive migration communication model (MCM), which makes an important leap forward for the scientific understanding of the interplay of migration processes and ICT.

In addition, Newell, Gomez, and Guajardo (2016) proposed that “[h]aving a better sense of how migrants find the information they need, and [of] how they perceive and use (or do not use) various ICTs will contribute to a better understanding of the role of information [...], and may inform the implementation of potentially lifesaving practices by humanitarian organizations” (Newell et al., 2016, p. 179). In addition to humanitarian organizations, we also believe that state officials and border control agencies can benefit from more detailed insights into how migrants handle information and how different kinds of information influence their perceptions and subsequently their migration aspirations, adding concrete practical relevance to our endeavor.

Forming a project consortium that includes NGOs as well as border control agencies of different nations, the interplay between migration-related media use and (resulting) migration-related perceptions is of particular interest in the MIRROR project, and especially in Work Package 8 “Analysis & Field Studies for EU Perceptions and Media Impact.” In Work Package 8, the here presented framework will serve in particular as a general theoretical guideline and will inform the design of a field interview guide and, at a later stage, the analysis of the collected data.

Based on background-information gathered through comprehensive interviews with experts in the field as well as on a thorough review of the literature in the intersection of media and migration studies, in what follows, we first, lay out a set of terminological and conceptual clarification that will ease a common understanding of the matter at hand. We then go into more detail about the concepts of migration networks. Third, we focus on the different

types of (broadcast) feedback and underscore their twofold role and relevance in contemporary migration processes. This allows us to develop a comprehensive Migration Communication Model, which we discuss in several key steps. In the final section, we summarize the benefit of our model and discuss further avenues of research.

### 3 Terminological and conceptual clarifications

In this framework, we conceive migration in a broad sense as we follow the concept of mixed migration, understand migration as a process, and emphasize the active nature of individuals' decisions regarding migration.

#### 3.1 Mixed migration and the continuum of voluntary and forced migration

*Mixed migration* refers to the notion that people of different origins and with different motivations often use the same migration routes and migration infrastructure (Carling, Gallagher, & Horwood, 2015, p. 1). These motives span from human rights reasons to economic reasons, where especially in the legal context of asylum procedures, the former is often associated with forced migration and the latter with voluntary migration. To describe contemporary migration realities appropriately, it must also be acknowledged that drawing a clear distinction between people who migrate involuntarily from those who migrate voluntarily is not as simple. In this regard we follow, Erdal and Oeppen (2018), who promote the “acknowledgment of forced and voluntary migration as a continuum of experience, not a dichotomy” (Erdal & Oeppen, 2018, p. 981). As the label of forced migration matters first and foremost in a political sense, namely when it comes to the certification of asylum status, it might be challenging for migration scholars to decouple the political meaning and its implications when using the terms of forced and voluntary migration. Although there may well be absolute extremes on the spectrum between forced and voluntary, the migration decisions of most migrants are likely to fall somewhere in the fuzzy middle of the spectrum (Erdal & Oeppen, 2018, p. 981-982). In this context, reference must also be made to the works of Olsaretti (1998) and Colburn (2008). Olsaretti (1998, p. 54) points out that a decision can only be considered *voluntary* if acceptable alternatives are available; subsequently, Colburn (2008, p. 102;111) states that the assessment of what can be considered an acceptable alternative depends on individual convictions as well as on access to information.

For the reasons outlined above, this deliverable builds on theoretical literature as well as empirical studies dealing with different forms of migration along the forced-voluntary spectrum.

#### 3.2 Migration as a process

In this theoretical framework, we define migration as a process, rather than as a single action based on one consistently maintained decision. In contrast to many studies that focus primarily on the migration decision and intention at the time of departure (see, e.g., Neumayer 2005; van Hear, Bakewell, & Long, 2017), Schapendonk (2012) and Zijlstra and van Liempt (2017), for example, analyzed the decisions made *en route*. Thereby, they were able to show that in many cases, it is not yet clear at the time of departure how the journey will unfold and that initial plans may often change. Similarly, Kuschminder, de Bresser, and Siegel (2015, p. 61) noted that especially the choice of destination could change in the course of migration, arguing that, for example, conditions in transit countries such as Greece or Italy can encourage both, further movement as well as settlement.

Consequently, we define migration as a continuous process and take into account that availability of information as well as other resources at various points in time substantially shape – and may lead individuals to re-evaluate – migration perceptions, aspirations, decisions, follow-up decisions, and destination plans (Kuschminder, 2015, p. 62).

#### 3.3 Migration as an active decision

In our theoretical discussion, we depart from traditional migration theories, which interpret migration as a “more or less passive response to external factors” (Timmerman, Hemmerchts, & De Clerck, 2014b, p. 497). In the following, and in line with the work of de Haas (2011) and Carling (2014), migration is seen as a function between individual aspiration and ability, which thus sees the individual as an active and self-reliant decision-maker. In this sense, the agency of each individual plays a vital role. Thus, we define migration decision making as an active and

agent-based process, while keeping in mind that this process also comprises the active decision not to migrate, but to stay.

#### 4 Migration networks and social capital

Starting with the works of Massey and España (1987) and Boyd (1989), the concept of *migration networks* has become a central approach in the migration studies' literature (Haug, 2008, p. 588). Essentially, the theory indicates that networks consisting of (potential) migrants' kinship and acquaintances, facilitate interaction, and thereby provide information, assistance, and funding throughout the migration process (Haug, 2008, p. 588). The so-called *social capital*<sup>1</sup> created through these networks then consequently decreases the associated costs and risks of migration (Palloni et al., 2001, p. 1264). Following Granovetter's theory on the strength of ties (1973), networks depend not only on strong ties but also on weak ties. Weak ties allow to bridge different networks with each other and thereby expand a network and the information flow within. Combining Granovetter's work on social ties with the concept of social capital, Putnam (2000) distinguishes two types of social capital, being 'bridging social capital' established between loose contacts (i.e., *weak ties*) that provide useful information, and 'bonding social capital' between trusted friends and family (i.e., *strong ties*) that provide inter alia emotional support (Ellison et al., 2007, p. 1146).

The migration network concept was considered a welcome alternative to purely economic attempts to explain migration (Collyer, 2005, p. 699; Schapendonk, 2015, p. 810). Migration networks were found to be an essential factor in determining migration plans and the choice of migration destinations (Haug, 2008, p. 588) regarding both international as well as internal migration (Collyer, 2005, p. 699-700).

Scholars have established various ways in which social networks affect individual migration decisions. Haug (2008, p. 588) has summarized them in the form of five hypotheses. The hypotheses most frequently referred to and most relevant to our theoretical framework are the *encouraging*, the *facilitating*, and the *information* hypotheses. It is argued, that family encourages potential migrants based on strategic considerations regarding the family income and security (encouraging hypothesis), that having a personal network in the destination country facilitates migration due to more effortless adjustment to the new surrounding (facilitating hypothesis), and that the amount of information circulating between places of origin and places of destination play a crucial role in migration decision-making and depend on the characteristics of one's network (information hypothesis). Additionally, the conflict hypothesis implies that families may boost migration decisions due to family disputes, and by way of contrast, the affinity hypothesis indicates that having friends and family at the place of residence may reduce the aspiration to migrate. Thereby, the affinity hypothesis is the only one of the five hypotheses that describes personal networks as a migration hampering factor.

##### 4.1 The non-static nature of migration networks

In line with the notion that personal networks and connectivity are not always enabling migration, scholars have criticized the static conception of the migration network concept. Following Schapendonk (2015, p. 817), we have to "move away from the idea that having a network is, in itself, decisive in migration processes." Schapendonk (2015) argues that personal networks should not be understood as some "kind of social given" (p. 810). These networks would not automatically lead to social capital, and networks could change, expand, or decrease over time (Schapendonk, 2015). Specifically, in the context of migration, scholars have shown that migrants are actively building strategic networks valuable for the concrete stage of the migration process they are currently in (Muanamoha et al., 2010) and that so-called *migrant pioneers* aim at expanding their networks globally through new contacts (Somerville, 2015).

---

<sup>1</sup> Although there are some variations in the definition of social capital by different scholars, there seems to be a consensus that "social capital is derived from relations with other people in a social structure, which allows social relationships among individuals and helps them create a competitive advantage to achieve their social goals" (Lee & Lee, 2010, p. 713-714).

In accordance with our specification of migration as an agent-based process rather than a one-time action with an apparent completion, in this framework, we as well perceive migration networks as a non-static concept which demand active efforts and that can be modified over time.

#### 4.2 Migration networks and social capital in the context of social media

The emergence of social media has exerted a great impact on the conception and meaning of social networks and social capital. Research has established that social media help to maintain ties, allow to expand personal networks, and thereby enable users to acquire resources through such mediated contacts (Xie, 2014, p. 229).

Transferred to the migration context, studies have shown that the infrastructure offered by online media widens the opportunities for potential migrants to obtain connections to various networks and gain information and feedback (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014, p. 401; Hiller & Franz, 2004, p. 731; Lim, Bork-Hüffer, & Yeoh, 2016, p. 2148; Thulin & Vilhelmson, 2014, p. 389). This infrastructure consists not only of weak and strong ties but also of so-called *latent ties*, which are ties that are made accessible through online media and “connect previously unconnected people, providing an opportunity for weak ties to develop and strengthen” (Dekker, Engbersen, & Faber, 2016, p. 541). Consequently, this has altered the nature of contemporary migration greatly.

