



Geographies of escape. A fact-finding and didactic survey on asylum seekers at the CARA of Castelnuovo di Porto – Rome

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Abstract

This article focuses on the geographical knowledge of their migratory routes of the asylum seekers of the Castelnuovo di Porto Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers (CARA), located near Rome. Through an assisted self-administration of a 44 question semi-structured questionnaire, school courses and geographic content and subjects in each country were reconstructed to verify any possible connection between types of travel, spatial behavior and geographical knowledge acquired by migrants. The questionnaire, translated into English, French, Arabic, Somali, Tigrinya, Urdu was given to 200 guests, who were asked to draw a mental map concerning their migratory path, making it possible to show the idea of the world that pushes migrants towards countries of asylum.

Keywords: Immigration, Refugees, Travels, Mental Maps

1. Introduction

Armed conflicts, violations of human rights, worsening security and humanitarian conditions, natural disasters and climate changing consequences push millions of people to a forced exodus (Cristaldi, 2013, 2012). In 2014, also because of the wars in Syria and Iraq, asylum applications to industrialized countries reached the highest level in 22 years (from the beginning of the Balkan war). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates

that industrialized countries, in 2014, received 866,000 new asylum applications (570,820 of which in EU countries); this shows an increase of 45% compared to 2013, when 596,600 asylum applications were submitted (UNHCR, 2014). The asylum seekers are mainly Syrians, Iraqis, Afghans, Serbs and Eritreans who come from geo-politically and economically fragile areas where lives are too often put at risk.

The international arena since the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art. 14) states that everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy “asylum” from persecution in other countries. This right has been internationally confirmed and regulated by the 1951 Geneva Convention and modified compared to time and geographical constraints dictated since the 1967 New York Protocol. The legislation provides for different kinds of legal protection including the possibility of achieving “refugee status” following the acceptance of the application. In short, asylum seekers are people who, finding themselves outside the country of their habitual residence, are unable or do not want to return for fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. These people can apply for asylum in another country by submitting an application for recognition of “*refugee status*”.

Even Italy, which recognizes the right of asylum as stated in the 1948 Constitution, article 10, subparagraph 3¹, is seeing a sharp increase of asylum applications. People who applied in Italy in 2014 were more than double that of the previous year (Figure 1), placing Italy between the first three EU countries for the number of applicants for international protection (after Germany and Sweden), even if the ratio between inhabitants and seekers in Italy (1.1 per thousand) is still below the EU average of 1.2 per thousand.

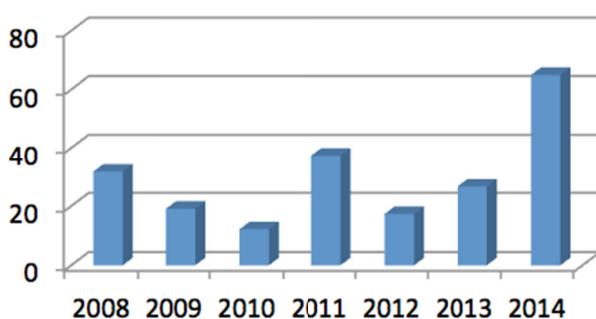


Figure 1. Number of asylum applications in Italy from 2008 to 2014 (in thousands).

Source: National Commission for Rights of Asylum.

¹ “A foreigner who is denied, in his or her own country, the effective exercise of the democratic liberties guaranteed by the Italian Constitution shall have the right of asylum in the territory of the Italian Republic, in accordance with the conditions established by law”.

Regarding the asylum seekers’ home country, the top five nationalities who applied for asylum in Italy in 2014 are: Pakistan, Nigeria, Somalia, Eritrea and Afghanistan. Each year, based on world conflicts or on political issues affecting trouble spots, the countries’ order changes. In recent years many applications were presented by citizens of Mali, Gambia, Senegal and Bangladesh, with a peak of requests from Tunisians in 2010-2011.

Obviously these flows require the State to be involved for both the recognition of the migrant and the assessment of their application for asylum (as regulated by the Dublin Convention III) and, in the time needed to carry out these formalities, it should organize a reception system. Among the different forms provided for by the Italian legislation there are the reception centers for asylum seekers (CARA), introduced in 2008, designed to house the migrant until the recognition of “refugee status” or until the permit is issued on humanitarian grounds by the Territorial Commission. The CARAs are currently located in Sicily, Calabria, Apulia, Lazio, Marche and Friuli Venezia Giulia (www.interno.gov.it/it/temi/immigrazione-e-asilo/sistema-accoglienza-sul-territorio/centri-immigrazione) and they are often in the news for different problems.

At present there are many papers and geographical studies examining regular and irregular incoming migration flows, especially highlighting their social, cultural and economic characteristics (Krasna, 2009). In the national scene, by contrast, studies on geographical knowledge of migrants, about those spatial elements which help people to feel citizens of several territories and not of just one place, are rare.

This article aims to study the geographical knowledge of asylum seekers about their migratory route; it is a universe of migrants, often having to flee quickly, who do not have time to plan in detail the escape route and the direction needed to reach the destination. Geographical knowledge changes the way people look at their world and, by introducing an idea of spatial integration, it lets people navigate on the Earth’s surface by helping them to minimize internal disorientation. Fleeing migrants leave with their remarkable life experience and

education. Some of them studied more than nine years, others graduated, while some are almost illiterate. School provides for geography basics, therefore, migrants who attended school are supposed to have this kind of knowledge. Will the concepts learned at school about the location of countries, morphology, geographical coordinates, distances, cartography, and the political conditions of the territories to be crossed, etc. be useful? Will migrants be able to travel on their own along the way or will they be guided (carried) by smugglers, remaining disoriented for weeks, months and sometimes for years before arriving in Italy (often by sea)? Is the decision to seek asylum in Italy linked to the real knowledge of the country or is it mainly a need/obligation coming from the Dublin Convention which binds migrants to submit the request for asylum to the first country of entry into the EU? What kind of maps did migrants draw in their minds?

In order to answer these questions, a questionnaire, translated into English, French, Arabic, Somali, Tigrinya, Urdu, has been developed and from November to December 2013 it was self-administered to a group of guests of CARA of Castelnuovo di Porto (a few kilometers from Rome). At the time of the survey, 200 out of the 723 asylum seekers living in the facility were interviewed. Many of these could map out their migratory path drawing a mental map. The importance of this subjective drawing is that the map is not the territory; it does not faithfully reproduce the geography of places, because it filters reality according to the beliefs, expectations, knowledge of individuals (De Vecchis, 1994). The analysis of the individual maps is the first step to understanding the idea each applicant has about the territory they crossed and about the path they made (Gokten, Sudas, 2014). The CARA guests are primarily males, many of the women are members of families as well as the 80 minors received (Table 1).

The origin of the asylum seekers housed in Castelnuovo di Porto obviously reflects the composition of the flows in Italy with a substantial presence of Pakistani citizens followed by Somalis and Nigerians (Figure 2).

<i>Age</i>		<i>Number</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
0	10	67	40	27
11	20	88	79	9
21	30	369	328	41
31	40	151	126	25
41	50	42	35	7
Over	50	6	5	1
<i>Total</i>		<i>723</i>	<i>613</i>	<i>110</i>

Table 1. Asylum seeker at the CARA in the period of the survey by age and sex.

2. Survey methodology and specification

The sample of the survey “geographical knowledge of immigrants” is a non-probability sample because the target of the survey does not allow the creation of a sampling design including a random selection of units on which to perform the detection. The results of the research, outlined below, do not allow the inference to the reference universe and so they are therefore extensible only to the sample used, but they represent original data on this phenomenon; indeed they are extremely important not only in terms of statistical estimation but furthermore in the qualitative research on asylum seekers’ characteristics and knowledge, as well as in the field of dynamics underlying the journey taken by a part of the population often experiencing critical situations in terms of safety.

