

# Co-creating narratives about migration



A STRATEGY TO CONNECT MIGRATION RESEARCH AND NATIVE CITIZENS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE **PACES PROJECT**

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## **Co-creating narratives about migration**

A strategy to connect migration research and native citizens  
in the context of the PACES

### **Master thesis**

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*Making migration and migration policy decisions  
amidst societal transformations*



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# Executive summary

In recent years, the EU and its member states have perceived migration as a significant challenge, leading policymakers to adopt prediction and control strategies that fail to consider the nature of migratory patterns (PACES Consortium, 2022). Research on migratory patterns in social science is extensive but not widely used in policy development, highlighting a significant gap between scholarly discussions and their impact on policymaking. PACES is a research project aiming to bridge the gap between social science research on migration patterns and policy development in the migration sector. In doing so, PACES aims to involve multiple participants in discussions about migration policies, as it appears that the lack of citizen involvement is a factor contributing to the inefficiency of migration policy.

This project's goal is to help PACES empower citizens and promote dialogues to create more informed opinions. The objective of this thesis is to facilitate a two-way information exchange between PACES and native citizens. PACES provides scientific knowledge on migration and policies, while citizens contribute their perspectives. The aim is to foster evidence-based opinions among citizens to achieve greater engagement and participation in the public debate.

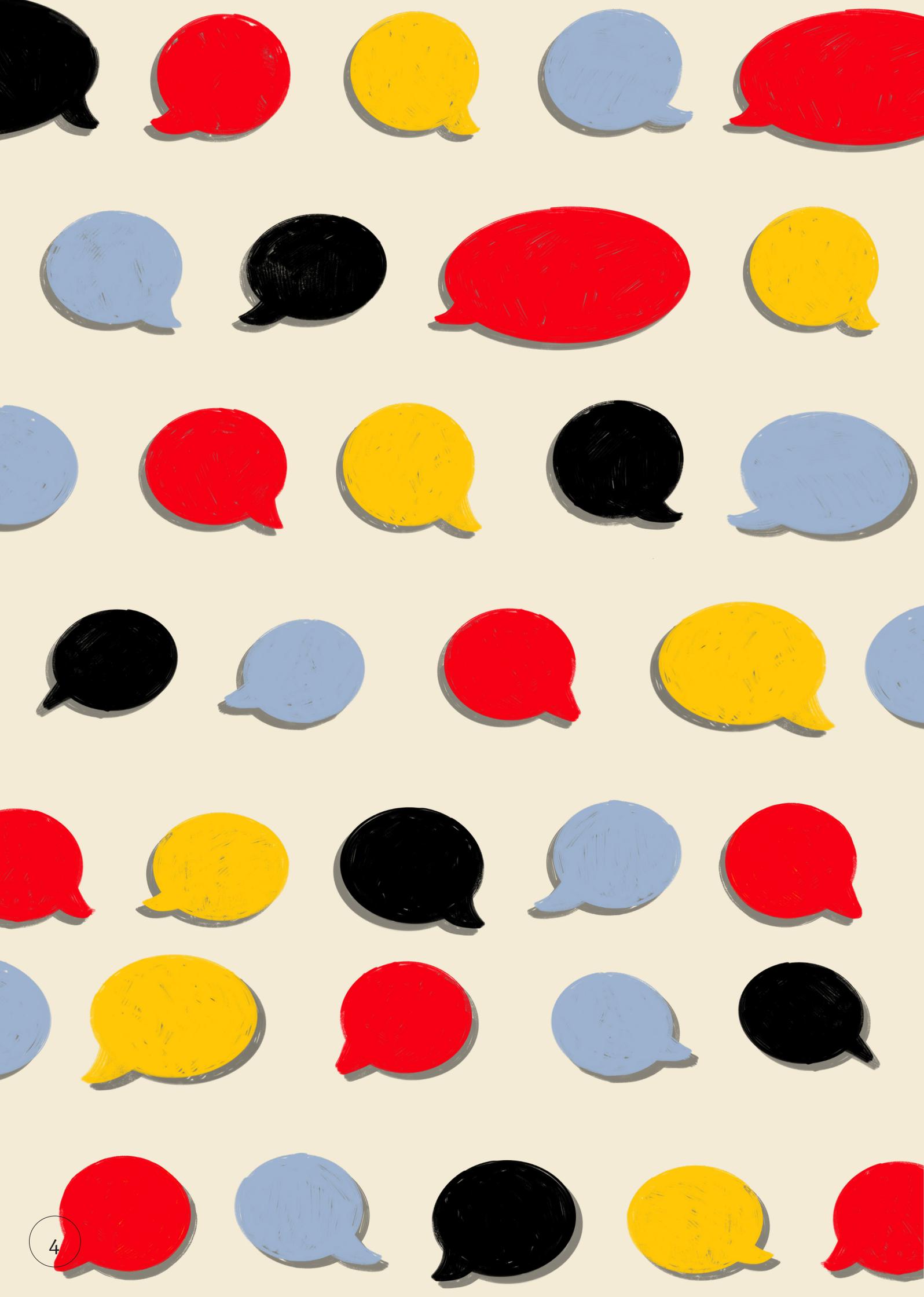
To approach this objective, an analysis of the context of the public debate on migration was initiated, and system mapping was used to better define the stakeholders and dynamics between them. This analysis highlighted the lack of a direct connection between the world of research and citizens, who struggle to form opinions based on evidence, as the knowledge they receive is often shaped by political and media narratives. To better understand this distance, a smaller group of citizens was selected, specifically Italian emerging adults, to explore their perception of the public debate and their experiences in staying informed. Subsequently, a group of experts in the field of migration was consulted to understand their perception of the role of research and expert knowledge in the debate. The empirical exploration revealed that both experts and Italian emerging adults agree on the need to shift the way migration is portrayed in the debate, but they also agreed on the presence of a gap between research and citizens.

To bridge this gap and support Italian emerging adults in forming opinions on migration based on scientific knowledge, this thesis developed a workshop that PACES could use to "co-create narratives about migration" with Italian emerging adults. In this workshop, knowledge is shared by focusing on different perspectives on a chosen topic and assisting Italian emerging adults in developing their own point of view and reworking it into new narratives to share with their peers

The results of the workshop include an increase in the participants' awareness of migration patterns and information that can help PACES in further research development that takes into account the point of view of native citizens. These results become the basis for initiating dialogues about alternative migration policies with policymakers, representing the perspectives of citizens on migration matters developed from scientific knowledge. The workshop can be further developed in the future to reach a broader audience and increase participation in the discourse on migration policymaking.

In conclusion, the value of this project lies in its representation of the public debate, providing a simplified yet complex representation of the debate while placing citizens at the center. It also offers a strategy that PACES can scale further to lay the groundwork for a more open discussion on migration policy based on expert knowledge and resilience to social changes.





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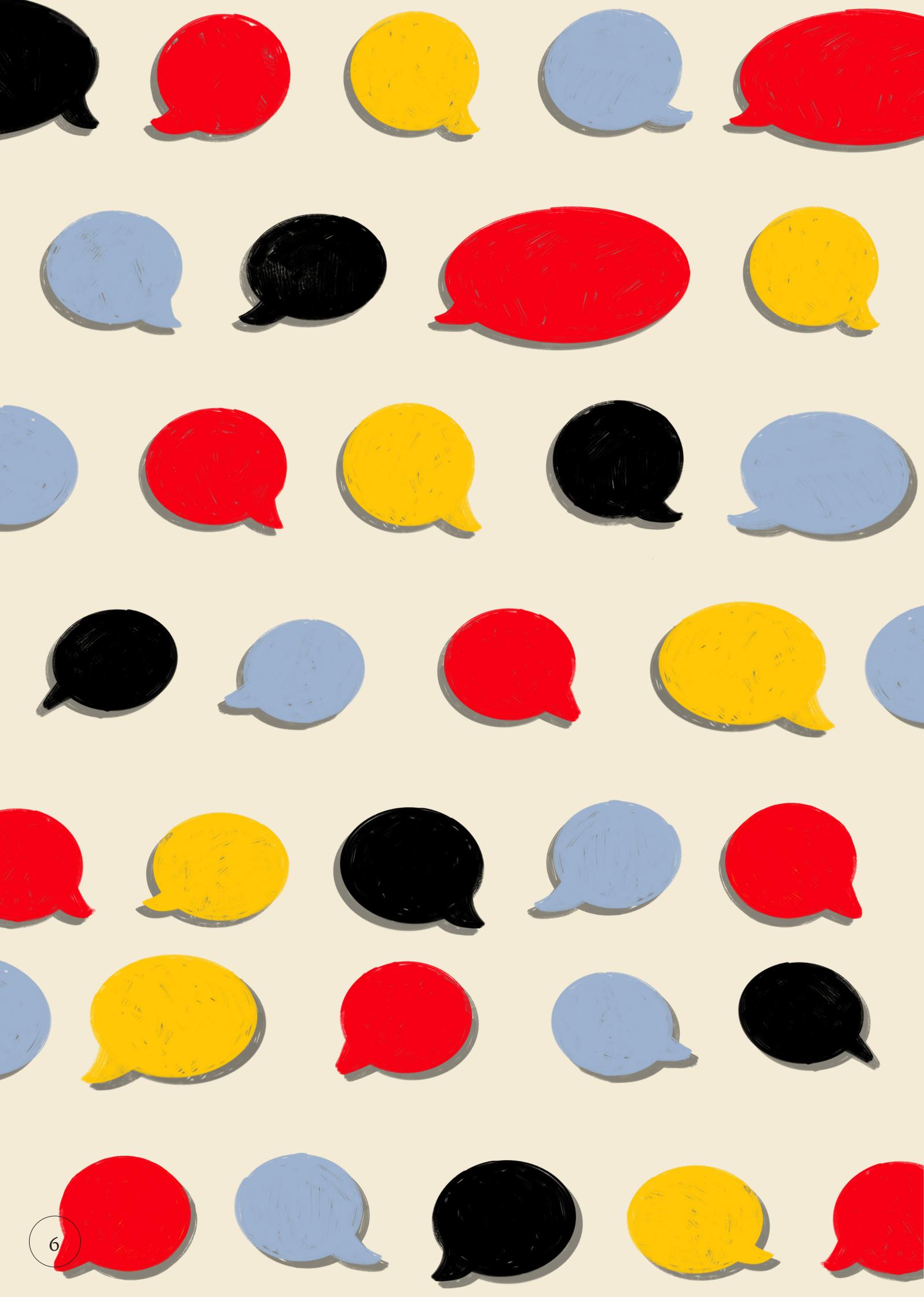
And to my colleagues, of this strange and challenging journey that was graduation. I could not have done it without each and every one of you. You have helped me in every way, attending session after session, listening to me talk about my project all the time, giving me wonderful moments together. To Eneko, Dafne, Ragini, who saw and heard more of this project than anyone else. Thank you.

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# Glossary

*In this section some key terminology are defined for a better comprehension*

## **Public debate**

Understood as discussions among the general public, including their attitudes and media coverage regarding migrants and refugees, as well as the arguments put forth by various public and civil society organizations. These discussions both reflect and shape public perceptions of migration and migrants.

## **Media**

This report refers to media as the media coverage in the broader sense, including news media and social media and every channel of information.

## **Information environment**

In this report is used associated with the media and with the meaning of environment generated by the media in the public debate.

## **Research**

It is an umbrella term encompassing theories, concepts, data, empirical findings, and diverse perspectives, representing a wide spectrum of knowledge.

In this report is used to refer to the realm of research the term academic world or scientific world. While the knowledge coming from research is also referred to as expert knowledge.

## **Italian emerging adults**

Italians belonging to the age between 18-29 that are facing a period of transition in their lives

## **PACES**

Research project initiated by the ISS (International Institute of Social Studies) recipient of the Horizon Europe grant, that focuses on making migration and migration policy decisions amidst societal transformations.

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2. Public debate map iterations

### **Appendix B**

"Restating the problem" creative session

### **Appendix C**

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Ideation phase

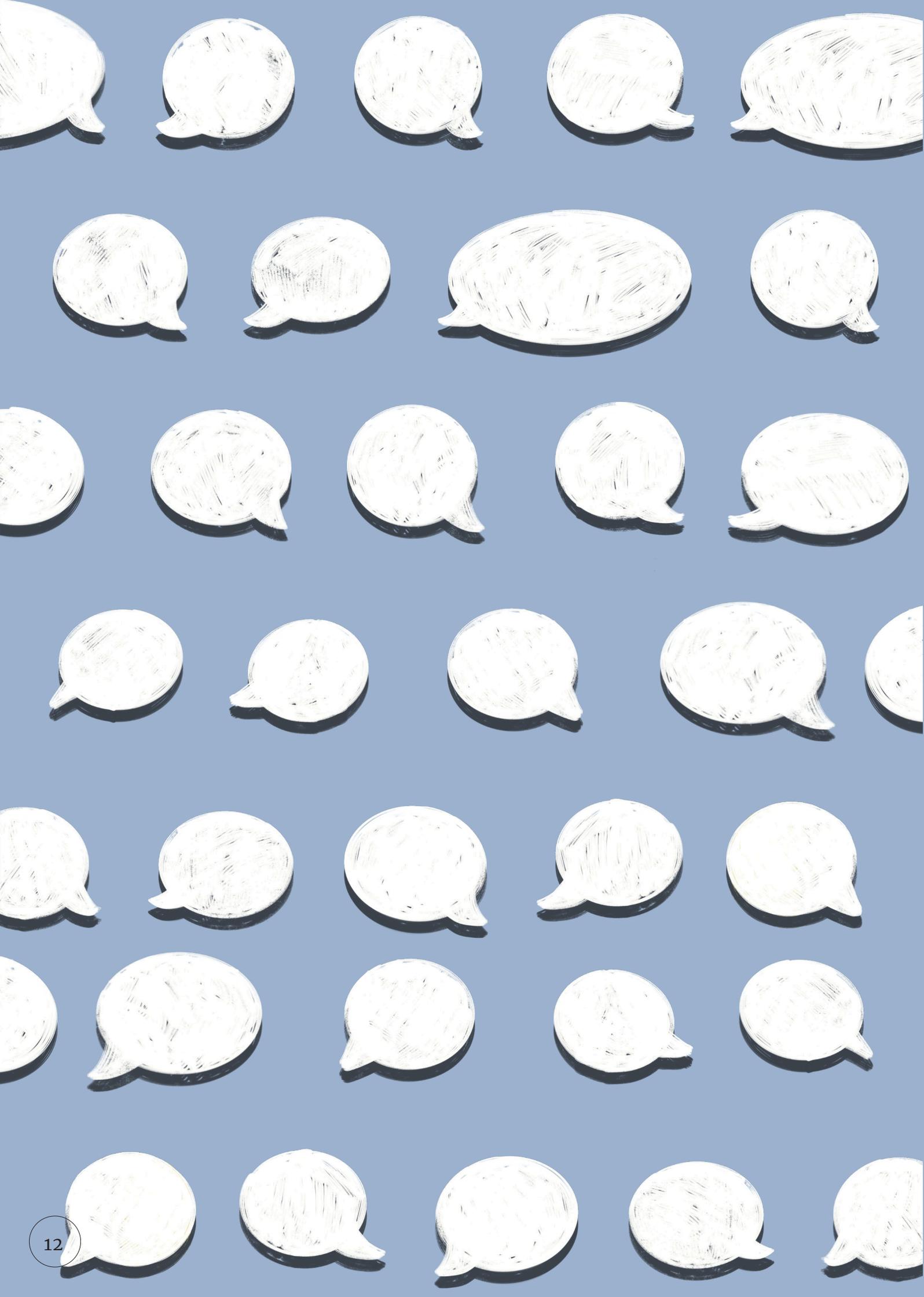
1. Individual design cycle
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3. Evaluation of the workshop
4. Converging design cycle

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# Chapter 1

# Project initiation

This chapter starts by introducing the context in which this graduation project has been generated: the PACES project. Within the frame of PACES and its objectives, the scope of this project is then outlined, and the approaches taken explained, and how these relate to the structure of the report.