More recently, social media were found to provide assistance and information that was much more difficult to access through networks before the advent of modern ICTs and new media (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014, p. 410-411), “forging an instant safety net for the new migrant” (Lim et al., 2016, p. 2148). In 2016, Dekker and colleagues conceded that most of the online communication that takes place in migration networks involves already existing social ties and that communication among latent ties forms only a small part in contemporary online migration networks. In line with this notion, the Danish Refugee Council reported in 2016 that for most Syrian refugees, it was friends, family or neighbors, that already had tried to reach Europe, who functioned as a primary source regarding information on the migration process and the situation in Europe. Only for those who do not hold such direct connections, new media are relevant in terms of establishing new ties and connecting with what until then were strangers. These people have to rely heavily on media and word-of-mouth (Danish Refugee Council, 2016, p. 4; Dekker et al., 2016, p. 540), which complicates their situation because of the possible lack of trustworthiness of this feedback (Danish Refugee Council, 2016, p. 4). In that respect, Dekker and Engbersen (2014, p. 413) note that in an environment that is mainly characterized by weak and latent bonds, as it is the case on social media, the motives for passing on information are not always completely altruistic.

Although, as outlined above, studies have shown that most communication via online migration networks still takes place with pre-existing connections and the small amount of exchange that actually occurs between latent ties should be treated with caution, recent research nevertheless points to the importance of online communication for migration networks and migration decisions. Dekker and colleagues (2016) found that the migration aspiration of potential migrants explains their online communication with migrants who already arrived in Europe (Dekker et al., 2016, p. 549-550). More explicitly, in 2018, Dekker and colleagues stated that migrants increasingly base their decision to migrate and the decision about their migration destination on feedback obtained through social media (Dekker et al., 2018, p. 1). The way in which modern ICTs and social media are used and the question of which contacts (strong, weak, or latent ties) are accessed via these media depends on the specific needs and circumstances of the particular migratory phase, as further discussed below.

## 5 The role of different types of feedback

Complementing the feedback that can be received through personal migration networks, i.e. network feedback, and reflecting on the role of modern ICTs in the process of migration, Bakewell and Jolivet (2016) introduced the term *broadcast feedback*. In general, it refers to messages, information, or assistance (at least potentially) accessible to a broader public and not necessarily dependent on individual networks. As it was already well-established for feedback received via personal networks, Bakewell and Jolivet (2016) point out that broadcast feedback also matters for migration decision-making and its outcomes.

In their conception of different types of migration-related feedback channels, Bakewell and Jolivet (2016) distinguish not only between network-based feedback and broadcast feedback but establish overall five types of feedback, which work either based on personal networks or based on publicly available information: *personal network feedback*, *narrowcast feedback*, *induced broadcast feedback*, *general broadcast feedback*, and *embedded broadcast feedback*. However, Bakewell and Jolivet acknowledge that the boundaries between the five types of feedback have to be perceived as “extremely blurred” (Bakewell & Jolivet, 2016, p. 188).

The idea of broadcast feedback corresponds with extant studies, which have agreed that modern mobility is not exclusively shaped by personal networks. Scholars emphasize that we are currently living in a time that is characterized by possibilities to easily gain insights into aspects of life in completely different and distant places in the world through broadcast media as well as the Internet and social media (Bakewell & Jolivet, 2016, p. 187; Carling et al., 2015; Schapendonk & van Moppes, 2007). Following this notion, media have repeatedly been ascribed an encouraging role in affecting potential migrants’ perceptions of the migration process and, first and foremost, of the situation in destination countries (see, e.g., Diker, 2016; Timmerman, 2014). In addition, with the rise of social media in the migration context, research has focused on social media’s role in enabling (potential) migrants to contact previously unknown people in likely destination countries (Hiller & Franz, 2004; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Thulin & Vilhelmson, 2014; Lim et al., 2016).

### 5.1 Personal network feedback

Personal network feedback is defined as information and assistance via letters, emails, calls, etc. that are directly exchanged between a potential migrant and a contact person who has already gained experience in migration (Bakewell & Jolivet, 2016, p. 187). The vital role that this type of feedback plays in migration decision making has been established in various studies, ranging from research that stresses the significance of the well-functioning preservation of contacts between the African Diaspora and its communities in their countries of origin (Schapendonk, 2012, p. 28) to studies, that highlight the relevance of contacts shared by family members or friends when crossing the Mexican-American border (Newell et al., 2016, p. 183).

We primarily define contemporary migration by its processual nature. Extending Bakewell and Jolivet’s definition of personal network feedback that focusses on potential migrants, we therefore include those forms of personal network feedbacks that are relevant not only *before* migration but also *during* the migration process. In this respect we also argue that feedback may not only come from those members of one’s personal network who have already gained migration experiences themselves. Facilitated by online media, migrants can remain socially connected with their loved ones across borders, which reduces the potential negative sides of migration (Dekker et al., 2016, p. 541). In 2008, Diminescu already pointed out that modern ICTs are transforming the “paradigmatic figure of the uprooted migrant” into that of the “connected migrant” (Diminescu, 2008, p. 565).

In this regard, Zijlstra and van Liempt (2017, p. 185) term contact with family at home as „crucial condition for reaching the preferred destination in Europe” for the Afghans, Syrian, and Iranian migrants who are accompanied *en route*. Migrants heavily depended on family funding at different stages of the migration process to be able to move on (Zijlstra & van Liempt, 2017, p. 185). Similarly, the Mixed Migration Centre stated in its info sheet on young African migrants of October 2019, that the most vital sources to rely on during migration are indeed social contacts in the country of destination, however, closely followed by friends and family in the country of origin (Mixed Migration Centre, 2019, p. 4).

### 5.2 Narrowcast feedback

Narrowcast feedback, as defined by Bakewell and Jolivet (2016), takes place when information or messages of personal contacts reach potential migrants in an impersonal form. This includes, for example, social media posts or the forwarding of online news articles to one’s network (Bakewell & Jolivet, 2016, p. 188). In this context, the trustworthiness of the information that migrants share with their networks on their social media channels is often discussed. As a result, in a newspaper article on Somaliland’s problems with emigration published by Aljazeera in 2015, Somaliland officials criticize “polished and heavily retouched photos that Somalis post abroad on their social media accounts” to “obscure reality” (Mohamed, 2015, April 30).

In this respect, scholars discussed the impact of the immediate spreading of the success stories of migrants who have safely arrived in Europe via social media on those still in their home countries. The primary reason why migrants share images through social media may be to let their social environment know that they are safe and well. However, pictures – sometimes staged next to tourist attraction and wealthy cars – can significantly enhance the migration intentions of those who stayed at home, especially for those for whom migration was an option beforehand (Frouws et al., 2016, p. 10).

### 5.3 Induced broadcast feedback

Induced broadcast feedback describes the outcome of any actions potential migrants undertake, to “discover – online or through other means – new contacts outside their existing social network in order to gain advice, information or other help to further their migration aspirations” (Bakewell & Jolivet, 2016, p. 188). In doing so, migrants can expand their social networks. However, as these contacts initially did not form a part of one’s networks, the information gained is not acquired through an already existing social surrounding but by one’s migration aspiration and one’s decision to further seek strategically relevant contacts (Bakewell & Jolivet, 2016, p. 188). In this regard, again, the Internet and new media play a significant role. Various websites, forums, and online communities offer first-hand advice and provide potential virtual contact points for people who were previously strangers (Lim et al., 2016, p. 2148).

Again, we extend Bakewell and Jolivet’s definition by including forms of induced broadcast feedback relevant to migrants already *en route*; bearing in mind that migration often is a long process, consisting of different stages and situations in which the need for feedback can vary and may change. Migration research found that smartphones not only serve the purpose of keeping in touch with friends and families but also to get informed by those who left before them and to contact those who can help them, for example, the coastguards (Gillespie, Osseiran, & Cheesman, 2018, p. 7). To strategically facilitate their onward journey, many migrants moreover need to connect with smugglers as well. Zijlstra and van Liempt term these diversified connections as “geographically dispersed hybrid networks,” whose creation via mobile communication devices enable migrants to more autonomously organize and fund their journey (Zijlstra & van Liempt, 2017:186). Scholars seem to accord, that the advent of mobile communication devices has led to the smuggling industry being increasingly organized online (Diker, 2016; Latonero & Kift, 2018, p. 4), making smartphones and similar devices the central intermediary between migrants and smugglers along contemporary migration routes. Of particular importance in this context are messenger apps such as WhatsApp or Viber as well as Facebook group pages, in which everything that could be useful for the trip to Europe is gathered from a broad range of users (Kaufmann, 2016, p. 337).

Moreover, the role of personal contact established face-to-face along the way should not be overlooked. In their study on the Mexican-American border crossing, Newell and colleagues (2016, p. 183) found that the most valuable advice “was acquired face-to-face while staying at the border.” Likewise, Schapendonk (2015) observed how migrants without European connections established strategically important contacts with fellow-migrants along the way. The migrant groups, or “traveler’s collective,” thus formed on the journey, may have a significant influence on the route and destination decisions of its members (Schapendonk, 2015, p. 817).

### 5.4 General broadcast feedback

Termed as general broadcast feedback, Bakewell and Jolivet describe information and images that are indiscriminately distributed to a broad audience via mass media, such as TV, radio programs, or the Internet. Thereby, the migration-related part of the information can form the central part of the program or content, but may also be referred to less explicitly within a story focusing on a non-migration centered topic (Bakewell & Jolivet, 2016, p. 188). Schapendonk and van Moppes (2007) attest this form of broadcast feedback a central function in the African migration context. Described as “modern migration encouraging factors,” they refer to “biased images of wealth and western luxury,” which are disseminated via mass media and have a particular impact on the ideas of young people (Schapendonk & van Moppes, 2007, p. 2). Similarly, more recent research has focused on the role of ICTs and new media in disseminating unrealistic and misleading rumors and in potentially encouraging others to migrate (see, e.g., Diker, 2016).