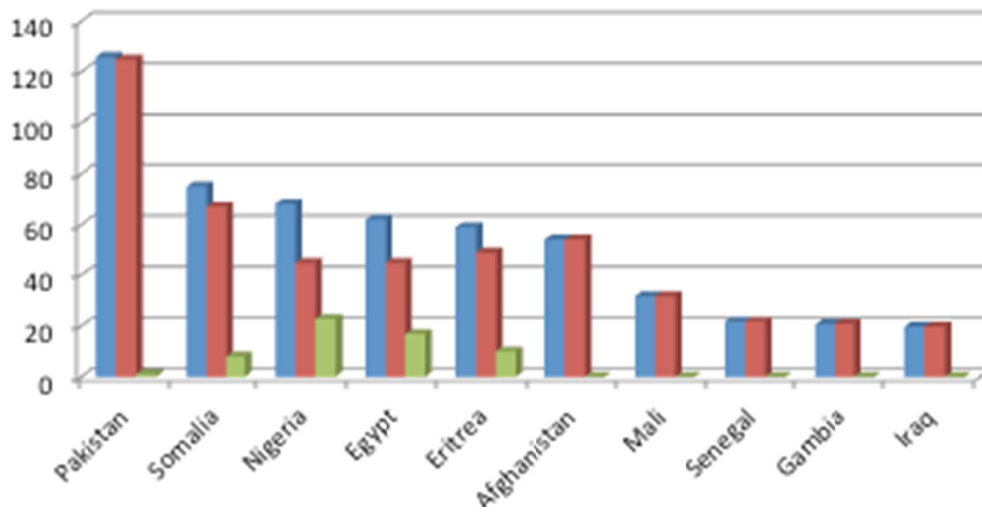


Figure 2. Origin of the CARA's guests by citizenship and sex. Top Ten Countries.

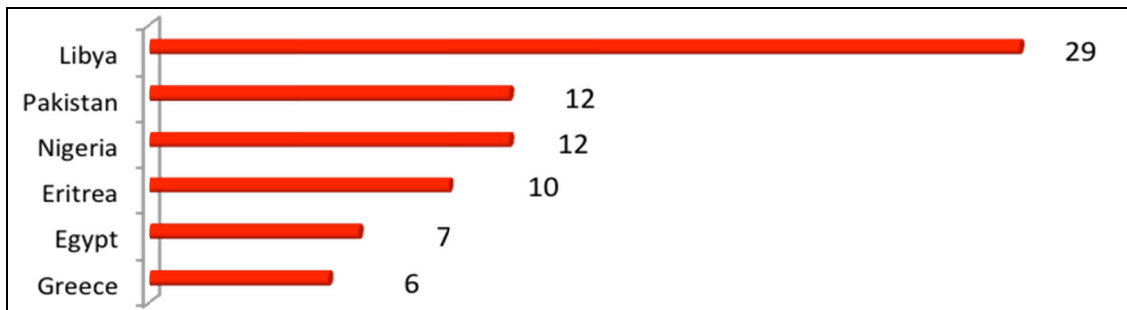


Figure 3. Main countries of birth (percentages).

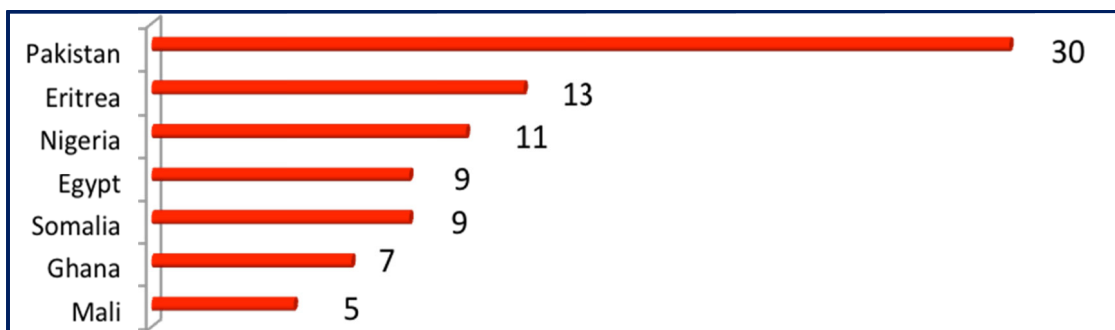


Figure 4. Major nations of departure with destination Italy (percentages).

3. Overview of asylum seekers. Personal characteristics and education

Respondents have inhomogeneous personal characteristics. In terms of geographical origin the most represented macro-region is Asia. 34% of asylum seekers are from this area, while the remaining population is from Sahel (28%), the Horn of Africa (25%), North Africa (11%) and in a small part from the Middle East (2%)². By analyzing the answers based on nationality Asia is, however, largely represented by Pakistan (30% of the total), a country subject to frequent terrorist attacks at least in part related to the Afghan political contingencies. Africans are the vast majority of other asylum seekers, above all from Eritrea, Egypt and Nigeria (Figure 3). Immigrants are young people, aged between 19 and 40 (the most represented age group is from 25 to 30, and corresponds to 40% of the sample). Generally, people under 18 and over 40 were in low proportion, as well as women: only 2 every 10 immigrants. The respondents' data show that single persons were in the majority (69%), followed by a lower share of married people (26%), and by the separated or divorced (5%). In which country did asylum seekers live before leaving for Italy? The answers to this question only partially follow the analysis of nationality. The majority of respondents, 3 out of 10, comes from Libya, and about 1 out of 10 from Pakistan, Nigeria and Eritrea (Figure 4).

In the case of the specific category of asylum seekers, the motivating factors to emigrate are different, but, in general, these people leave the country in which they live for international protection with the intent to put themselves and their family in a safe place, far from social, political or military threats. For these migrants

the choice to leave their country does not arise from economic needs which, even if they can influence their choice, are not a priority (Livi Bacci, 2010). The vast majority of respondents – 7 out of 10 – declared the possession of employment prior to departure. The trades registered and most widely carried out in the countries of origin are labourers and farmers (together accounting for 34% of the occupations identified), but there are also many people registered generally as employed, entrepreneurs and teachers (31%) (Figure 5). As evidence of the special needs of those who emigrate in order to exercise their right of asylum, notably, only 1 respondent out of 10 was unemployed before embarking on the journey to a place where freedom and personal safety were defended.

Although respondents are poorly represented by the very young (only 4.5% are under 18 years old)³ a sample of 15% of students is remarkable; these are people who, before the departure, probably attended a secondary school or university. One aspect that was indirectly confirmed by data on education was that 20% of the asylum seekers said they had studied during their life from 14 to 18 years old. From this point of view, more frequently, respondents studied from 9 to 13 years of age (38%), but in the context of the group examined the survey also revealed a large number of people who have studied up to a maximum of 8 years (37%) (Figure 6). With regard to nationality, while the Horn of Africa is at the top of the ranking for education, at the very bottom we can find Sahel, where 3 out of 10 have studied up to 4 years. With regard to school and university curricula, respondents studied mostly scientific subjects (31%) then humanities and technical subjects (24% and 23% respectively).

² The countries of origin of the immigrants interviewed were aggregated by macro-regions. The Asian area includes: Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Iran, Georgia; the area of North Africa: Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco; the Sahel area: Gambia, Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Sudan, South Sudan; the area of the Horn of Africa: Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia; the Middle East area: Syria, Turkey; the East Europe area: Romania, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Austria; the South Europe area: Greece, Cyprus, Malta.

³ This information should be considered taking into account that unaccompanied minors (MSNA) are given hospitality in dedicated temporary highly specialized reception facilities. A MSNA is a third-country national or a stateless person below the age of 18 who enters the territory of EU Member States unaccompanied by a responsible adult, or minor who is left unaccompanied after his entering the territory of a Member State.

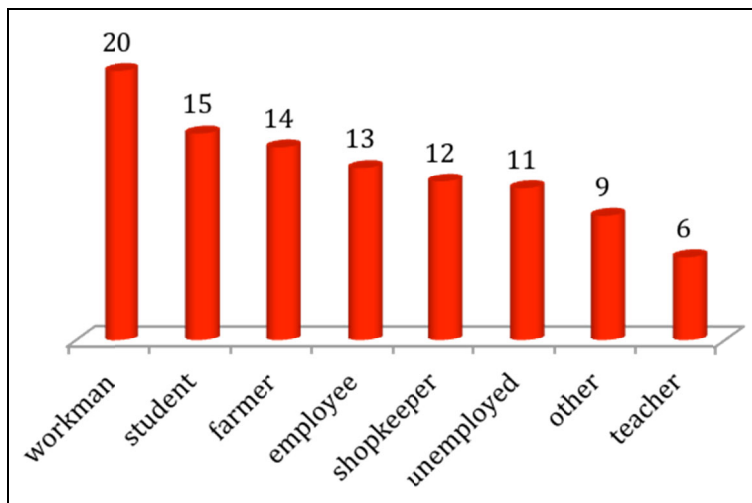


Figure 5. Main immigrant employment in the country of origin (percentages).

