THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN MIGRATION CRISIS:
STORIES OF FEAR AND HOPE

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Front Cover: Pozzallo (Sicily) abandoned boat previously used for the Mediterranean crossing now seized by the Italian authorities. Credit: Emilia Torrisi.
Abstract

“The most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and be understood. The best way to understand people is to listen to them.” — Ralph G. Nichols

Listening to and reporting the voices of the people who crossed the Mediterranean is the main purpose of this research. Their individual experiences are, in fact, often neglected by politicians and Media and this often leads to them being subjected to misunderstandings and prejudices. This study aims to make the invisible testimonies visible and to reveal a human side to the crisis which is hidden behind legal categorisations and deceptive images.

Through key informant interviews and desk-based research, the study explores, in particular, the root causes of their migration, the difficulties experienced during the travel with human traffickers and their concerns and hopes for the future.

The dissertation describes the impossibility to use the labels of “migrant” and “refugee” for all the individuals interviewed in Sicily: a classification is often made difficult by the complexity of some stories which present a combination of political and cultural persecution, social marginalisation and economic reasons. Moreover, the study highlights the terrible conditions people had to endure before arriving in Italy, the inhumane treatment inflicted by the traffickers and also by civilians in Libya. Lastly, the research will show how the traumatic events of their past still have repercussions in their life, this was visible in the impossibility to make plans for the future.

This dissertation concludes that a more human approach should be adopted when dealing with the topic. The stories of the individuals who experienced the crossing are to be heard and shared as they do represent the key to finding a solution to the migration crisis that is currently troubling the EU countries.
Statement of Originality and Ethics Declarations

This thesis is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references.

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I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

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Statement of Ethics Review Approval

This dissertation involved human participants. A Form TDE1 and TDE2 for each group of participants, showing ethics review approval, has been attached to this dissertation as an appendix.
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Acronyms

ECRE European Council on Refugees and Exiles
EU European Union
ILO International Labour Office
IOM International Organisation for Migration
IPSO Independent Press Standards Organisation
ISPI Institute for International Political Studies
OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SPRAR System of Protection for Asylum Seekers and Refugees
UN United Nations
UNDESA United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNHCR United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNHR United Nations Human Rights
UNPFA United Nations Population Fund
SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION, AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Introduction
The Mediterranean route from the African coasts to Italy has been regarded by the United Nations as the most lethal migration route in the world. In 2014 only, more than 3000 people died attempting the crossing to reach Europe and this figure is expected to rise in 2015 (The Independent 2014).

Due to the increasing number of people arriving in Italy, mostly Sicily, the Mediterranean migration phenomenon has been widely publicised by Media and politicised by European governments. Despite this popularity, little is known about the individuals who risk everything they have - including their life - to migrate to Europe. These people are often fit into the standardised labels of “migrant” and “refugee”. This classification is usually made without taking into consideration the complexity of the root causes that push people to leave their countries.

This research draws attention to the real people behind the migration phenomenon, their personal stories, opinions and expectations which are often neglected. Ignoring their background leads to the creation of false images which bring discredit on them and fuel suspicions around his/her activities.

In the attempt to demonstrate the importance of people’s individuality, this study will focus on the past and present difficulties individuals had and still have to overcome in order to enhance their conditions and look for a better future.

Aim and Research Questions
This research aims to gain a better understanding of the experiences and the root causes that forced people to leave their country of origin and their future aspirations in Italy. The personal stories collected will help investigate if the labels “migrant” and “refugee” can be used in the case of the Mediterranean migration phenomenon or if a differentiation cannot be done due to the intricacy of the stories.

The main research questions guiding this study are:
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- What is the background of the people who cross the Mediterranean? What are the root causes of their migration?
- What did they have to go through to reach Europe?
- Are they migrants or refugees? Can we categorise them?
- What are they looking for in Europe? What are their expectations for the future?

SECTION TWO: METHODOLOGY

In order to provide an answer to the research questions and meet the aim of this study, this research has adopted several methodologies:

A desk based research, to support secondary qualitative data, has been combined with key informant interviews that on the contrary provide primary data.

Secondary Data Collection

The secondary source data was collected through a literature review on the migration phenomenon in Southern Europe, specifically the case of the latest migration flow in Italy. The use of labels and their importance has also been examined; this was considerably beneficial to this study as it effectively illustrates the academic theories behind the employment of the categories of migrant and refugee in migration and the implications they have on individuals and the society. Moreover, a brief review has been carried out in regards to the image of the migrants and refugees attributed by the Italian media and political discourse.

The literature review was conducted prior to the collection of primary data (through interviews) in order to gain familiarity with the migration phenomenon in Italy.

Primary data Collection

Key informant interviews have been conducted in various locations of Sicily\(^1\) with individuals who have crossed the Mediterranean. The interviews have been made by approaching directly four reception centres (SPRAR) and one migrant transit centre all located in the

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\(^1\) Refer to Appendix 6: Map of Sicily and reception centres location.
Sicilian East coast. Six women and eighteen men have been interviewed, a total of twenty-four individuals. The interviewees came from nine different countries, these are: Nigeria, Gambia, Ivory Coast, Mali, Senegal, Ghana, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. The youngest individual was fifteen years old while the oldest one was thirty-one.

The qualitative data collection method most suitable for this research was semi-structured interviews.

The purpose of the interviews was to obtain first-hand knowledge and to familiarise with the personal experiences of people who crossed the Mediterranean. Such information has proved to be invaluable in supporting secondary data and answering the research questions.

A combination of open-format and standardised questions proved to be suitable to this study; due to the flexibility of the format individuals have been more inclined to express their views in their own terms.

Face-to-face interviews have been more advisable due to the fact that the researcher was in the position to judge the quality of the answers obtained and to capture visual signs such as nods, smiles, etc. Although the majority of the interviewees could speak English and French, an interpreter proved to be helpful to translate the testimonies of the individuals from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

SECTION THREE: LIMITATIONS

Firstly, the interviews were conducted in a few reception centres in Sicily where only twenty-four people from certain nationalities were interviewed. The sample is clearly small, for this reason the viewpoints expressed by the interviewees do not represent those of people currently hosted in other receptions centres in different regions of Italy.

Originally, more than five reception centres were contacted but access was not granted as employees were extremely busy - summer is the most hectic period as the number of arrivals usually increases. Moreover, other centres have already been the subject of media

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2 Refer to Appendix 5: List of key informants.
3 Refer to Appendix 7: Questionnaire for key informants.
attention and, for this reason, their directors no longer wanted to expose their guests to interviews of any kind.

Lastly, the interviewees were victims of human traffickers as they clearly expressed their worries that they would be judged and accused of illegally crossing the sea. Therefore, some of their answers might not be the accurate representations of what they had actually experienced or they preferred not to reveal certain information.

SECTION FOUR: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher adheres to all ethical considerations. The Oxford Brookes staff confirmed ethical approval before any interviews were conducted⁴. Interviewees were fully aware of the purpose of the interview and the aim of this research. The directors of the reception centres, who in the case of unaccompanied minors act as their custodians, have been contacted prior to the researcher’s visit and a copy of the questionnaire has been sent to allow people to preview it. Full consent was given by the interviewees who were also made aware of their right to abstain from answering any questions and to remain anonymous. Regarding this pseudonyms have been use in order to protect people’s identity. Permission to audio record the interview sessions have also been asked in order to enhance the accuracy of data.

Contact details of the researcher were provided should there be a need for further details or information.

⁴ Refer to Appendix 1: Oxford Brookes University’s Ethics Review Form E1 and Appendix 2 Oxford Brookes University’s Ethics Review Form E2
SECTION FIVE: LITERATURE REVIEW

The following chapter will explore basic concepts that will provide an analytical framework and contextualise the commentary of the research questions.

Firstly, I will broadly present the phenomenon of international migration from a purely academic standpoint and then I will move to investigating the current Southern Europe crisis. A particular attention will be given to the labels media and public opinion attach to immigrants.

Migrants and refugees

Migration has always been a recurring phenomenon in the history of humanity. From the spread of Homo Sapiens from Africa to the Western Hemisphere, to the colonial migrations starting in 15th century (Manning, 2005). More recently, in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the innovation of transportation systems allowed fifty million European migrants to move to North and South America (ibid).

At an institutional level, there is not a universally accepted definition for "migrant".

An attempt to formally define the term has been made by the United Nations. According to the International Organisation for Migration a “migrant” is an individual who has resided in a foreign country for more than one year irrespective of the causes, voluntary or involuntary, and the means, regular or irregular, used to migrate. Under such a definition, those travelling for shorter periods as tourists and business persons would not be considered migrants (IOM, 2011). The term “migrant” usually refers to those individuals whose decision to migrate was taken freely, without any external and forceful elements, for reasons of "personal convenience" (Ibid). It therefore relates to individuals and/or families, who move to a foreign country or region to have access to better life, social and economic conditions and improve their future prospects (Ibid).

Unlike a migrant, a refugee is described as a person who is "owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such
fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. (Art. 1(A)(2), Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Art. 1A(2), 1951 as modified by the 1967 Protocol).

**Different types of migration**

There are various types of migration and these vary according to several characteristics such as the geographical boundaries, the length of the permanence, the legality and coerciveness.