# 1.1 Project context

The European Union is today facing its most challenging difficulties since it was formed (Laouris et al., 2014), such as climate change, wars at its doors, and scarcity of resources among others. Each and each one of them is characterised by a high degree of complexity and interdisciplinarity and has strong consequences on citizens' lives. A few of these challenges are difficult to define without ambiguity, do not have a single solution, and require the involvement of many stakeholders. Migration is one of them with issues regarding refugees, integration and many others (Pachocka et al., 2020).

In recent years, migration has been perceived by the EU and its member states as a major challenge, and therefore it had a disproportionate impact on the public and political debate (PACES Consortium, 2022). The main focus of EU and national migration policymakers has been adopting prediction and control strategies. This approach is mainly reactive, and it fails in taking into account the future social changes that can shape future migration drivers, and consequently in proposing forward-looking migration policies (PACES Consortium, 2022).

Furthermore, policy interventions carried on by the EU and national governments are frequently founded not on research evidence but on the assumption that migrations are driven by poverty and inequality and are characterised by mass movements. This oversimplification of migration decision-making reinforces the general belief that control, and surveillance measures are the only tools to deal with migration and its consequences, thus resulting in reactive resolutions by European governments. (PACES Consortium, 2022)

These approaches contrast with the research evidence that states the independency of migration from control techniques (PACES Consortium, 2022)

The world of public policy is complex, with multiple facets and layers, and it is often dysfunctional. It is crucial to evaluate how policies operate at the practical level, particularly in the context of migration. Evaluating the performance of migration policies can be challenging due to the long-term nature of migration, which makes it difficult to assess the true success or failure of a policy (Haines, 2013).

In the social science field different research has been conducted to assess the discrepancies between the goals of national immigration policy and the actual results on the long term and it seems that this gap is wide and growing wider. If migration policies are tied to a short-term vision this could lead to their likely failure that is intended: "when a policy does not achieve its stated objectives" (Castles, 2004). Migratory pattern seems to be driven by forces out of the control of governments, that through policies definitely have influence over them, but not

always in the intended directions (Castles, 2004).

Such migratory patterns and processes have been extensively studied by research in the field of social science in the last decades, however, this is not often considered in the development of policies in the matter (PACES Consortium, 2022). While there is a growing demand in the policy world for scientific knowledge to address social issues, particularly regarding migration (Kraler, 2023), it is evident that the contribution of scholars has not yet had a determinative impact (PACES Consortium, 2022). A substantial disparity exists between scholarly discussions on migration and their influence on policymaking (Kraler, 2023).

This shows the presence of a considerable gap between migration policy and migration research, which itself presents a fragmented knowledge. All these gaps and flaws contributed to strengthen the beliefs that the contribution of scientific evidence and research can positively impact the policymaking processes.

# 1.2 Bridging the gap: PACES project context

PACES is positioned in this context, to bridge the gap between social sciences, which have extensive knowledge of migration processes, and the migration policymaking sector.

PACES is a research project initiated by the ISS



(International Institute of Social Studies) recipient of the Horizon Europe grant and it focuses on two parallel research components: the factors shaping migration decision-making and the mechanisms supporting migration policies. The goal is to study migration policy and migration decision-making as interlinked.

Therefore, the research questions of the PACES project are:

*How do changes in society, individual life experiences and migration policy shape decisions to stay or to migrate over time and across countries?*

*And how can this knowledge inform future migration policies and governance?*

To achieve that, PACES wants to set the basis for improved practice in developing migration policies and initiatives, therefore there is the need of gaining public support and the willingness of all the stakeholders in the process to implement the policies.

Multiple participants should be involved in the discussions around migration policies, starting from the migrants, but also the non-migrants, i.e., the native-born majority groups. As a matter of fact, a crucial aspect that impacts the migration policy inefficiency appears to be the lack of involvement of citizens in the migration policy conversation (Haines, 2013).

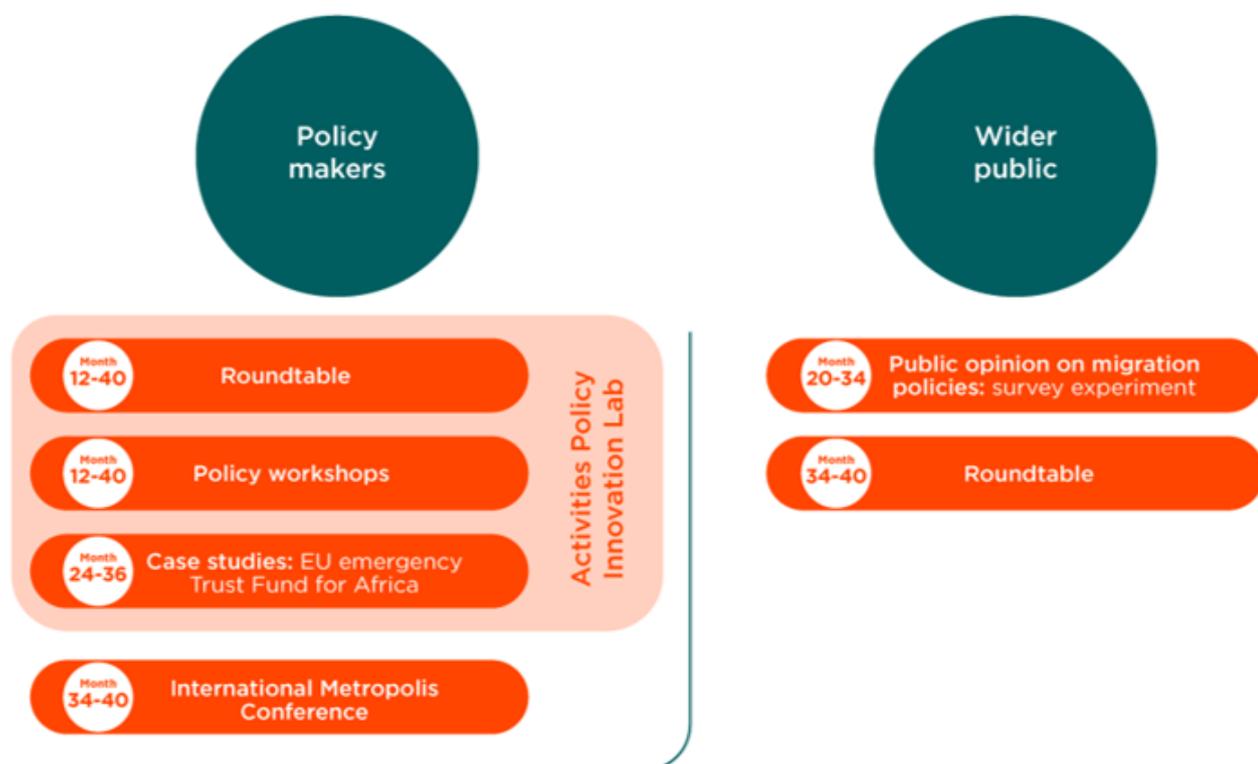
Hence, different stakeholders are involved across the project's life cycle mainly individuated within the macro-groups of academia, policymakers and the wider public. The plan, as is shown in Figure 1 (PACES Consortium,

2022), is to increasingly promote cross-sectional exchanges of information through the co-participatory activities listed in the figure to engage various actors.

For what concern the involvement of the wider public, PACES aims to understand what the public opinion on migration policies is and what are migration policy preferences in the population. PACES has a research interest in investigating how public opinion influences migration policies and their implementation, since this area of scientific research still has several gaps. Most of the existing research on public opinion has centred around how native citizens perceive immigrants or immigration as positive or negative. However, there has been little attention given to understanding what the public knows about different aspects of migration policy and the alternative policies they might consider viable (PACES Consortium, 2022).

To fill this knowledge gap regarding the public opinion on migration policies, PACES will generate new insights into public knowledge on existing migration policies and public opinion on possible alternative migration policies, which can engender the support needed by policymakers to propose new migration policies.

Figure 1. Cross-sectional exchanges of information through co-participatory activities engaging various actors from PACES report.



## 1.3 Project scope

PACES aims to generate new insights into the existing knowledge about migration and current migration policies among the broader public, particularly native citizens. To achieve this, PACES plans to conduct a survey experiment on public opinion regarding migration policies.

Beyond the research impact that PACES seeks to reach with this survey, their purpose is to open debates on migration that show the complexity of the phenomenon and challenge public and political narratives that offer quick policy solutions to migration-related issues.

Therefore, the survey results will be used to generate knowledge that will be shared, discussed, and taken into account during subsequent discussions with policymakers. The expected benefits of this approach could be softening the polarisation of the public debate and policymakers learning about public preferences with migration policies.

However, a survey approach alone may not fully engage citizens and achieve the objectives of the PACES project, as they are not very valid indicators of community opinion when used without other input from citizens (Arnstein, 2019). To achieve a redistribution of power that enables citizens to be more determinant in the public debate, citizens need to be involved more extensively (Arnstein, 2019).

Therefore, my graduation project proposes an additional approach to help PACES empower citizens and foster dialogues to create more informed opinions.

## 1.4 Project goal and research questions

The engagement of citizens during the PACES project demands a two-way exchange of information; PACES provides information about migration and migration policies backed up by scientific evidence, and citizens provide new insight into people's perceptions and knowledge of migration policies.

Therefore, the goal of this graduation project is to design an approach that PACES can use to provide citizens with the scientific knowledge to better understand migration and migration policy, and consequently empower them in expressing well-informed opinions on the topic. This is important because one of the reasons why policies fail is the lack of influence citizens have over policies that directly affect them (Haines, 2013).

In conclusion, the PACES project's focus on public opinion is a crucial step towards understanding how migration policies are shaped. Still, to achieve greater participation and engagement, PACES needs to move beyond surveys and include citizens in a more meaningful way.

While the goal of PACES is to aim for more evidence-based policies, this graduation project will focus on supporting people to have more evidence-based opinions by answering the following research question: What kind of approach can PACES use to provide citizens with the scientific knowledge to better understand migration and migration policy, and consequently empower them in expressing well-informed opinions on the topic?

To answer this question, it is first required to explore the current understanding and dynamics of the public debate about migration and migration policy and what role the natives/citizens play in it. To do so the research question was divided into two other sub research questions:

RQ1

**What are the factors currently shaping citizens' opinions about migration and migration policies?**

RQ2

**How do native citizens experience the process of informing themselves?**

RQ3

**What is the role of expert knowledge in the process of informing of citizens?**

## 1.5 Project structure

To answer the research questions the project was divided in two main phases, the research phase, and the design phase. Figure 2 illustrates the project's structure as it is presented in this report. The primary phases and the conclusions are highlighted by the three rectangles at the top of Figure 2. The boxes beneath the rectangles of the phases represent the approaches taken, and the circles represent the activities conducted in each of them. In the research phase on top of the boxes the research questions that the approaches and activities below aimed to answer. At the bottom, there are three separate boxes. The first two represent moments that clarified the direction of the project, while the third box refers to the outcome of the project.

### Research phase

In this first phase, theoretical and empirical research were conducted to address the research questions. The theoretical research involved a combination of literature review, system mapping, and consultations with PACES. This part of the research primarily aimed to answer research question 1 (*What are the factors currently shaping citizens' opinions about migration and migration policies?*) while also contributing to the overarching research question (*What kind of approach can PACES use to provide citizens with the scientific knowledge to better understand migration and migration policy, and consequently empower them in expressing well-informed opinions on the topic?*). Some insights derived from the literature review also informed the other two research questions, laying

the foundation for the next steps in the process. The results of the theoretical research can be found in Chapter 2: *Understanding opinion formation of native citizens*.

This step of the project provided a deeper understanding of the context from which emerged the need to reframe the role of PACES and establish a clearer direction to address the initial scope, represented by the orange box at the bottom of Figure 2. Chapter 3: Reframing the role of PACES explains the creative session conducted for this purpose and its results.

The following step of the research phase involved empirical research, which was divided into two main activities: the interviews with the target group and the interviews with experts in the field of migration. These activities allowed for the exploration of research question 2 (*How do native citizens experience the process of informing themselves?*) and research question 3 (*What is the role of expert knowledge in the process of informing of citizens?*).

Chapter 4: Understanding the Native Citizens' Opinion Formation Experience elaborates on the process, results, and insights derived from the interviews with the target group, while Chapter 5: Roles of Expert Knowledge presents the results of the interviews with experts and details how they were conducted. It's important to note that throughout these steps, the information gathered covers various aspects of the

project and not exclusively the research question that initially motivated the inquiry.

### Design phase

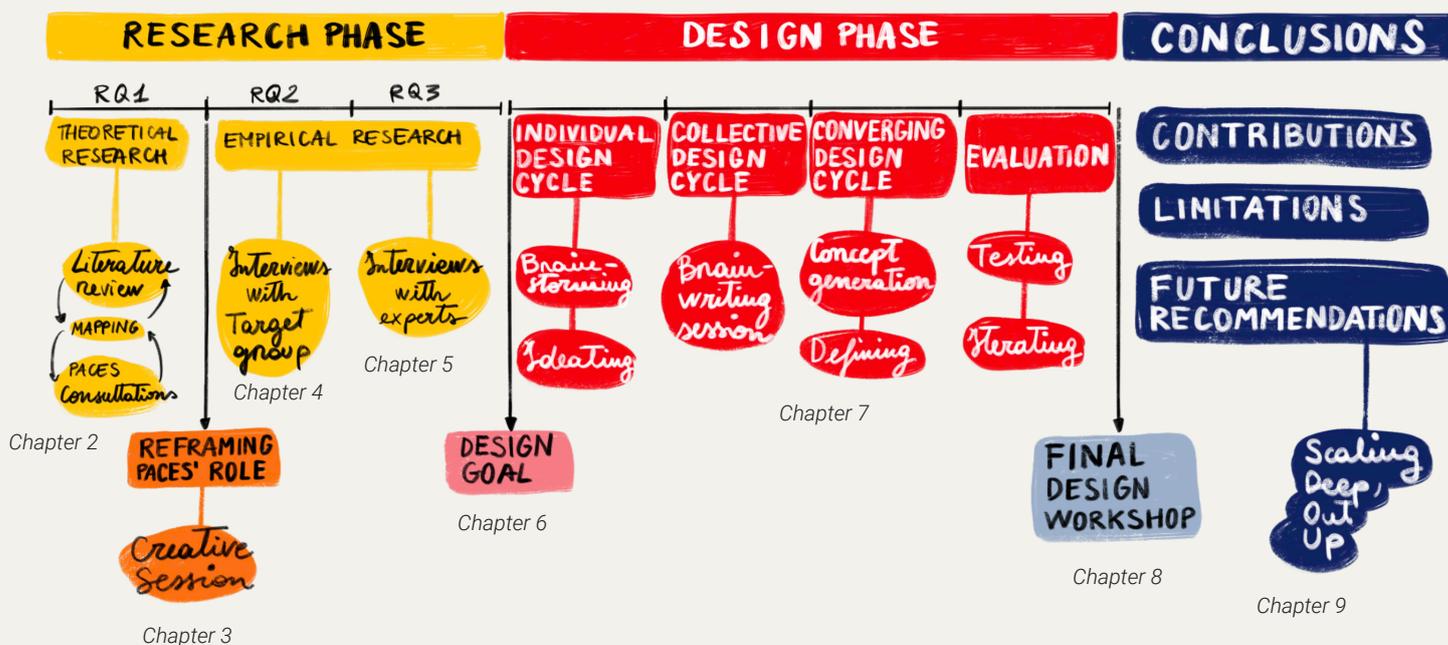
Following the research phase, a crucial transition was needed to transform the insights gained from the research into valuable design directions and goals. This transition process, represented by the pink box labelled "Design Goal" in Figure 2, is elaborated on in Chapter 6: PACES as bridge between citizens and expert knowledge. After defining the design goal, the ideation phase was initiated, including 3 design cycles: individual design cycle, collective design cycle, converging design cycle. These cycles are illustrated in chapter 7: Ideating a 'moment of encounter' which also includes an evaluation of the initial design through a testing session.