When already being *en route*, ICTs and new media, however, also provide navigation functions (Frouws, Phillips, Hassan, & Twigt, 2016, p. 2; Gillespie et al., 2016, p. 2; Kaufmann, 2016, p. 330; Kutscher & Kreß, 2018, p. 6). With the help of mobile devices and an Internet connection, migrants can use various services *en route* to make their way through unknown territory (Lim et al., 2016, p. 2148). GPS applications, such as Google Maps, as well as geolocations from migrants who have already made their way, help find strategic routes past border controls (Frouws et al., 2016, p. 4). Moreover, migrants use their smartphones to get informed about relevant news events at home and in Europe that might affect their journeys (Gillespie et al., 2016, p. 12).

### 5.5 Embedded broadcast feedback

Embedded broadcast feedback refers to tangible (objects) but also intangible (ideas and behavior) results of migration, their meaning, and interpretation, which can only be understood in a specific local context. On the one hand, this concerns materially consolidated effects of migration; examples include new houses built with remittances sent back home or the clothes that migrants wear when they visit their countries of origin. On the other hand, this refers to ideas that spread through rumors and stories about migrants, or it relates to the altered behavior of migrants who visit or return to their places of origin (Bakewell & Jolivet, 2016, p. 188).

Concerning this form of broadcast feedback, the dissemination of information on migration can be conscious (e.g., when a returning emigrant actively displays her or his wealth) but also unconscious (e.g., when potential migrants notice altered behavior of visiting emigrants), and is also indiscriminately accessible to everyone in a community. However, whether everyone perceives it equally intensively depends in part on the previous knowledge of the respective persons (e.g., knowledge about where the money for the construction of the new house in the neighboring village comes from) (Bakewell & Jolivet, 2016, p. 188).

This embedded broadcast feedback can be linked to the concept of *emigration environments* (Carling, 2002, p. 13) or *culture of migration* (see, e.g., Timmerman et al., 2014b; van Mol, Snel, Hemmerechts, & Timmerman, 2018). Carling's term of *emigration environment* refers to the specific "social, economic and political context which is largely common to all members of the community" (2002, p. 13), in which emigration can be understood as a socially constructed project. Linked to this, Timmerman and colleagues (2014b) and van Mol and colleagues (2018) use the term *culture of migration* to describe communities that are characterized by particularly high emigration. In such communities, emigration may become a common thing while staying in the country of origin may be seen as failure (van Mol, 2018, p. 3). A striking illustration of this is the *tahriib* (Arabic for *the journey to Europe*) phenomenon in Somaliland and Puntland, where the emigration of young people is an omnipresent trend, leading to a large-scale outcry of affected communities (Rift Valley Institute, 2016). However, contrary to the common thesis, research has found that living in a culture of migration can also have a dissuading effect on potential migrants' migration aspirations (Timmerman et al., 2014b, p. 512).

### 5.6 Feedback communication, modern ICTs, and the migration process

As argued above, we do not consider the five feedback types introduced by Bakewell and Jolivet (2016) to be limited to the phase prior to migration, but also relevant *en route*. The five types of feedback are to be understood as communication, which is of great importance both before and during migration, as it transports migration-related content. Following this understanding, the close connection between various feedback types and modern ICTs and new media becomes particularly evident. Even if not all forms of feedback can or must be transmitted via new media and ICTs, as discussed above, we can assume that these tools play an essential role in the context of contemporary migration. However, we conclude that it is ultimately not media or modern ICTs as such that affect contemporary migration and decision-making processes in a facilitating or encouraging way, but rather the feedback communication that is (potentially) made accessible via these media. Following Dekker and colleagues (2016), the effect of media always depends on the content and the way things are communicated, and may, therefore, also have a migration-undermining character. What should also not be left out of consideration is that different content may always cause different reactions in different people.

In sum, we understand the different types of feedback as communication – may it be for mediated (i.e., reinterpreted and transmitted through the media) or unmediated (i.e., directly experienced) communication – that play a twofold role for the migration process: First, the different types of feedback communication often

spread through modern ICTs can function as a *facilitator* of modern migration (facilitating function) as they enable potential migrants as well as those already on their way to gain strategically vital information and assistance through already existing personal ties (see, e.g., Zijlstra & van Liempt, 2017) but also new contacts and information sources, that only became available through the extant use of social media and mobile devices (see, e.g., Gillespie et al., 2018). Second, feedback communication, through the dissemination of texts and images about life in destination countries and stories of successful migration through traditional as well as social media has been assigned the role of an *encouraging* force in the migration (decision-making) process (encouraging function) (see, e.g., Diker, 2016; Frouws et al., 2016).<sup>2</sup>

## 6 Developing a migration communication model

Following the notion of the twofold role of different types of feedback in the process of migration decision-making, we conclude that on the one hand, feedback, in its facilitating function, leads to a gain in migration-related information (see, e.g., Dekker et al., 2016; Frouws et al., 2016; Zijlstra & van Liempt, 2017). On the other hand, in its encouraging function, feedback influences migration aspiration (see, e.g., de Haas, 2010; Schapendonk and van Moppes, 2007; Timmerman et al., 2014a). Essential is the observation that feedback does not trigger aspiration per se, but that this interaction only works through the migration-related content, thus, through the information that different types of feedback may convey (see, e.g., Thulin & Vilhelmson, 2014). To phrase it in the words of de Haas “improved access to information through modern mass media, the internet and (migrant) networks increase people’s awareness of social, economic and political opportunities elsewhere and, hence, increase their own life aspirations” (de Haas, 2010, p. 17).

Furthermore, it has been shown that aspiration, in turn, commonly causes the active search for information and induces the use of feedback communication (Vilhelmson & Thulin, 2013; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014). Consequently, we arrive at a circular interplay of different factors, which is illustrated in Figure 1 and which forms the core of the migration communication model (MCM) developed in this section:

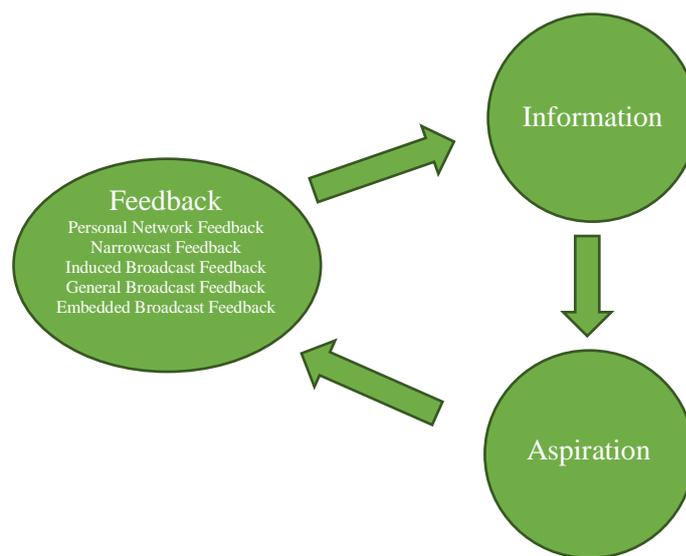


Figure 1. Preliminary Migration Communication Model

<sup>2</sup> Please note that, overall, in the above elaboration on the role of different types of feedback, we more generally focused on migration decisions in favor of leaving the country of origin. However, this does not necessarily have to be the case. As we have discussed in the introduction, migration decision-making can also lead to an active decision to stay in one’s country or to abort the migration process midway. Different types of feedback can *facilitate* a deliberate consideration of various options and may also *encourage* someone to stay.

## 6.1 The mediating role of perceptions

When examining the quote of de Haas (2010, p. 17) mentioned above, we further specify what he terms *people's awareness*. Not only does de Haas state that (mediated) feedback communication facilitates improved access to information, and this subsequently leads to increased life aspirations, but he also mentions an intermediary between information and aspiration: "*people's awareness* of social, economic and political opportunities elsewhere," which we will term *perceptions* in the following.

Communication science has long been and still is concerned with the question of how individuals perceive the world around them and the role of second-hand information, i.e., information that is not directly experienced but, for example, conveyed via different media, in this process (Hoffman & Glynn, 2008, p. 2945). Thus, communication science research also deals with the connection between these perceptions and individual behavior as well as their social relevance (Hoffman & Glynn, 2008, p. 2958). In migration studies literature, however, the role of an intermediary between information and aspiration is often left out (for a few exceptions see Schapendonk, 2012, p. 28; Timmerman et al., 2014a, p. 241; van Mol et al., 2018, p. 2). Both concerning the role of traditional migration networks and in the context of the intensive investigation of the role of modern ICTs in the migration process, it seems that researchers generally have focused solely on the interplay of the two factors of information and migration (aspiration). In the few cases where an intermediary between information and aspiration is mentioned, it seems that no homogeneous terminology has yet been agreed upon.

Similar to de Haas' use of the term *awareness*, Schapendonk (2012), for example, writes about "images about 'the good life'" (p. 28), which are disseminated with the help of media and ICTs. Elsewhere, the term *expectations* is used; for example in a report by the Danish Refugee Council where expectations of Syrian refugees regarding migration to Europe, are described as being first and foremost "the promise of respect and dignity that participants felt to be lacking in their current country of residence," followed by more job and education opportunities and access to health care (Danish Refugee Council, 2016, p. 3). Correspondingly, Timmerman and colleagues speak of "perceptions and imaginations regarding the democracy and human rights situation of possible asylum and migration destinations" (2014a, p. 223), which are created by the discourses of media, of returned migrants, or of friends and family abroad. They found that *perceptions* strongly influence migration aspirations, as people's migration aspirations are not only stimulated by potential economic opportunities elsewhere, but also by their perception of educational opportunities, gender equality, or less corruption in Europe (Timmerman et al., 2014a, p. 241). Referring to Timmerman and colleagues' (2014b) framework, van Mol and colleagues (2018) postulate that information, perceptions, and individual values strongly shape migration *aspiration* and that these *perceptions* are becoming more and more relevant today, as people are increasingly exposed to "migration-related images through mass media, social media, and cheap travel opportunities" (van Mol et al., 2018, p. 2).