First and foremost, migration can be internal or external. It is internal when people decide to relocate inside their own country; this is often the primary cause of the urbanisation process. According to the UN’s *2011 Revision Report* more than half of the world’s population currently live in urban areas, and this is contributing to the decline of rural population (Hanlon *et al*, 2014). The migration can also take place externally or internationally: this is the case of migrants who cross their national borders to take up residence in another country or continent (*ibid*). Migrants might decide to remain in a foreign country for years and make that their permanent home; others find themselves in a more temporary state of residency. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), temporary migration related to international migrants whose stay in a foreign country does not exceed the duration of three months (Samers, 2010). An example is represented by those individuals whose migration involves several steps or stops in various countries before reaching their ultimate destination (*Ibid*).

People can either move voluntarily or are forced to migrate. Voluntary migration, usually refers to people who intentionally move away from their country of origin to seek better economic conditions and living standards (*Ibid*). Involuntary migrants are those individuals who were forced to leave their country or region because of unforeseen circumstances such as conflicts, persecutions or natural disasters like floods, famines, and droughts (Hanlon *et al*, 2014).

Another important distinction worth mentioning is that between international legal and undocumented migrants. Legal migrants have received a formal authorisation from the national government that allows them to reside and/or work in the country of arrival. Undocumented migrants, also known as irregular or illegal immigrants are on the contrary
those who cross international boundaries without a regular permission or stay in a foreign country after the expiration of their visa (Samers, 2010). In 2010, the International Organisation for Migration calculated that out of 214 million migrants in the world, around 20/30 million of migrants were undocumented and this phenomenon is expected to increase in the coming years.

**Causes of migration**

According to the United Nation Population Fund in 2013, 232 million people – 3.2 per cent of the world’s population – lived outside their country of origin. It has been reported that the majority of migrants move abroad in search of more favourable economic and social opportunities. At the same time, there is also a large and increasing number of people who move to seek refuge from conflicts and persecution (UNPFA, 2013).

Although migration is a complex phenomenon whose motivations depend on different factors, three main causes have been identified: 1) Political, 2) Economic, 3) Environmental (IOM and UNDESA, 2012)

**Political migration** - In the forced migration literature it has been observed that specific violent occurrences, such as major gun battles and/or bomb blasts can increase the perceived risk to people’s life. In addition to this, political events taking place during armed conflicts can also have a negative impact on the well-being of people. These events can include government changes or collapses, states of emergency, ceasefires and major strikes or protests. Political instability and lack of political and legal control can also instil a sense of insecurity and lead to chaos and anarchy. Moreover, these events have a negative impact on the economy of a country as they discourage foreign investments and internal and external trade. For all of these reasons, it has been noticed that during high levels of violence and insecurity, migration usually intensifies and can be considered as a precautionary solution to escape the possibility of future danger (Williams et al, 2009).

**Economic migration** - the term “economic migrant” refers to someone who voluntarily decides to leave his home country to settle abroad to improve his/her standard of living and escape poverty. It is also a way to obtain job security and benefit from greater economic opportunities (IOM, 2011). It is often assumed that economic migrants come from less
developed countries of the global south. This is the case of North Africans to Europe, Mexicans to USA, or individuals from former colonies to the colonising nations. Nonetheless, some economic migrants are highly qualified and educated people who move abroad in search of new employment opportunities in specific sectors or to learn new skills (Lowell et al., 2001). The term “economic migrants” can also refer to those people who migrate with a required and valid visa or individuals trying to enter a country without legal authorisation and/or by using asylum procedures without \textit{bona fide cause} (IOM, 2011).

\textbf{Environmental migration} - The phrase “environmental migrant” identifies those individuals who: “\textit{for reasons of unexpected or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to have to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their territory or abroad}” (IOM, 2009). Environmental migrants are also known as “climate refugees” or “environmental refugees” (Towards Recognition, n.d). Environmental migration is an increasingly popular phenomenon that is displacing millions of people: it has been shown that poor people are usually most affected and suffer the drastic consequences of climate change related events such as the rising of sea levels, drought, desertification, flooding, hurricanes, and cyclones (\textit{ibid}).

\textbf{Migration to Southern Europe}

Various studies and researches have recently been written on the phenomenon of international illegal migration in the countries of Southern Europe, in particular to Italy, Spain and Greece. The history of migration in the Mediterranean began in the late 1980s, in Italy, and the early 1990s in Greece and Spain when these countries all underwent a transformation from senders to receivers of migrants (Triandafyllidou, 2013). In 1960s and 1970s Spanish, Greek and Italian citizens moved to North Europe to look for jobs. The migratory flow were directed to France from Italy and Spain and to Germany from Greece. Italian migrants also moved to Switzerland and Germany in the early 1960s (Venturini, 2004). The causes of this new trend were mainly due to the geopolitical renovation of Europe in the post-World War II period. Moreover, Italy, Greece and Spain are all located at the heart of several Mediterranean migration pathways of individuals coming from the
global South. Italy and Greece, in particular, are situated in strategic positions of the Southern Mediterranean and Eastern European passages from Asia and Africa to the EU (Triandafyllidou, 2013). Another important factor that contributed to the migration in Southern Europe is the large informal economy of its countries; this element proved to be an invaluable opportunity of employment for migrants, especially during the 1990s and early 2000s. During those years the migration to Southern Europe was significant: it has been calculated that in the 1990s Greece accepted around 700,000 immigrants while Italy received nearly three million and Spain nearly one million migrants (Ibid).

Although Spain, Greece and Italy all experienced the large migration flow, they presented different characteristics in terms of source countries of migrants. During the 1990s the migration flow to Greece was largely foraged by some former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Albania for example accounted for 65% of the applicants for regularization, followed by Bulgaria (7%) and Romania (4%) (Cavounidis, 2002). Similarly to Greece, in Italy the former communist regimes constituted an important element. The Italian Ministry of the Interior in 1998 estimated that the largest undocumented groups were the Moroccans followed by Albanian and Romanians. According to the Spanish Home Ministry, in 1997 none of the previous communist nations was a significant source of migrants in Spain. On the contrary, in the regularization programmes of 1996 the top source countries were Morocco (33%) followed by Peru (9%) and Argentina (6%) (Ibid).

The migration during 2000s:

The migration flow to the Southern European countries did not slow down during 2000s, and due to the increased number of migrants the countries of Southern Europe began to proactively create strategies to limit the number of arrivals and reduce the pressure on the borders. Spain - for example - started to intensify the controls over the Gibraltar straits and Canary Islands and it also started to cooperate with Morocco in order to restrict irregular migration (Triandafyllidou, 2013). Although these strategies proved to be successful, they did not restrain the migration flow that was instead redirected elsewhere in the Mediterranean. In the 2000s the only way to enter Italy was through the crossing from Tunisia and Libya to Sicily. To control the migration flow between Italy and Libya the two
countries have been signing agreements since the late 1990s, which were notably sought by both parties to bring irregular migration under control together with trafficking. The agreements aimed to reduce the number of migrants by making use of the re-admission practices. Migrants were sent back to Libya without taking into consideration the principle of non-refoulement that prohibits the forced return of a victim of persecutions or conflicts (Ibid). This approach was not successful as the route from Libya remained the most used. In 2011, Italy signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Libya, this document focused on measures to reduce illegal migration and stipulated on the repatriation of undocumented migrants (Ibid) This agreement proved to be effective as the illegal border crossing almost disappeared. Italy paid a high cost for this policy, as in 2012 the European Court of Human Rights condemned the country for the denial of humanitarian protection (Ibid). Greece decided instead to join forces with the EU’s agency for border management coordination (Frontex) to control the high number of irregular migrants and asylum requests along the Greek-Turkish borders. The effect of these combined efforts became visible in 2012, and while this strategy reduced the arrivals from the land border it transferred the problem to the sea borders in the Greek islands (Ibid).

Towards the end of 2010, the flow of irregular migrants and asylum seekers drastically intensified due to social and political uprisings known as the “Arab Spring”. These rebellions started in Tunisia and Algeria in late 2010 and spread throughout 2011 to Lebanon, Yemen, Libya, Egypt, Syria and Morocco (CESE, 2011). The protests were an expression of the resentments of the population of those countries that led to the fall of authoritarian regimes characterised by the brutality of the security apparatus, corruption and unemployment (Ibid). The phenomenon started a series of democratic processes, but also caused the insurgency of armed conflicts as there was no or little consensus among protesters on the type of government that was supposed to replace the previous regimes (Ibid).

The migration from Mediterranean Arab countries\(^5\) towards Europe started before the events of the Arab Spring. When the revolts aroused at the end of 2010, the region was source to almost 8 million first-generation migrants; 62% of them were living in the EU

\(^5\) - Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon and Syria.
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(Fargues et al, 2012). Among the reasons to migrate there were: unemployment and underemployment, especially of educated youth, the difference in wages, the intention to gain skills and education in Europe as well as the desire to experience and live according to the European cultures and lifestyles. The Arab Spring created a new socio-political and economic reality in the region and transformed the balance of power, not because states have become stronger, but rather because states have become weak and fragile (Elawaki, 2014). The precarious situation in the region has prompted further migrations (Ibid). As a result, in the first two months of 2011, an estimated total of 25,000 Tunisians arrived at the island of Lampedusa (Sicily). An additional 20,000 sub-Saharan Africans arrived in the spring and summer of 2011 in Sicily, fleeing the war and racial violence in Libya. These were economic migrants residing in the Maghreb and in the Gulf States, particularly Libya. Since 2013, though, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of Syrian asylum seekers fleeing war in the region, leading to a huge upsurge in arrivals on Italian shores (Ibid).

