

# Refugees and asylum seekers coping with (im)mobility conditions through information and communication technologies (ICT)

IP37

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**How** are asylum seekers and refugees using digital technologies to cope with (im)mobility conditions, daily life, and crisis situations?

**What differences** and similarities can be observed in the use of ICTs by asylum seekers and refugees, and which are the reasons behind them?

This project contributes to the understanding of the digital empowerment of precarious migrants, by comparing ICTs-mediated practices of sub-Saharan 'on the move' asylum seekers in Turkey, and settled refugees in Switzerland.

It grounds on a critical theoretical approach that questions agency from the perspective of the complex interplays between ICTs, mobility and immobility within transit and settlement contexts.

## Methods

- 100 Semi-structured interviews
- Participant observation online and in situ
- Focus-groups
- Informal face-to-face and social media discussions



## Sub-Saharan asylum seekers in Turkey

## Sub-Saharan refugees in Switzerland

### Decision making and preparation

When they are available, ICTs are widely used before leaving the origin country, to find information and contact fellows in Turkey.

For many refugees, ICTs availability and time for preparation in the country of origin are very limited. Some Eritreans, for instance, only begin to use ICTs in Switzerland.

### Migration journey

Little or no use of ICTs during journeys, as they are mostly short and made by plane.

Journeys can last several months, even years. In certain areas (e.g. in the Sahara desert and Libya), ICTs are not available.

### Daily life

Extensive use of ICTs to find pragmatic information for accommodation, work, travelling or support to survive.

Necessity to develop their capacities to use ICTs in order to learn a local language, study, find a job, as well as travel.

### Crisis situations

Relatively frequent, crisis situations (e.g. irregularity, Covid-19) trigger a more extensive use of ICTs to cope with uncertainty and lack of resources.

To deal with (less frequent) crisis situations in Switzerland, it is possible to look for institutional support. This requires some specific capacities to use ICTs.

### Networks

ICTs are crucial for maintaining social and family networks in Turkey, their country of origin and in Europe.

For their life in Switzerland, both face-to-face and ICTs-mediated relationships are important. ICTs are crucial for maintaining transnational social networks.

### (Im)mobility

While stuck in Turkey, our respondents have been increasingly mobile internally, especially to survive during the Covid-19 pandemic. They used ICTs mainly to find jobs, and contact smugglers for Europe.

Mobility in Europe is banned for respondents with a F permit. They may use ICTs to overcome the lack of mobility. Those benefiting from a B permit, use ICTs for international mobility.

### In addition...

Sub-Saharan asylum seekers and refugees make pragmatic and selective uses of ICTs (smartphones, applications, social media platforms...), depending on infrastructures in places where they are, their economic resources, their digital skills, and their needs.

This study emphasizes the importance of digital agency, (i.e. ICT-mediated capacity to "make a difference") in forced migration processes.

## Main Outputs & dissemination



Soysüren, I. (2022). La Turquie, la migration, la montée du racisme et les Africains / Réseaux sociaux : Amplificateur du racisme versus outils de solidarité et de survie pour les personnes migrantes, *Vivre Ensemble*, 186.



Nedelcu, M. & Soysüren, I. (2020). Precarious migrants, migration regimes and digital technologies: the empowerment-control nexus, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*.



Soysüren, I. & Nedelcu, M. (2020). European instruments for the deportation of foreigners and their uses by France and Switzerland: the application of the Dublin III Regulation and Eurodac. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*.



Soysüren, I. & Nedelcu, M. (2019). Technologies for Expulsion: the Use of the Eurodac Database by Switzerland. *Blog nccr-on the move*, 10.05.2019.

Organization of 2 international workshops and 3 paper sessions, 5 paper presentations in international conferences and workshops.

# ICTs-mediated practices of asylum seekers in Turkey and refugees in Switzerland to cope with (im)mobility conditions

IP37  
DIGITAL  
EMPOWERMENT

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## Research Questions

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What differences and similarities can be observed in the use of ICTs by asylum seekers and refugees, and which are the reasons behind them?