Overall, in the theoretical framework at hand, we will use the term *perceptions* for the intermediary factor connecting information with aspiration; as we argue, this term embraces the meanings of *awareness*, *image*, as well as *expectation* outlined above. In this respect, we assume that it is not the information per se that leads to migration aspiration, but rather what migrants make of the received information, or as Hagen-Zanker and Mallett (2016, p. 38) put it: "Perceptions govern action. Decisions are made, and options selected on the basis of an individual's own interpretation of which option(s) make most sense given the time and place (an interpretation that is of course influenced by others)." In this context, we have to stress that perceptions should not merely be associated with superficial impressions or purely wishful thinking since perceptions are often the result of an in-depth assessment of a variety of information and one's options (see, e.g., Alonso, 2011, p. 11). We extend our model by the factor *perceptions*, as illustrated in Figure 2:

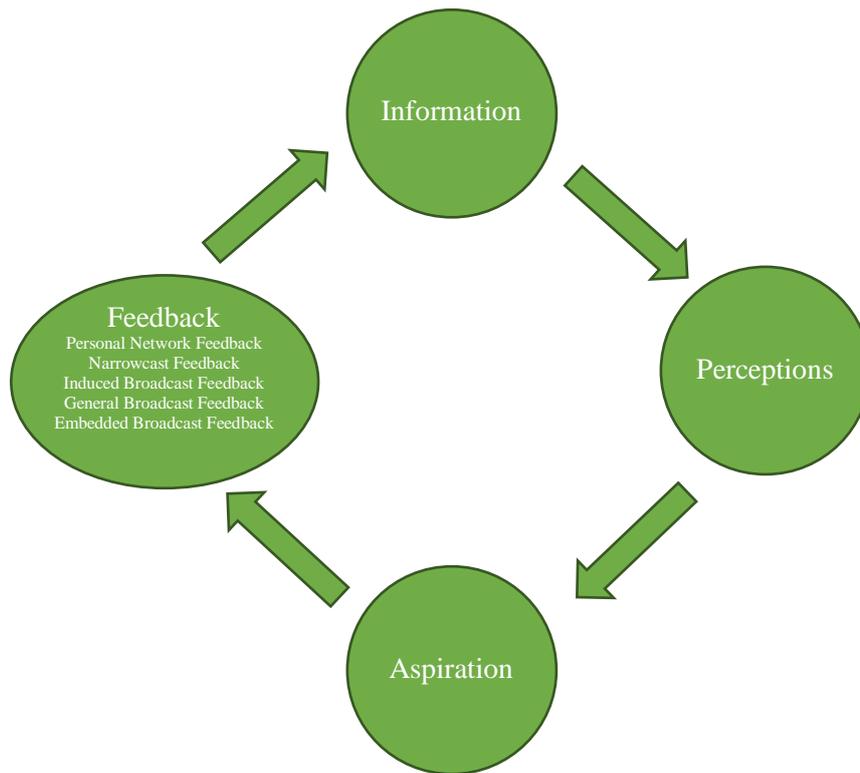


Figure 2. Preliminary Migration Communication Model including Perceptions

**6.2 Aspiration and ability**

Aspiration must be understood in its relation to the individual and it can vary significantly within and across societies and may also change over time (de Haas, 2010, p. 17; van Mol, 2018, p. 2). As a central part of migration decision-making (van Mol et al., 2018, p. 2) and a determinant of migration (Carling, 2014, p. 2), aspiration plays a two-fold role in influencing migration decisions. On the one hand, aspiration, generally described as expressing goal-orientation relevant to broad well-being (Bernard, Dercon, Orkin, & Taffese, 2014, p. 5), affects migration decisions in its reference to people’s general life aspiration relating to, e.g., happiness, security or wealth. On the other hand, more specifically, *migration* aspiration understood as being the conviction, that migration is something desirable, influences migration decisions. In the latter regard, aspiration is not to be confused with enthusiasm about migration, as in some cases, migration is merely presenting the “lesser of two evils” (Carling, 2014, p. 2).

It can further be assumed that there is not only the desire to migrate but also the desire to stay. Hence, in the following we will no longer refer to *migration aspiration*, but rather to *aspiration* in the sense of Carling’s term of *spatial aspiration*: “By making spatial aspirations the central concept, we allow for greater variation in how people engage with the spatial parameters of their lives and ambitions” (Carling, 2014, p. 9). By introducing the concept of aspiration into migration theory, scholars moved further away from the notion that migration is primarily dependent on “‘exogenous’ factors such as income and employment differentials” (de Haas, 2010, p. 17); following the argument, that if exogenous factors had a deterministic effect on migration decisions, aspirations would remain constant and identical across time and individuals. Instead, scholars such as de Haas (2010) and Carling (2014) stress the importance of (potential) migrant’s agency. Agency can be described as the means by which people can realize their aspirations and adapt their social or geographical position accordingly (van Hear et al., 2017, p. 930).

In 2010, de Haas stated that migration should be conceptualized as a function between individual aspiration and individual capability, which he defines as “social, human and material capital [which] individuals are able to mobilize in order to migrate” (de Haas, 2010, p. 16). Carling describes *capability* or - as he synonymously terms it - *ability* as “the decisive element in turning migration aspirations into actual migration” (Carling, 2014, p. 9). Migration thus takes place on a continuum between independent decisions based on knowledge, perceptions, and preferences, and structural conditions and constraints such as physical and political barriers (de Haas, 2010, p. 16). In this respect, there are also situations characterized by *involuntary immobility*: e.g., when someone aspires to migrate but is not able to do so (Carling, 2014, p. 2). Migration, therefore, only takes place when both aspiration and ability are provided. If only aspiration is given, it can be assumed that this, in turn again, promotes further attention to different types of feedback in search for additional migration-related information. In our model, we thus consider ability in relation to aspiration and migration decision-making, as depicted in Figure 3:

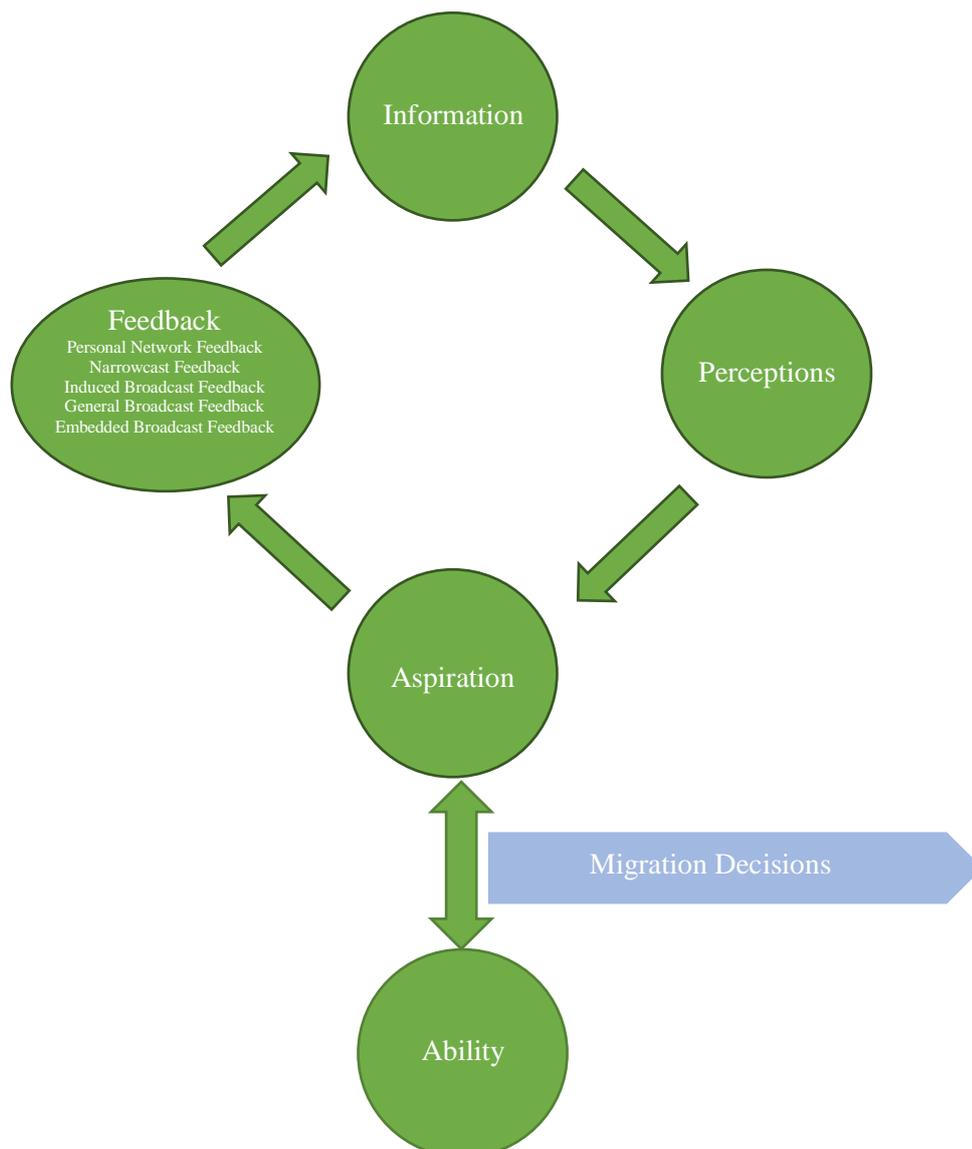


Figure 3. Preliminary Migration Communication Model including Migration Decisions

### 6.3 Macro-, meso- and micro-level influence

Having introduced the different parts of our circular model, we have to consider that all components are also influenced by factors at the macro, meso, and micro level. However, the sphere of influence needs to be located more precisely within our Migration Communication Model.