In Chapter 8: Co-creating narratives about migration, the outcomes of this project are explained in detail.

### Conclusions

In this section the project is summarised with reflections on its impact and contributions to the PACES project and research. Additionally, some considerations regarding the project's limitations are provided. Future recommendations are also presented, with a particular emphasis on opportunities for scaling the impact of this project within and beyond the scope of PACES.

Figure 2. Project process structure



**Chapter 2** Understanding opinion formation of native citizens **Chapter 3** Framing the role of PACES **Chapter 4** Understanding the experience of native citizens **Chapter 5** Role of expert knowledge **Chapter 6** PACES as bridge between citizens and expert knowledge **Chapter 7** Ideating a "moment of encounter" **Chapter 8** Co-creating narratives about migration **Chapter 9** Conclusions



## Chapter 2

# Understanding opinion formation of native citizens

This chapter presents an overview of the theory investigated in order to understand how native citizens' opinions about migration are formed, what are the contributing factors and the diverse actors involved in this process. This part of the research focused particularly on the dynamics within the public debate as it emerged that they play a significant influence over people's perspectives. Among the multitude of stakeholders involved, particular emphasis is directed towards scientific knowledge about migration, in order to understand its role in the public debate and the utilisation of research-derived information.

## 2.1 Methodology

The primary objective of this theoretical research phase is firstly my personal understanding of a field of study in which I have no previous academic training. Secondly, it aims to provide a comprehensive and clear view of the current situation regarding the debate around migration.

The selection of the literature to review was not based on predefined categories but initiated through a general exploration of topics related to the subject of study. Some of these topics were taken from the theory used in the PACES project proposal, such as the relationship between research and policymaking on migration. Then based on the relevance of this information to the present project other topics were explored, and so on as represented in Figure 3.

The result of this phase is an initial broad overview focused on the main influences on citizens' opinions, which then expands to include the public debate on migration and its role in shaping these influences. The analysis of the public debate on migration revealed the complexity of its dynamics, involving a multitude of actors and levels of interpretation. Consequently, it was crucial to organise and select information coherently to provide a clear and functional overview that could support the PACES project in engaging with native citizens on migration-related topics.

To facilitate this process, I adopted the "system mapping" technique, a widely used practice in the field of systemic thinking and systemic design for representing the complexity of the relationships between the various stakeholders and their variables and providing an overview of the functioning of the considered system (Tschavгова, 2022). This process began with a visual analysis of the documents I considered most relevant, summarising key concepts through an individual analysis on the wall (Sanders & Stappers, 2012) by connecting sticky notes. In Figure 4 is represented an article with the analysis made with sticky notes next to it. Subsequently, I identified the most significant actors based on the gathered information. I used the sticky notes generated during the analysis to define the relationships between them and included elements that, although not actual actors, played a crucial role in the dynamics of the debate. Figure 5 is a representation of the initial type of map generated through this process. Iterations on the maps can be found in Appendix A.

As the mapping expanded to include new information from the literature, the next step was to transition from an exploratory phase of theory to a synthesis phase. In this case as well, the selection of information was based on its relevance to the project, with the research questions playing a key role in skimming the materials. In addition, I involved experts from within

and outside PACES, asking them to evaluate my work. Their guidance was valuable not only in selecting information but also in ensuring that the map, while simplified for better understanding, remained accurate and did not lose sight of the inherent complexity of the public debate on migration. Figure 6 represents how the map looked like after the process of synthesis and simplification.

What is presented in this chapter represents the result of this process and utilises insights drawn from the reviewed literature, reworked in the light of the understanding gained in the mapping process.

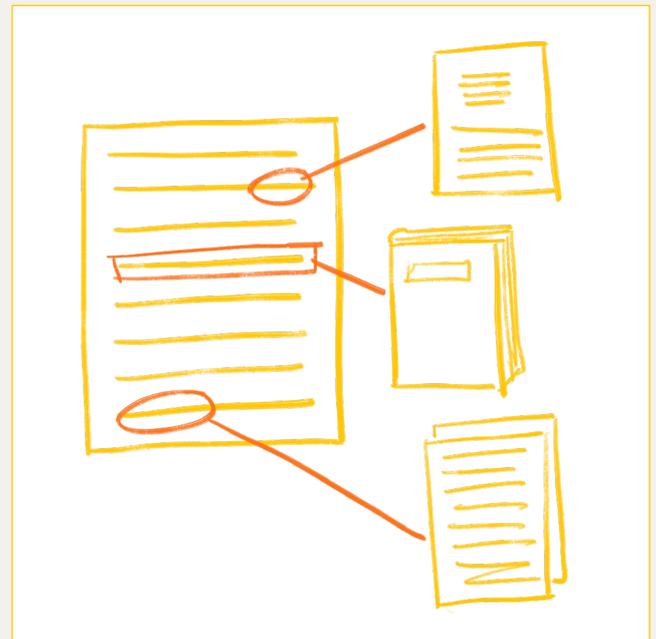


Figure 3. Process of literature selection.

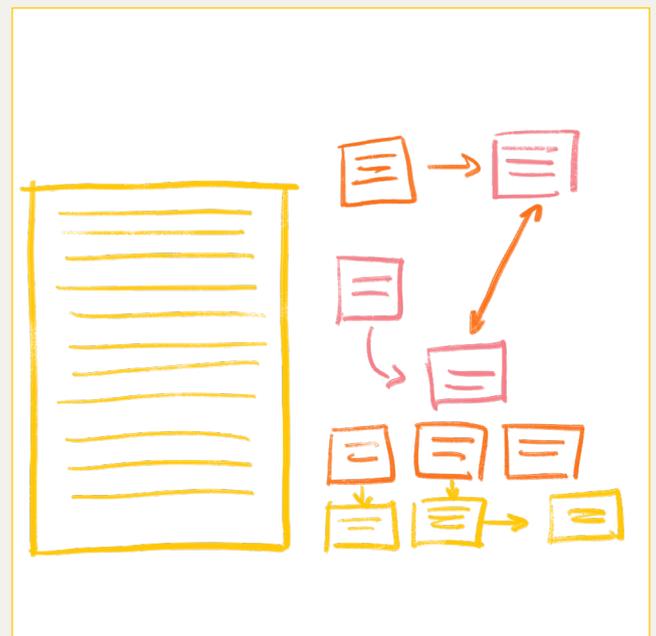


Figure 4. Representation of the analysis on the wall done on the literature

## 2.2 Theoretical framework

Given that the primary objective of this project is to assist PACES in reaching native citizens, providing them with scientific knowledge, and enabling them to form well-informed opinions, the analysis of existing literature starts with an examination of the factors that influence the attitudes of native citizens toward migration (RQ1: What are the factors currently shaping citizens' opinions about migration and migration policies?). Afterwards, analysis extends to include the various dynamics within the public debate, as these dynamics play a pivotal role in shaping citizens' opinions. Creating a comprehensive understanding of

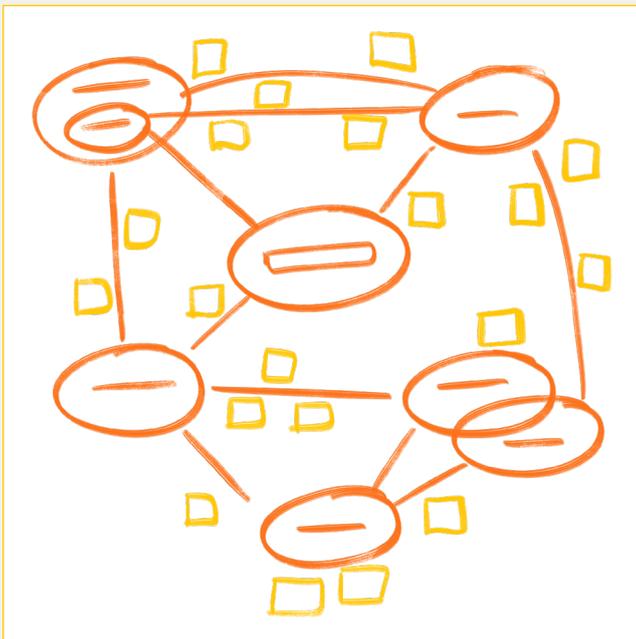


Figure 5. Representation of the initial type of map generated through the mapping process

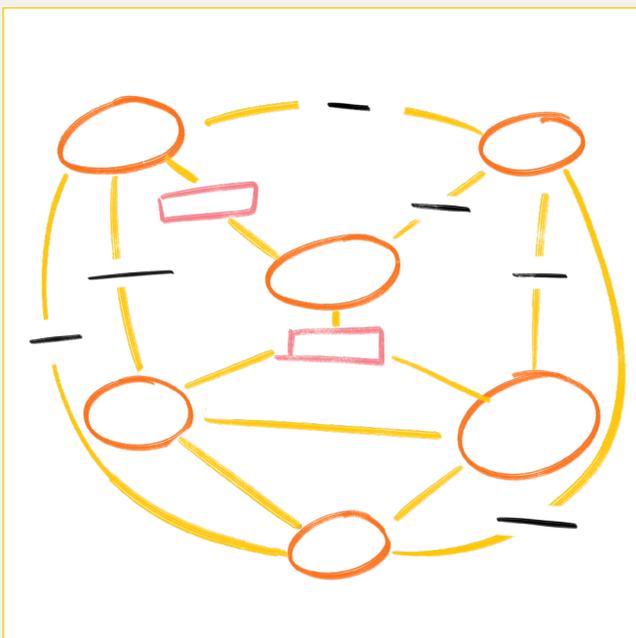


Figure 6. Representation of the map after synthesis and simplification

the public debate is also crucial for recognizing the role of expert knowledge in this context (RQ3: What is the role of expert knowledge in the process of informing of citizens?) and how it can be leveraged in later phases of the project. Finally, dynamics related to the world of (migration) policymaking are briefly introduced to provide better context and to comprehend their interactions with native citizens and the world of research.

### Factors influencing native citizens' opinions on migration

The native citizens experience the effects of migration directly and have a wide variety of responses to the phenomenon. Various research has been conducted on this to determine its causes and consequences. Beliefs and attitudes take shape through an intricate network of concerns, evolving through a process that depends equally on emotions and personal values as it does on logical examination of evidence (Dempster & Hargrave, 2017).

Public attitudes are shaped by various influential factors as shown in Figure 7. Yet, comprehending and establishing causation within these connections is challenging (Dempster & Hargrave, 2017).

In this section, several key factors that influence public attitudes towards migration are explained and we will see how media and information environment are in particular relevant in shaping the public perception of migration, for the same reason in Figure 7 they are distinguished from the other factors.

### Perception of economic and cultural impact of migration

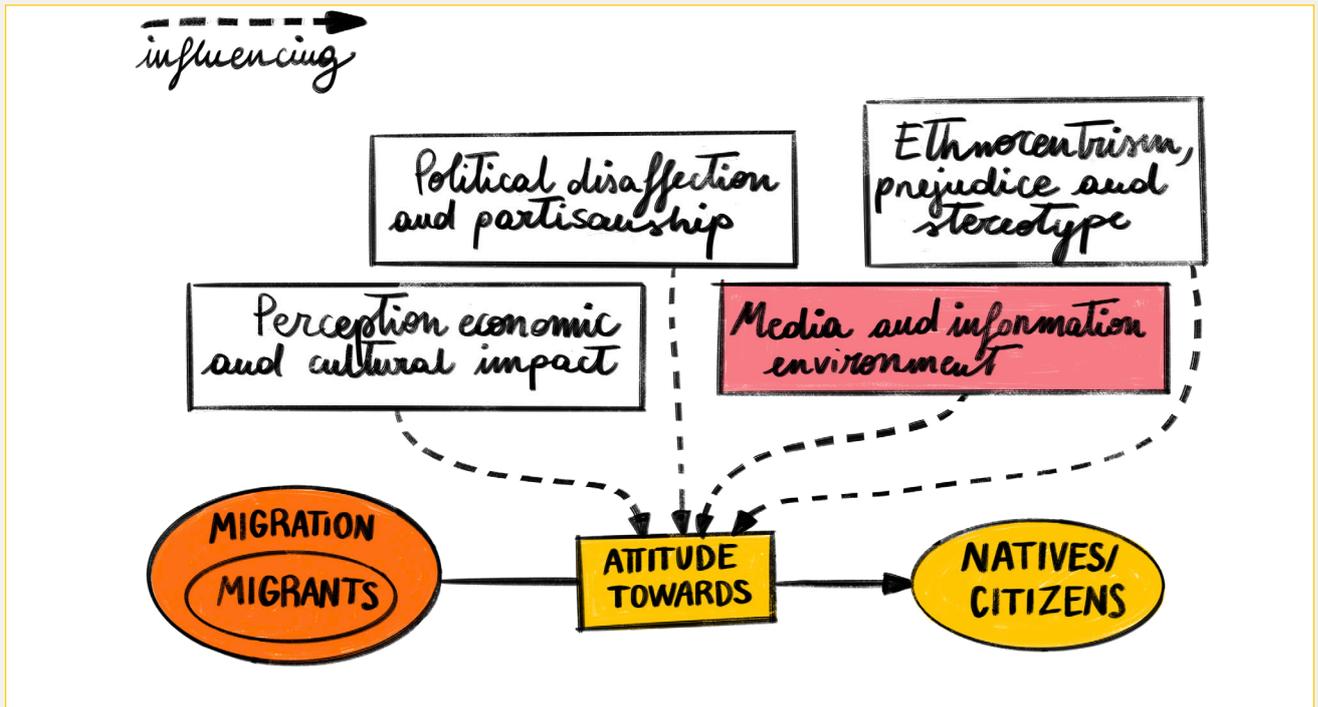
The perceived impact of migration, both on an economic and cultural level has an important role in defining the public attitude towards migration (Dempster & Hargrave, 2017; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014).

People might perceive migrants and refugees as an economic strain on their country. Indeed, the view that migration should decrease and the impression of a country's economic status as being poor appear to be related. (Dempster & Hargrave, 2017).

Within the economic motivations that can shape the attitudes, one big component is individuated in the perception of the impact that immigration can have on the labour market competition. This is particularly relevant on a more societal level rather than individual, therefore as something that can challenge the economic balance of a whole social group or nation (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014).

In this regard it is clear how the perception of the impact on the economy is deeply connected to the one on the culture. In this case the focus is on the perceived impact of immigration on aspects of national identity and culture, which can be declined in different attributes (such as the language) that have different weights on the attitudes (Hainmueller &

Figure 7. Factors influencing native citizens' opinions on migration.



Hopkins, 2014).

The willingness or the perceived willingness of migrants to integrate in the arrival country on a cultural level (e.g. adopting language, local customs and traditions...) play a role on the positive attitude of residents to migration (Dempster & Hargrave, 2017)

Another element to keep into account is the social impact that migration can have and how it can be seen as a challenge to pre-existing group boundaries (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014). Economic and cultural worries regarding refugees and migrants become prominent because they align with a perspective where individuals from different cultures are viewed as potential threats (Dempster & Hargrave, 2017; Esses et al., 2017).