This project contributes to the understanding of the digital empowerment of precarious migrants, by comparing ICTs-mediated practices of sub-Saharan 'on the move' asylum seekers in Turkey, and settled refugees in Switzerland. It grounds on a critical theoretical approach that questions agency from the perspective of the complex interplays between ICTs, mobility and immobility within transit and settlement contexts.

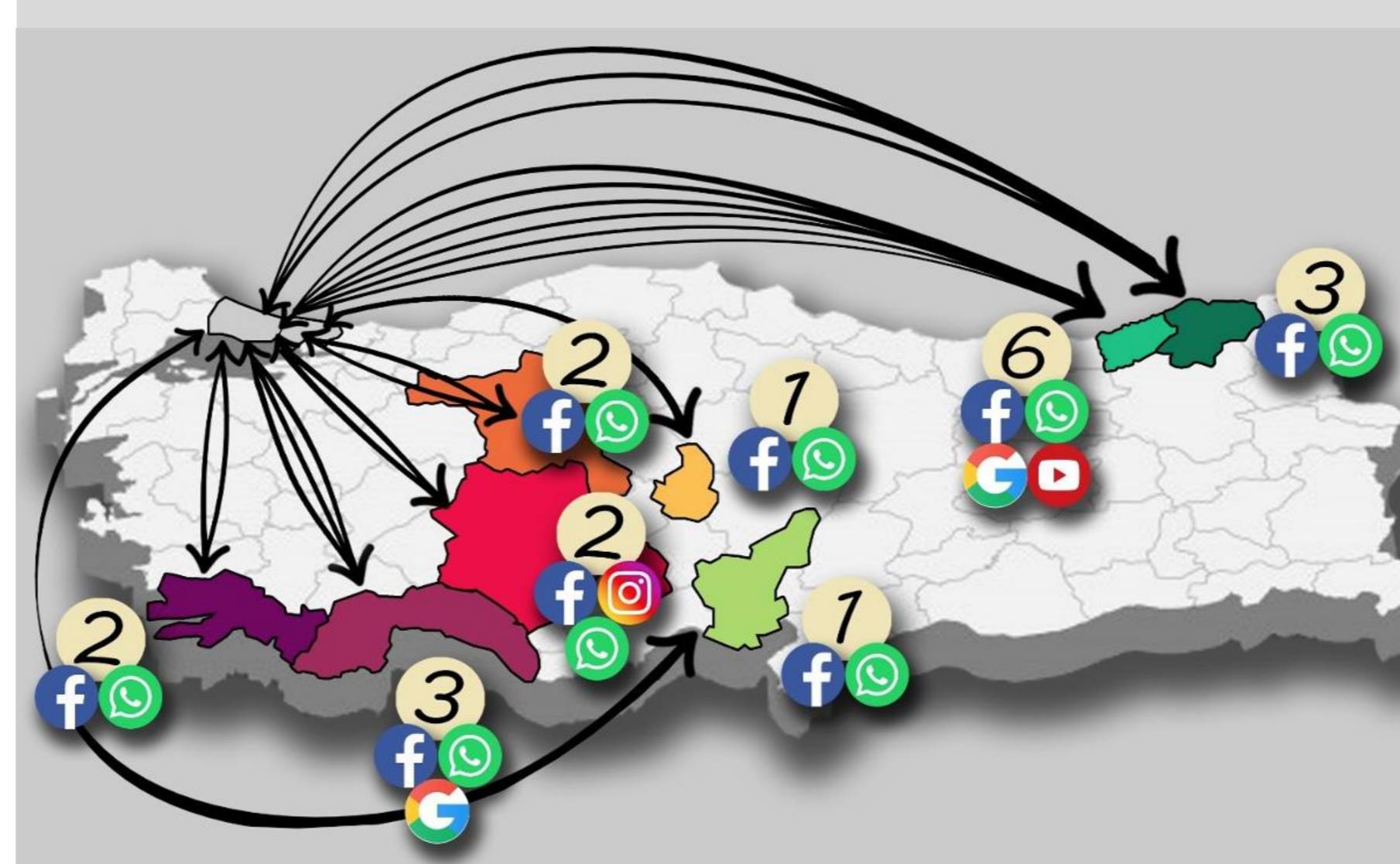
## Methods

Qualitative comparative research

- Semi-structured interviews
  - About 50 with asylum seekers in Turkey
  - About 40 with refugees in Switzerland
- (Participant) Observation: online and *in situ*
- Focus-groups
- Informal face-to-face and social media discussions

## Key Findings

Sub-Saharan asylum seekers in Turkey	Sub-Saharan refugees in Switzerland
<b>Decision making and preparation</b>	
When they are available, ICTs are widely used before leaving the origin country, to find information and contact fellows in Turkey.	For many refugees, ICTs availability and time for preparation in the country of origin are very limited. Some Eritreans, for instance, only begin to use ICTs in Switzerland.
<b>Migration journey</b>	
Little or no use of ICTs during journeys, as they are mostly short and made by plane.	Journeys can last several months, even years. In certain areas (e.g. in the Sahara desert and Libya), ICTs are not available.
<b>Daily life</b>	
Extensive use of ICTs to find pragmatic information for accommodation, work, travelling or support to survive.	Necessity to develop their capacities to use ICTs in order to learn a local language, study, find a job, as well as travel.
<b>Crisis situations</b>	
Relatively frequent, crisis situations (e.g. irregularity, Covid-19) trigger a more extensive use of ICTs to cope with uncertainty and lack of resources.	To deal with (less frequent) crisis situations in Switzerland, it is possible to look for institutional support. This requires some specific capacities to use ICTs.
<b>Networks</b>	