The migration nowadays

The nature of the flow of migrants has considerably changed over the last twenty years. The people that are currently trying to reach Southern Europe come mainly from West Africa and the Horn of Africa, but the number of Syrian, Eritrean and Afghani is increasing as well (Brady, 2014). The most popular route is usually from Libya to Italy. These crossings are generally planned and arranged by well-organised and armed smuggling groups based in Libya who can freely operate thanks to the lack of security and stable governing institutions (Ibid).

There are also other routes still in use; for example Syrians, Pakistani and Afghani try to reach Europe by crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands of Samos and Lesbos (Ibid).

The arrival of migrants has intensified during the first half of 2015 and the data that has been recorded and transmitted by Greece, Italy, Malta and Spain, showed that between January and June there has been a substantial increase of 83% in the number of people that crossed the Mediterranean (UNHCR, 2015). It has been calculated that in those six months of 2015, 137,000 migrants and refugees arrived in Southern Europe against the 75,000 arrivals in the same semester of 2014. These numbers are likely to escalate during the
second half of the year, especially during the summer months, as the same happened during the second half of 2014 (Ibid). The situation in the Mediterranean has been identified as a crisis not only for the high number of arrivals but also for the number of casualties; between January and March 2015, 479 people died or disappeared at sea. This figure is alarming if compared to the previous year (Ibid).

The Migration in Italy - The humanitarian crisis

Within the European Union, Italy has always been a popular destination for those who escape from conflicts, persecutions, oppressions and political and economic instability. This situation is due to the geographical position of the Italian southern regions, in particular Sicily, with its proximity with the northern African countries (The European House-Ambrosetti, 2007). Although Italy has a crucial role in the migration phenomenon, it has been considered as a transit country. The majority of asylum seekers and migrants arriving in Italy are on their way to somewhere else. They often want to move to northern European countries like Germany or Sweden (Al Jazeera America, 2015). But due to the Dublin Regulation approved on 1st January 2014, they are forced to stay in Italy as the procedure establishes a hierarchy of criteria for identifying the Member State responsible for the examination of an asylum claim on the basis of the State through which the asylum seeker first entered (ECRE, n.d.).

Over the years, the number of arrivals has increased drastically: in 2010 on average around 23,000 migrants arrived in Italy. This number became higher in 2011 due to the events linked to the Arab Spring; as a result a total of 63,000 migrants arrived at the Italian coasts. In October 2013, the Italian Government launched and financed an operation called Mare Nostrum with the aim of intercepting migrant boats headed for Italy (Calori, 2015). This military and humanitarian campaign was set up not only in response to the boost of migration during the second half on 2013 but also as a reaction to the shipwreck of a boat, with nearly 500 passengers on board, close to the shores of Lampedusa (Sicily) between 2nd and 3rd October of the same year that caused the death of 366 Eritrean nationals (Ibid).

Between October 2013 and October 2014 Mare Nostrum, rescued over 150,000 asylum seekers and irregular migrants that were trying to reach Italy by boat. The operation was
concluded on 31st October 2014 and was replaced by Triton on 1st November 2014 (Il Post, 2015). The Joint Operation Triton has been financially supported by the European Union and 29 EU member states participated in this campaign by sending the necessary equipment — including aircrafts and a variety of patrol vessels to support the Italian authorities in border-control activities in the Mediterranean (European Commission, 2014). Unlike Mare Nostrum, the Triton programme is primarily focusing on border management; the rescue operations are still expected but they are not its main aim (Ibid).

Although the presence of the two programmes contributed to the detection and recovery of the boats that cross the Mediterranean, the number of arrivals has rapidly increased. According to the International Organisation for Migration 47,449 migrants arrived by sea in Italy from January to May 2015. This figure is slightly higher if compared to the same period of last year, when arrivals were 41,243. As of 31st May 2015 the main nationalities of migrants arriving in Italy were: Eritrean (10,985), Somali (4,958), Nigerian (4,630), Syrian (3,185), Gambian (2,941), and Senegalese (2,328), they all departed almost exclusively from Libya (ReliefWeb, 2015).

The role of Libya in the Mediterranean migrant emergency

The fall of former dictator Muammar Gaddafi plays a crucial role in the Mediterranean Migrant Crisis. The Colonel’s security apparatus which had previously controlled the trafficking routes through Libya vanished and was replaced by a “hybrid” system consisting mostly of the “revolutionary” brigades (also called militias) that had fought against Gaddafi (Toaldo, 2015). Since the revolution in 2011, warring militias have been supervising the frontiers and have been in charge of the trafficking operations along the desert and sea borders, earning money by ferrying humans, gasoline, food, drugs and weapons (Ibid). Libya is now divided between two governments and two parliaments: one based in Tripoli and the other in Tobruk. Both are supporting and encouraging conflicts between local tribes in order to take possession of power and assets. The collapse of a centralised government has forced embassies and various humanitarian international organisations such as the UNHCR and the IOM to leave the country and relocate to Tunisia. The coastguard is working with limited resources and there is also a deep lack of funding for official detention centres and desert patrols that can tackle the thriving criminal networks (Charron, 2015).
Before the events of 2011, Libya was a land of opportunities. Prior to the crisis around 1.7-1.9 million of migrants resided in the country. Many of them, had travelled from neighbouring countries attracted by higher salaries, but the amount of individuals from Sub-Saharan African was also remarkable. This specific migration flow was due to Gaddafi’s Pan-African politics in the 1990s that allowed many Africans to move to Libya to work without the need for a visa (Toaldo, 2015). Libya’s considerable wealth as compared to the rest of the continent made it not just a country of transit but also the final destination for a large number of migrants who found jobs that Libyans were not interested in doing (Ibid). As a result, many West Africans originally moved to Libya to look for employment opportunities to support their family back home. Young people moved to follow the footsteps of older generations who worked in Libya and returned home with a profit (IBTimes, 2015).

The civil war and its consequences have dramatically accelerated the number of asylum-seekers and migrants crossing the Mediterranean from Libya. According to Matteo de Bellis, the Italian representative for Amnesty International, “people who had originally moved to Libya with the intention to remain there — including both refugees and migrants — have now decided to flee towards Europe, even though it means risking their lives in a very dangerous journey at sea” (The New York Times, 2015).

Libyan anarchy has allowed smugglers to operate undisturbed along the country’s coastline, but it has also unloosed many African labourers who were working there (Ibid). Many migrants recently arriving in Sicily have reported the appalling humanitarian conditions and the unsafe environment in Libya. Torture and abuse are rampant, many bosses had stopped paying wages to their employees, and those who did get their salaries reported they were preyed upon by criminal gangs. Moreover, it is not easy for these migrants who try to go back to their country of origin, as they usually have no money left and this means they cannot afford the trip back home. (Ibid).

The labels: Migrants Vs Refugees

The Italian and the European political and public discourses have been shaped by series of preconceptions attributed to migrants and refugees. The debate around the two categories is predominant in the political discourse and media. A distinction between the two terms
does exist: according to the UNHCR migrants and refugees, even if they often reach Europe in the same way, are fundamentally different. Migrants, especially the economic ones, choose to move to enhance their own or their families’ lives. Refugees, on the contrary, are forced to move to save their lives from wars and persecutions or defend and protect their freedom (IRIN, 2015). The distinction between the two groups is clearly remarked by the immigration policies and, as argued by Sinthujan Varatharajah, needs to be made. When we compare migrants to refugees, we erase and negate the suffering of the latter and the forced nature and the violence that caused their movement will be neglected. By ignoring the differences, the public is left to believe that crucial categorical and political distinctions are irrelevant in the face of the mass-arrivals of racialized people, who are perceived as a monolithic and one-dimensional group (Varatharajah, 2015).

The usage of labels has important implications on whether individuals should be addressed as economic migrants or asylum seekers. On one hand, this could have a significant impact in the destination country as their legal status and their right to stay could be affected (The Washington Post, 2015). On the other hand, it can also have consequences in the countries these people come from. Eritrea, for example, has repeatedly refused to admit that thousands of people fleeing the country are leaving because of political pressure, instead stating that they move abroad in search of better job opportunities (Ibid).

Although humanitarian and immigration policies aim to draw clear distinctions between refugees and migrants, the line between the two categories is no longer obvious (Long, 2015).

According to Roger Zetter, former director of the Refugee Studies Centre in Oxford, the separation of the two terms is appearing not to have the same relevance anymore as the concept of labelling in migration elaborated nearly decades ago has now taken a new connotation, and needs to be re-examined and re-established. The author suggested that in the contemporary era the formation of labels reflects causes and patterns of forced migration which are much more complex than in the past. As a result, labels have become much more blurred over the last few years. Governments are also currently playing a strategic role in remodelling labels which over time are inevitably transformed by
bureaucratic processes which institutionalize and differentiate categories of eligibility and entitlements in order to implement and manage policies designed for them. Another point raised by Dr Zetter is the fact that the labels of “refugees” and “economic migrants” have frequently, and perhaps intentionally, been driven by national interests (Zetter 2007). This is partially due to the increasing numbers of applicants escaping complex root causes that often combine persecution and socio-economic exclusion. Finally, labels have merged because governments themselves have failed to create managed migration policies that can be adapted to more complex contexts (Ibid).

The undefined line between refugees and migrants constitutes a challenge for an international community attempting to maintain humanitarian protection but also enforcing immigration laws (Long, 2015). As argued by Katy Long, lecturer in International Development at the University of Edinburgh, the issue is particularly severe because many undocumented migrants are exposed to extreme threats during their clandestine journeys; this has been stressed out by the high death rate of migrants crossing the Mediterranean (Ibid).