### Prejudice, Ethnocentrism, Stereotype adherence

Ethnocentrism, prejudice, and stereotyping play a role in determining attitudes, they are often linked to more restrictive attitudes towards immigration, but it is still not clear how (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014). One of the shapes that ethnocentrism might take is nationalism, the belief of the superiority of one nation over the others, that brings to see migration in antagonistic terms, resulting in more restrictive attitudes (Esses et al., 2017). This is also connected with how native identities are defined.

### Political Disaffection and Political Partisanship

Similarly political disaffection has been connected to more restrictive immigration attitudes by different studies. Overall arguments related to immigration are often connected to particular parties and ideologies. Therefore, there might be a connection between public attitude and political partisanship that is not exclusive to immigration but that is more rooted into

ideology (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014). Politicians frequently use the outcomes of perceived threats and competition posed by migrants and refugees as part of their political campaigns, since this feeling of danger can influence policy preferences (Esses et al., 2017).

Immigration anyway relates to the conceptions of national identity and boundaries therefore is a highly politicised topic and it creates emotional resonance in the public (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014).

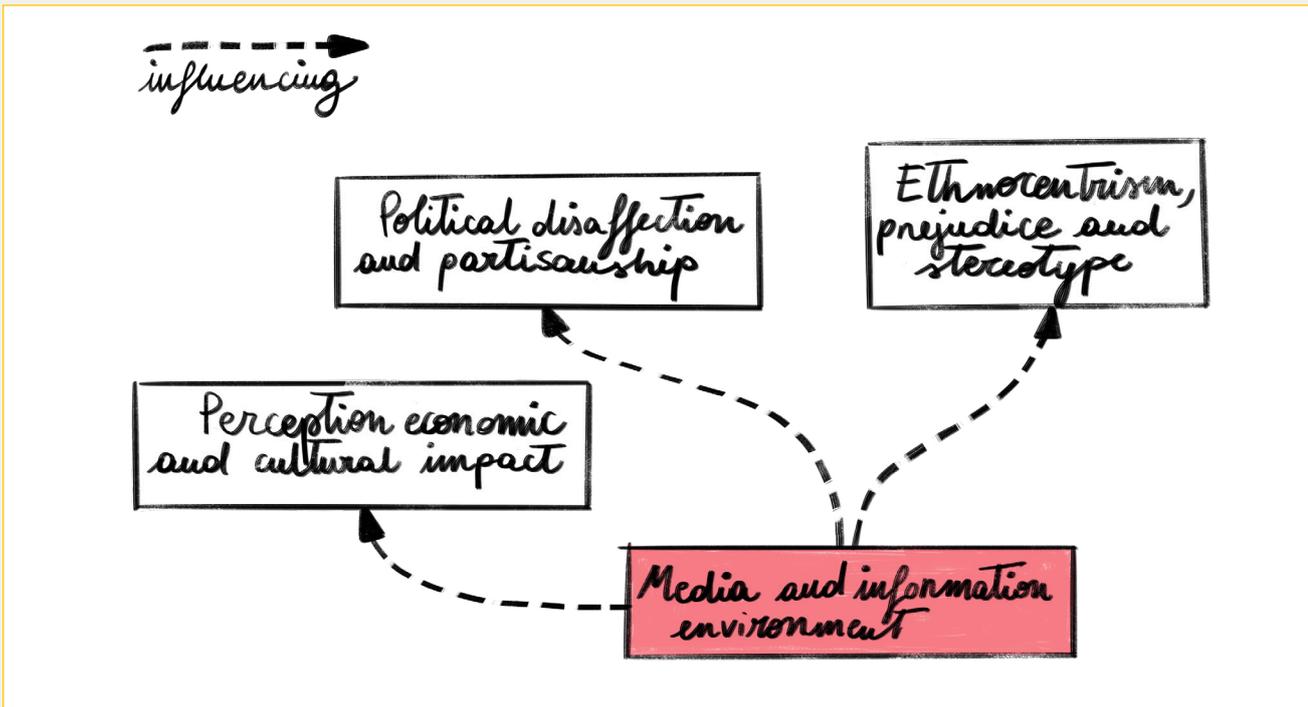
### Mass media and information environment

The modes of communicating information related to migration can set the direction and the tone of the overall public debate and the information environment have a significant impact on the general population attitude towards migration. (Dempster & Hargrave, 2017). Media provides to people information that is crucial for shaping their opinions about migration, and, in arrival countries, this information is often framed in a way that puts migration under a negative light, focusing on aspects that can be considered threats (Allen et al., 2019). In the words of Hainmueller & Hopkins, (2014): "How the media portray immigrants—and which immigrants they portray—matters".

As a matter of fact, the above-mentioned factors that contribute to shaping native citizens' vision of migration, are often, in turn, influenced by the media and the public debate.

To start, research shows how news coverage can influence the perception of migration by portraying the phenomenon differently in terms of dimension of the impact (e.g. crisis, national emergency, human phenomenon etc. ) and in terms of positive or negative connotation (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014). Moreover,

Figure 8. Influence of media on other factors.



there are some expedients used by the media to give a specific connotation of migration and some of them are the dehumanisation of migrants and refugees, the importance of numbers that brings to privilege quantitative aspects of the phenomenon over the qualitative and explicative ones, and finally the use of topic-related terminology but in an imprecise way (Dempster & Hargrave, 2017). As already mentioned, the economic and cultural concerns can become predominant based on the given perspectives where individuals from different cultures are threats or not (Dempster & Hargrave, 2017).

Secondly, it has been noted how in some cases the role of media has been crucial in grounding negative attitudes towards migration and migrants through stereotypes, expression of prejudice or ethnocentrism. This influence of media on citizens' stereotypes towards migration is particularly determinant when addressing specific immigrant groups during specific time frames (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014).

Finally, causal evidence demonstrates that misinformation about immigrants' characteristics significantly affects people's policy preferences, indicating that information treatments causally impact immigration policy preferences. (Abascal et al., 2021; Grigorieff et al., 2020).

In some cases factual information is used to substantiate existing beliefs and this might result in a purposeful selection of facts that validate an existing misperception about the phenomenon (Abascal et al., 2021).

In conclusion, the media and information play a central role, not only because they have influence on

the public perception of migration, but also because, as shown in Figure 8, they have a significant impact on the other factors (Figure 5). This influence is exercised through the careful selection and dissemination of information within the public debate.

### Public debate about migration and migration policy

In the previous section the factors influencing native citizens' opinions on migration have been explained, in the attempt to answer to the RQ 1, What are the factors currently shaping citizens' opinions about migration and migration policies?. Between the four main factors identified, the one represented by the media resulted in being particularly influential, especially in connection with the role that media play in the public debate about migration. Therefore in this section the dynamics and actors in this context will be explored.

The topic of migration increased its relevance in the public debate since our society became more and more multicultural. Furthermore, the public debate about migration has the capacity to spark emotional and ideological reactions and engage with political interests and institutions bringing to an extensive media coverage on the topic (Ihlebaek & Endresen Thorseth, 2017; Ruhs et al., 2019).

The media, especially the news, have traditionally served as a vital platform for the public debate, underpinned by a perceived social contract between democracy and journalism, signifying a mutual reliance (Ihlebaek & Endresen Thorseth, 2017).

Moreover, mass media functions as the primary means of communication connecting the public with the realm of politics (Boswell, 2009). This means that

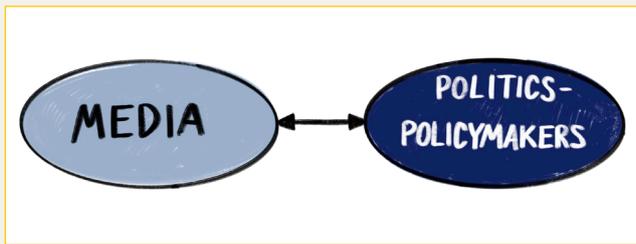


Figure 9. Interdependency of media and politics.

media and politics are interdependent as shown by the connection between them in Figure 9.

A third significant participant in this context contributing to shaping the public discourse is the research. (Ruhs et al., 2019).

Research, media, and politics are highly correlated and influence each other in a causal way as represented in Figure 10, and their role in the public debate about migration is decisive. Their interrelationship makes it difficult to have a clear understanding of the actual influence that these three stakeholders have on each other (Ruhs et al., 2019).

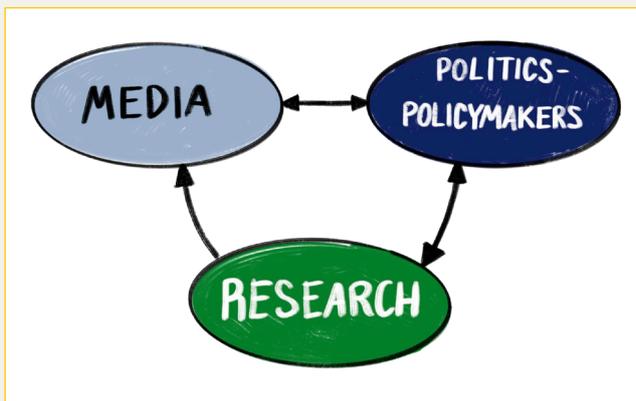


Figure 10. Research, media, and politics are highly correlated and influence each other.

Looking into the public debates, it is frequent to encounter contributions from social science, especially when discussing migration policies (Balch & Balabanova, 2011). Exploring the role of research in the public debate would also partially answer the RQ 3, What is the role of expert knowledge in the process of informing of citizens?. Expert knowledge is frequently used to support different perspectives in these discussions, particularly in areas of uncertainty and risk and when the matter is contentious and critical (Boswell, 2009, 2019; Boswell et al., 2011) and we already established that the dynamics of the public debate influence citizens opinion formation.

The way in which this knowledge is utilised, however, leads to a paradox. On one hand, there is the tendency to oversimplify and dramatise the information in the political debate, in the words of Boswell (2009) 'dumbing down'. On the other hand, expert knowledge is frequently pointed out in the debate as fundamental to frame migration (Balch & Balabanova, 2011).

The public debate is indeed characterised by simplification and the tendency of portraying information in a sensational way. However this does not mean that the expert knowledge is not present, it is simply subjected to a selective utilisation to support specific positions or adapt to media-imposed criteria (Boswell, 2009).

Political salience plays an important role in the selection of what type of expert knowledge gets selected for the public debate by those involved in the debate to gain consensus. In this case research has the role of 'substantiating' knowledge in the debate to provide legitimacy to specific political instances (Boswell, 2019).

Another way in which knowledge is selected and consequently used is based on its presumed authority (e.g., preferring quantitative over qualitative data due to the idea that they convey objectivity and versatility across context). This in some extent resonates with the function of 'substantiating' research, but it takes advantage of the epistemic authority that can be claimed for different pieces of academic knowledge (Boswell, 2019). Epistemic authority is also used to claim more relevance of resources over others to create hierarchies of expertise (Balch & Balabanova, 2011). These are both ways in which political actors use epistemic authority to leverage their own (Boswell, 2009).

It has been established, then, that research plays a role in shaping public discourse and influences public perceptions in various ways. However, this influence is not direct, as the majority of the public does not engage directly with research materials, despite the intentions of researchers. Instead, a significant portion of the public relies on mass media as their primary source of information. Consequently, for research findings to have an impact, they must be presented in a manner that captures the interest and attention of the media (Allen et al., 2019). Matters considered political as migration tend to naturally spark the interest of media, however the amount of information provided by the academic world needs to be filtered to be digested by the general public (Balch & Balabanova, 2011). The knowledge on migration is more effectively adapted for the audience when it is shaped in convincing narratives (Allen et al., 2019). These narratives are often used in the media to interpret political interests, in areas of uncertainty as it is migration (Balch & Balabanova, 2011). Narratives are crucial because they represent ready-to-consume information that are particularly convenient when people do not inform themselves independently due to not having enough interest, time, or resources (Allen et al., 2019).

### The Roles of Narratives in Shaping Migration Debates

The literature analysed until this moment showed how the expert knowledge is in fact present in the public debate but in the process of informing of citizens this

knowledge is mediated by the narratives shaped in the public debate.

In the context of political science, a narrative is a form of storytelling and cognitive structuring that helps individuals and groups make sense of their political reality. It is a tool for understanding and interpreting political events, shaping our perceptions of political reality, and influencing our actions in response to these events. Narratives are used both on an individual level and by collective units like nations or groups (Patterson & Monroe, 1998).

In the public debate about migration and migration policy narratives are oftentimes the shape in which scientific knowledge reaches native citizens (Allen et al., 2019; Balch & Balabanova, 2011; Boswell, 2009). Figure 11 shows how the flow of information starts from the research to be then selected and shaped into narratives before finally arriving to citizens.

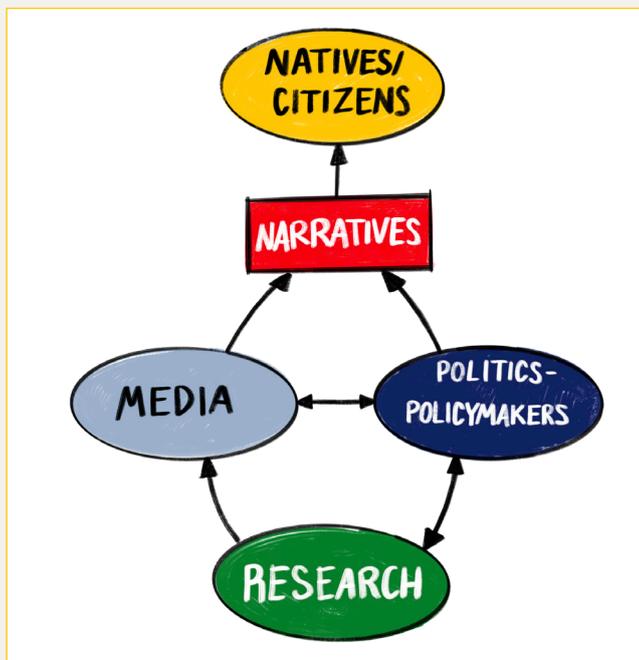


Figure 11. Flow of information from the research to the citizens.

### Narrative for sense-making and framing of the situation

Media and politics frequently use narratives to make sense of the issue and frame it to provide clarity. To explain this process better Balch & Balabanova, (2011) used the Cynefin framework to show how expertise and scientific knowledge are used in the public debate to frame migration. The Cynefin framework shows different ways of conceiving and making sense of situations and the consequent actions taken to deal with those situations. The framework, that is represented in Figure 12, distinguishes five different domains based on cause-and-effect relationships. Among these domains in the four sections of the Figure – known, knowable, complex, and chaotic – the situation can be assessed and the actions suitable to that context defined. The fifth domain, termed “disorder,” comes into play when it’s uncertain which

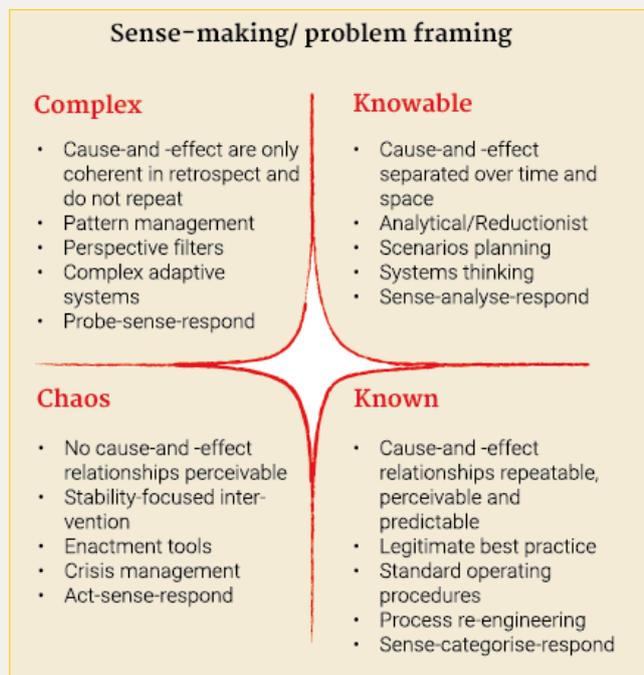


Figure 12. The domains of the Cynefin framework in the adaptation of Balch & Balabanova (2011).

of the other four domains is the most relevant and it is represented by the white space in the centre of Figure 12 (Kurtz & Snowden, 2003).