Although we generally take an agency-centered (and thus micro-level) perspective on the process of migration and migration decision-making, the influence of *macro*-level factors cannot be ignored completely. Research (mostly conducted in relation to migration push-pull-models) has, for example, established that the general socioeconomic situation influences migration aspiration (e.g., Neumayer 2005, p. 405; Timmerman, 2014a, p. 241). On the basis of our circular model, however, this notion has to be broadened; after all, it is not the socioeconomic situation per se that is decisive, but the perception of it (de Haas, 2011, p. 16), which in turn depends on the information that is received by an individual. In fact, access to information and (mediated) feedback again is reliant on macro-level factors such as the socioeconomic or political situation in a country. Thus, these factors appear to affect all main components of our model. Still, we assume that all events (e.g., war, catastrophes, etc.) and external circumstances (e.g., economic crisis, political suppression, etc.) must be made perceivable in some way in the first place, be it through communication, news, or - following Bakewell and Jolivet's (2016) embedded broadcast feedback - their manifestation in the world around us (e.g., seeing consequences of war or unemployed people on the street). Therefore, we conclude that macro-level factors always enter into our migration communication circle through means of communication.

In the context of migration, *meso*-level influence mainly refers to forming part of a family or a network or to living in a specific region. The family's or network's contacts with people who have already successfully emigrated, or a place of residence that is characterized by a high level of emigration play a crucial role (e.g., Timmerman, 2014a, p. 241). As with factors on the macro-level, meso-level factors affect aspiration, perception, and the information received, but they, as well, find their way into our circular model only via various forms of communication and feedback. As Bakewell and Jolivet (2016, p. 184) argue, "the extent to which [feedback] is picked up and the meaning with which it is imbued will be mediated by individual and collective characteristics – including aspirations – and also connections to social networks."

Concerning the individual *micro*-level characteristics, research has established that migration is influenced by gender (e.g., van Mol, 2017, p. 100), age (Ackah & Medvedev, 2010, p. 7), education and household income (e.g., Torresan, 2007, p. 106; UNDP, 2019, p. 5), marital status (e.g., Kanaiaupuni, 2000, p. 1315), and previous migration experience (Timmerman, 2014a, p. 241). In contrast to the macro-level and meso-level factors mentioned above, the influence of individual characteristics needs to be perceived as affecting all four aspects of our circular Migration Communication Model. In essence, individual characteristics such as education, income or personality influence the ability to access feedback or use media, they affect information retrieval (Zijlstra & van Liempt, 2017, p. 188), and co-shape our perceptions (Timmerman et al., 2014b, p. 497) and aspirations (Carling, 2002, p. 13).

Given the current relevance of ICTs and new media for contemporary migration and our framework's aim to strengthen thus far existing links between migration and communication theories, in the following, we will focus on a specific micro-level characteristic to extend the MCM: individuals' abilities related to media use and information processing.

### 6.4 The importance of information and information processing

Access to reliable information in the migration process is crucial. Schapendonk and van Moppes (2007, p. 2) call the sharing of information an "essential survival strategy"; Ros and colleagues (2007, p. 16) speak of a "necessary resource" for migration; Xu and Maitland (2016) emphasize in this respect the desire to stay in contact with family and friends, to know the current state of the news and information regarding future migration steps. However, especially in the context of displacement and migration, information appears not to be a perfectly available good. Contrary to what is assumed in neo-classical migration theories, an ideal information situation cannot be assumed; migration is rather characterized by incomplete information or information overload (Baláž, Williams, & Fifeková, 2016). The stark contrast between the high demand and the scarcity of reliable information has caused scholars to emphasize the *information precarity* of migrants. Many migrants experience high instability and uncertainty

regarding access to information. As practices such as source and information validation are thus hardly possible, it makes them highly vulnerable to misinformation (Frouws et al., 2016; Wall, Otis Campbell, & Janbek, 2017).

Scholars argue that European governments and newsrooms do not provide irregular migrants with the kind of information they need and force them to rely heavily on alternative, often unconfirmed information and rumors, some of which are spread by smugglers and traffickers through social media (Carlson, Jakli, & Linos, 2017, p. 539; Gillespie et al., 2016, p. 38). In general, many studies found that irregular migrants are not as uninformed and unprepared as some may believe (see, e.g., Hagen-Zanker & Mallett, 2016, p. 39; Schapendonk & van Moppes, 2007, p. 12; UNDP, 2019, p. 5). However, the consequences for those who come to Europe ill-informed and caught off guard by the harsh living conditions of migrants in Europe are often far-reaching. Schapendonk and van Moppes refer to “mental problems due to unfulfilled expectations, often in combination with social pressure from the family, and the burden of a life-threatening journey” (Schapendonk & van Moppes, 2007, p. 2). Similarly, Borkert, Fisher, and Yafi (2018, p. 1) state “bodily harm or death, loss of family, or financial ruin” as consequences of inadequate or false information in the migration context.

The relevance of information in the course of the migration process also shows that it is not only essential that information is available or which information is available, but also that the handling of information and one’s own information needs is of central importance. In 2017, fieldwork-based research established that next to traditional educational skills, e.g., language skills, it is digital literacy that affects “migrants’ ability to actually use and profit from mobile technology” (Zijlstra & van Liempt, 2017, p. 188). Similarly, many other recent studies found that there are considerable differences regarding migrants’ media access and quality of use. However, in contrast to Zijlstra and van Liempt (2017), who speak of literacy, most scholars refer to the concept of the digital divide (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014, p. 404; Frouws et al., 2016, p. 3; Kutscher & Kreß, 2018, p. 7).

Within the framework of our agency-centered migration approach, we also deal with the handling of information from an actor-based perspective. Instead of the concept of the digital divide, we, therefore, focus on the media and information literacy of the individual. As described by Borkert and colleagues (2018), by focusing on individual media and information literacy skills, we refrain from ascribing migrants a passive role. In doing so, we also adopt the approach of usage and gratification theory (Palmgreen, 1984; Ruggiero, 2000). This communication science theory pursues an audience-centred approach that focuses on “what people do with the media” (Katz, 1959, p. 2), as opposed to “what media do to people” (Katz, 1959, p. 2). According to this approach, media users actively select and consume media according to their individual needs. More recently, the media use of migrants has been studied from this perspective (Nachrin, 2020).

## 6.5 Media and information literacy and the migration communication model

As outlined above, in the migration process, not only the availability of information is essential, but also the quality of the information is crucial. As we assume that media have a significant influence not only on our perceptions and attitudes (Koltay, 2011, p. 211), but also on our choices and knowledge (Livingstone & van der Graaf, 2010, p. 4) we have to conclude, that “a good understanding of the media, their messages, and their effects” (Potter, 2004, p. 20) is crucial in order to navigate in one’s world successfully.

In the theoretical debate on literacy in a world characterized by digital media technologies, three different terms usually coincide; some speak of *media literacy*, others of *information literacy*, and yet others of *digital literacy*. All terms are to be understood as umbrella concepts and are challenging to clearly differentiate from one another (for a comprehensive overview of the theoretical concepts see Koltay, 2011). For our Migration Communication Model, we take on the concept of *media and information literacy*, because it considers the multiple meanings of information in the digital age and thereby allows flexibility regarding the channel through which the information is received. (Frau-Meigs, 2017, p. 114) This openness is central to our framework, reflecting on the different channels through which different feedback types can be spread.

While we recognize that different literacy approaches focus on different sets of skills (see Livingstone & van der Graaf, 2010, p. 1), we draw on the American Library Association’s (1989; 2000) basic understanding of the following skills to define our approach to media and information literacy. These four skills are the ability to

*recognize the need for information, locate or identify information, to evaluate information, and to use information effectively.*

Following our theoretical considerations on the different types of feedback, we should again point out that not all types of feedback can or must be transmitted via social media and ICTs. Nevertheless, we assign a particularly important role to these tools in the context of current migration trends, due to the mobility they provide to migrants regarding information retrieval. In this sense, the media and information skills described above are also linked to specific know-how of mobile media use. Depending on the type of feedback and communication channel chosen, the skills must also be understood in terms of the required knowledge in dealing with new media and ICTs.

In the context of migration, information literacy has been studied primarily with regard to the information literacy of migrants after arrival in the destination countries, focusing on getting connected to the new information environment (e.g., Lloyd, Kennan, Thompson, & Qayyum, 2013). Only a few explicitly investigated the application of information literacy when traveling (for an exception see: Borkert et al., 2018). There are, however, several studies that examined individual aspects of information literacy.

Concerning the **identification of one's own information needs**, in the context of the migration process, it must be considered that the information needs during this process are in flux and depend on the specific situation. In an experimental study on work-related migration, Baláž and colleagues (2016) showed that information on wages and costs, but also health, crime, freedom, and security, is needed before an initial migration decision is made. In a survey of refugees who had arrived in their destination country, it was shown that while the respondents were still *en route*, their information needs revolved around political or economic stability in potential destination countries. In contrast, when they had arrived in the destination country, the need for information focused on their families' well-being in the country of origin, news about the country of origin, learning a new language and the culture of the destination country (Borkert et al., 2018, p. 6).