Furthermore, as already suggested by Jackie Pollock former director of a grassroots Non-Governmental Organization called MAP foundation, the profiling of migrants is being institutionalised: they might be labelled as migrant workers, refugees or as victims of human trafficking; however this distinction does not reflect people’s life experiences that resist being so neatly categorised (Pollock, 2010). The author gives the example of the migrant workers of Burma in Thailand who identify the main reasons of their move as economic but they also blame the repressive nature of the military dictatorship as a root cause of their migration. Although they might be free to return home they will almost certainly find it difficult to survive if they decide to (Ibid).

In regards to the case of migrants and asylum seekers arriving in Italy through the Mediterranean, the issue is related to the high number of arrivals registered every day. Due to this rapid increase the distinction between the two categories seems crucial for European politicians. Regarding this, during the last UE Summit on 25th and 26th June 2015, the Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi declared the Italian intention to repatriate the economic
migrants who are not recognised as refugees (Il Redattore Sociale, 2015). Media and public opinion tend to label Syrians, Palestinians and Eritreans as asylum seekers while the West Africans who arrive in South Italy are all grouped together as economic migrants without taking into consideration the differences in the specific contexts and personal stories (Ibid). The separation into two neat categories, although strongly sought by the Italian politicians appears to be quite a critical task. This is due to the high number of identifications carried out every day and requests of protection submitted. It has been calculated that it takes Italy, on average, 18 months of more to process the asylum requests that are overwhelming the Italian bureaucracy (The Guardian 2015). Moreover, distinguishing the two categories is rather challenging for several reasons: firstly, the migration flow that has characterised Italy in recent years is a mixed one, (IRIN 2015) which means that the people who crossed the Mediterranean are on the move for various reasons, including fleeing persecution and/or for economic purposes (Long, 2015). The increasing volume of people from sub-Saharan Africa, attempting the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean, is the most obvious current example of individuals forced to migrate due to a mixture of causes: some of them might belong to ethnic minorities subjected to prolonged socio-economic exclusion that creates a powerful sense of injustice. Others are citizens of failing states and warlord economies or oppressive regimes. These conditions create sufficiently compelling reasons for people to flee to seek a better life even if they do not qualify for legal protection (Zetter, 2007).

This can be the case of many African migrants arriving in Italy who are coming from countries like Gambia, Nigeria or Mali where they have experienced violence and repression (IRIN, 2015) As a result, in Italy the majority of individuals who apply for international protection come from Nigeria (16%), Mali (15%), Gambia (13%), Pakistan (11%) and Senegal (7%) (Ibid).

Due to the complexity of the stories of the Mediterranean migrants, several humanitarian organisations like the Caritas have declared that this differentiation between refugees and migrants is impossible to make as the phenomenon of migration arises from the will to improve one’s own condition. Europe cannot deny people the possibility to enhance their lives and have a better future (IRIN, 2015).

It has been shown that according to public opinion the image of migrants is usually portrayed as threatening for the welfare of the state while refugees are often reduced to victims (Varatharajah, 2015). As expressed by Lisa Doyle, Head of advocacy for the Refugee Council, the language used to describe “migrants” and “refugees” is politicised and the way we talk about them might influence the way we deal with them with sometimes worrying consequences (The Washington Post, 2015). These unpleasant effects can accentuate a sense of alienation and suspicion about the “other” who looks and behaves differently from us. All is deeply affected by a hostile political discourse, the ambiguous propensity of the media towards “refugees” and “migrants” (Runnymede Trust 2005), and series of unfriendly reception policies which confine asylum seekers in detention centres or forcibly locate them in communities already marked by critical social deprivation and structural disparities (Zetter, 2007).

**The migration crisis: the Italian political discourse and public opinion**

The increasing number of migrants arriving in Europe at present has spurred the political discourse and influenced public opinion. As a result, the continuous migration flow is seen by media, politicians and general public as a very pressing issue. The intricate relation among these parties is insightfully analysed in the study *Portrayals of Immigrants, Migrants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees in National British Newspapers, 2010 to 2012* conducted by the Migration Observatory at the Oxford University. Regarding this, Dr Scott Blinder, former Director of the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford affirms that: *It is extremely difficult to untangle whether media drives public opinion about a subject, or whether it is politics or public opinion that drives media coverage, or some of each. Crucially,*
the research also demonstrates that the labels usually attributed to migrants on national newspapers and other media outlet do have an important part in the nation’s political and public debate (Allen et al, 2013).

The essay Tuning into Diversity - Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities in the Media conducted in Italy and financed by the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affairs, underlined the importance of media in regards to the phenomenon of migration. The study has reported that there is usually a “communication flaw” that is due to: a tendency to overdramatise the information reported in the news, a lack of depth in proving the truthfulness of the references in favour of a more dramatic message, lack of critical purpose and a partial and misleading representation of migrants and ethnic minorities. These characteristics have had a deep impact on the way migrants are portrayed in Italy (Fondazione Census, 2002).

The image and perception of migrants and asylum seekers

The terms used to describe the phenomenon of migration in Southern Europe is frequently associated to “an invasion”⁶, “a bomb ready to explode”⁷, and swarm of people⁸. The way we refer to people might have huge implications on the general opinion about migrants and refugees, as a result by using a negative language they might become undesirable (The Washington Post, 2015).

The terminology used is likely to reinforce a sense of repulsion and insecurity towards the migrants. In regards to this, a survey recently conducted in Italy has showed that since the beginning of 2015 public fear towards migrants has increased from 33% to 42% (Osservatorio Europeo Sulla Sicurezza, 2015). The apprehension for these individuals crossing the Mediterranean is also due to the fact that for 34% of the Italian citizens who took part to the survey believe that the migrants constitute a threat to the employment; moreover 32% of the interviewees think that the immigrants are a risk for their own identity, culture and religion (Ibid). Another survey conducted by the global market research

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⁶ The Spectator: [http://www.spectator.co.uk/features/9560982/the-invasion-of-italy/](http://www.spectator.co.uk/features/9560982/the-invasion-of-italy/)
company IPSOS has communicated that according to 25% of Italians the migration phenomenon represents the main threat to their country, second only to the economic crisis. The survey has also reported that 38% of the respondents the flow of migrations is linked to the Islamic terrorism and they are concern about the presence of terrorists among those individuals who cross the Mediterranean, even if until now there is no visible evidence (ISPI, 2015).

The mixture of populism and anti-foreign attitude is becoming very popular: according to Sebastiano Maffettone, professor and political scientist at LUISS University in Rome, the adverse opinion toward the migrants and asylum seekers is partially caused by politicians: they see that there is a hate towards the immigrants, and they try to exploit it for political reasons (The Guardian 2015).

The aversion and sense of insecurity and fear among the public opinion towards the migrants is instigated in particular by the ascendancy of far-right nationalist parties (Zetter, 2007). In the case of Italy by the Northern League party that has always been engaged in strong anti-migration campaigns and has often been described as a party with a racist or quasi-racist ideology (Mignone, 2008). This belief has also been supported by the new leader of the party Matteo Salvini who in recent elections announced a tough approach to immigration. Together with Salvini, the other major representatives of the party are opposing the Italian Government’s decision to continue supporting the rescue activities in the Mediterranean and accept the flow of migrants and asylum seekers arriving almost daily in Sicily. These in particular have been remarked on by the president of the northern Italian region of Lombardy, Roberto Maroni, who has declared he will no longer allow any migrants to enter the region following the huge rise in people trafficking to Italy (Daily Mail, 2015). He also advised mayors and other officials in Lombardy to refuse the central government’s demand for the settling of migrants in the region, and has threatened them to cut the funding to any municipalities who disobey his banning order (Ibid). The language used by Italian Northern League party propaganda is mainly designed to create a sense of exasperation and frustration as well as increase racial discrimination among the Italian citizens. Luca Zaia the right-wing governor of the Veneto region said that the allocation of migrants in centres in a few villages of his region was like a declaration of war against the
africanisation phenomenon of some areas (The Guardian, 2015). Roberto Calderoli from the Northern League Party, called the migrants who were complaining about the level of service inside the reception centres, ungrateful individuals as their requests were related to the pocket money they should receive, the quality of food served and the lack of Wi-Fi and access to mobile phones. (Secolo d’Italia, 2015). Moreover, newspapers blogs and social networks often show the list of benefits offered to migrants and asylum seekers and compare these to the ones provided to Italian citizens. An example is given by the TV programme Dalla Vostra Parte, broadcast on the Italian-based mass-media TV Company Mediaset. The TV programme is a series of documentaries that deals with daily issues reported by the citizens, including the migration phenomenon that has been deeply advertised. One of the investigative reports titled “Immigrants: Emergency and Madness” compared the situation of a homeless Italian citizen who was forced to live inside his car to the migrants living inside a luxurious villa. The episode has been uploaded on Facebook by Salvini who commented that situations like this one are deeply humiliating to Italian citizens (Dalla Vostra Parte, 2015). Similar episodes are constantly reported by the national news and are generating discontent and triggering uprisings. Riots have broken out all over Italy mainly to protest about the closeness of migrant reception centres to their own cities or villages (The Guardian, 2015). Hostility is not only spawned by the spreading of misleading news regarding migrants but, as expressed by Riccardo Magi (president of the left wing - libertarian Radical party), is also caused by the lack of a well-established reception system. According to Magi, the migrants should be located in small numbers in various centres across the country, instead of creating massive centres of hundreds or thousands of migrants usually located in isolated areas (Ibid). The party-leader reckons that this solution might bring more cohesive environment and incentivize the integration. The key to integration and immigration acceptance seems to be effective communication. Alberto Barbieri, a doctor who helps run mobile health clinics for migrants in Rome, states that tensions could be avoided if the information about the migrants arriving in Italy was shared and available in the public domain. According to him ignorance is the fodder, the public

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9 Due to the overpopulation of reception centres the Italian Government has established ad hoc partnerships with several hotels and private holiday villas to temporarily host migrants and asylum seekers. The facilities are part of the CAS system (special reception centres).
needs to be aware of the migrants’ personal stories and experiences that pushed them to get to Italy need to be more publicised (The Guardian, 2015).