In this specific case the narratives provide a sense-making of the phenomenon, migration, and the consequence is that through this framing the public derive a series of expected actions that need to be pursued in order to have control over the situation of migration (Balch & Balabanova, 2011).

The expected positioning of migration is in the complex domain (Balch & Balabanova, 2011), where our knowledge has certain limits. In this ‘complex’ domain, current analytical tools fall short, and we can only understand events logically after they occur, a concept known as “retrospective coherence” by Kurtz & Snowden (2003). Existing expertise is not enough; we require new ways to gather information and create knowledge. Nevertheless, by studying past patterns and implementing innovative research methods, we might be able to shift the issue into the ‘knowable’ domain (Balch & Balabanova, 2011; Kurtz & Snowden, 2003).

However what frequently happens with migration is that it is framed either as belonging to the knowable domain or to the chaos one (Balch & Balabanova, 2011).

In the case of migration framed as known or knowable, the objective is to communicate that is a phenomenon that can be managed and regulated, heavily relying on knowledge to take action. Narratives on the opposite side of the spectrum frame migration as belonging to the domain of chaos, with the consequence of considering actions in the realm of

crisis management as an adequate response to the situation. In both cases this is a simplification of the nature of the phenomenon, that does not consider both the potential and the limits of the knowledge (Balch & Balabanova, 2011).

### **Narratives for simplification and knowledge selection**

The act of simplifying while making sense of the nature of migration is part of the tendency present in the public debate of preferring certainty over uncertainty, to give the impression of control over the situation. However this can imply pursuing actions that contribute to building a system not resilient enough to cope with the actual complexity and unpredictability of migration efficiently (Balch & Balabanova, 2011).

The overall debate results are then simplified despite the presence of knowledge coming from research (Boswell, 2009). The expert knowledge is chosen based on its capability to substantiate the supported framing, and this choice is per se “deeply subjective and political” (Balch & Balabanova, 2011).c Narratives in this sense are a way in which politician select expert research to support their position (Boswell, 2019).

### **Politicisation and polarisation of the narratives**

This demonstrates that the narratives currently present in the public debate are highly politicised even with the presence of information coming from research (Balch & Balabanova, 2011). In particular, when talking about migration the public debate tends to be polarised and driven by emotions (Allen et al., 2019). The political polarisation, combined with an information environment that provide a huge variety of possible sources, especially thanks to internet and social media, have as consequence the production of material that tries to match the audience by providing confirmation for prior ideas (Allen et al., 2019), and by having a sensationalist approach to the information (Dempster & Hargrave, 2017).

### **Media-friendly narratives**

Driven by a desire to sustain the attention of their readers or viewers, mass media select the knowledge to comply with media-friendly criteria, creating spectacular and emotionally charged stories, but also original or conflictual ones (Boswell, 2009). Simplification and visual representations of data are also means to provide media-friendly narratives (Balch & Balabanova, 2011)

### **The role of emotions in narratives**

The emotions also play a role in the narratives about migration, which is a topic that naturally tends to raise emotional resonance (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014). In particular negative feelings such as anxiety could bring people to look for information that back up their current ideas (Allen et al., 2019), therefore the emotions are often used by media’s and politics’ narratives to trigger people’s reactions.

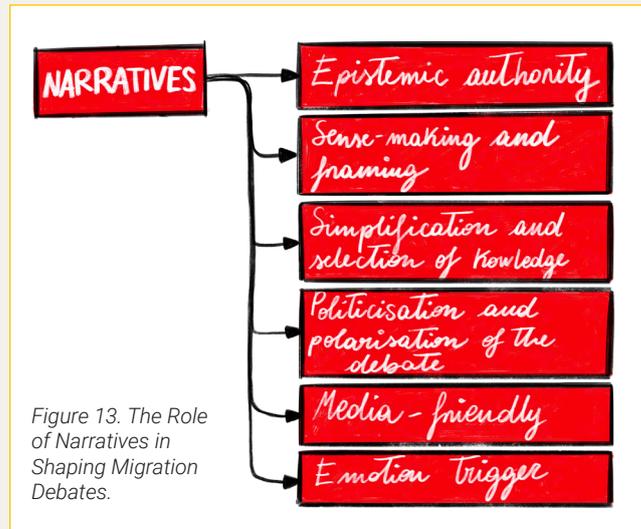


Figure 13. The Role of Narratives in Shaping Migration Debates.

It happens often with the use of narrative that portray migration as a threat, that can provoke reactions that are not necessarily proportionate to the actual entity of the threat but can also be linked to personal feelings of the recipients (Dempster & Hargrave, 2017).

In Figure 13 a summary of the roles of narratives in shaping migration debates that have just been explained. The first role of narratives shown in the Figure is the one to convey epistemic authority. In combination with the knowledge taken from research and depending on how the narrative portrays this knowledge, a position in the debate can be claimed as more valid than others due to an allegedly greater epistemic authority of the source. Then above there is sense-making and framing that refer to the process of defining the entity and nature of migration in different ways based on the narrative used. While simplification and selection of the knowledge refers to the necessity of translating research knowledge into narrative that can be more easily understood. However when the selection of the knowledge is driven by political interests then the narratives contribute to the politicisation and polarisation of the debate. The fact that narratives are politicised and therefore create a lot of noise and discussions align with the objective to make them media friendly. Media friendly is intended more comprehensible but also that aim for sensationalism. This type of communication exploits the emotional resonance of the topic and even amplifies it.

### **Narratives and research in migration policy**

Another important role played by narratives together with the knowledge coming from research is shaping migration policy, offering distinct lenses through which policy problems are framed and decisions are made. Narratives have a significant influence on migration policymaking, they are employed to frame migration in a way that argues for certain policy preferences and influence the policy discussion (Boswell et al., 2011). They draw upon expert knowledge, which role goes beyond the mere process of reporting research

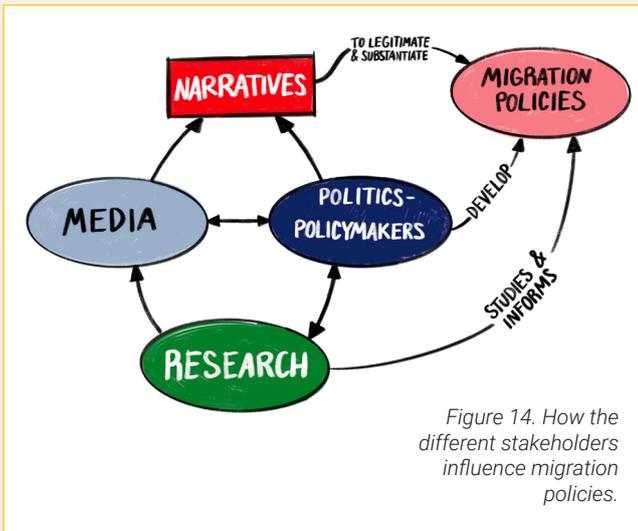


Figure 14. How the different stakeholders influence migration policies.

findings, but it can actively contribute to decision-making processes (Kraler, 2023).

Expert knowledge on the other hand is also essential in the development of policy narratives in the context of migration. This knowledge serves as the foundational basis for policy narratives (Boswell et al., 2011) and can have a symbolic function as well. Boswell (2008) argues that within this symbolic function two alternatives can be individuated. The first is a legitimising function, a way to provide validity and improve the credibility of the interested parties and strengthen their authority in specific policy domains. The second one is defined as substantiating function, meaning using the expert knowledge to support policy preferences, and it is often conducted by using specific sources that could play in favour of a specific political position in case of contestation (Boswell, 2019). In Figure 14 it is possible to see how the different stakeholders influence migration policies and in particular the legitimating and substantiating function of narratives in migration policymaking.

Another driver of the policy narratives in the processes of policymaking as the narratives in the public debate

that rotate around migration, are the media. The mass media assumes a pivotal role in shaping the political salience and impact of various issues. Additionally, it functions as the primary means for communication between the public and the realm of politics (Boswell, 2009).

### Migration policy impact on native citizens and migrant

It might sound obvious to state that migration policies influence migration as a phenomenon and consequently affect migrants' lives. A less direct group affected by migration policies are the native citizens, or non-migrant. Both groups and their connections to migration policy are represented in Figure 15. For this reason, one of the PACES project objectives is to involve multiple participants in the migration policy conversation to guarantee the efficiency of policies. Nevertheless, outside the PACES context this rarely happens, especially with migrants. Their role is crucial in this conversation, because it is their behaviour and response to policies that often defines the effectiveness of them. Moreover the migration policies are not the only policies affecting migration and migrants' lives, other realms of public policy can have an influence too, such as the ones regarding education, labour market and so on (Haines, 2013).

On the other side little research has been done on the role of the non-migrants in shaping the migration policy discussion (PACES consortium, 2022) even though migration policies have effects on them too (Haines, 2013).

This lack of involvement of people in the migration policy conversation is one of the aspects that brings to migration policy inefficiency (Haines, 2013).

In the social science field different research has been conducted to assess the discrepancies between the goals of national immigration policy and the actual results on the long term and it seems that this gap is wide and growing wider. Migratory pattern seems to be driven by forces out of the control of government, that through policies definitely have influence over them, but

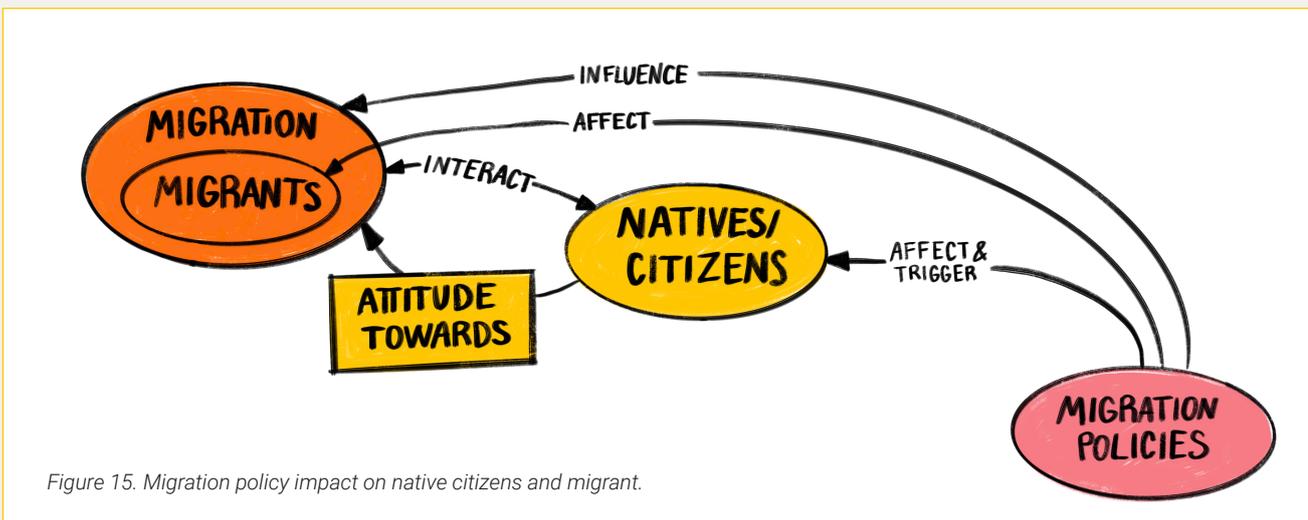


Figure 15. Migration policy impact on native citizens and migrant.

not always in the intended directions (Castles, 2004). The world of public policy is complex, with multiple facets and layers, and it is often dysfunctional. It is crucial to evaluate how policies operate at the practical level, particularly in the context of migration. Anyhow, it is important to keep into account that evaluating the performance of migration policies can be challenging due to the long-term nature of migration, where short-term time frames may not accurately reflect the true success or failure of a policy (Haines, 2013). It follows that, if migration policies are tied to a short-term vision this could lead to their likely failure that is intended "when a policy does not achieve its stated objectives" (Castles, 2004).

### 2.3 Theoretical relevance and mapping the relations

The literature provided an idea of who are other stakeholders in the debate and how all the actors relate to each other and to the native citizens. This facilitated future explorations on how the different dynamics and behaviours affect the experience of native citizens. As it is possible to see in the generated map of the public debate in Figure 16, native citizens are mainly receivers of information or affected by policies, they do not have an active role in the public debate. Migrants and migration are in a similar situation and neither of the two have influence over the direction of migration policies. From this map it is also possible to notice

what is the current flow of information from research to the citizens: the knowledge goes from the research to the media and the politics to be then shaped into narratives that are the way in which it reaches the citizens.

To better define the relevance of the knowledge acquired through the literature review for the project, the findings have been put in relation with the research questions.

RQ1 **What are the factors currently shaping citizens opinion about migration and migration policies?**

From the literature review we individuated four main factors shaping citizens' attitude towards migration. These are visible in the map in Figure 16 between the balloon of native citizens and migration/migrants and specifically are the following:

- People's perception of the economic and cultural impact of migration
  - Ethnocentrism, Prejudice and Stereotypes
  - Political Disaffection and Partisanship
- Media and information environment influence

The role of information environment appears to be predominant, since it also plays a significant role in influencing the other factors. Consequently, the focus of the literature review shifted to looking into the stakeholders and dynamics of public debate, mapped

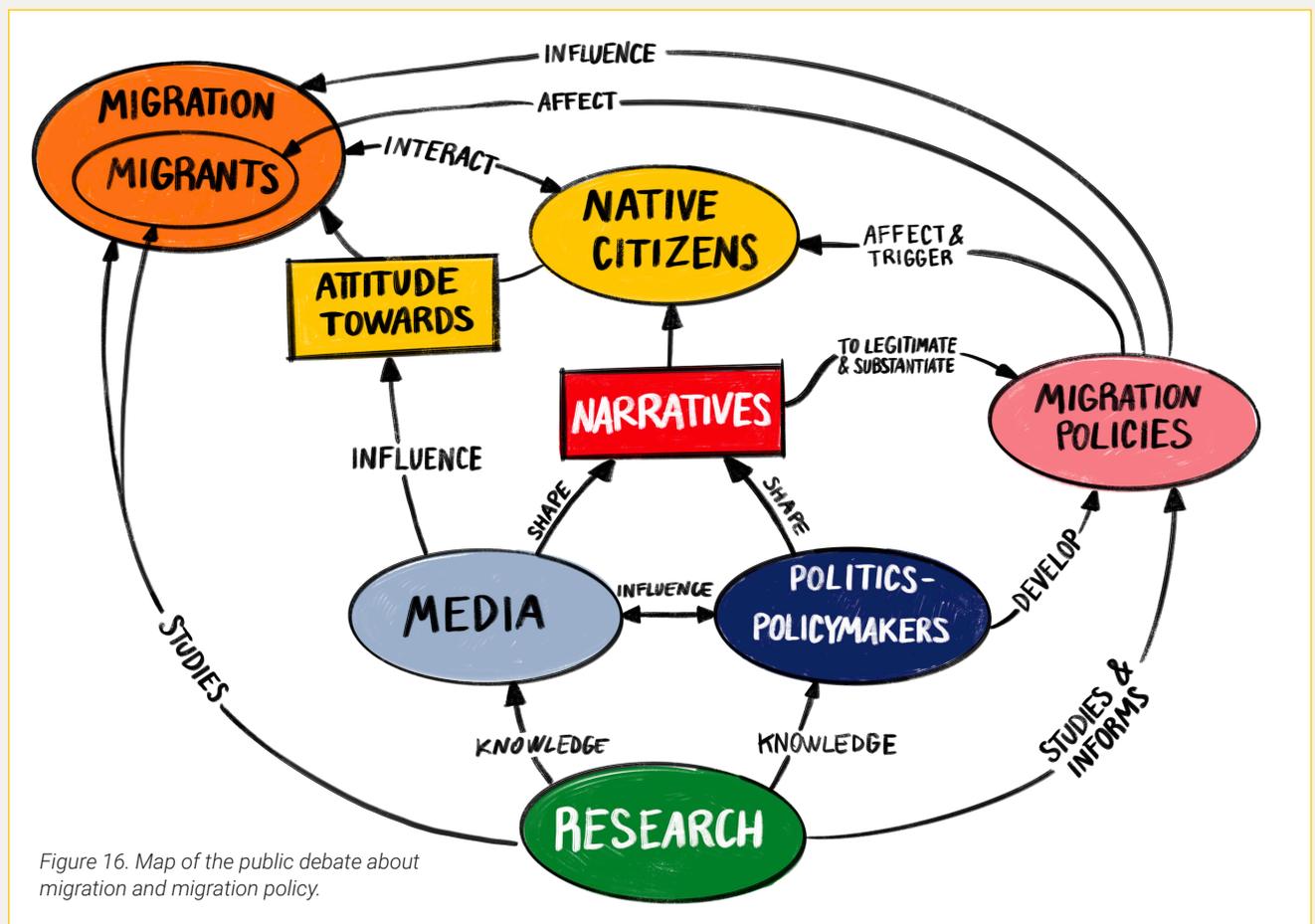


Figure 16. Map of the public debate about migration and migration policy.

in the figure, to see exactly how and in what shape information reaches people.