Furthermore, scholars have pointed out that aspiration commonly causes an active search for feedback and induces media use (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Vilhelmson & Thulin, 2013). Following this notion, in the context of our Migration Communication Model, we assume that migration-related information is needed in situations in which migration aspirations are at least in some respect present. Therefore, we locate this media and information literacy skill between aspiration and feedback (see Figure 4). Furthermore, it can be assumed that both the specific information need (e.g., a particularly intimate question) and the available resources (e.g., available internet access) are decisive for the feedback type selected to feed the information need.

Successfully **locating information** is highly dependent on the type of information being searched for. For example, locating information on political stability in a potential destination country proved to be relatively easy, while information on vocational and higher education for adults is not that easy to find (Borkert et al., 2018). A person's previous migration experience is further considered to be an advantage in determining what types of information to look for (Baláž et al., 2016).

In our model, the skill referred to as locating information relates to the ability to retrieve and select the information that meets the information needs. The exact specification of this skill must be perceived as tailored to the type of feedback. For example, the requirements for locating the information that needs to be filtered from a public Facebook group are considered to be quite different from those for locating information from a phone call with a relative who has already emigrated or from any form of embedded broadcast feedback. In our model, we position the ability to locate information between feedback and information (see Figure 4).

The third of our media and information literacy skills, **information evaluation** relates to the recognition of information quality, authenticity, and credibility (Hobbs, 2006). This also applies to the migration context, as Gillespie and colleagues (2018, p. 8) point out: "[j]ust like most media consumers, refugees collect, compare, and rank different informational resources from various sources and make decisions accordingly." In this regard, previous studies have paid particular attention to the validation of information via comparison. The comparison may relate to different sources of information (Dekker et al., 2018; Frouws et al., 2016, p. 6, Leurs, 2017, p. 690)

or the comparison of information to reality (Borkert et al., 2018; Dekker et al., 2018; Wall et al., 2017). Online and social media information is, for example, cross-checked with trusted social ties (Dekker et al., 2018, p. 8) or through an active online search with Wikipedia (Leurs, 2017, p. 690). When it comes to source credibility, findings indicate that credible information generally stems from known social ties (Misztal, 2000), from “connections with whom the individual already shares a relationship of (at least some) trust” (Hagen-Zanker & Mallett, 2016, p. 39), or migration networks (e.g., Dekker et al., 2018, p. 7; Zijlstra & van Liempt, 2017, p. 176). Examples include social media information shared through existing contacts and information based on personal experience (Dekker et al., 2018) or mainstream media distributed through personal social networks (Gillespie et al., 2016). When publicly available information on social media is concerned, social media is considered a source with low credibility (Dekker et al., 2018, p. 9). We refer to Carlson and colleagues (2017) for a discussion of the source credibility of personal contacts and smugglers in contrast to NGOs and government officials.

Similar to locating information, we see that the type of feedback or the information source plays a decisive role in the context of evaluation. Depending on the feedback type, the information is evaluated differently and potentially leads to different perceptions. In our model, we locate information evaluation between information and perceptions (see Figure 4).

Finally, when studies investigate **effective information usage** by migrants, they often focus on the exchange and sharing of information (e.g., Borkert et al. 2018; Gillespie et al., 2016). Ultimately, however, this skill also addresses migration decision-making (e.g., Baláž et al., 2016). In this respect, the relevance of source credibility has to be stressed once more. “For information to be acted on, it needs to come through particular channels and from particular sources (especially from those with whom a relationship of trust has already been established).” (Hagen-Zanker & Mallett, 2016, p. 32).

When locating this skill in our model, it must be emphasized again that certain perceptions generated by information received from different sources can influence migration aspiration, but not directly the migration decision. Since a migration decision, as outlined above, is still dependent on the existence of both aspiration and ability. Therefore, we position the media and information literacy skill of effective information usage between perceptions and aspirations (see Figure 4).

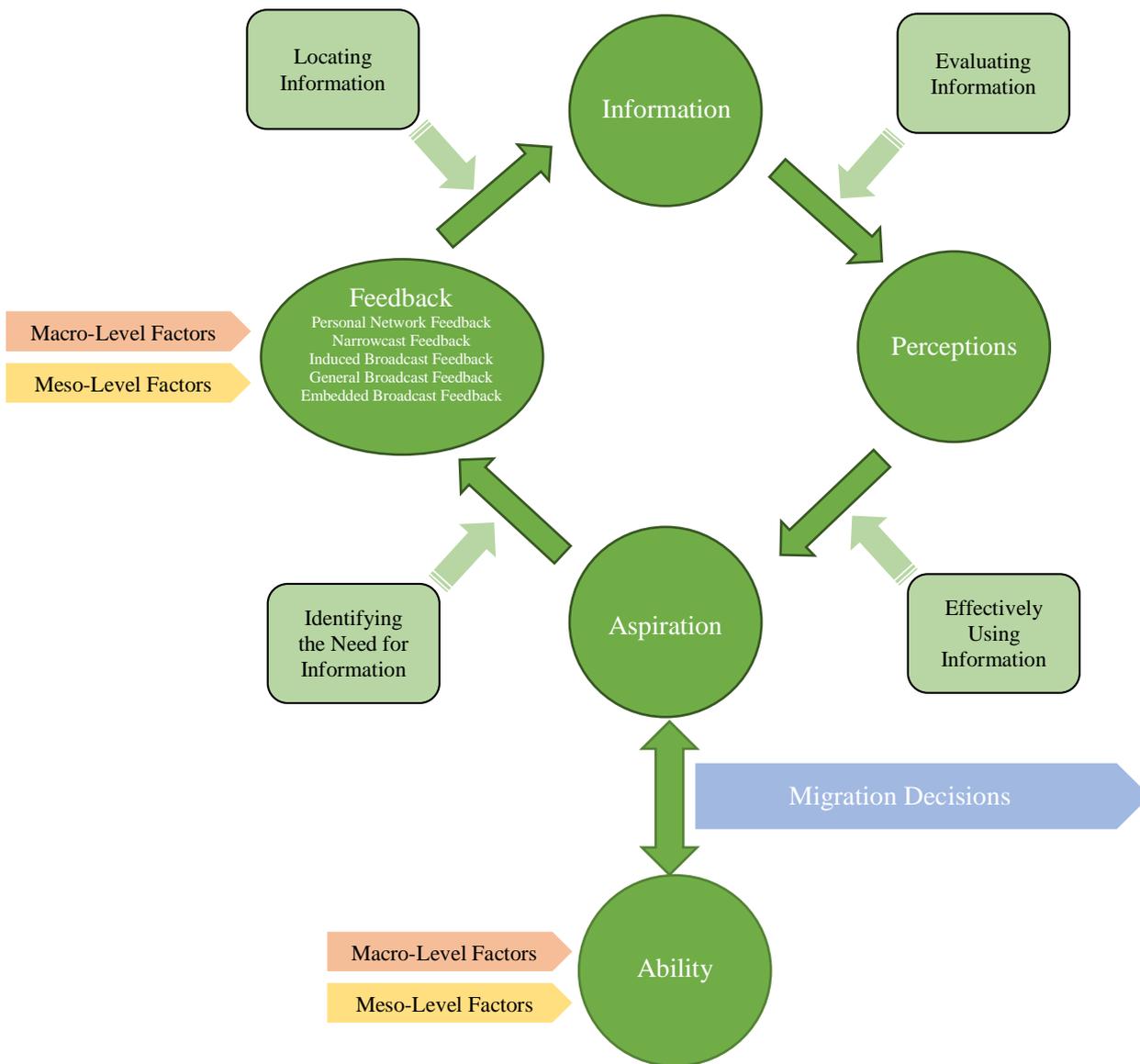


Figure 4. Final Migration Communication Model

## 7 Conclusions

Based on background-information gathered through comprehensive interviews with experts in the field as well as on a thorough review of the literature in the intersection of media and migration studies, this manuscript introduced a comprehensive Migration Communication Model, bringing together existing research on perceptions of irregular migrants and the role of media for perceptions of migration decisions. This framework aims at a better understanding of the driving factors behind migration decisions as well as the role of social media and ICTs in this process. Starting from the concept of migration networks, which we expanded through Bakewell and Jolivet’s (2016) conception of broadcast feedback, we systematically integrated the different aspects of various feedback types, information, perceptions, and aspirations. The primary aim was to explore the interplay of these four aspects in the context of contemporary migration decision-making processes. In the wake of the emergence of new media and ICTs, which are known to have a vital impact in shaping current migration processes, we further theoretically determined to what extent individual media and information literacy affects the different parts of our media and migration model.

Our model's core focuses on migration-related communication, which may take place in various forms of feedback and through multiple channels. The model, therefore, illustrates how migration-related communication processes work, especially when an awareness of the possibility of migration has already been established. At the same time, we must bear in mind that in a globalized world, where almost everyone is confronted with migration-related communication, migration depicts at least a theoretical option for action for many.

Based on our theoretical elaboration and our introduced model, we propose to understand media-supported migration decisions as a circular process in which (mediated) forms of feedback communication contain migration-related information, which then forms resulting perceptions and consequently migration aspirations. Migration aspiration then leads either to an even greater need for information and again to a turning to media and different types of feedback. Alternatively, if, following the aspiration, the ability to realize the desire to stay or migrate is also in place, it leads to the implementation of a migration decision.