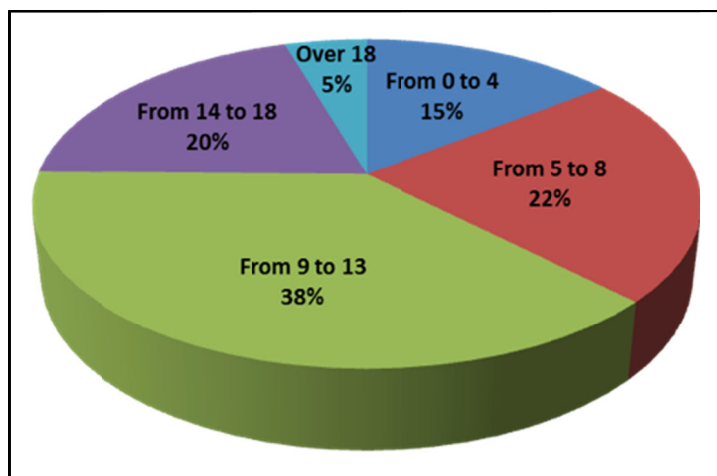


Figure 6. Years of study (percentages).

Everybody studied geography; the difference was in the time devoted to the subject. Figure 7 shows that the study of geography is usually restricted to a limited number of years (34% of respondents studied it for up to three years) and that, almost everywhere, it is progressively less present with increasing years of education.

What are the topics of the study of geography? In first place is the geography of their country (32%), then the geography of the world (28%), geography of their city (23%) and their continent (17%). It is women in particular who acquire a broader view during their studies, especially in the field of physical geography,

learning concepts relating to the entire globe, and this mainly in the Horn of Africa. Although 63% of respondents studied at least 9 years, about 8 out of 10 immigrants knew little or nothing of Italy before leaving. Even 41% knew nothing of the present host country.

The fact indicates the important push factors that lead to emigrants often blindly facing, more or less consciously, the risks associated with the journey, first of all the way of travelling to a land sometimes unknown. In a way the sole exceptions are respondents from the Horn of Africa: half of them showed a medium-high knowledge of Italy before departure.

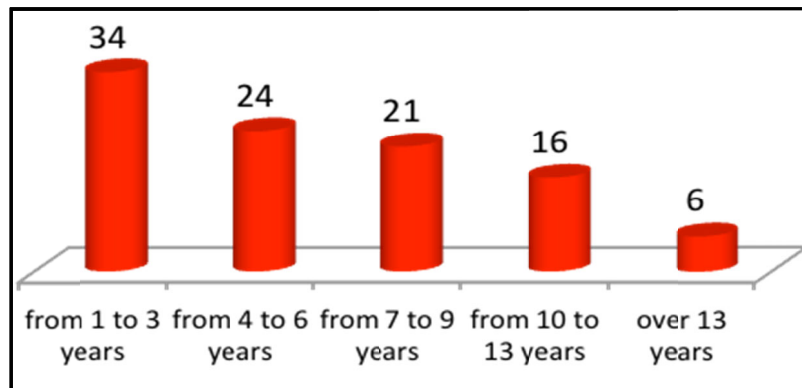


Figure 7. Years of study of geography (percentages).

Overall, however, albeit scarce, the awareness of the characteristics of Italy was a prerogative of women and young people (40% of women and 21% of men knew Italy); consequently the level of this knowledge decreases progressively with the increasing migrant age (Figure 8).

The survey also found the most known aspects of Italy before the asylum seekers' departure. Among these they knew in particular democracy (27%), and the physical characteristics of the territory (15%), the existence of undeclared work (14%), the economic and social conditions (12%), the type of work available (9%) and other specific aspects not really relevant (23%). Figure 9 shows the relation between geographical origin and knowledge of these aspects of Italy. Hence we can understand the importance of the undeclared work for people from North Africa – an unfortunately extremely communicative aspect, that “advertises” Italy – the presence of democracy for people from the Sahel, the awareness of the availability of professions practicable for people from Asia.

From the geographical analysis we can see how knowledge about Italy before departure was often limited to the name of the capital; the position of Sicily, as well as the distance in kilometers from the country of departure are rarely known (Figure 10).

4. Geographical knowledge

What is the geographical knowledge at the time of departure? Are these people leaving with little knowledge about the route and the country of destination or have they a broad cultural background, including geographical basis? Have they ever seen a map of Italy, what is their idea of the local topography and, above all, have the expectations they had at the beginning been reached?

Of course, for those who must choose whether to *die or flee* (Barbieri et al., 2015) in and from countries where dictatorial regimes have living conditions at the limits of human rights or where the absence of a state makes any possible oligarch the owner of human lives, having a look at a map before setting off might be totally irrelevant. Whoever is in search of a new life as an escape route to freedom does not care about knowing the itinerary or the destination precisely.

Probably for those who have no choice, the knowledge of the area will not stop their departure, but geographical science suggests that knowing places and spaces can somehow come in handy. As Immanuel Kant said, geography allows us to be citizens of the world and to have a clear understanding of the resources and opportunities that Mother Earth, outside the borders of the single territorial reality, can offer. Not only that, knowing the territory and its resources, realizing our place in the world, can offer a different chance for redemption, possibly

geared to survival within our own country, always with the same security conditions of life and freedom.

In addition, for those who are involved in migration studies it is important to have full knowledge about what migrants know at the time of leaving, just to try to intervene, whenever possible, with information campaigns that would certainly not block their escape and would not prevent shipwrecks and deaths in the Mediterranean Sea, but could help to improve the migrants' living conditions in countries of departure leading to different choices and enabling a proper welcome to the different needs. It is important to have data and information about migrants in order to implement a proper and reliable policy of coexistence, to have a proper arrangement in the destination countries and respect for the dignity of the human being. These men and women are a force to be valued and used in the best possible way, with mutual respect, in order to improve the fates of their countries and the countries of destination. Europe, plagued by the economic crisis, could define targeted courses to give asylum seekers a job, a training and gratification, according to their origin, knowledge, attitudes and skills. A cynic might say that this human capital may not be assessed for its real capabilities and, on the contrary, because of marginalization and abandonment, it could create degraded modes where crime and exploitation of a valuable workforce proliferate⁴. It is therefore important to check how they describe their territory and what their perception of territoriality is, that is the relationship that every human being has with the space surrounding them and what type of relationship they take with them in order to satisfy their own needs (Rafferstin, 2007).

In response to the question "Before leaving have you ever seen a map of Italy" 44.5% said they had never seen a map, 31.9% saw it once and 23.6% several times (Figure 11).

⁴ The job-matching between the national and regional employment needs and the CARA human resources is one of the IOM's tasks with the aim to maximize the asylum seekers' professionalism and skills.

The percentage of respondents who had never seen a map of Italy rose to 54.8% among Asians who represent the peak in the sample although this contrasts with the years of study. People from the Sahel (49.2%) and North Africa (47.4%) show the same ranking, above the average, once again in contrast with the previous data. Definitely respondents from the Horn of Africa and the Middle East are better informed; the percentage of lack of information drops respectively to 24.4% and 25%, but while in the first case we can notice an identical distribution of the sample (37.8%) on the two possible answers, in the second case the single observation of the paper reaches 50% (the highest figure between the various geographical areas) and the multiple vision 25%. On the other hand, the North African component shows also the highest percentage of respondents who say they have seen a map of Italy several times (42.1%) compared to migrants from other areas (Figure 12).

By analyzing the total sample and the weight of respondents by region of origin we can also highlight how migrants from the Horn of Africa represent the percentage with greater awareness of the Italian territory through a cartographic view (8.9% said he had seen a map several times and an identical percentage said they had seen it at least once).

With regard to their age, the most significant component is between 25 and 30 (39.5%). The sample has a normal/ Gaussian distribution and shows a slight asymmetry to the right accounting for 23.7% between 19 and 24 and 26.3% between 31 and 40; lower percentages under 18 and over 41 (Figure 13).

89.5% of the sample is central-loaded and (19-40) also shows a high prevalence of migrants who have no knowledge of the geography of Italy (78 out of 170, 45.9%) (Figure 14).