In this context we can observe how media and politics are interdependent and together with research/expert knowledge they are crucial for the debate since they are the ones contributing to the creation of content in the debate. Expert knowledge, often from the social sciences, is frequently used in public discussions about migration and migration policies, especially in areas of uncertainty and contention. However this knowledge is used selectively through narratives that can shape the public perception.

Narratives are responsible for:

- *Sense/making and problem framing of migration in the public debate*
- *Simplification and over-simplification of uncertainty and complexity*
- *Politicisation and polarisation of the debate*
- *Establishing legitimacy and authority triggering emotional resonance (also in the attitude of natives towards migration)*

The consequence of this type of narratives is a representation of migration that remove the complexity of the phenomenon. This is often done with the aim of having a simplified representation of the situation, to give the impression of clarity and control over the issue. However, this could be the premise underlying the construction of a system to respond to migration, "a system that is poorly designed, rigid or vulnerable to collapse" (Balch & Balabanova, 2011).

RQ2

### **How do native citizens experience the process of informing themselves?**

This question has been explored mainly through the interviews of the target group, that can be found later in the report. Nonetheless with the literature review it was possible to create a picture of the overall context in which this is happening. Seeing where native citizens are positioned in the map in Figure 16 allows to have a clearer idea of the experience of citizens in informing themselves and the perception of the other stakeholders

RQ3

### **What is the role of the research in the process of informing of citizens?**

Currently research is extensively used in the public debate as demonstrated by its presence and relevance in the map. Nevertheless, the way in which the expert knowledge is used in such context has some limitations.

These limitations are:

- *The public rarely employ research in a direct way but relies on intermediaries* (Allen et al., 2019)
- *The intermediaries are politics and media* (Allen et al., 2019; Balch & Balabanova, 2011)
- *The three key stakeholders—research, media, and politics—are highly interconnected and influence each other in complex ways* (Allen et al., 2019; Ruhs et al., 2019)
- *Knowledge needs to be compelling, by highlighting sensational aspect, and to be simplified to be accessible to the public and to give the illusion of certainty over uncertainty* (Balch & Balabanova, 2011; Boswell et al., 2011).

For these reasons expert knowledge is often turned into narratives (Balch & Balabanova, 2011)

- *Narratives derived from scientific knowledge are usually used both by media and in the policy discussions with similar aims: sense-making or framing and authority or legitimacy* (Balch & Balabanova, 2011; Boswell, 2008, 2009, 2019)
- *Framing an issue in a certain domain is deeply political* (Balch & Balabanova, 2011)



## Chapter 3

# Framing the role of PACES

The previous chapter provided an overview of the public debate on migration, leading to the identification of themes and complexities. To proceed effectively, it was essential to prioritise specific aspects to support PACES providing their knowledge to citizens. Therefore, in this chapter the problem space will be narrowed down by defining the role and positioning of PACES within the context of the public debate. To achieve this, a creative session was conducted involving other designers to gain external perspectives. This session resulted in a more specific area of focus within the public debate and generated some questions to guide possible interventions in this context.

The previous chapter has helped to provide an overview of the functioning of the public debate on migration and the behaviour and relationships of the various stakeholders. The representation of this information in the map has helped to provide a helicopter view of the context, but it has also highlighted the need to better define an area of intervention in the system.

To do so a creative session was conducted with the objective to identify strategic points for intervention within a complex system, such as the considered one, where PACES could intervene with small actions in one specific area that can lead to substantial transformations throughout the entire system (Bijl-Brouwer & Malcolm, 2020). The strategic area of intervention individuated in this session has then the scope of and creating a first direction for the design phase.

The creative session offered the advantage of an external perspective in two ways:

It provided an initial validation of the generated map. While the participants were not experts in the field, they could offer their opinions on its effectiveness and judge its - comprehensibility.

The participants brought an external viewpoint to the potential role of PACES within the system. This allowed them to identify possibilities that might not have been apparent to me or other PACES researchers.

### 3.1 Structure of the session

The creative session lasted roughly one hour and involved six design master's students. The creative session focused on re-defining the problem proposed by the project, in this case the research question, and it was an adaptation of the creative session "restating the problem" from Road Map for Creative Problem Solving Techniques (Heijne & van der Meer, 2019). In the session I played both the role of the problem-owner and the facilitator.

The agenda of the session was as follows:

- Explanation of the topic and of the "problem"
- Clarify the purpose of the process



Figure 17. Participants discussing the map and reflecting on the area of intervention.



Figure 18. Participants writing restatements of the given problem

- Select together the area of intervention
- Write multiple restatement of the problem
- Select together the area of intervention

In the explanation the participants received the map generated through literature review, representing the public debate about migration, together with an explanation of the topic.

The map served as a trigger for exploring the workings of the public debate about migration and migration policy, as well as the relationships among various stakeholders as it is shown in Figure 17. Looking at it the participants were asked to narrow down the project to a smaller section of the map (the highlighted one in the figure 19).

Subsequently, participants were tasked with analysing the main research question and coming up with restatement or more detailed follow-up questions that addressed the specific area of intervention they had previously identified, while remaining consistent with the initial research question. Two different rounds were made to stimulate unfamiliar options (Heijne & Van der Meer, 2019) and after discussing in group, different options were proposed. Following group discussions, different options were proposed and subsequently grouped into main themes.

The session was recorded, and the results were analysed by reviewing the identified themes based on the participants' restatement. Then the reviewed themes were turned into possible directions for PACES to intervene and for each of them a final restatement was written in the form of a question.

More detail on the steps of the session and the results can be found in Appendix B.

### 3.2 Area of intervention and PACES role

During the discussion generated by the map the participants agreed that the area of intervention should encompass the flow of information between research and citizens, as highlighted in Figure 19. The reasons behind this decision were mainly two:

- The capabilities and the knowledge that PACES already have, coming from the academic world they already hold the knowledge and the willingness to transmit it
- Idea of starting from a small intervention that can then be scaled, by focusing mainly on the way in which information reaches citizens rather than intervening directly in dynamics intrinsic of the public debate.

The other outcomes of the session were also analysed, resulting in the restatement of the research question being grouped into different directions for PACES' intervention within the selected area. For each

direction, a summarising question was defined.

**Infrastructuring the debate:**

- Focusing on the way in which information reaches citizens, and which role could PACES play in that process. Building a proper structure to enable the public to reach a more in-depth understanding.
  - Explore connections with existing structures or changes in media dynamics.
- Question: *How can PACES become the connecting infrastructure between citizens and expert knowledge about migration and migration policy?*

**Reducing hierarchy within the Debate:**

- Dilemma of who set the agenda of the topics to discuss
  - Address the dilemma of who sets the agenda for topics under discussion.
  - Tackle power imbalances and hierarchy in influencing the public debate.
  - Prevent the exclusion of migrant and native citizens from the conversation.
- Question: *How can PACES promote exchange of knowledge that reduces power imbalance and hierarchy in the debate?*

**Providing understanding of complexity:**

- Assist individuals in navigating the complexity.
  - Simplify expert knowledge without oversimplification.
  - Address communication modes, including the language used by researchers.
- Question: *How can PACES provide the citizens with "tools" to navigate through the complexity of the context/reduce uncertainty?*

**Building trust and relationships between people and PACES:**

- Approach people with divers beliefs and ideas
  - Communicate reliability and understanding
- Question: *How can PACES become a trustworthy source*

*of knowledge about migration and migration policy for natives/citizens regardless of their ideology/political view?*

**Mitigating Politicization and Ideology:**

- Engage with different ideologies without creating conflicts.
  - Overcome stereotypes and biases.
- Question: *How can PACES encourage citizens to get rid of their existing biases and opinions while acquiring new information about migration and migration policy?*

**Caring about migration and migrants:**

- Foster interest in information about migration that often concerns only migrants.
  - Directly connect native citizens to migrants.
- Question: *How can PACES encourage citizens in taking an active role in getting informed about migration and migration policy?*

**Intervening in the information process:**

- Provide guidance in the information process. Integrate with education.
  - Intervene in the information process through the media.
  - Demonstrate the validity and relevance of expert knowledge.
- Questions:
1. *How can PACES create a debate environment to better involve citizens and people in general?*
  2. *How can PACES disseminate information (about migration and migration policy) in the current public discussion in a way that efficiently reaches citizens?*

**Reflections on the role of PACES**

For this project phase, the "restating the project" technique was employed to further narrow down the problem space. It is worth noting that this technique is typically used as a starting point for the design phase. In this project, it was intentionally utilised beforehand to facilitate data collection in the subsequent phases by reducing the problem space, considering the complexity of the dynamics of the public debate.

For the same reason, the original technique was adapted for the project. Instead of concluding with a more precise new problem statement, it culminated in delineating various roles that PACES can play within a delimited area of intervention in the context of the public debate. The purpose of this phase in the project was purely transitional, aimed at facilitating the collection of data in a more focused manner in the subsequent phases.

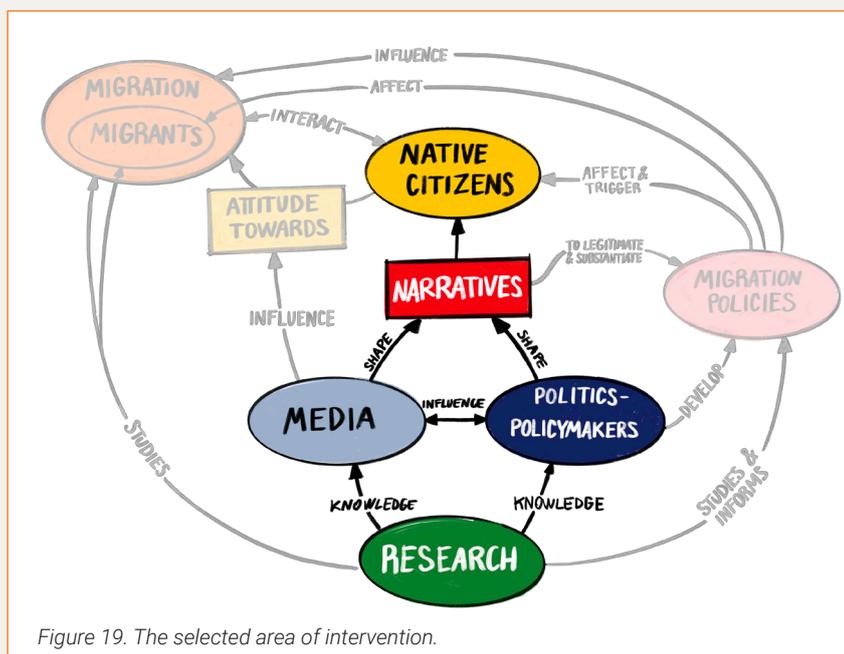


Figure 19. The selected area of intervention.



## Chapter 4

# Understanding the experience of native citizens

After acquiring a deeper understanding of the dynamics within the public debate and framing the area of intervention, this chapter delves into the subsequent phase of the project. The focus is gaining a better understanding of the experiences of native citizens, within the context under study, with a particular emphasis on addressing Research Question 2 (RQ2): “How do native citizens experience the process of informing themselves?”

To answer this question, I conducted qualitative research involving semi-structured interviews with a specific target group—Italian emerging adults. The outcomes of these interviews were subsequently analysed to derive insights that will inform future design directions

In the previous chapter, an area of intervention was identified on which to focus the research efforts. The selected area, visualised in Figure 19, represents the flow of information that goes from the research to the native citizens. From the literature review emerged how this flow is not direct and expert knowledge is often channelled by media and politics (Allen et al., 2019) and shaped into narratives.

Consequently, interviews were conducted with native citizens to understand their perception on the relationship between the public, if it aligns with the representation on the map, what their current practices for getting informed are, and how they experience this process.

## 4.1 Interviews structure

### Data collection method and sampling

Ten semi-structured interviews of about 30 minutes were conducted to investigate how native citizens experience the process of informing themselves (about migration and migration policies). All the interviews were conducted one-to-one with the researcher except for one of them, where two people have been interviewed together. An interview guide (that can be found in Appendix C) was used as an overarching structure but leaving space for in-depth explorations in interesting topics that were coming out during the interview. At the end of the interview, the interviewees were also asked to comment on a picture visualising the part of the public debate map that shows the area of intervention selected in the previous chapter, repropose here in Figure 20.

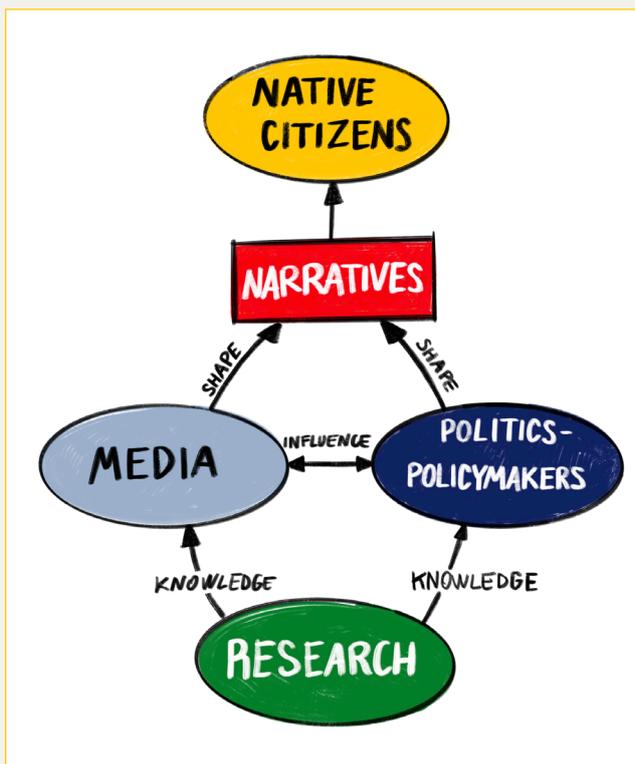


Figure 20. The area of intervention selected in the previous chapter.