Moreover, we assume that individual media and information literacy skills and the corresponding handling and accessibility of different types of feedback are decisive for migration aspirations and subsequent migration decisions. It should be noted that various types of feedback are expected to be handled differently, and thus take on a distinct role and have distinct effects on information gain, emerging perceptions, and migration aspirations.

The circular form of the model, furthermore, allows us to understand migration decisions not as a one-time, executed and completed act, but as a potentially repetitive process. This is essential, as research has established that its processual nature often characterizes contemporary migration and that after an initial decision to depart, many migration decisions are only made when already *en route* (see, e.g., Schapendonk, 2012; Zijlstra & van Liempt, 2017).

## 7.1 Discussion

The proposed model theoretically integrates communication and information in a comprehensive way in the migration decision making process. However, it thereby depicts only one possible approach to the complex processes involved in migration decision making. We also have to limit our model to its focus on the aspect of migration-related communication and its consequences and have to point out that the relationship between aspiration, ability, and migration decisions has thereby been presented in a somewhat condensed form (for a more detailed elaboration of the factors influencing this interaction, please see, e.g., Carling & Talleraas, 2016, p. 6-10). Furthermore, it is important to stress that this model has so far solely been based on theoretical reflections on existing and established theories and has not yet been empirically tested.

Moreover, in the context of investigating contemporary migration processes, it must once again be highlighted that these processes must be approached with great flexibility. Migration and migration decision-making have to be understood primarily as highly dependent on both the specific situation and individual processes. In this context, we would also like to raise awareness of the fact that the study findings discussed in this manuscript are mostly based on a small sample of different groups of migrants (ranging from labor migration to fleeing from war-torn countries). Therefore, we join Xu and Maitland (2016) in their advice not to easily generalize the findings on migrants' media use due to the unique situation in each country of origin and each group of study participants.

Speaking of processes and influences on the individual level, we would like to use this discussion to address the role of micro-level factors once again. As we specifically focused on individual media and information skills, in our model, micro-level factors are only represented in terms of media and information literacy. However, this does not deny the influence of other micro-level factors on the different aspects of our Migration Communication Model. These factors must always be taken into account and have to be considered as a prerequisite for the specific media and information literacy skills, as for example, specific cognitive or linguistic skills.

## 7.2 The Migration Communication Model and the MIRROR field study

Central to the work of the MIRROR WP8 is the conduct of interviews with migrants at different locations along migration routes to Europe. The structure and content of the interviews are guided by the Migration

Communication Model and theoretical considerations discussed in this framework, the empirical observations that we collect and analyze will then be used further to refine the theoretical framework and the presented model.

Specifically, in WP8, we are concerned with media use and the perception of possible European destination countries and of various migration routes, and the interrelation between these two aspects. The theoretical framework and model design introduced here will allow for a theory-based analysis of the aforementioned aspects. In addition, the model allows us to consider migration in its processual nature. This is of central importance considering the research design of WP8, which is based on conducting interviews at different stages of the migration process.

At this point, we would like to mention that an important part of the interview guide are questions that are aimed at different media and information literacy skills. Identifying the need for information and especially locating information (Have you actively sought information on specific European countries before you left your country? [IF YES] How and where?) evaluating information (How do you decide which information or information source to trust?), and use of information (When you find information that is relevant to you personally, what do you do with it? What kind of information do you share with others?). By analyzing the answers of the participants, we will, therefore, be able to deepen our understanding of the importance of media and information literacy concerning migration-related media use, information processing, perceptions of Europe, migration aspiration, and migration decisions. Within this context, we will focus in particular on how these may vary, change, or stay the same at different locations along frequented migration routes.

## 8 References

- Ackah, C., & Medvedev, D. (2010). *Internal migration in Ghana: Determinants and welfare impacts*. (Policy Research Working Papers). The World Bank. <https://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/pdf/10.1596/1813-9450-5273>
- ALA. (1989). *American library association presidential committee on information literacy. Final report*. <http://www.ala.org/acrl/publications/whitepapers/presidential>
- ALA. (2000). *Information literacy competency standards for higher education*. <https://alair.ala.org/bitstream/handle/11213/7668/ACRL%20Information%20Literacy%20Competency%20Standards%20for%20Higher%20Education.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Alonso, J. A. (2011). *International Migration and Development: A review in the light of the crisis*. UN.
- Bakewell, O., & Jolivet, D. (2016). Broadcasting migration outcomes. In O. Bakewell, G. Engbersen, M. L. Fonseca, & C. Horst (Eds.), *Beyond Networks* (pp. 183-204). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Baláž, V., Williams, A. M., & Fifeková, E. (2016). Migration decision making as complex choice: eliciting decision weights under conditions of imperfect and complex information through experimental methods. *Population, Space and Place*, 22(1), 36–53.
- Bernard, T., Dercon, S., Orkin, K., & Taffesse, A. (2014). *The future in mind: Aspirations and forward-looking behaviour in rural Ethiopia*. London: Centre for Economic Policy Research.
- Borkert, M., Fisher, K. E., & Yafi, E. (2018). The best, the worst, and the hardest to find: How people, mobiles, and social media connect migrants in (to) Europe. *Social Media+ Society*, 4(1), 2056305118764428.
- Boyd, M. (1989). Family and personal networks in international migration: recent developments and new agendas. *International migration review*, 23(3), 638–670.
- Brunwasser, M. (2015, August 25). A 21st-century migrant's essentials: Food, shelter, smartphone. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/26/world/europe/a-21st-century-migrants-checklist-water-shelter-smartphone.html>
- Carling, J. (2014, September 23-25). *The role of aspirations in migration*. [Paper Presentation]. Determinants of international migration, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford.
- Carling, J. (2002). Migration in the age of involuntary immobility: Theoretical reflections and Cape Verdean experiences. *Journal of ethnic and migration studies*, 28(1), 5–42.

- Carling, J., Gallagher, A. T., & Horwood, C. M. (2015). *Beyond definitions: Global migration and the smuggling-trafficking nexus*. (RMMS Discussion Paper, 2) Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat. [http://www.mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/021\\_beyond-definitions.pdf](http://www.mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/021_beyond-definitions.pdf)
- Carling, J., & Talleraas, C. (2016). Root Causes and Drivers of Migration: Implications for Humanitarian Efforts and Development Cooperation. PRIO Paper. *Peace Research Institute Oslo, Oslo*.
- Carlson, M., Jakli, L., & Linos, K. (2017). Refugees misdirected: How information, misinformation, and rumors shape refugees' access to fundamental rights. *Va. J. Int'l L.*, 57, 539–574.
- Colburn, B. (2008). Debate: The concept of voluntariness. *Journal of Political Philosophy* 16 (1). 101–111.
- Collyer, M. (2005). When do social networks fail to explain migration? Accounting for the movement of Algerian asylum-seekers to the UK. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31(4), 699–718.
- Danish Refugee Council Middle East and North Africa (2016). *Going to Europe: A Syrian Perspective*. (Regional Report). <https://drc.ngo/media/2126540/drc-going-to-europe-report-pdf.pdf>
- de Haas, H. (2010). *Migration transitions*. (Working Papers, 24) International Migration Institute. [https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:63b0a544-2b39-45a5-b9fe-cffdb5f4c654/download\\_file?file\\_format=pdf&safe\\_filename=WP24%2BMigration%2BTransitions.pdf&type\\_of\\_work=Working+paper](https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:63b0a544-2b39-45a5-b9fe-cffdb5f4c654/download_file?file_format=pdf&safe_filename=WP24%2BMigration%2BTransitions.pdf&type_of_work=Working+paper)
- de Haas, H. (2011). *The determinants of international migration*. (Working Papers, 32). International Migration Institute. [https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:0b10d9e8-810e-4f49-b76f-ba4d6b1faa86/download\\_file?file\\_format=pdf&safe\\_filename=WP32%2BThe%2BDeterminants%2Bof%2BInternational%2BMigration.pdf&type\\_of\\_work=Working+paper](https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:0b10d9e8-810e-4f49-b76f-ba4d6b1faa86/download_file?file_format=pdf&safe_filename=WP32%2BThe%2BDeterminants%2Bof%2BInternational%2BMigration.pdf&type_of_work=Working+paper)
- Dekker, R., & Engbersen, G. (2014). How social media transform migrant networks and facilitate migration. *Global Networks*, 14(4), 401–418.
- Dekker, R., Engbersen, G., & Faber, M. (2016). The use of online media in migration networks. *Population, Space and Place*, 22(6), 539–551.
- Dekker, R., Engbersen, G., Klaver, J., & Vonk, H. (2018). Smart refugees: how Syrian asylum migrants use social media information in migration decision-making. *Social Media+ Society*, 4(1), 1–11.
- Diker, E. (2016). *Social Media and Migration*. Political and Social Research Institute of Europe. <http://ps-europe.org/social-media-and-migration/>
- Diminescu, D. (2008). The connected migrant: an epistemological manifesto. *Social Science Information*, 47(4), 565–579.
- Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook “friends:” Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12(4), 1143–1168.
- Erdal, M. B., & Oeppen, C. (2018). Forced to leave? The discursive and analytical significance of describing migration as forced and voluntary. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(6), 981–998.
- Frau-Meigs, D. (2017). Media and Information Literacy (MIL). In *The Routledge Companion to Media and Human Rights* (pp. 114–125). Routledge.
- Frouws, B., Phillips, M., Hassan, A., & Twigt, M. (2016). Getting to Europe the Whatsapp Way: The Use of ICT in Contemporary Mixed Migration Flows to Europe. *Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat Briefing Paper*.
- Gillespie, M., Ampofo, L., Cheesman, M., Faith, B., Iliadou, E., Issa, A., Osseiran, S., & Skleparis, D. (2016). *Mapping Refugee Media Journeys: Smartphones and Social Media Networks*. Project Report. The Open University / France Médias Monde.
- Gillespie, M., Osseiran, S., & Cheesman, M. (2018). Syrian refugees and the digital passage to Europe: Smartphone infrastructures and affordances. *Social Media+ Society*, 4(1), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118764440>
- Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360–1380.
- Hagen-Zanker, J., & Mallett, R. (2016). Journeys to Europe. The role of policy in migrant decision-making. *ODI Insights*. <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/10297.pdf>
- Haug, S. (2008). Migration networks and migration decision-making. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 34(4), 585–605.
- Hiller, H. H., & Franz, T. M. (2004). New ties, old ties and lost ties: the use of the internet in diaspora. *New media & society*, 6(6), 731–752.