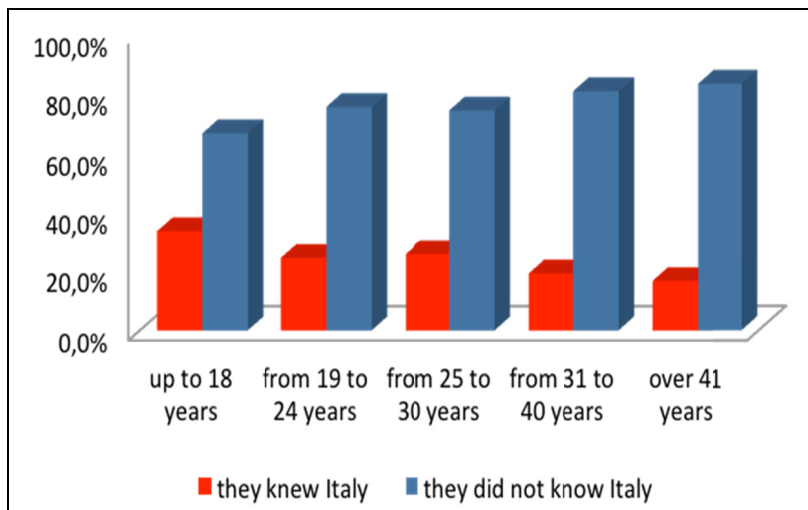


Figure 8. Knowledge of Italy before departure (percentages).

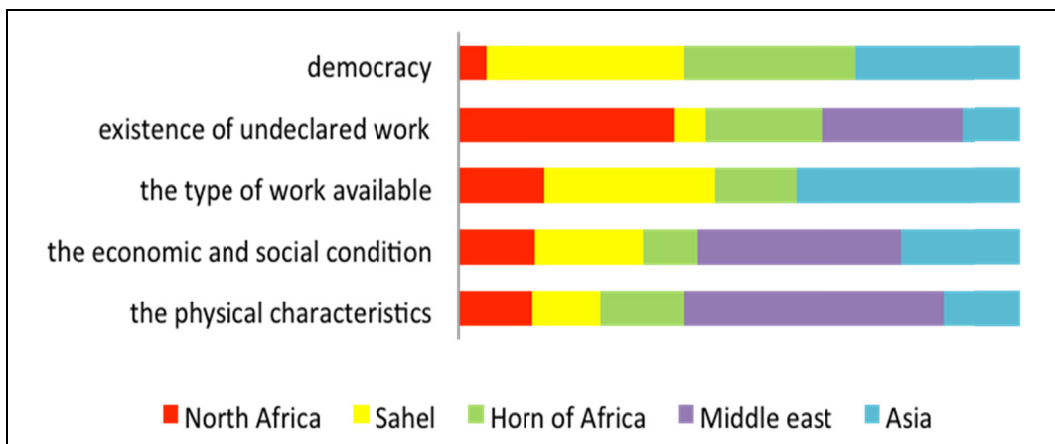


Figure 9. Geographical aspects of Italy known before the departure (percentages).

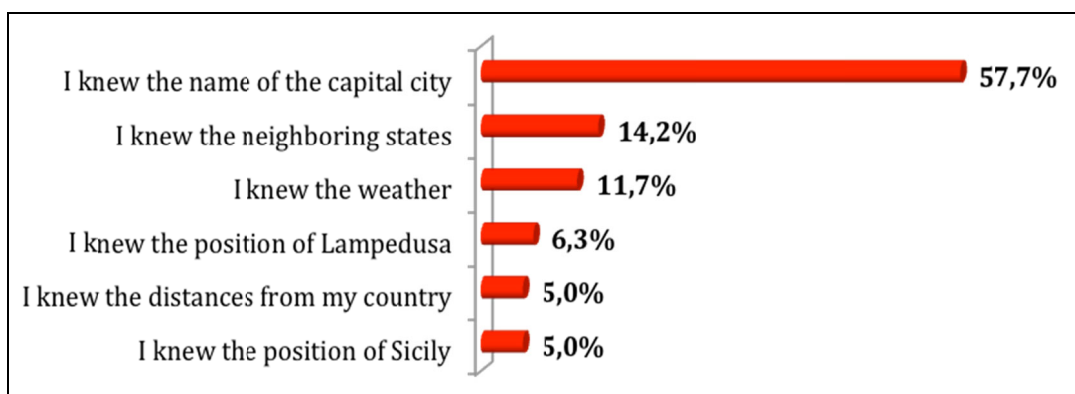


Figure 10. Italian geographical aspects known before departure (percentages).

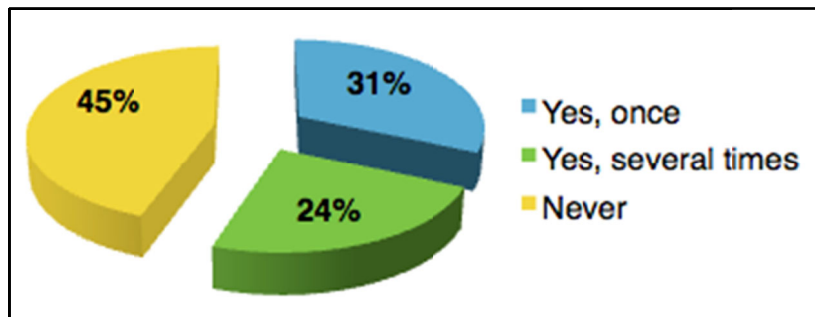


Figure 11. The graph shows the response rates to the question “Have you ever seen a map before leaving”?.

Women showed knowledge about maps (67.6% of which 44.1% once) higher than men (59.9% of which 28.8% only once). Finally, with respect to the employment carried out in the country of departure, the sample is heterogeneous among the following groups: farmer 14.3%, worker 19.6%, employed 12.7%, unemployed 11.1%, teacher/school leader 6.3%, retailer/entrepreneur 11.6%, student 15.3%, other 9% on the other side workers (only 43.2% of the sample).

The only categories departing significantly from the average values are teachers/school leaders and students on one side (respectively 75% and 72.4% of the sample declared to have read a map at least once) and To the question “Where have you seen the map?” they replied as follows: 29.4% on an atlas, 23% in a book, 18.3% on the internet, 21.4% at school on a wall, 2.4% on a single sheet of paper, and 5.6% somewhere else.

Analyzing by fact-finding/didactic source we can see that people from the Horn of Africa used different kinds of sources; Internet (25%) has almost reached the weight of traditional vehicles such as the atlas (27.5%) and the map on the wall of the classroom (30%). Two out of three migrants from the Middle East prefer internet to the more traditional book. There is quite a different breakdown for Asians, where a traditional setting is overwhelmingly with the atlas, the book and the school evaluated by over 70%; internet reaches only 15%. Similarly, internet is important but less for those coming from North Africa (9.1%) and the Sahel (12.5%) (Figures 15 and 16).

Compared to the average data already examined, with regard to the age of respondents,

the relationship between age and consultation of the network is not surprising. In fact for the under 18s geographic knowledge derives mostly from internet (40%) and books (60%), while in the other age groups the values are similar to the data already shown.

In terms of professions, as shown in Figure 17, the categories of farmers, workers and employees mainly prefer to tap traditional sources (atlas, books and school) while internet appears to be more the preserve of entrepreneurs and students.

5. Along the journey

Often the escape does not make it possible to plan anything. Life obliges people to flee even with no documents and no luggage in search of a safer place. This kind of journey is full of obstacles and risks. Some asylum seekers give up; others die during the journey (Gatti, 2008). No European would face this journey: without water, without any certainties, but refugees have no choice and they flee from certain death knowing that they must again face a risk of death. “If I had not left there, I would have surely died”, said a Tunisian interviewed in 2011 in Gualdo Tadino after sailing in the Mediterranean aboard a dinghy “I knew I could die crossing the sea, but at least I had a chance” (Cristaldi, 2013, pp. 175-176).

The majority of respondents said they escaped from a city, while only a small part said they lived in an isolated house, confirming that migrants above all left cities or small towns, that is from more or less small urban centres where ideas spread and where higher social classes are generally found. The majority fled from a

firefight, while others want to look for a job (Figure 18). Interestingly, droughts, floods, earthquakes and other natural disasters are pushing a large number of people to flee from their countries of residence (Cristaldi, 2013). International studies estimate over the next few years an increase in this type of migrants so we can expect an increase in the number of refugees and their pressure on European countries (UNHCR, 2015; Coderoni, Perito, 2014).

Everyone had Europe as their destination, the unattainable fortress that swallows the dead along its invisible walls. Only six out of ten migrants considered Italy as a possible destination, others would have preferred to reach other foreign lands. But before arriving in Italy they had to cross deserts, seas, borders and not everyone knew the details of the route. Only two out of ten said they knew the entire itinerary well while seven said they did not know it at all. The fact that they do not know the route can be one of the reasons pushing migrants to rely on smuggler organizations that carry paying bodies to their yearned for destinations.