The goal of the interview was to gain a better understanding of the citizens' experiences and perception of the public debate on migration and migration policies. However, the focus of PACES had to be narrowed down to a more specific group than European citizens to allow for an in-depth qualitative investigation. In addition, different groups may perceive the debate and the means of communication in different ways, so it was crucial to identify a more specific target group for the purpose of the subsequent design phase. The target group chosen is **Italian emerging adults**.

There are several reasons for selecting an Italian target group. Firstly, both me and the project lead of PACES, part of the supervisory team, are Italian. This allows for in-depth conversations and interactions with the target group, without having a language barrier and allows us to easily understand cultural, social, and political references.

Moreover, due to its position in the Mediterranean Sea, Italy has a long history of dealing with migration matters. In recent years the topic of migration has become increasingly present in the Italian media, with a good coverage in terms of quantity, but confirming its deficiency from a qualitative point of view (Musrò & Parmiggiani, 2022). Migration has been represented in the media mainly in relation to breaking news, dramatic events, without any other nuance (Musrò & Parmiggiani, 2022). It is also interesting to observe that Italy is the country in Europe with the largest gap between the percentage of non-EU migrants actually present in Italy and the estimated one (Valbruzzi, 2018). One of the reasons might be that the media narrative of migration treats the phenomenon not as a structural but as an emergency that often is described as an invasion (Musrò & Parmiggiani, 2022). Delving into the topic and establishing stronger connections between Italian native citizens and migration research can provide a deeper understanding of the effects. Shifting the focus towards the processes and dynamics of migration, by exploring expert knowledge in this area, could benefit Italian native citizens in understanding the phenomenon better.

There are several reasons for the decision to include emerging adults. The term emerging adults was coined by the psychologist Jeffrey Jensen Arnett in 2000 to describe the people between the ages of 18 and 29, who are too mature and conscious to be considered adolescents but still in an uncertain stage of life to be called young adults (Arnett, 2014). This particular period is characterised by the "feeling in-between" and having to make important life decisions that play a role in the process of forging their personal identities. Arnett (2014) defines five features that characterise this specific age and one of these is identity exploration. People in this age group are still figuring out different aspects of their lives, and identity is one of the most critical, thus they may be more sensitive to the topic

when it is brought up in the debate. The fact that they are still taking decisions might make them more open to a dialogue. The in-between feeling means that they are starting to take responsibility but do not feel completely adults. This might be reflected in their perception of the world, which is starting to become clearer, but they are still eager for new stimuli (Arnett, 2014). Finally, Arnett (2014) defines this as the age of possibilities, with a positive attitude towards life, which might make them less inclined to create negative informational environments.

Moreover, this specific age group has just started to approach adult matters and to deal with the larger society in an autonomous way. Therefore, together with the formation of their identities, they show an interest in defining their vision of the world around them. Not having a fixed image of the world in their heads makes them open to different perspectives.

In these interviews, there were a total of 10 respondents, evenly split between male and female participants. Among them, four were engaged in both work and studies, four were solely working, and two were exclusively focused on their studies.

### Data Analysis

In the analysis of the interview data, a systematic approach was employed to extract the rich insights provided by the participants. This process followed several key stages: Initial Coding: After transcribing the interviews, they were coded with an inductive approach, looking for patterns (Saldaña, 2021).

Pattern Identification: During the initial coding phase, patterns emerged and were identified during the process by grouping the codes

Re-Coding: Subsequently, the interviews underwent a re-coding process. This re-coding was based on the newly identified codes and patterns that emerged gradually during the initial transcription analysis. Category Formation: Following re-coding, the codes were organised and grouped into categories and subcategories, aligning with Saldaña's (2021) qualitative inquiry framework. Theme Extraction: From these categories, overarching themes were extracted to capture the essential insights.

From the themes, some main insight has been extrapolated. In Figure 20 it is possible to see the streamlined codes to theory model for qualitative inquiry adapted from Saldaña (2021), and in Figure 21 an example of the streamline adapted to the content of the interviews.

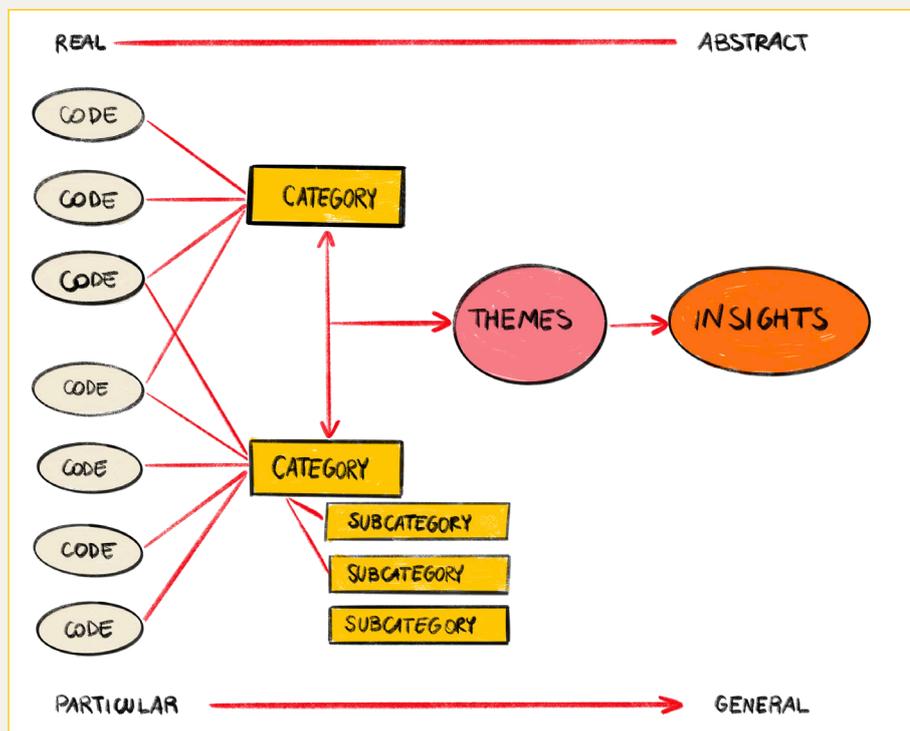
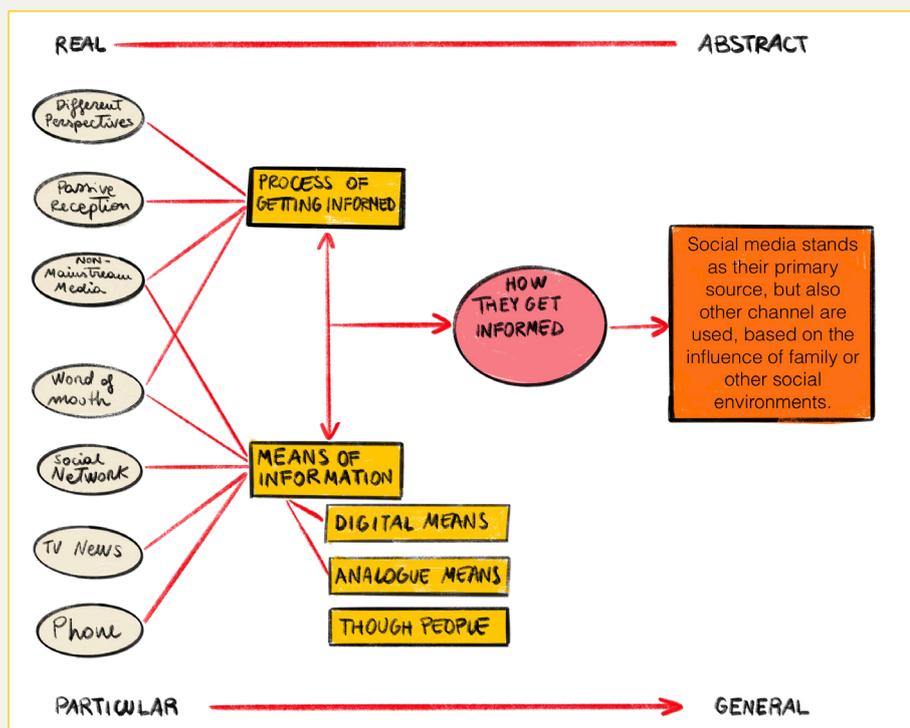


Figure 21 and 22. Streamlined codes to theory model for qualitative inquiry adapted from Saldaña (2021) and an example taken from the data analysis of the interviews.



## 4.2 Results

The interviewees were asked questions related to their process of information, the means, and the motivations that lead them to inform themselves. Then the interview continued on understanding how much they consider themselves as informed people, in particular about migration, politics and on which scale (local, national, international). Then the difficulties encountered while wanting to inform themselves were explored, together with the emotions and feelings that this process triggered them. Finally, the focus was moved to the public debate and their perceptions and desires about it.

The interviews were conducted in Italian; therefore, all the quotes are translated from the original Italian transcript. It is important to mention that I handled all translations myself, and I am not a professional translator.

From the analysis of the interviews, the following themes emerged.

### Values and priorities

#### *Impartiality, critical mindset and humanity*

From the interviews, different similarities emerged in values and priorities. Most of the participants highlighted the importance of getting informed (referring generally to being informed on the socio-political situation), almost defining it as the right thing to do. However, a lot of them also feel like they do not do it enough.

A strong value was given to impartiality, having sources, and fact checking. In some way it looked like they were aiming to find the objective version of the information to then get their own opinion about it ("In my opinion, it is more a question of reporting information as truthfully and as simply as possible, without going through what are inevitably also the thoughts of politics or ideology"). Most of them agreed in appreciating neutrality and transparency, and they also expected the media to adhere to this type of communication. If that happened or not, it influenced their way of evaluating the means of information.

Another insight that came up and that might look contradictory was the importance given to having a critical mindset when approaching information ("The thing that everyone should do in my opinion is to take the information 360 degrees and then make up your own mind and then come to your own conclusion, which may be right or wrong. But it is your conclusion."). They considered exploring different perspectives almost as a fundamental requirement to form their own opinion. On the contrary, those who appear to be static and never question their point of view should be criticised.

The appreciation of Italian emerging adults for looking for objectivity and using a critical mindset, provide a picture of this group as rigorous and not really inclined towards an ideological information environment.

However, another component that results to be positively considered by the Italian emerging adults, was the importance of looking at the human side of information and facts. This "need for humanity" in the debate was

twofold. On the one hand, the participants expressed a desire to know how facts and phenomena affect people's lives ("I mean, maybe one of the problems with the migrant stuff is that it seems distant"). On the other hand, by a more human debate they mean a debate that puts the dialogue between the various interlocutors more at the centre. In some ways, a more human-centered debate. It is interesting to note how the participants observed the lack of humanity in the debate and how this is confirmed by what stated in the literature, that is that in the media there is the tendency to dehumanise people refugees and migrants (Dempster & Hargrave, 2017).

### Perception of the debate

#### *Politicisation of the media and lack of*

These values and priorities just mentioned influenced the perception that the Italian emerging adults interviewed have of the public debate.

They recognise that migration is often mentioned in the Italian media, but mainly for what concerns numbers, news and most of the time in terms of catastrophic events ("They talk about migration through catastrophes. That is for them the event for which to talk about migration, probably, for the rest ciao."). What they perceive as missing is the interest and the focus on the stories of people and dynamics on how migration happens ("OK, we know when migrants arrive in Italy, when migrants die, but we know zero about how migrants are treated, there in Libya in the concentration camps they have to endure before making the long journey, etc.").

They perceive that in the media and in the political debate every information is given with an intention, that is never objective or impartial, and they get upset and confused when the news is portrayed in contrasting ways, because they struggle to understand what the reality of the fact is ("I also find inconsistencies between different sources. After a while I find that maybe the same thing is written differently here and there, I get annoyed. In the sense what is the true fact, what is the reality? If that gets on my nerves because, how is it possible that things are so different?"). This need for impartiality also reflects on the way they choose their sources of information, some of them mentioned that they use it (impartiality) as one of the criteria to assess the quality of the source.

A common thought among interviewees is that the lack of impartiality is due to political interventions in the public debate. They stated that media and politics influence each other, and that media became a powerful tool used by politicians but also with the power of influencing politics.

This was confirmed by the instrumental way in which politics uses migration. Migration is framed in the media in different ways to follow the consensus. The result is that the interviewees consider that, by trying to follow consensus, the politics of behaviour and statement about migration incoherent.

In particular, they pointed out how anger and prejudice in the debate are often used to leverage approval. And to do so, specific framings are used in the media to trigger reactions in the public ("a person X who does a

bad thing, if he comes from a country that is not Italian it is specified, if he comes from Italy it is not specified. [...] whereas maybe the positive thing I don't think they care so much about specifying the origin").

In the opinion of participants, these modalities of referring to migration have a role in the formation of prejudice that then people share ("I think mainstream information is much to blame for many prejudices that are shared by the majority of the Italian population").

One of the most mentioned ways to leverage prejudice is referencing a potential negative impact of migration on the economy of the country, and this triggers animosity against migration.

An interesting observation made by different participants is that even if the debate about migration is extremely politicised and polarised, they do not perceive the same in the debate in the "real world", i.e. conversations in their circle of acquaintances ("it is as if there is a discrepancy between the public debate and the actual political situation"). In general, it was recognised that the incoherence and discrepancies are also facilitated by the variety of possible sources of information that makes it difficult to orientate in the media. As result of this wide range of media and sources, they see the tendency of looking for validation of own opinions ("But I don't know, I think all people who search for things (information) eventually find the solution in what is closest to their own thinking"), and some of them admitted that in some situation that was their case too ("I'll probably be satisfied when I read that it's how I more or less think. Then yes, probably the right thing is to read more things").

#### *Pessimistic view of Italy*

When talking about their perception of the public debate, the Italian context was taken as reference.

Consequently, even though most of the considerations about the public debate about migration are already contextualised in Italy, some individuated characteristics of the debate were specifically connected to their perception of the country.

Overall, the sentiment towards the country and its socio-political situation were negative. The feeling of politics and media being strongly related were particularly highlighted when connected to the Italian context, and different participants specifically pointed out that this relationship comes with hidden interests or power games. This results in a great distrust for institutions and their actions.

One of the participants described how this distrust was also reflected in their willingness to keep themselves updated on the political situation. They felt disconnected to politics, that the inputs of citizens, like voting ("let's go vote and all that, but it's really hard for things to go your way, isn't it?") are not actually affecting the situation therefore they lost interest in being informed on these matters ("there is no cause and effect between what we do and what they do").

Especially for what concerns the discussions about

migration, some of the participants attribute the politicisation and polarisation to ideological issues intrinsic to Italian culture that bring the debate to be polarised.

In the opinion of one of the interviewees, this can be also attributed to a more generalised frustration and ignorance of Italian citizens that look for someone to blame. Another participant sustained that there is a general disregard for others' conditions, that Italians tend to focus on their own ("We (Italians) don't care much about the people who are worse off than we are, because everyone stays in their own little place and thinks about their own little.>").

From the vision of the Italian emerging adults interviewed about the Italian context, it is clear that they have a very negative perception of how the public debate in their country works. Most of them expressed the feeling that this has also to do with the fact that "Italy is a country of old people". An interviewee directly connected this to the use of populist modes of communication. Overall, they did not feel represented by politics, especially in terms of generation. They felt like since young people are a "minority" in Italy, then they are also not the designated recipients of the political discourse and actions.