This literature review has highlighted the dominant views on the migration phenomenon in Europe and Italy. These will be further discussed and analysed in the empirical research chapter where the key findings will be presented.
SECTION SIX: THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The empirical research is based on twenty-four testimonies collected in five different migrant reception centres all located in the Eastern part of Sicily. The purpose of the interviews was to get to know the personal stories of people who are normally perceived as an indistinct swarm. Through their own words, three main themes have emerged: the difficulty in attributing labels, the dangers of the route through Libya and their hopes and concerns for their future.

Are they migrants or refugees?

The ambiguity characterising the categories “refugee” and “migrant” has been a key part of the research carried out in Sicily. This intricacy is mainly due to the status that has been assigned to people by the Italian Government but also to the complexity of some stories.

All interviewees, except two minors, have requested international protection to be recognised as refugees. Based on their answers, they can be categorised in five different groups:

1. Fifteen people have not been officially identified as refugees but the Territorial Commission for Recognition of International Protection\(^\textit{10}\) - a local body that refers to the UN - has granted them the humanitarian protection\(^\textit{11}\) for a period that may vary between one, two or five years.

2. Five people have been heard by the Commission but they are still waiting for the outcome. They have all arrived in Italy in 2015.

3. One person has not applied but declared the intention to do so in the near future.

\(^{10}\) Local commissions are the appropriate authority to examine the asylum requests. The local commissions are supervised and coordinated by the National commission for asylum right. This has the power to revoke the previous admission of international protection status. National Commission avails itself of information by United Nation High Commissariat. Further details are available at this link: [https://www.giustizia-amministrativa.it/cdsintra/wcm/idc/groups/public/documents/document/mdax/nzex/“edisp/intra_000512.html](https://www.giustizia-amministrativa.it/cdsintra/wcm/idc/groups/public/documents/document/mdax/nzex/“edisp/intra_000512.html)

\(^{11}\) The Territorial Commission for Recognition of International Protection can decide to grant humanitarian protection when although a person cannot be recognised as a refugee, there are still serious justifications of a humanitarian nature. The Italian Asylum System can be found at this link: [http://www.resettlement-observatory.eu/documents/italy/outputs/countryprofile/italycountryprofile.pdf](http://www.resettlement-observatory.eu/documents/italy/outputs/countryprofile/italycountryprofile.pdf)
4. One person has not been granted any legal form of protection but he has already appealed to the Court and he is still waiting for the Court’s decision.

5. Lastly, two unaccompanied minors (fifteen and seventeen years old) who are currently benefitting from all the rights recognised and guaranteed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The benefits aim at their well-being and development and include protection, placement in a suitable institution and psychological support (UNHR, 1989).

Although all the interviewees, twenty-four in total have already applied or have revealed the intention to obtain refugee status, when directly asked they have expressed a general confusion in regards to the use of the legal terms “refugee” or “migrant”. Only eight people considered themselves as refugees. Moravi, nineteen years old from Gambia is one of them: “I am a refugee because I come from a very unstable country, everywhere in Africa there are wars and conflicts and there are no safe places to stay” (Key Informant No 1, 2015).

Only two interviewees openly declared to be migrants. This is the case of Ib, eighteen years old from Senegal, who during the interview said: “I think I am a migrant as I am here to work but I believe I deserve to stay because I need a better future, I want to be able to make plans for my future” (Key Informant No 3, 2015).

The majority of respondents declared some confusion on identifying their status and choosing a label for themselves. In regards to this, Akua, nineteen years old from Gambia admits: “I do not know how to reply to this question, I am not sure what I am” (Key Informant No 16, 2015). Others believed they did not fit the two conventional categories, like Hadrian, eighteen years old from Gambia, who reckons: “according to the Italian Government I am a refugee and I need protection but I consider myself as a survivor” (Key Informant No 4, 2015).

The stories told by the people I personally met in Sicily have shown varying degrees of complexity. Some personal experiences are so tangled that a clear separation of the two

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12 According to the Article 20 of the Convention on the rights of the child a child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own best interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the State. The Convention is available at this link: [http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx)
labels “refugee” and “migrant” cannot be determined. Other testimonies are more straightforward and therefore easier to be categorised.

**When categorisation is possible**

**Refugees - Yakira and Shahid**

Yakira, a thirty-one-year-old political activist from Ivory Coast used to raise awareness for crimes committed by the regime. During a protest, her sister was killed; after this incident she felt her life was in serious danger and she decided to flee her country and leave her daughter with her relatives (Key Informant No 15, 2015). Although Yakira’s story is dramatic it is also relatively unambiguous: she is a victim of persecution and for this reason she has received humanitarian protection for 5 years.\(^{13}\)

Political/ethnic causes have also pushed Shahid, twenty-nine years old from Pakistan to move abroad. Shahid is a Sunni Muslim like the government of his village and the majority of its citizens. He used to go out with some friends who were Shiites but this was not approved by the elders of the place he was from. “I could not see anything wrong in going out with my friends, I liked to go to their parties and follow their traditions, I did not want to convert to their beliefs, I just wanted to have fun with them. One day, we all went to the Shiite mosque and there was an attack, a bomb was placed inside the mosque and it killed all my friends. I knew the people responsible for this attack, they were Sunnis, and I reported them to the police” (Key Informant No 22, 2015). Shahid was asked several times to change his statement but he wanted those people to pay for the murder of his friends. After several warning signs, a group of Sunnis entered his place and killed his brother; as a consequence of this tragic event, his parents forced him to leave Pakistan.

Both Yakira and Shahid declared they did not have the intention to flee their countries for economic reasons, they did not go abroad to look for better job opportunities or to enhance their economic situation. Both their families were economically stable, they had a job and they liked their life in their countries.

\(^{13}\) Yakira is trying to obtain an Italian work permit and ID card as she wants to be reunited with her daughter who is currently in Ivory Coast, unfortunately the permit for humanitarian reason does not allow family reunification.
Economic migrants - Ihsan, Joni and Mahmud

Unlike Yakira and Shahid, the story of Ihsan, eighteen years old from Mali is characterised by poverty and financial instability. During his interview Ihsan\(^\text{14}\) confessed: “I did not want to move as my life was peaceful in Mali with my family, I also studied for thirteen years but I wanted to carry on as I know education is important, I want to study and find a better job”. (Key Informant No 2, 2015). Ihsan moved to Italy for economic reasons: he wanted to continue his studies but his family did not have the money to pay for his school fees, he also moved to find a job and be economically independent.

Poverty is also the reason why Joni and Mahmud\(^\text{15}\) both eighteen years old from Bangladesh, fled their country. The two young men moved abroad because they need to support their families in Bangladesh, they are the oldest sons and they feel they are morally obliged to offer their economical support at home.

Joni explained that many families in Bangladesh especially those who reside in the outskirts of Dhaka live in extremely poor conditions: “Poverty is a big issue in Bangladesh especially in the area I am from, there are no jobs available for me…My father used to work as a farmer but he lost his leg and cannot work anymore. I worked for a while but the money they gave me was not enough” (Key Informant No 23, 2015). Mahmud and Joni left Bangladesh to find a better job, they need to send the money back home otherwise their families cannot afford to buy food or send their younger brothers and sisters to school (Key Informant No 23 and 24, 2015).

When categorisation is not possible

Hadrian and Jabir

Some of the testimonies collected in Sicily confirm the difficulty to differentiate the category of economic migrants and refugees. Some stories unfold economic causes but also social

\(\text{14} \) Ihsan received humanitarian protection for one year, he wanted to find a job in Italy in order to renew his permit.

\(\text{15} \) Joni and Mahmud were both granted humanitarian protection for 2 years.
exclusion and racial discrimination. This for example is the case of Hadrian, who travelled to Italy from Libya. He has never met his parents and he was raised by a family he was not related to. Life was not easy for him as he affirmed he was not treated very well: “My life in the village I am from is not easy if you are an orphan, I was discriminated all the time” (Key Informant No 4, 2015). Hadrian also told me he was accused by a friend’s parents to be homosexual as he used to spend lot of time with their son. He could not confirm if these allegations were true but he admitted being confused about his sexuality: “I was forced to leave my country because homosexuality in Gambia is a crime and I was due to go to prison” (Ibid).

Interviewees themselves realised at times how their stories were intricate. Jabir, seventeen years old from Nigeria declared that the causes that forced him to move abroad were varied. Coming from a poor family, after the loss of his dad, his mom could not afford to buy food or send the children to school: “When dad died life got too difficult, mum tried to send us to school as in Nigeria if you do not have an education you are nothing. I managed to finish the compulsory years as they were free but we did not have the money to continue to pay the fees” (Key Informant No 7, 2015). Jabir’s conditions further complicated as he reported that he felt his life was in great danger due to the rise of the militant Islamist group Boko Haram in the area near his village: “I was not directly affected by Boko Haram, but a friend of mine who lived near my village was forced to join them, I was afraid as I saw what they do to people” (Ibid).