Only three out of ten migrants said they organized the trip by themselves while the others relied on relatives, friends and networks of smugglers. Asked about the awareness of their position during the entire trip, only three out of ten said they always knew their location while the others have always been more or less unaware of their position.

Five out of ten did not even know there would be all those stopovers, and sometimes the stops were long. For half of the respondents there were also stops longer than four weeks; the reasons are various: finding a job to get money to continue, waiting for money from the family, looking for a lift on a new means of transport, waiting for the sea to be calm enough. Eight out of ten migrants faced a trip which took much longer than expected and this also because of their little geographical knowledge.

Most of the migrants who did not follow the route in an informed manner came from the Sahel and Asia. Significantly, women were more aware than men, perhaps because now many women know what atrocities they have to go through before they reach Europe and try to get better information about this. Many of them are raped and made pregnant, and many men admitted they did not take their wife with them

because they would not be able to defend her.

The awareness of the journey is related also to the kind of work: employees, teachers, school leaders and students reported greater awareness than the other respondents (including farmers and workers).

Many asylum seekers said they had been robbed during the journey of the few belongings they had managed to take with them when they fled. Some of them took a map, a compass, or a GPS so as not to get lost in the desert (Figure 19). 13 out of the 20 migrants who had a map came from the Sahel; this shows an awareness of the complexity of the journey through the desert and their need to get oriented. Some of them had a mobile phone (20%), a communication tool that goes beyond the land borders and reaches the family even in extreme cases, for example to ask the family to pay a ransom in the case of a kidnapping. The youngsters declared they used some devices while such behavior becomes less frequent among older people; while electronic instruments were used mainly by males, females made more use of maps. The majority of respondents crossed the sea and arrived on the Sicilian coast with a dinghy or a "rust bucket" but a large proportion of the sample arrived by land (from Eastern Europe) or by a flight (Figure 20) contradicting the stereotype often conveyed by the media and by some political groups which, showing asylum seekers rescued at sea or shipwrecked, talk of invasions.

Immigration by sea in recent years has increased sharply as a result of the closure of the European borders following the adoption of a particularly restrictive visa regime (Idos, 2013). In 2013 42,925 immigrants landed on Italian shores, a much higher number than in 2012 (13,267) but lower than in 2011 (62,692) when the Arab Spring's instability and conflicts pushed thousands of people to flee (VV.AA., 2014). Mind maps made by asylum seekers, collected during the survey, with a few stretches of thousands of kilometers covered, told of the seas crossed and the uncertainties faced.

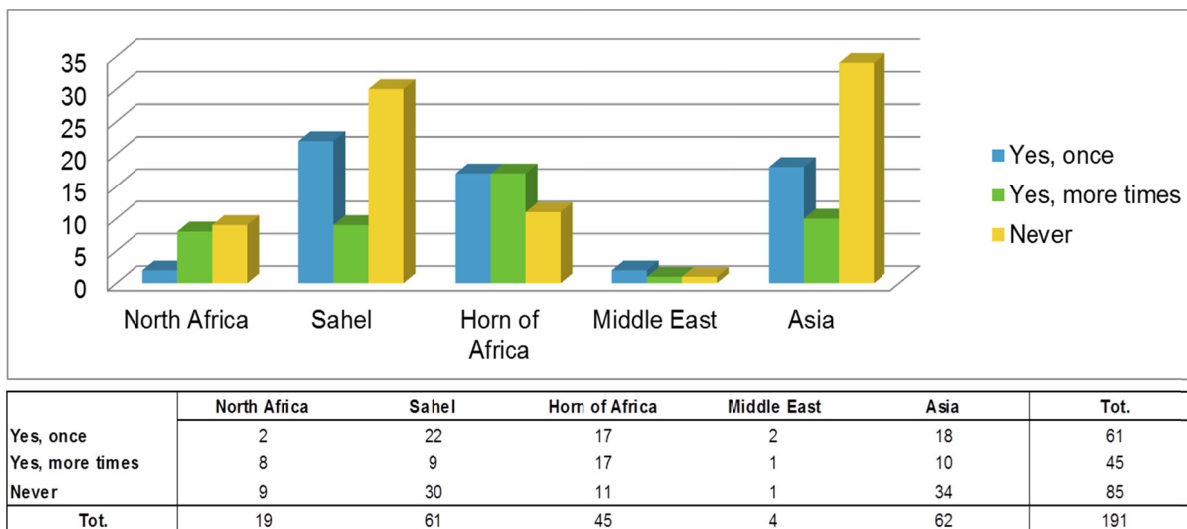


Figure 12. Cross tabulation “Have you ever seen a map of Italy before leaving?” – “What is your country of birth?”.

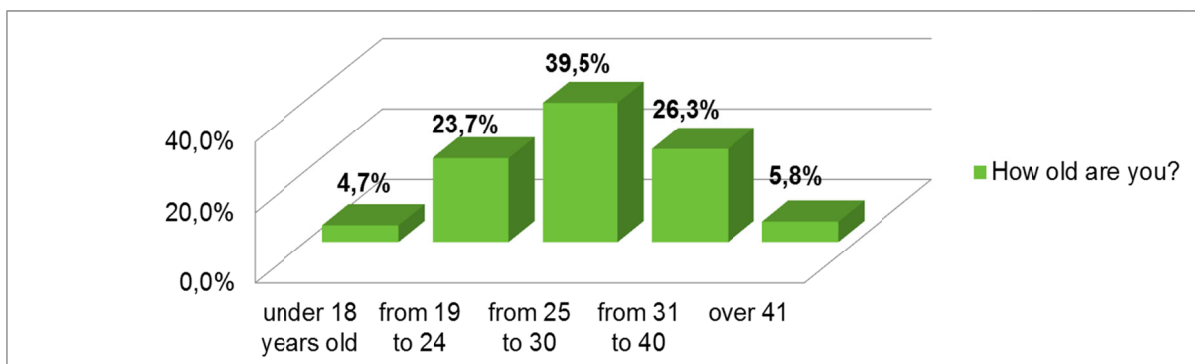


Figure 13. Percentage of those who viewed a map of Italy before their departure by age brackets.

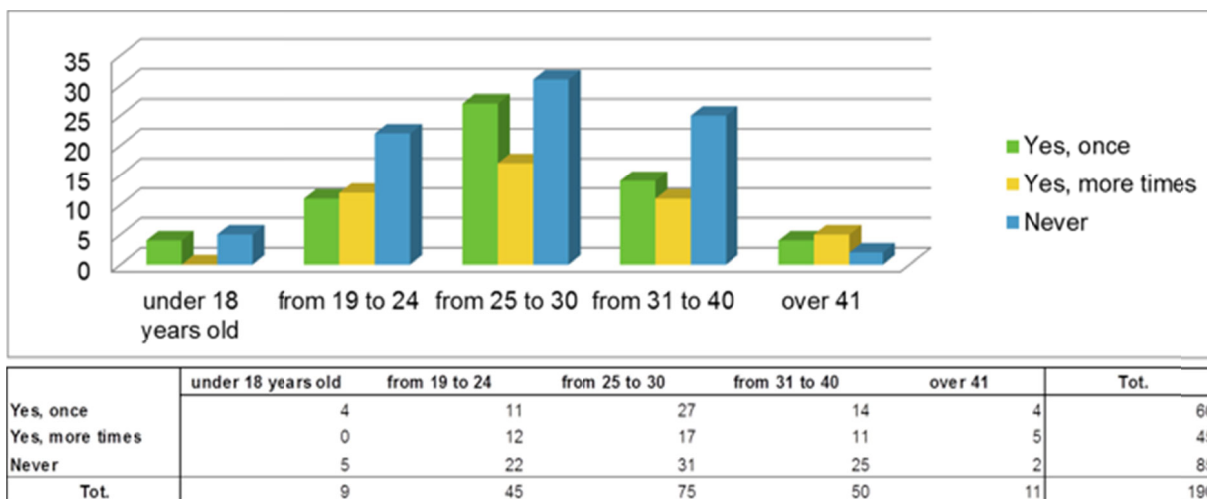


Figure 14. Cross tabulation “Have you ever seen a map of Italy before leaving?” – “How old are you?”.