- Hobbs, R. (2006). Multiple visions of multimedia literacy: Emerging areas of synthesis. In M. C. McKenna, L. D. Labbo, R. D. Kieffer, & D. Reinking (Eds.), *International handbook of literacy and technology. Volume 2* (pp.15–28). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Hoffman, L. H., & Glynn, C. J. (2008). Media and perceptions of reality. In W. Donsbach (Ed.), *The international encyclopedia of communication* (pp. 2945–2959). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Kanaiaupuni, S. M. (2000). Reframing the migration question: An analysis of men, women, and gender in Mexico. *Social forces*, 78(4), 1311–1347.
- Katz, E. (1959). Mass communications research and the study of popular culture: An editorial note on a possible future for this journal. *Departmental Papers (ASC)*, 165.
- Kaufmann, K. (2016). Wie nutzen Flüchtlinge ihre Smartphones auf der Reise nach Europa? Ergebnisse einer qualitativen Interview-Studie mit syrischen Schutzsuchenden in Österreich [How do refugees use their smartphones when travelling to Europe? Results of a qualitative interview study with Syrian protection seekers in Austria]. *SWS-Rundschau*, 56(3), 319–342.
- Koltay, T. (2011). The media and the literacies: Media literacy, information literacy, digital literacy. *Media, Culture & Society*, 33(2), 211–221.
- Kuschminder, K., De Bresser, J., & Siegel, M. (2015). *Irregular migration routes to Europe and factors influencing migrants' destination choices*. Maastricht: Maastricht Graduate School of Governance.
- Kutscher, N., & Kreß, L. M. (2018). The ambivalent potentials of social media use by unaccompanied minor refugees. *Social Media+ Society*, 4(1), 1–10.
- Latonero, M., & Kift, P. (2018). On digital passages and borders: Refugees and the new infrastructure for movement and control. *Social Media+ Society*, 4(1), 1–11.
- Lee, J., & Lee, H. (2010). The computer-mediated communication network: Exploring the linkage between the online community and social capital. *new media & society*, 12(5), 711–727.
- Leurs, K. (2017). Communication rights from the margins: Politicising young refugees' smartphone pocket archives. *International communication gazette*, 79(6-7), 674–698.
- Leurs, K., & Prabhakar, M. (2018). Doing digital migration studies: Methodological considerations for an emerging research focus. In R. Zapata-Barrero, & E. Yalaz (Eds.), *Qualitative research in European migration studies* (pp. 247–266). Springer.
- Leurs, K., & Smets, K. (2018). Five questions for digital migration studies: Learning from digital connectivity and forced migration in (to) Europe. *Social Media+ Society*, 4(1), 1–16.
- Livingstone, S. & van der Graaf, S. (2010). Media literacy. In W. Donsbach (Ed.), *The international encyclopedia of communication*. Blackwell Publishing, Oxford.
- Lim, S. S., Bork-Hüffer, T., & Yeoh, B. S. (2016). Mobility, migration and new media: Manoeuvring through physical, digital and liminal spaces. *New Media & Society* 18(10), 2147–2154.
- Lloyd, A., Kennan, M. A., Thompson, K. M., & Qayyum, A. (2013). Connecting with new information landscapes: information literacy practices of refugees. *Journal of Documentation*, 69(1), 121-144.
- Massey, D. S., & España, F. G. (1987). The social process of international migration. *Science*, 237(4816), 733–738.
- Misztal, B. A. (2000). *Informality: Social theory and contemporary practice*. London: Routledge.
- Mixed Migration Centre. (2019). Young people on the move from East Africa. (MMC East Africa & Yemen 4Mi Snapshot October 2019). [http://www.mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/076\\_snapshot\\_eay-.pdf](http://www.mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/076_snapshot_eay-.pdf)
- Mohamed, H. (2015, April 30). Facebook sells 'paradise in earth' to young Somalis. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/africa/2015/04/facebook-sells-paradise-earth-young-somalis-150430134414207.html>
- Muanamoha, R. C., Maharaj, B., & Preston-Whyte, E. (2010). Social networks and undocumented Mozambican migration to South Africa. *Geoforum*, 41(6), 885–896.
- Nachrin, T. (2020). Social media use by the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh: A uses and gratification approach. *Int'l J. Soc. Sci. Stud.*, 8, 1.
- Neumayer, E. (2005). Bogus refugees? The determinants of asylum migration to Western Europe. *International studies quarterly*, 49(3), 389–409.
- Newell, B. C., Gomez, R., & Guajardo, V. E. (2016). Information seeking, technology use, and vulnerability among migrants at the United States–Mexico border. *The Information Society*, 32(3), 176-191.

- Olsaretti, S. (1998). Freedom, force and choice: Against the rights-based definition of voluntariness. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 6(1), 53–78.
- Palloni, A., Massey, D. S., Ceballos, M., Espinosa, K., & Spittel, M. (2001). Social capital and international migration: A test using information on family networks. *American Journal of Sociology*, 106(5), 1262–1298.
- Palmgreen, P. (1984). Uses and gratifications: A theoretical perspective. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 8(1), 20–55.
- Potter, W. J. (2004). *Theory of media literacy: A cognitive approach*. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Rift Valley Institute. (2016). *Going on Tahriib: The causes and consequences of Somali youth migration to Europe*. (Rift Valley Institute Research Paper 5). <https://www.refworld.org/docid/57e92d114.html>
- Ros, A., González, E., Marín, A., & Sow, P. (2007). Migration and information flows: A new lens for the study of contemporary international migration. Barcelona: Internet Interdisciplinary Institute.
- Ruggiero, T. E. (2000). Uses and gratifications theory in the 21st century. *Mass communication & society*, 3(1), 3-37.
- Schapendonk, J. (2015). What if networks move? Dynamic social networking in the context of African migration to Europe. *Population, Space and Place*, 21(8), 809–819.
- Schapendonk, J. (2012). Turbulent trajectories: African migrants on their way to the European Union. *Societies*, 2(2), 27–41.
- Schapendonk, J., & van Moppes, D. (2007). *Migration and Information: Images of Europe, migration encouraging factors and en route information sharing*. (Working Papers Migration and Development Series, Report 16). Radboud University Nijmegen.
- Somerville, K. (2015). Strategic migrant network building and information sharing: understanding ‘migrant pioneers’ in Canada. *International Migration*, 53(4), 135–154.
- Thulin, E., & Vilhelmson, B. (2014). Virtual practices and migration plans: A qualitative study of urban young adults. *Population, Space and Place*, 20(5), 389-401.
- Timmerman, C., De Clerck, H. M. L., Hemmerechts, K., & Willems, R. (2014a). Imagining Europe from the outside: The role of perceptions of human rights in Europe in migration aspirations in Turkey, Morocco, Senegal and Ukraine. In *Communicating Europe in Times of Crisis* (pp. 220–247). Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Timmerman, C., Hemmerechts, K., & Marie-Lou De Clerck, H. (2014b). The relevance of a “culture of migration” in understanding migration aspirations in contemporary Turkey. *Turkish Studies*, 15(3), 496–518.
- Torresan, A. (2007). How privileged are they? Middle-class Brazilian immigrants in Lisbon. In V. Amit (Ed.), *Going first class? New Approaches to privileged Travel and Movement* (pp.103–125). Bergbahn Books.
- UNDP. (2019). *Scaling Fences: Voices of Irregular African Migrants to Europe*. <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/rba/docs/Reports/UNDP-Scaling-Fences-EN-2019.pdf>
- Van Hear, N., Bakewell, O., & Long, K. (2018). Push-pull plus: reconsidering the drivers of migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(6), 927–944.
- Van Mol, C. (2017). Moroccan women in Madrid: between change and continuity. *Identities*, 24(1), 100-118.
- Van Mol, C., Snel, E., Hemmerechts, K., & Timmerman, C. (2018). Migration aspirations and migration cultures: A case study of Ukrainian migration towards the European Union. *Population, space and place*, 24(5), e2131.
- Vilhelmson, B., & Thulin, E. (2013). Does the Internet encourage people to move? Investigating Swedish young adults’ internal migration experiences and plans. *Geoforum*, 47, 209–216.
- Wall, M., Otis Campbell, M., & Janbek, D. (2017). Syrian refugees and information precarity. *New Media & Society*, 19(2), 240–254.
- Xie, W. (2014). Social network site use, mobile personal talk and social capital among teenagers. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 41, 228–235.
- Xu, Y., & Maitland, C. (2016, June). Communication behaviors when displaced: A case study of za'atari syrian refugee camp. In *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development*, Article No 58, (pp.1–4).

Zijlstra, J., & Liempt, I. V. (2017). Smart (phone) travelling: understanding the use and impact of mobile technology on irregular migration journeys. *International Journal of Migration and Border Studies*, 3(2-3), 174–191.