The testimonies collected for this research have had a crucial role in recognising the difficulties in labelling people. The personal stories of many interviewees have

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16 Hadrian decided not to leave his name and remain anonymous, he did not want to reveal his identity as he was afraid to be judged and discriminated in the migrant reception centre where he currently lives in. Hadrian has been granted humanitarian protection for five years.

17 An amendment to the country’s Criminal Code on October 2014 toughened existing laws punishing people for the ‘crime’ of homosexuality in Gambia and lengthened the criminal sentences for those found guilty. Prior to October 2014 people accused to be homosexual faced up to fourteen years in prison. The full article is available at this link: http://www.amnesty.org.uk/gambia-anti-gay-bill#.Vemw5xHBzGc

18 As an unaccompanied minor, Jabir is protected by the UN convention on the Rights of the Child. He will soon turn eighteen and he will apply for asylum.

19 Since 2009 the Boko Haram regime has been causing havoc in Nigeria through a wave of bombings, assassinations and abductions, this Islamist group is fighting to overthrow the government and create an Islamic state. Further details are available at this link: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13809501
demonstrated how complicated it is to define a specific cause of migration. The use of labels has important implications on the life of individuals especially when they apply for protection. Further research is needed to understand the reasons behind the Italian Government not to grant asylum but to opt instead for humanitarian protection even for those cases when there is a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions.

The dangers of the passage through Libya

As briefly discussed in my literature review, Libya’s political turmoil is playing a crucial role in the Mediterranean migration crisis. The lack of a stable governance has exacerbated the situation and migrants and refugees suffer the terrible consequences. The testimonies collected in the migrant reception centres confirmed that Libya was the most used route to reach Europe. Only four interviewees declared they went through the Balkan route, the two men from Pakistan and the two from Afghanistan stopped firstly in Iran, after that they moved to Turkey to then finally reach Greece. They admitted they stayed in Greece for a short period and then illegally moved to Italy by boat. The four key informants also expressed their disappointment concerning the current situation in Greece: they did not find a job, had a difficult relationship with the authorities and, as a result, they could not integrate in the society.

The other interviewees stated they moved to Libya before reaching Italy by boat. All twenty cases confirmed that the trip to Libya involved several stops in different countries in Africa. This plan was mainly due to the necessity to gain money to be able to pay for the travel to reach Libya. The length of the journeys varied according to the salary received; Moravi for example told me that it took him two weeks to reach Libya from Gambia: he had stopped in Mali and then Niger as he was able to find a lift by car that was not so expensive (Key Informant No 1, 2015). Ib on the contrary, was not so lucky, his trip from Senegal lasted two years and he had few jobs in Mali and Niger before arriving in Libya (Key Informant No 3, 2015).
Labour exploitation and violence towards migrants staying in Libya

There is a recurring component in the stories of the twenty people who arrived in Italy through Libya, which is the terrible treatment they received in the North African country.

The issue has already been described by several newspapers like the Telegraph that denounced the chaos in Libya and the brutality reserved to migrants (The Telegraph, 2015). Humanitarian organisations such as Amnesty International claim that the state of lawlessness and the armed conflicts raging in the country are forcing people to place their lives in the hands of smugglers who extort, abuse and attack them (Amnesty International, 2015). The abuses were repeatedly mentioned by the testimonies who also reported the racist environment in the country. Hadrian declared: “they treated us like animals because we are black, moreover we do not speak their language and although we are Muslim they believe we are not pure” (Key Informant No 4, 2015). According to IRIN, an independent, non-profit media organisation, the racial discrimination and xenophobia in Libya are no new phenomena. Violence towards black sub-Saharan migrants has been mounting since the early stages of the conflict in Libya in 2011 (IRIN, 2015). The situation is even worse for Christian migrants who are forced to hide in order to avoid being abducted and tortured, Faith for example said she had to spend their time hidden at home and they could not go outside: “a friend of my husband was robbed and tortured, he could not complain to the police because they do not like us [Christians]” (Key Informant No 10, 2015).

As confirmed by Amnesty International, migrants are at the mercy of smugglers, they faced weeks or months in prisons or detention centres waiting to be shipped to Italy (Amnesty International, 2015). Some of the interviewees confirmed they spent a long time in squalid detention centres in Libya: “I spent weeks in detention, I did not know why I was there, the rooms were very crowded and there were more than thirty people in mine. There were no toilets so the smell was awful; I used to vomit a lot” (Key Informant No 15, 2015). Imprisonment in Libya is also very recurring in the stories of the migrants interviewed in Sicily. Among the most common reasons there is the lack of identification documents, some of the interviewees reported that as soon as they crossed the border to enter Libya they had their IDs confiscated. This usually gave police a valid reason to then stop and arrest
migrants. Police checkpoints are located everywhere, as stated by Abbas: “there is a police control every fifty metres; if you are black they stop you all the time. They put me in prison for three months because I did not have my documents” (Key Informant No 18, 2015).

Migrants are not only subjected to brutality by the Libyan army, police or militias but also by ordinary citizens who steal from them. According to few testimonies, it is almost impossible to recognise a real policeman from a fake one; anyone could pretend to be from the armed force, civilians can easily obtain a uniform and buy a gun. “Everybody can stop black people, they ask for money and if you do not give it to them they will kill you” (Key Informant No 18, 2015).

Although the stories of the twenty people I interviewed have the common element of the transit through Libya, their journey to Italy presented a series of different traits.

Human trafficking

The research has also showed that, in different modalities, all of the 24 interviewees had had contact with human traffickers in their journey to Italy. Three groups can be identified: people who deliberately moved to Italy to improve their conditions and paid for their journey, people who were permanently resident in Libya and had to flee the country due to political instability and people who had recently moved to Libya looking for employment and were forced to embark on the journey to Italy.

People deliberately moving to Italy – Moravi and Ib

Out of twenty people who reached Italy through Libya, only seven individuals declared they directly paid the smugglers to cross the Mediterranean; the amount spent varying between 500 to 1000 euros. The majority of people received financial help\(^{20}\) from their family and only needed to spend a few days in Libya. This is the case of Moravi: his uncle who currently lives in Belgium sponsored his trip and, for this reason, he only stayed for a couple of days in Tripoli (Key Informant No 1, 2015). Other people had to live in Libya for a long period in order to afford the cost of the trip. Ib for example had to stay in Tripoli for two years, he

\(^{20}\) It has not been possible to identify the means through which the families financially supported their relatives.
saved money by covering several roles mainly as a construction worker (Key Informant No 3, 2015). The seven individuals who paid for the crossing deliberately moved to Italy in order to enhance their conditions. Moreover, they were all aware of the risks involved in the travel: “when I asked my uncle to pay for my trip he warned me that the crossing was incredibly dangerous, a lot of people usually die but I had to leave” (Key Informant No 1, 2015). “Since I was nine years old I have been dreaming of a life in Italy, I heard you can have a good job there and life was easier than Senegal...I knew it was difficult to go by boat, two of my best friends lost their lives but I decided to go anyway” (Key Informant No 3, 2015).

People who had to move to Italy due to political instability – Faith and Gabby

Another group formed by five individuals from Nigeria all admitted that the cost of the travel was not covered directly by them. The testimonies of the Nigerian people presented few elements in common: firstly these individuals were all adults, between twenty-five and thirty years old, they lived in Libya and they used to work for wealthy Libyan families mainly as hired help. They arrived in Italy in 2013 and their travel was financially supported by their employer. According to few directors of migrant reception centres, it is quite common especially for Nigerian couples to have their travel paid by their employer. Wealthy Libyan families who left the country due to the hostile situation, decided to support their hired help by financing their journeys to Italy. This was confirmed by Faith, 25 years old who stated: “My husband and I did not pay for the travel, our employer did pay for us, the family loved us and cared about our life, we had to go as Libya was no longer a safe place” (Key Informant No 10, 2015). A similar story has been told by Gabby, twenty-six years old who confirmed they did not plan to move to Italy but they were forced by the war and instability in Libya: “we used to have a happy life in Libya but we had to move because it was very dangerous, they were bombing every day, the family we were working for paid for the trip, we could not afford it” (Key Informant No 11, 2015).

Coercively moved to Italy after looking for a job in Libya - Sow and Abbas

Lastly, eight interviewees stated they did not pay for the journey, their stories present a recurring plot and share similar features. These individuals, who are all very young, between
fifteen to nineteen years old, declared they had been encouraged to go to Libya by an acquaintance of their family or friends with the promise of a good job. In some cases, this individual even recommended a convenient route to reach Tripoli and helped with the cost of the internal travel. These young people were attracted by the guarantee of a stable employment that would have allowed them to help their family. Sow\textsuperscript{21}, fifteen years old from Ivory Coast said an acquaintance of his aunt told him to go to Libya to look for a job: “I did not know this person but my aunty told him he was very important and well respected in the village, he gave me money to reach Libya...I went because I needed to help my little brother and sister, my mom died during the civil war so I had to send them money to eat and go to school” (Key Informant No 6, 2015). A similar story was told by Abbas\textsuperscript{22}, nineteen years old from Ghana, due to some family issues he moved to Niger with his mother where he stayed for a few years till her death. “One day I was approached by two people who told me I had to go to Libya if I wanted to have a better job, I was all alone in Niger so I decided to go. These people were very helpful they showed me the route to go and gave me advices” (Key Informant No 18, 2015). All seven interviewees confirmed they found a job in Libya but the work conditions were appalling and their bosses did not pay any salary. After spending a few months in Libya, they all reported they were physically forced to board a boat usually late at night without knowing the destination. Sow stated: “I did not know where I was going, it was 2am and it was very dark. They forced me to go, they had guns and I was afraid they would kill me so I went” (Key Informant No 6, 2015). The case of these seven young people can lead to the hypothesis of a criminal network that operates from different countries from West Africa to Libya, these organisations make a profit by employing and then trafficking human beings. Unfortunately, the reason behind this occurrence is unclear but a similar scenario has been reported by the Italian newspaper \textit{La Repubblica} but it was mainly referring to the cases of young women coming from Nigeria. According to the humanitarian organisation \textit{Be Free}, a group of young Nigerian women all stated they did not pay for the travel and they were all forced to go to Italy. The organisation suspects this can

\textsuperscript{21} Sow is an unaccompanied minor, he would like to help his little brother and sister who are still in Ivory Coast. He admitted he would like them to come to Italy one day as they might have a better future.