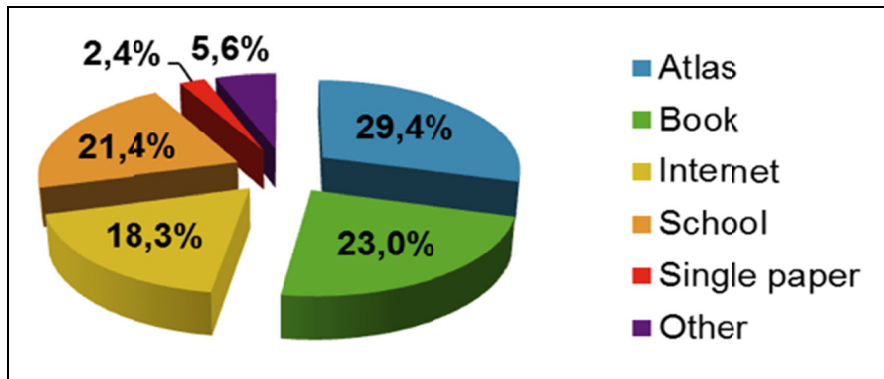


Figure 15. “Where have you seen the map of Italy?”.

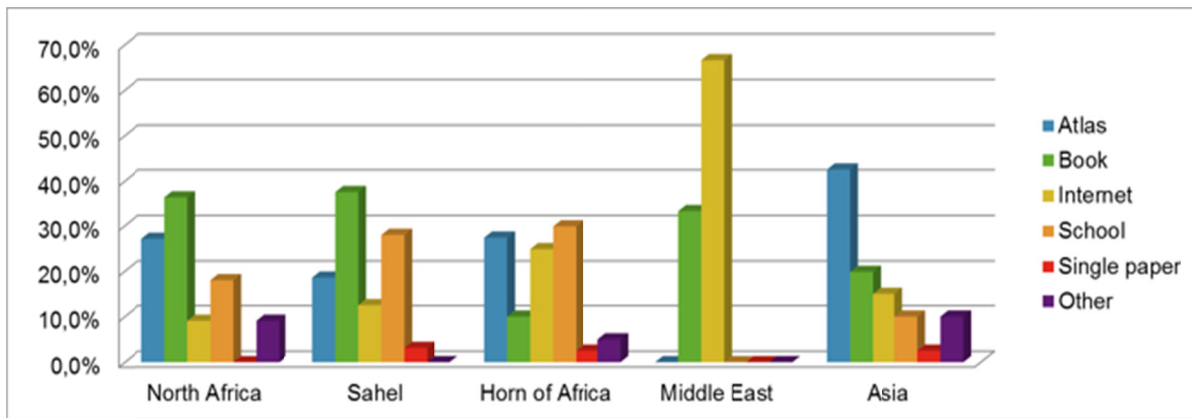


Figure 16. Cross tabulation “Where have you seen the map of Italy?” – “What is your country of birth?”.

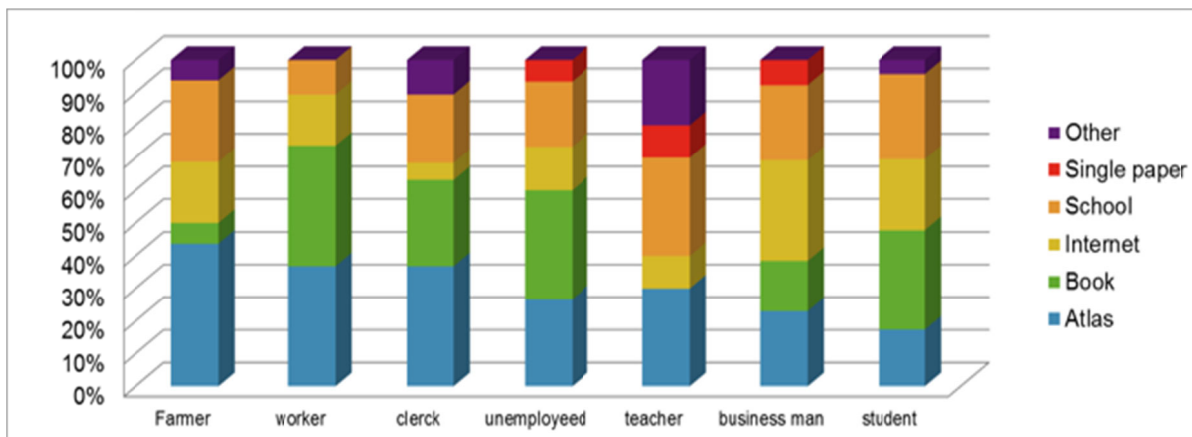


Figure 17. Cross tabulation “Where have you seen the map of Italy?” – “What did you do for a living before leaving for Italy?”.

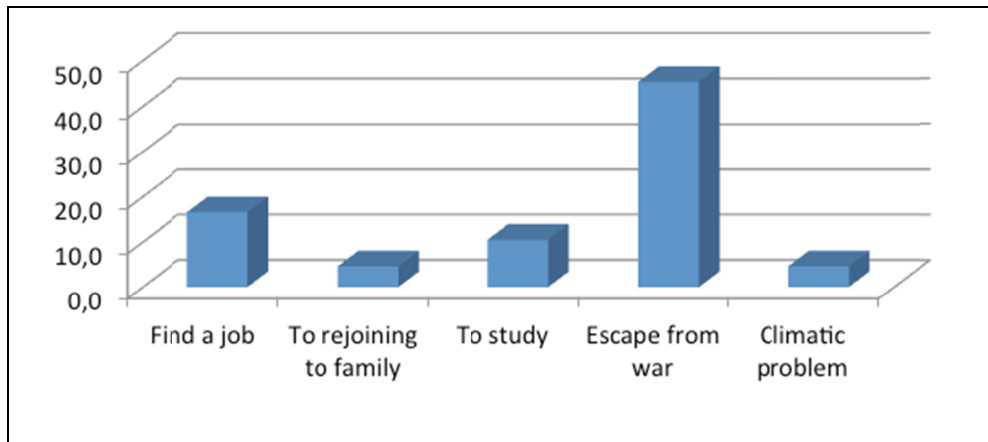


Figure 18. Reasons that led to the departure.

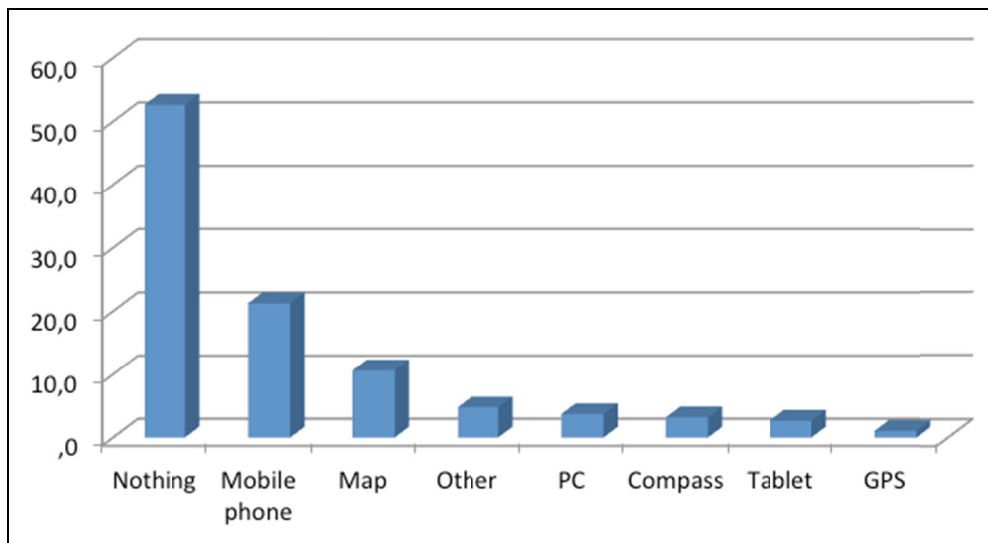


Figure 19. Tools used during the journey to get oriented.