ICTs are crucial for maintaining social and family networks in Turkey, their country of origin and in Europe.	For their life in Switzerland, both face-to face and ICTs-mediated relationships are important. ICTs are crucial for maintaining transnational social networks.
<b>(Im)mobility</b>	
While stuck in Turkey, our respondents have been increasingly mobile internally, especially to survive during the Covid-19 pandemic. They used ICTs mainly to find jobs, and contact smugglers for Europe.	Mobility in Europe is banned for respondents with a F permit. They may use ICTs to overcome the lack of mobility. Those benefiting from a B permit, use ICTs for international mobility.



**IN ADDITION...**  
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This study emphasizes the importance of digital agency, (i.e. ICT-mediated capacity to "make a difference") in forced migration processes.

## Research design and context



**Population:** Sub-Saharan migrants

**Comparative case-studies:**  
**Turkey:** transit country of asylum seekers on the move for Europe  
**Switzerland:** destination country of refugees (B or F permit for less than 5 years)

**Fieldwork sites:**  
**Istanbul** and **Izmir** departments  
**Geneva** and **Vaud** cantons

## Main Outputs & dissemination

- Soysüren, I. (2022). La Turquie, la migration, la montée du racisme et les Africains / Réseaux sociaux : Amplificateur du racisme versus outils de solidarité et de survie pour les personnes migrantes, *Vivre Ensemble*, 186.
- Nedelcu, M. & Soysüren, I. (2020). Precarious migrants, migration regimes and digital technologies: the empowerment-control nexus, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, DOI 10.1080/1369183X.2020.1796263
- Soysüren, I. & Nedelcu, M. (2020). European instruments for the deportation of foreigners and their uses by France and Switzerland: the application of the Dublin III Regulation and Eurodac. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, DOI 10.1080/1369183X.2020.1796278
- Soysüren, I. & Nedelcu, M. (2019). Technologies for Expulsion: the Use of the Eurodac Database by Switzerland. *Blog nccr-on the move*, 10.05.2019.
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