\textsuperscript{22} Abbas’s request for humanitarian protection has been rejected, he has already appealed to the Court. The commission did not approve his application as his reasons were based on problems he experienced in Libya and they were not related to his situation in his country of origin.
be a clear sign of the presence of a criminal organisation that traffics women who will be sold to the sex industry in Europe (La Repubblica, 2015).

**Hopes and concerns for the present and the future**

The interviewees’ words clearly reveal a sense of precariousness but also hope for the future. These people had to go through a series of traumatic events whose repercussions have a significant impact on their present and future decisions.

**Their present in Italy**

For all interviewees, Italy does not represent a country of transit as they all declared their intention not to move to another European country. This decision can be attributable to different factors:

**Unawareness of regulation - Saadia**

The concrete impossibility to migrate to another country in Europe due to the Dublin Regulation that forces migrants to stay in the first EU country they have entered. When they arrived, all interviewees were unaware of the regulations, this was also confirmed by the directors of a few reception centres. For example, the director of the centre based in Scicli, a city few kilometres away from Pozzallo, one of the main arrival port in Sicily, stated: “*When they first arrive they are so confused, sometimes they soon declare the intention to move somewhere else in Europe and they want to leave straightaway, but after spending a few weeks or months in Italy they soon change their mind, they realise they cannot freely move and have to stay here*”. All the interviewees were not familiar with the legal processes and requirements that are linked to the asylum request procedures. They were also not aware of the timing required by the Italian bureaucracy. Saadia, 26 years old from Gambia expressed her concerns about this situation: “*I did not know it takes long time to approve our documents, I applied for being a refugee two months ago but I have no news, I need to know soon as I really need to work. I thought Europe was supposed to be different and I could easily find a job*” (Key Informant No 14, 2015). The director of the centre in Scicli declared that it is very complex to instruct guests on the procedures and the waiting time to have their asylum request processed: *they are simply not aware of the complexity of*
regulations and the waiting time that usually derives from those. We need to understand it is not easy for them, sometimes they come from small villages and they have no clue about the concept of bureaucracy. It is very hard to explain that to them”.

Need for safety and stability – Tad, Ihsan and Moravi

The desire to remain in Italy stems also from their pursuit for stability. The majority of interviewees admitted they no longer want to live in a precarious state and they desperately need a normal life. This was for example expressed by Tad, twenty-seven years old from Nigeria who said: “I would like to stay in Italy, I want my child to grow up in a peaceful country and have a better life” (Key Informant No 9, 2015). The need for a more stable condition is also linked to their search for a job. All twenty-four interviewees expressed the hope to find employment. Unfortunately, only four people were currently working, three of them were involved in work experiences that have been financed and supported by the city council with the collaboration of the host reception centre of the city. The other individual was, on the contrary, working as cultural mediator for the reception centre that was once his home. All the others were anxiously waiting for employment opportunities. Younger people felt the pressure to help their family back home, some of them said they would consider moving to another country in Europe if they could not find a job in Italy. This was the case of Ihsan who said: “I need to support my family in Africa, I need to earn money and help them. I cannot stay in Italy for a long time if I do not find a job, I will go to other countries in Europe until I find a job” (Key Informant No 2, 2015). Teenagers also expressed their wish to continue their studies, some of them only attended school until the compulsory and complementary grade. Ibrahim for example stated: “I used to go to school but I stopped at grade eight, I was twelve years old. If I wanted to continue to study I had to pay and my family did not have the money. I would like to go to school again” (Key Informant No 3, 2015). Others like Moravi had to stop their education due to unforeseen circumstances: “I used to go to school but I had to stop when my father lost his job and he

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23 Tad arrived in Italy in 2014 together with his wife; they also have a baby girl who is few months old. They both expressed a need for stability but they would like to go back to their country one day when the situation in Nigeria will improve.
went to prison\textsuperscript{24}. I would like to study again, one day I would like to be a doctor” (Key Informant No 1, 2015).

Their future

Concerns – Ib and Moheem

The consequences of the harsh reality these people had to deal with before arriving in Italy are still visible in the perception of the future and in the inability to make long term plans. This issue was mainly visible in younger people who displayed a sense of scepticism towards their future: “I used to make plans for my future when I was in my country but now I do not know what I will be and where I will be, I need to stay healthy so I can have a better future” (Key Informant No 3, 2015).

Some people expressed their desire to be reunited with their family, this is mostly the case of adults who were victims of persecution in their country. Moheem\textsuperscript{25}, twenty-six years old from Afghanistan, was forced to leave as his family refused to join the Taliban; as a result, his parents and his brother were killed: “I managed to save my life as I was not at home when they burned my parents’ house down. My wife and my children are still in Afghanistan, I do not know where they are but I want to be in contact with them and organise their trip to Italy” (Key Informant No 19, 2015).

Hopes – Hadrian and Lawan

Not all people had a negative vision of their future. Many interviewees were quite optimistic and did not abandon their dreams. Hadrian for example confided he would like to concretely help people who are going through a similar situation: “I want to contribute to help people in Africa, I want to help them to understand how difficult the trip will be so that they can prepare themselves and decide if they still want to leave. I also want to give them

\textsuperscript{24} Moravi’s father was a medical director; he was employed by the Taiwan Government that used to sponsor Gambia’s development programmes including the health care one. The government accused his father for the misuse of money for this reason he was jailed.

\textsuperscript{25} Moheem only arrived in Italy in May 2015. It took him three months to reach Italy, although he entered Europe through Greece he admitted he did not want to stay there due to the unfavourable economic conditions. This is not the first time he attempted to migrate to Europe, in 2013 he managed to go to the UK but the British authorities sent him back to Afghanistan. He now hopes his children can soon move to Italy as he knows they cannot have a better future in Afghanistan.
advice on life in Europe” (Key Informant No 4, 2015). Others would like to continue to work in the same sector they used to work in when they were in Nigeria, Lawan wishes to open a business as a hairdresser, while Faith would like to be a fashion designer. They are both taking Italian classes in order to be able to manage a shop.

All key informants expressed their desire to have a normal life. It is not easy to erase the sorrows of their past but it appears essential to understand their simple but special needs. The reception centres where the interviewees were currently living were all working hard to assist their guests but this assistance clearly needs to be embraced and recognised by the wider public and Media.
SECTION SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the research has been to show a different side to the Mediterranean crisis. At the moment, the migration phenomenon has lost its humanity and this is visible from the strategies adopted by the EU governments, the images used by media and in the perception of public opinion. As the migration flows are constantly increasing, the debate around this topic is mainly based on the legal labels assigned to people, the adequacy of the EU migration policies and the issues around the location of migrants and refugees in the rest of Europe. The stories I have been told in Sicily are stories of bravery, endurance and hope which do not fall under specific categories and cannot be labelled. For the above reasons, my analysis has focused on the experiences of the people arriving in Italy: on their fears and their aspirations which too often are overlooked by politicians, Media and public opinion.

The empirical research has investigated the use of labels questioning whether the standardised categorisation between “migrant” and “refugee” could be applied to all people crossing the Mediterranean. The research has showed how this oversimplification does not accurately reflect the migratory flow that affects the Mediterranean routes. The results have, in fact, been varied: some of the narratives were quite linear, for example with people who were victims of social and political persecutions. Other stories clearly showed economic causes as the driving force of the migration: the escape from poverty and the necessity to look for a job to support the family back home. In both cases, the labels “refugee” and “economic migrant” are justifiable. On the other hand, the complexity of some of the stories cannot be encompassed under a single category: the root causes of migration being an intertwinement of poverty, social exclusion and persecution.

The personal stories of the individuals I met in Sicily also described a recurring element which is the passage through Libya. The interviewees have described three scenarios: some of them deliberately moved to Europe to better their conditions, others had to move to Europe due to political instability and the last group was coerced to embark on boats unaware of the destination. Further investigations have illustrated how plausible is the presence of a well-established criminal organisation that operates in various countries in
Africa by trafficking human beings. For this reason, it appears critically essential for the Italian Government to guarantee their protection.

The key informants have expressed their concern for their present circumstances but seemed hopeful for the future. The stories have also clearly showed the interviewees desire to move on, to regain the dignity previously lost and their pursuit for a normal life. To them, the employment opportunity did not represent just a way to be financially independent and to support the family but it was also a way to be more integrated in the societies they were living in and avoid marginalisation. They needed a safer environment and stability and the impression is that they would be willing to “fit in” were they given the opportunity.