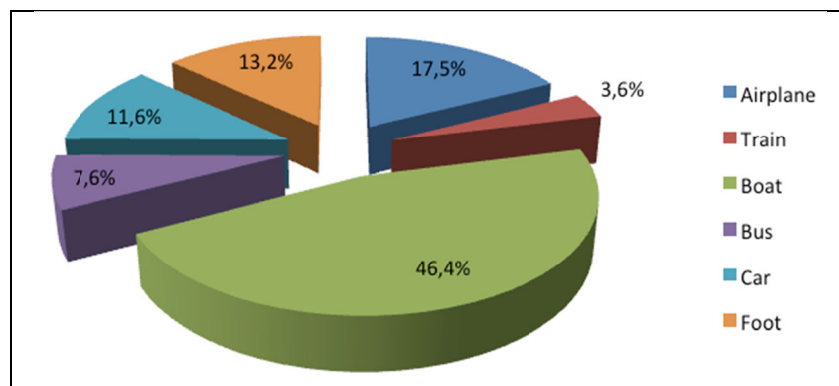


Figure 20. Means of transport used to reach Italy.

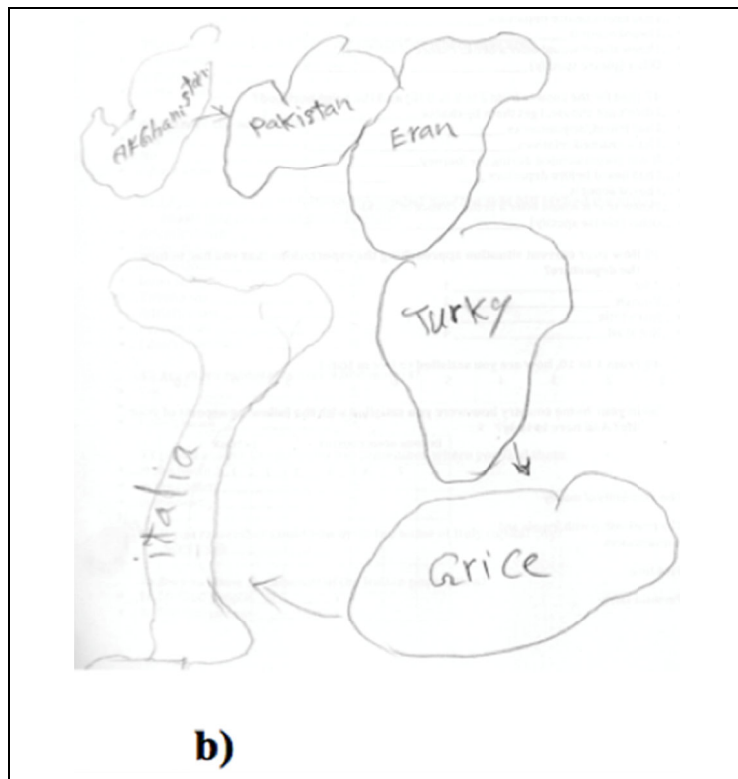
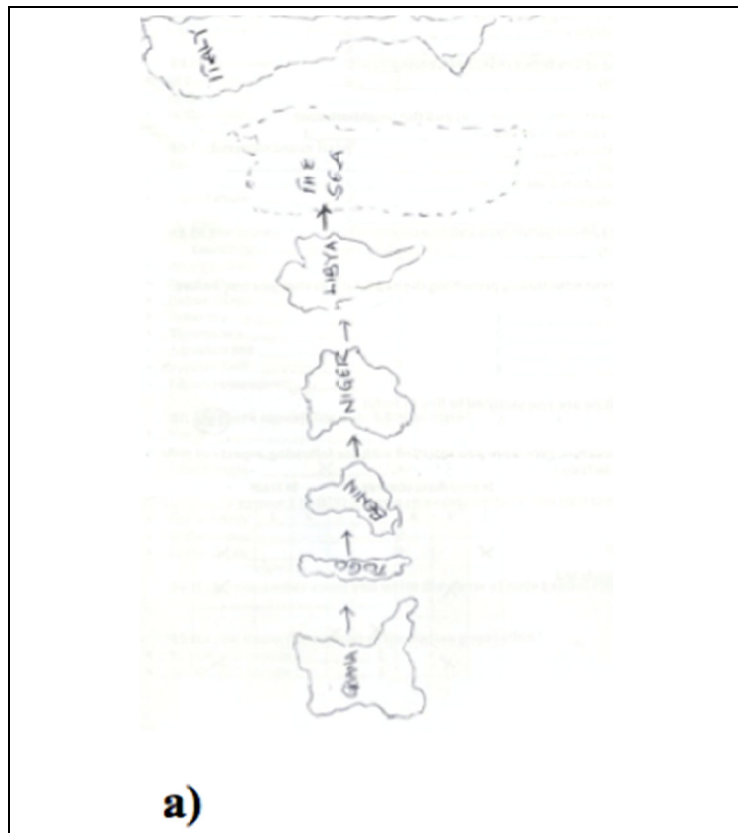


Figure 21. Mind maps made by two asylum seekers. Respectively (a) drawn by an immigrant from Ghana and (b) from Afghanistan.

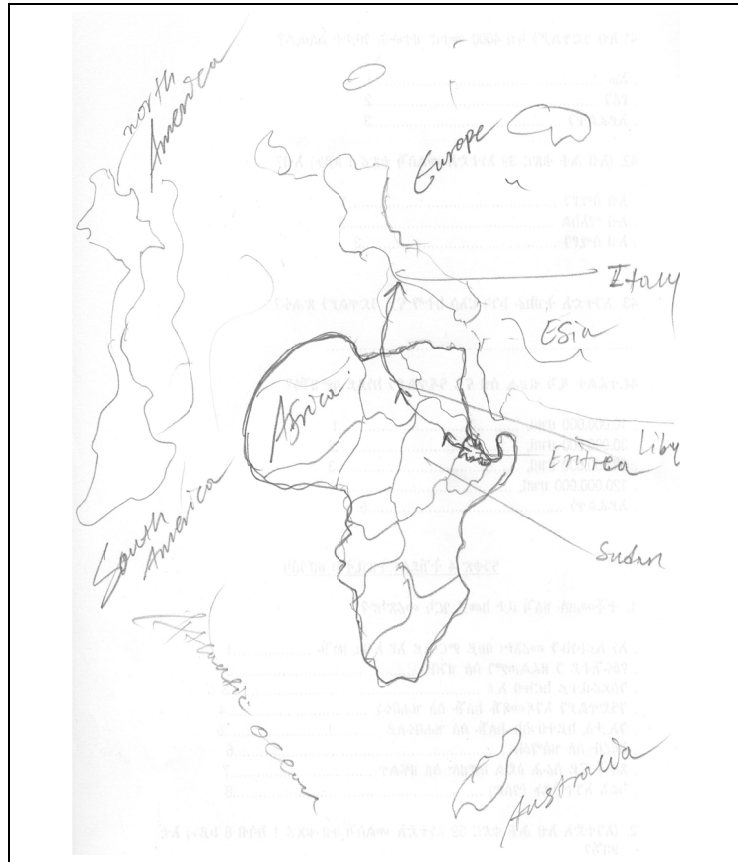


Figure 22. Mind map made drawing by an asylum seeker from Eritrea.

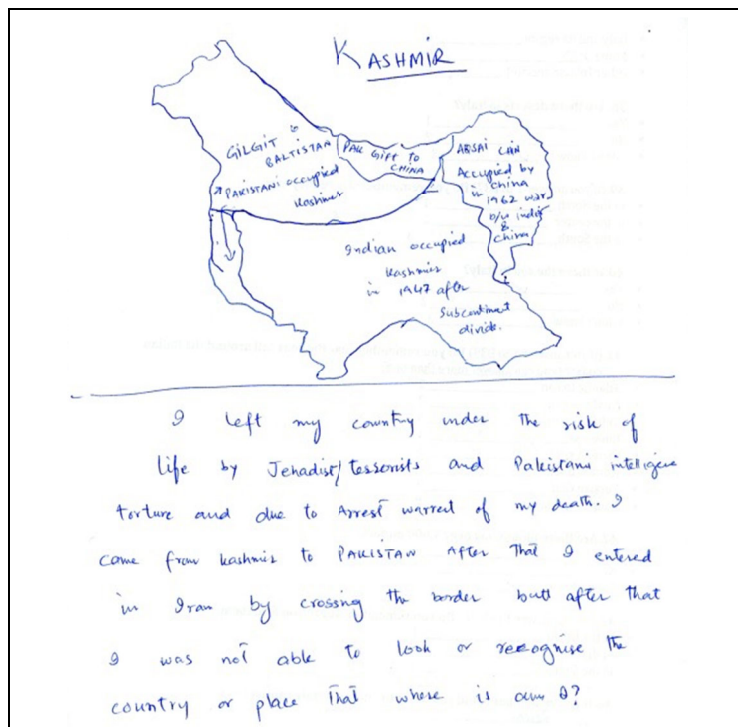


Figure 23. Map and description by an asylum seeker coming from Kashmir.

The first two drawings (Figure 21) represent the journey with the same symbolism: a succession of clouds, one close to the other, indicating the countries that migrants passed through. In the first map the Ghanaian migrant correctly named the African countries he passed through, but he called the sea “the sea”, not knowing its real name. Other migrants correctly called it the Mediterranean Sea but there are those who identified it as the Atlantic Ocean. The third picture (Figure 22) puts Eritrea, the country of origin of the migrant, in the Horn of Africa, but while Africa’s outline is close to reality, America’s outline is far from it, just like Europe. Completely different is the fourth example shown in Figure 23; here the asylum seeker from Kashmir represented the political conflicts of that area by showing an excellent knowledge, in contrast, however, with the absolute ignorance of the countries he crossed, as the man himself admits.

This testimony, as others collected during the survey, shows that the reasons for migration are not only economic, but they are also related to political factors.

6. Italy, this unknown?

With regard to the expectations fulfilled with regard to the correspondence between the idea they had about Italy and reality, 36.6% of respondents declared having found little correspondence; 34.7% did not find any correspondence, while 19.2% found a suitable correspondence and only 9.6% found a high correspondence.

With regard to the correspondence between reality and expectations, within a situation of general substantial disillusionment, North Africans and migrants from the Horn of Africa, however, have higher percentages than average, both for the high and substantial satisfaction, while asylum seekers from the Sahel and Asians show greater disillusionment. Moreover, the analysis by age and gender highlights a feeling of bitter awareness among the youngest and the oldest and a higher pragmatism among women. In terms of the job done, it is interesting to note the figure of teachers/leaders who do not identify any high correspondence (0%) between the geography of Italy before the trip and reality, but

they record a percentage of low correspondence (60%) above the average figure of the sample (36.5%). Conversely, above average satisfaction characterizes farmers and students.

Asians stood out in the field of geographical knowledge when they arrived in Italy thanks to the use of the map.

From the answers to the question “Since in Italy, have you looked at other maps?”, we could notice the new knowledge in Asians and in migrants from the Sahel, who answered in the affirmative, respectively, for 77% and 67.7% (vs. an average figure of 66.5%). These answers are a consequence of the CARA literacy courses. Groups between 19 and 40, women, single people result over the average figure for the affirmative answer, as if to describe a migration route that confirms what has been written for Asians, asylum seekers from Asia-North Africa-Southern Europe.

The map that the migrants looked at, once they arrived in Italy, was mostly a world map (35.1%) a map of Italy/Europe (26.7%), and finally of Rome (18.3%). Less attention was directed at the Mediterranean countries (4.6%) and the Italian regions (11.5%). The interest in the map of Rome can arise from the location of the CARA, where the data were collected.

These data show an element of curiosity about the general context, about Europe which is the main destination and about neighboring regions or about the territory where they are hosted. Worthy of note is that while the youngest are interested above all in the local context, as the age increases this interest shifts to a geographical knowledge on a smaller scale, up to the global context for those over 41 years old. Similarly, with far beyond the average figure are the samples of women, divorced/separated people, students and entrepreneurs and, for geographical origin, those who, before arriving to Italy, lived in Sahel, Middle East or Northern Europe. However, asylum seekers from the Horn of Africa, Asians and asylum seekers coming from Southern Europe show a mainly local interest, above average.

With regard to the knowledge of the Italian territory from the physical point of view, about the presence of deserts (“Are there deserts in Italy?”) the 8% responded affirmatively, mostly men, aged between 25 and 30 years, who are

mainly students (18.5%) and employees (12.5%). Obviously, in light of their travel and of the privileged access route to the Italian territory, 88.6% showed an awareness that the country is surrounded by the sea. As regards the names of the seas, 44% identified correctly the seas around Italy (although only 9.2% indicates the Ionian Sea) and there is a high percentage of migrants who say they do not remember (36.4 %). In addition, for 9.6%, Italy is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, for 4.2% by the Pacific Ocean, for 3.3% by the Indian Ocean, and 2.5% thinks that the sea around Italy is the Persian Gulf.

Always to check for the geographical awareness of the guests of the CARA of Castelnuovo di Porto questions related to the morphology of the host country were asked: "In Italy are there mountains higher than 4,000 meters above sea level?" And the majority of respondents said they did not know. With regard to the name of the capital of Italy almost the whole sample (96.2%) show some knowledge of the role of Rome.

7. Conclusions

What emerges from the data is a scenario that is very different from the one given by the media, driven rather by looking for sensational news that ultimately affects the idea that everyone has of immigration. The results of this study highlights the discomfort and a degree of inadequacy in the reception system, which is still strongly oriented towards the emergency aspect of the phenomenon, with few initiatives for integration policies (Unar, 2014). In fact, the host should not be targeted exclusively to liberalize their possibility to travel in Europe as much as possible but must ensure a successful integration (Giordano, 2015).

These men and women, alone or with their families, remain in the accommodation facilities for a long time, which do not allow any integration with the surrounding area, both due to the geographical distances and the legislation in force. In particular, the CARA of Castelnuovo di Porto is located in open countryside a few km away from the town, 30 km from Rome and it ends up making people there feel even more isolated than people without landmarks. Even the existing rules do not allow asylum seekers to start to look for means of subsistence

immediately; despite the fact that they express a great desire for redemption and realization, these rules eventually force them endure long periods of waiting. In other regional contexts, the localization of CARA pushes migrants to find undeclared work during the long months of waiting. In Apulia, for example, they can often find intermittent work in the agriculture sector, swelling the ranks of the army of invisible migrants who, with their sweat and very few gains, set our tables (Cristaldi, 2014).

The asylum seekers' strong desire to talk about their own path and their motivation that forced them to leave their country is a clear example of suffering and constriction in a place/unplace because their destination is not Italy, as Italy is only a transit country to the free world (Oropeza, 2011). As reported by Eurostat in 2014, 1 out of 3 asylum seekers in the EU applied for asylum in Germany (more than 200,000 applications submitted in 2014). Following Germany, the largest number of applications submitted for asylum was in Sweden (81,000 applications, representing 13% of applicants) and in Italy (64,000 applications, 10% of applicants). Following these is France (62,000 applications, 10%) and Hungary (42,000 applications, 7%).

The five main countries of destination for asylum seekers, however, have a trend of growth in applications other than in the last year: in Italy in 2014 asylum seekers more than doubled, in fact, they had an increase of 143% compared to 2013 (26,000 applications). It appears to be the country with the highest increase compared to other European countries (Hungary, 126%, and Denmark, 105%). In Germany asylum applications increased by 60% and in Sweden by 50%. A 5% decrease, compared to applications filed in France in 2013. But this figure does not correspond to the will of the asylum seekers, as they are forced by law to remain in the first country they reach.

In relation to the population, the highest number of asylum seekers is in Sweden (9 applicants per thousand inhabitants), followed by Germany with 7, while in France and the United Kingdom there are respectively three and four per thousand inhabitants, in Italy less than one per thousand inhabitants (Giordano, 2015; Baldinelli 2013; Caritas – Migrantes 2013, UNHCR Italia 2014) (Table 2).

Country	Number of asylum applications in 2014
Germany	202,815
Sweden	74,375
Italy	58,975
France	56,905

Table 2. Number of asylum applications submitted in 2014. Source: UNHCR, 2015.

But apart from the number of applications, what seems to be clear is that these people flee their countries of birth, face long journeys by putting their lives at risk, enduring forms of torture and ill-treatment of various kinds (Barbieri et al., 2015), often working along the way to pay for the next leg of the trip, in order to reach a safe country able to protect their right to life. Although for the most part they have no idea about the route and do not know the main characteristics of the country that hosts them at the time, the information gathered profiles often educated people, who have well-defined skills which could also be an opportunity for Italy and its social and economic system.

The current education systems in the departure countries show significant differences compared to the Italian one: the level of training for African countries is generally translated into a low number of years of study (average 8 years for girls and 10 years for boys, while in Italy this stood at 16 years) (Save the Children, 2013). Understanding what the geographical knowledge of asylum seekers is may allow the communities involved to prepare services that can facilitate the transition, the gradual acceptance and integration to the Italian territory (IOM, 2008). Therefore, to know the disparate levels of education and geographical training, it could be educationally useful to have a reference point in order to calibrate better teaching methods for courses that are required by the various associations within the CARAs and for other reception facilities.

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