It is important to note that the study has some limitations due to the small sample of people interviewed and the choice of one location. Despite this, the stories and experiences collected in Sicily have been examined in considerable depth and have been an invaluable source of information. The study can be considered as a springboard for further research in the field of migration. A more ample sample size may produce different results and a more careful consideration of their needs might have a significant impact on improving the humanitarian support. The hope is that the research has unmasked some of the myths related to the migration phenomenon in Italy and has provided a better understanding of the people involved. Listening to the voices of the victims of the Mediterranean crisis is the key to effectively control and organise the new arrivals.
Bibliography


The Human Side of the Mediterranean Migration Crisis: Stories of Fear and Hope


- Daily Mail. (2015) *Northern Italian towns are ordered to stop accepting migrants because the situation 'is like a bomb ready to go off', as 6,000 refugees are rescued in one weekend desperately trying to reach Europe*. Available at: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3115235/Northern-Italian-towns-ordered-stop-accepting-migrants-situation-bomb-ready-6-000-refugees-rescued-one-weekend-desperately-trying-reach-Europe.html (Accessed: 1 September 2015).


The Human Side of the Mediterranean Migration Crisis: Stories of Fear and Hope


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The Human Side of the Mediterranean Migration Crisis: Stories of Fear and Hope


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The Human Side of the Mediterranean Migration Crisis: Stories of Fear and Hope


Appendix 1: Oxford Brookes University’s Ethics Review Form E1

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<td>2. If the study will involve participants who are unable to give informed consent (e.g. children under the age of 16, people with learning disabilities), will you be unable to obtain permission from their parents or guardians (as appropriate)?</td>
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<td>3. Will the study require the cooperation of a gatekeeper for initial access to groups or individuals to be recruited? (e.g. students, members of a self-help group, employees of a company, residents of a nursing home)</td>
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<td>4. Are there any problems with the participants’ right to remain anonymous, or to have the information they give not identifiable as theirs?</td>
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<td>5. Will it be necessary for the participants to take part in the study without their knowledge/consent at the time? (e.g. covert observation of people in non-public places)</td>
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<td>6. Will the study involve discussion of or responses to questions the participants might find sensitive? (e.g. own drug use, own traumatic experiences)</td>
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The Human Side of the Mediterranean Migration Crisis: Stories of Fear and Hope

7. Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to the study participants? ☒ ☒

8. Will blood or tissue samples be obtained from participants? ☒ ☒

9. Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study? ☒ ☒

10. Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety? ☒ ☒

11. Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing of participants? ☒ ☒

12. Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? ☒ ☒

13. Will deception of participants be necessary during the study? ☒ ☒

14. Will the study involve NHS patients, staff, carers or premises? ☒ ☒

If you have answered 'no' to all the above questions, send the completed form to your Module Leader and keep the original in case you need to submit it with your work.

If you have answered 'yes' to any of the above questions, you should complete the Form E2 available at http://www.brookes.ac.uk/Research/Research-ethics/Ethics-review-forms/ and, together with this E1 Form, email it to the Faculty Research Ethics Officer, whose name can be found at http://www.brookes.ac.uk/Research-ethics/Research-ethics-officers/

If you answered 'yes' to any of questions 1-13 and 'yes' to question 14, an application must be submitted to the appropriate NHS research ethics committee.

Signed: [Signature]

Signed: [Signature]

Date: 10th June 2015

Principal Investigator
/Supervisor

Student Investigator
Appendix 2: Oxford Brookes University’s Ethics Review Form E2

Faculty of Technology, Design and Environment

Ethics Review Form E2

This form is only for graduate (MSc) and undergraduate students on taught programmes. Before completing this form, Form E1 should have been completed to establish whether a Form E2 is required.

The E2 Form should be completed by the Principal Investigator / Student undertaking the research. Reference should be made to the University Code of Practice for the Ethical Standards for Research Involving Human Participants, available at http://www.brookes.ac.uk/Research/Research-ethics/, and to any guidelines provided by relevant academic or professional associations.

1. Name of Principal Investigator / Supervisor: Supriya Akerkar

2. Name of Student: Emilia Torrisi

3. Project Title: The Human Side of the Mediterranean Migrant Crisis

4. Project Type:
   - MPhil
   - Master’s [x]
   - Diploma
   - Undergraduate
   - Other (please specify)

5. Project funded by (if applicable): N/A
6. **Summary of proposed research:**

   The research focuses on the human side of the migration crisis in the Mediterranean. As the migration flows are constantly increasing, the debate around this topic is mainly based on the labels assigned to people, the adequacy of the EU migration policies, and the issues around the reception and allocation of migrants and refugees in Italy and also Europe. Thanks to the interviews that will be collected in Sicily, my study will focus instead on the real people involved in the crisis. The research will help to understand the causes of migration, the personal stories and opinions, and the expectations in Europe.

7. **Participants involved in the research:**

   Migrants and asylum seekers that crossed the Mediterranean, including unaccompanied minors. They all live in reception centers where psychological support can be provided upon request after the interviews.

8. **Details of drugs or other substances used:**

   N/A
9. Estimate of the risks and benefits of the proposed research:

There might be a risk connected to the data collection as individuals might not be willing to take part in the research. This can be due to the fear of recalling such dramatic events. On the other hand, by interviewing people directly involved in the situation, we can have access to their personal stories and point of views. We will get to know them without the influence of media and political views.

Issues of psychological nature should be addressed by the counselor support offered in the centres.

10. Plan for obtaining informed consent: (please attach copy of information sheet and consent form to application)

The directors of reception centres have already been contacted and the majority of them agreed to me asking questions to the guests. A copy of the questionnaire has already been sent so that people will have the possibility to have a look at the questions before my arrival.

A copy of the information sheet and consent form will be given to the individuals who will be willing to take part in the study.

For unaccompanied minors in addition to their consent, a permission will be also asked to the directors of centres who act as custodians.

11. Steps to be taken to ensure confidentiality of data:

- The face-to-face interview will be confidential and anonymous.
- The responses and experiences will be confidential and permission to record the session will be asked.
- The data collected will be kept securely and the responses will not be discussed with any other interviewee or employee of the reception centres.

12. Signed: [Signature] Principal Investigator / Supervisor

Signed: [Signature] Student

Date: 10th June 2015
Appendix 3: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Full title of Project: The Human Side of the Mediterranean Migrant Crisis

Name, position and contact address of Researcher:
Emilia Torrisi- Master’s student
07538461550- 13098580@brookes.ac.uk

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

3. I agree to take part in the above study.

Note for PI / Supervisory team:
The following statements should be included if appropriate.
If not, please delete from the consent form:

4. I agree to the interview / focus group / consultation being audio recorded

5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications

7. I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) in a specialist data centre and may be used for future research.

Name of Participant __________________________ Date __________ Signature __________________________

Name of Researcher __________________________ Date __________ Signature __________________________
Appendix 4: Information Sheet

Research Title: The Human Side of the Mediterranean Migration Crisis
Researcher: Emilia Torrisi, Oxford Brookes University

Dear Participant,

You are being invited to take part in my research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully, if at any point you have any questions please do not hesitate to me at 13098580@brookes.ac.uk.

The research will focus the attention on the personal stories and opinions of the people that crossed the Mediterranean to reach Europe. The questions asked will only concern individuals’ backgrounds and future aspirations. The study will help to better understand the primary causes of this phenomenon and raise awareness towards the special needs of migrants and asylum seekers.

The collection of data through interviews will last approximately two weeks; the research will be submitted at the end of September 2015.

You have been asked to participate as your first-hand experience will be extremely helpful to the research. The face-to-face interview will be confidential and anonymous and it will last about 20 minutes. This will be arranged inside the reception centre you are currently living in, for a time and date of your convenience.

Your participation to this study is completely voluntary so it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

For the purpose of enhancing the accuracy of data from our interview session, with your consent, I will record the audio of the session. Also with you permission, I may include selective quotes from the transcription to illustrate points in my dissertation. Your interview responses and experiences will be confidential, notes and recordings will be anonymised and stored in a secure location, these will be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of ten years after the completion of a research project. Your responses will not be discussed with any fellow interviewees in the study or any employees of the reception centre.

The results of the research study will be used in my dissertation required for the completion of my master’s degree; a copy of the research can be requested via email after the submission date in September. At this stage is not possible to predict if the study will be published.

I am conducting this research as a Master’s student at Oxford Brookes University, Centre for Development and Emergency Practice, School of Architecture.
The research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee of the Oxford Brookes University.

For further information or details please contact the researcher, Emilia Torrisi at 13098580@brookes.ac.uk or the supervisor, Supriya Akerkar at sakerkar@brookes.ac.uk. If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, you can contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee on ethics@brookes.ac.uk.

Thank you for reading this information sheet and I hope to speak with you soon.

Oxford,
June 2015
Emilia Torrisi
### Appendix 5: List of key informants

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Appendix 6: Map of Sicily and reception centres location (underlined in red)
Appendix 7: Questionnaire for key informants

Name:

Age:

Country of Origin

Background: education, profession, family

Date of arrival:

The questionnaire is divided into 3 parts:

PAST:
What are the causes that forced you to leave your country?
How did you reach Italy?
How much did you pay for your travel?
What was your experience in Libya?
Why did you decide to go to Italy? Why not Spain or Greece?
How long did it take you to plan your trip?
Were you aware of the implications/dangers of the travel?
Was this the first time you move to another country?

PRESENT
Are you planning to move somewhere else in Europe? Where? Why?
Have you applied for asylum?
Is life in Europe as you expected?
What are your short-term plans?

FUTURE:
What are your plans/aspirations for the future? Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
Do you think your family will join?
Are you planning to stay in Italy permanently?