#### *Perception of research: Trust and distance*

When asked about what role research had in their process of getting informed and in the overall debate about migration, all the participants agreed on the importance of having reliable sources to back up information ("I think that the source is important"; "Well, the sources matter for sure, they are the base. They tell you, you always must write the source"). The presence of sources seems to reassure them of the reliability of information, even if they do not check their validity ("In my opinion, the bibliography is also important [...] I want that it gives me, I don't say the studies, I mean I would never go and look at all of them, of course, but to say OK, what I am writing is someone studying it"; "I have never read scientific articles, but maybe just seeing some that cited scientific articles that I could then read if I wanted to [...], I trusted each one."; "I always take a look at the source in Instagram stuff. [...] Which I might not go and look at them. But the fact that they are there gives me confidence that the data is reliable.").

It is possible already to notice a common thread that appeared in several interviews, that is the trust in research. From the interviews, it is noticeable that they consider researchers as subjects that are more entitled of others to have an opinion on that topic. And the contact with these figures could help them in forming their own opinion ("I need to have some data, all neutral data, and then there maybe I can also reformulate my idea").

They think expert knowledge is an important tool to understand the phenomenon and its implications. One of the participants mentioned that already speaking with someone that studies migration would help in comprehending better ("By discussing with someone else who is for some reason more knowledgeable than me in a particular field, I can get an opinion that is

certainly more informed than mine on that topic there”).

Even if most of the people interviewed recognised the importance of research and of verifying information, only one of the interviewees stated that it was their habit to also check scientific resources when getting informed (“actually no, I never go directly to the source.”).

When questioned on the reasons for this, most of them attributed this behaviour to the lack of accessibility of research and the perceived distance of the academic world. For accessibility of research, they mainly referred to the comprehensibility of the knowledge coming from research.

As nicely phrased by one of the respondents, “In my opinion there is a problem with the scientific dissemination. Especially in Italy, and for some fields, it seems to me that things are made to be exclusionary, not to be accessible and understandable. The experts, of course, write for other experts that are from their own small field, and so they make it almost impossible to get to that information for those who are perhaps experts in other fields, or even for those who are not specialists”.

In most of the interviews, it was clearly stated that expert knowledge is often too complex to be understood and used to form an opinion on the topic. Hence, the distance from academia and research, especially since the effort and time required to access this type of knowledge outweighs the benefits that would be derived from it (“I rarely go directly to the source, because I don’t have time. And one might even have time. But it means that most of my free time will have to be spent on informing myself”). Nevertheless, another finding from the interviews is that they recognise that there are cases where it is clear that efforts are being made to make research more accessible to a wider audience, and they appreciate it. This happens also thanks to different modalities to communicate information. The ones that are considered more efficient by the respondents are visuals, graphs, video (“I realise how important it is to capture attention through perhaps a graph, a photo, a video and very few words. Then, if anything, one goes deeper.”), podcasts and through social media (“there’s this physics teacher on Instagram who applies physics to everyday life and explains the laws of physics to you, but in a really simple way. And I’ve spent whole days watching the videos”).

However, some interviewees pointed out a potential risk of making expert knowledge more accessible. In order to access a wider audience, it is indeed necessary to simplify and make the content more stimulating. This, however, could be done by selecting information that validates specific positions (“the problem with data is that you can’t even bring them all in, so then there is a risk of false objectivity”). Another risk that one of the emerging adults pointed out is the chance that the researcher gets influenced by the dynamics of the public debate and becomes more ideological (“There is, however, the possibility that the audience then widens, and risks becoming so exposed that it is then influenced by political interests and ideologies”).

## Why they get informed

In the previous paragraph the perception of the public debate of the Italian emerging adults interviewed was explained. During the interviews it was also explored their role in the debate, starting from the reasons that motivate them to look for information, generally and about migration.

We have already established how all of them consider being informed on a variety of topics important, however this does not always happen. But when it happens, the motivations are different. In some interviews came out how they perceived getting informed as a necessary aspect of becoming adult and getting more responsibilities (“Maybe certainly as I grow older I actually have more and bigger responsibilities, for example a possible family where my possible child’s upbringing and so on, are influenced by politics, and all these choices. Indeed, it would be stupid not to inform oneself and not to have this interest, for example in politics”).

For some it was almost perceived as a social pressure of being informed, to be able to discuss certain topics in environments like the job place (“But I have noticed a little bit the social pressure, that growing up in a way then these become the things to talk to people about. I especially noticed it a lot, having to deal with my boss who is older than me”). Another type of pressure comes from the fear of knowing less than the people in your circle (“I often feel like a less informed person than the people around me”), and in both cases there is the fear of eventually being judge for that (“If you don’t keep up to date, then you end up looking like crap, so it’s more like social pressure to keep up to date”).

Genuine interest is another reason why the interviewees looked for information about a specific topic, and it could be pre-existing interest (“political topics that interest me maybe, or elections that are also important to me, that also concern me, maybe I’ll get a little more information”) or a temporary curiosity that can be generated by events or facts with a particular resonance on the media (“I don’t know, even situations like the war in Ukraine. That I had informed myself, I had seen many things. [...] I was informed a lot at the beginning, but then it kind of faded a little bit, in the sense that I don’t inform myself as much as before”). Another driver is the personal involvement in a situation or the involvement of someone close. One of the respondents migrated to another country for a period of time, and they realised that this brought them to be of course well-informed on migration and its legislation in the destination country, information that they never looked for in Italy (“when, for example, I was in Australia, I was much more informed, for example about migration, because I was a migrant, so I was informed about, for example, all the things I was supposed to do”). A similar idea was shared by another interviewee that imagined that in the case in which they or someone close had to migrate, that would have constituted a push to be more aware of what that entails (“Probably if it concerned me, a family member or myself with my family I have to escape from a situation... I don’t know, I mean surely there I would go to a lot more trouble to inform myself,

to know what I can, what I cannot, what is right, what is not right, what the law implies, does not imply, prohibits or obliges?").

Finally, the passive exposition to information is another reason why the respondents get information. Only the fact of being on social media already provides you some facts and news, without even putting the effort to look for them.

### How they get informed

But how do the Italian emerging adults inform themselves? Mostly through digital means, and the main ones are social media ("my first form of information is social networks"). But other means were named, such as AI. ChatGPT resulted in being used by different respondents, however not fully trusting the truthfulness of the information given. Other means mentioned were generically internet and the news section of the smartphone, podcasts, and YouTube videos. These types of tools to find information were mostly mentioned since they are convenient to access through smartphones or other devices of daily use.

Even so, some analogue channels were also mentioned. The most popular between the interviewees was the television, but mainly when being together with their parents and family ("I inform myself mainly through the news. I still live with my parents, very often we watch it at lunch and dinner"), and not something that they would choose autonomously. Similarly goes for other types of content broadcasted in television with an informative scope, with the difference that they resulted to increase the interest on specific themes. The radio, on the other hand, was named as a system to get news and information independently that some of them enjoyed. Finally, newspapers, mostly in the online version, were mentioned as tools for deepening the knowledge on specific events or facts.

Family and friends and in general word of mouth resulted to be also particularly relevant, at least to spark interest in a topic or to generate discussion and trigger the questioning of their own opinions ("And a lot is done by education, mainly family education, in the sense that the family unit is really the basis, I think [...] that's how kids develop a consciousness").

### Barriers

Different barriers were identified in the process of getting informed. A barrier is intended for anything that could prevent people from getting informed or that could make the process difficult or unpleasant. Different barriers were attributed to the participants themselves. It is interesting to know that many of the participants felt like they are not putting enough effort in getting informed ("For me it is very relevant to be informed. I do little, I would like to do more"). Laziness was one of the reasons mentioned the most ("Certainly laziness plays its part"), and the other one was the lack of time ("It's a bit sad, but I, having little time during the day, don't feel like spending any more energy on doing this, to keep on informing

myself"). One of the respondents considered the fact of not being accustomed to look for information a barrier, relating it also to the habits of their family ("Exactly, I was not used to it, so that was the main barrier I faced"). Especially when the conversation focused on the expert knowledge some of them draw the attention to the fact that most of it comes in a written form and for some people that could constitute a big obstacle ("For me, the fact is that very often things are written down, I don't get the urge to read them. And that can be a barrier"; "I already struggle to read newspaper stuff. Imagine if I go and read a scientific article"; "I think that most expert information is conveyed through written media and this is not necessarily accessible to everyone").

Lastly, some of them bring up the fact that they don't always feel involved enough to be more proactive in looking for information.

In explaining these barriers the Italian emerging adults interviewed used a language that showed judgement for themselves ("But in terms of information, I don't think I am very well-educated, let's say"), and this can result in the perception that their opinions are not valid enough ("Well, if I were a bit more informed, I would also give my opinion, but as I am not informed, I don't know") principally when the opinions concerned migration or politics ("Migration is not dealt with as it should be. Today people are not as informed as they should be, me in the first place"). This also resulted in them expressing the need or the willingness to inform more ("I should probably inform myself a lot more. But at the moment I'm not, I don't think I'm that well informed about migration in general or migration in our country").

Another group of barriers that the participants tended to attribute to themselves was individuated. However, these obstacles were also highly influenced by external factors.

For instance, the difficulties in comprehending some information that are often connected to a technical language ("They use these terminologies, almost to alienate the average citizen more. And I'm a person with a degree I read a lot of books, it's not that you say, I'm stupid. But they have this approach like they want to push you away"), mostly in the case of research or other political topics ("especially with regard to politics, I also struggle to understand things, so I inform myself rarely"). In connection to this, the lack of certain types of education were also brought up, for example related to politics or legislation blamed to the formal education but also to the familiar one ("I had no education about law, [...]. There is no education at all about current affairs. That's exactly the point, education doesn't start at school, beyond politics, all the part of current history, in my opinion that is left out, makes us all much more detached from the life we live. And for what concerns politics, in my opinion the basics are missing").

Another element creating distance between the Italian emerging adults interviewed, and the information world, is the feeling of not being considered as a generation. They perceive that with the exception of the social media, the other big stakeholders of the information

environment like national newspapers or news broadcast do not target young people, in Italy at least ("I don't know how much happened to me, that titles, articles, that really got me involved, I can't think of any"). The same goes for the political world, where they feel a great lack of representation ("In terms of age but also social category, I do not feel represented in either information or politics."). Finally, there is a lack of trust. Sometimes towards the channel ("I trust a news story based on where it comes from, if it's a source that I know like a newspaper, a news programme, that I think it's a reliable source. Whereas it's an X Instagram page maybe I don't trust it blindly there.") other times towards the media environment and politics ("I'm a bit discouraged, let's say, in the sense that trust in institutions in general in Italy is not so much... that is, mine is not so much, so even less for politics"), and consequently towards the information in the public debate.

Nonetheless, the thing that seems to bother most of those interviewed is the sensationalism that is widely used both in the media and by politicians. What they were upset about is the focus on the news immediacy and phenomena ("the immediacy of the news is also one of the problems, because they all write a lot of crap") like clickbait titles that focus on the catchiness of the titles in order to attract attention ("today's journalism is mainly on the internet and so on the internet, what counts, is the click, right? So if you have a headline that makes headlines and therefore numbers, then the information goes more in one direction").

Similarly, some of them are annoyed by the aggressive tone that sometimes is used in the debate, for example talk shows characterised by strong confrontations ("Another thing that came to my mind that annoys me a lot, are the discussions on TV, that is, those programmes that invite people to talk. No, in my opinion really, sometimes just from the discussion you see the baseness of people").

The consequence of this focus on the sensational aspect of information is, in the respondents' opinion, that the role of information is to catch the attention of the audience not to explain and give understanding of a phenomenon. It follows that the themes discussed in the debate are dictated by the attractiveness of them and not by how relevant they are for all the stakeholders in the debate ("Anything can become a trend and this annoys me a little, because it's as if you don't live with your feet on the ground any more, but anything is as good as any other, whether it's the most important thing, a big thing or a small thing. Everyone is on the same level and that bothers me a lot").

The news and the way of communication are considered by most of the interviewees of bad quality ("It is a bit of a struggle to get decent information because there is never a decent article or an interesting report, i.e. you really have to go and find it"; "I cannot stand the superficiality in which all topics are treated").

## Emotions and feelings

During the interview, participants also shared their emotions and feelings about their overall experience of the public debate. Most of the emotions mentioned are negative and related to mistrust in politics and the media and the feeling of not being taken into consideration by the main actors in the debate. Figure 21 shows the variety of emotions and feelings expressed by the respondents during the interview. The emotions are distributed from negative to positive, and it is possible to see how the negative ones outnumber the positive ones. The colours represent who generated these emotions in them, between Italy, research, politics, and the information process.

During the interviews, many of them referred to Italy as an entity, in general terms, and gave a judgement on the state of the country, mainly in terms of political attitudes towards their generation and towards migration. The dominant emotions towards Italy are a general lack of hope and a feeling of not being represented by politics or taken into account by the information environment ("So the relationship [with politics] I don't know. A bit mistrustful, let's say, in the sense that trust in institutions in general in Italy is not so much, I mean mine is not so much, so politics as well").

Their feelings towards the research world are less negative than towards other elements and actors in the debate, as most of them expressed trust in research. Nevertheless, they perceive research as distant and inaccessible because it is too complex and specialised for them.

As far as their feelings towards the political world are concerned, they recognise the importance of politics and some of them are regularly informed about political issues, but the emotions and feelings generated by politics are mainly negative. Some of them expressed sadness ("it is not easy to get information, for example, on the issue of migrants, because it is painful to come into contact with so many tragedies"), others detachment; there is a general distrust and discouragement which some of them also attribute to the lack of consideration that politics has for their generation.

Finally, their emotions and feelings when they receive information are also mainly negative. Some of them are related to a judgement of themselves generated during the information process, such as feeling ignorant or stupid. In general, they tend to put themselves down and to think that they don't make enough effort to inform themselves, so they are not as confident in expressing their opinion ("Well, if I were a bit more informed I would also give my opinion, but not being informed, I don't know."). They also perceive anxiety and fatigue generated by the media and the public debate, particularly in relation to the alarmist tone that the latter often adopts when reporting information ("Information on migration always causes me some anxiety, mostly because I am concerned on all sides"). Only one of

them expressed hope for a possible change in the way information, especially on migration, is reported.

### Desired debate

Finally, the respondents were asked what would impact positively on their experience in informing themselves and what they would change in the current debate about migration.

In line with the idea that most of them shared that the debate should be more impartial, they expressed the desire for a more analytical approach that could allow seeing all the different aspects of migration as a social phenomenon ("but in the meantime, I think it would be interesting if you did a bit of a sociological analysis of the migrants, [...] That really allows you to understand what's going on, because something is important for us too, isn't it?"), without preconceptions ("Try to see the positive aspects, what could be the advantages, even the disadvantages, but to see it from a better, more beautiful, interested point of view?").

Another insight was the need of feeling seen and being able to give an actual contribution to the debate ("Then I personally would like my opinion to matter enough to be able to change something. And as it applies to me, it should apply to everyone").

Some interviewees felt like they would like to discuss topics related to migration in an environment that looks more like a community where people can give their inputs ("In my opinion it must still create a sense of

community with something of recognition, engagement, like maybe I can add my opinion on a scientific topic and I don't know").

The expert knowledge shared should be more accessible and shaped as a coherent story to be more effective and understood ("Making in-depth studies, but perhaps not too heavy and not too technical, being able to translate technicalities into everyday language, without losing too much of what one wants to say"). They particularly focus on the language and the necessity of transforming scientific information into common language.

They valued the idea of having different modalities to convey expert knowledge, like experts explaining ("I really like the fact that they also put a guy, an expert anyway, who talks to you about that news in such a way that you understand it, understand it in a very basic way") or visual means that can simplify data and other information ("the moment there is a lot of data but not put in percentages but put in graphs, put in pictures anyway, I remember them much more than data I read in articles"). Other ideas mentioned were to make it an immersive experience or in any case find a way to integrate this type of knowledge into the daily life of people, thinking also about the lack of time that many experienced ("In my opinion it should be almost as if not you are looking for it, more innovative. It should be more something that enters your everyday life").

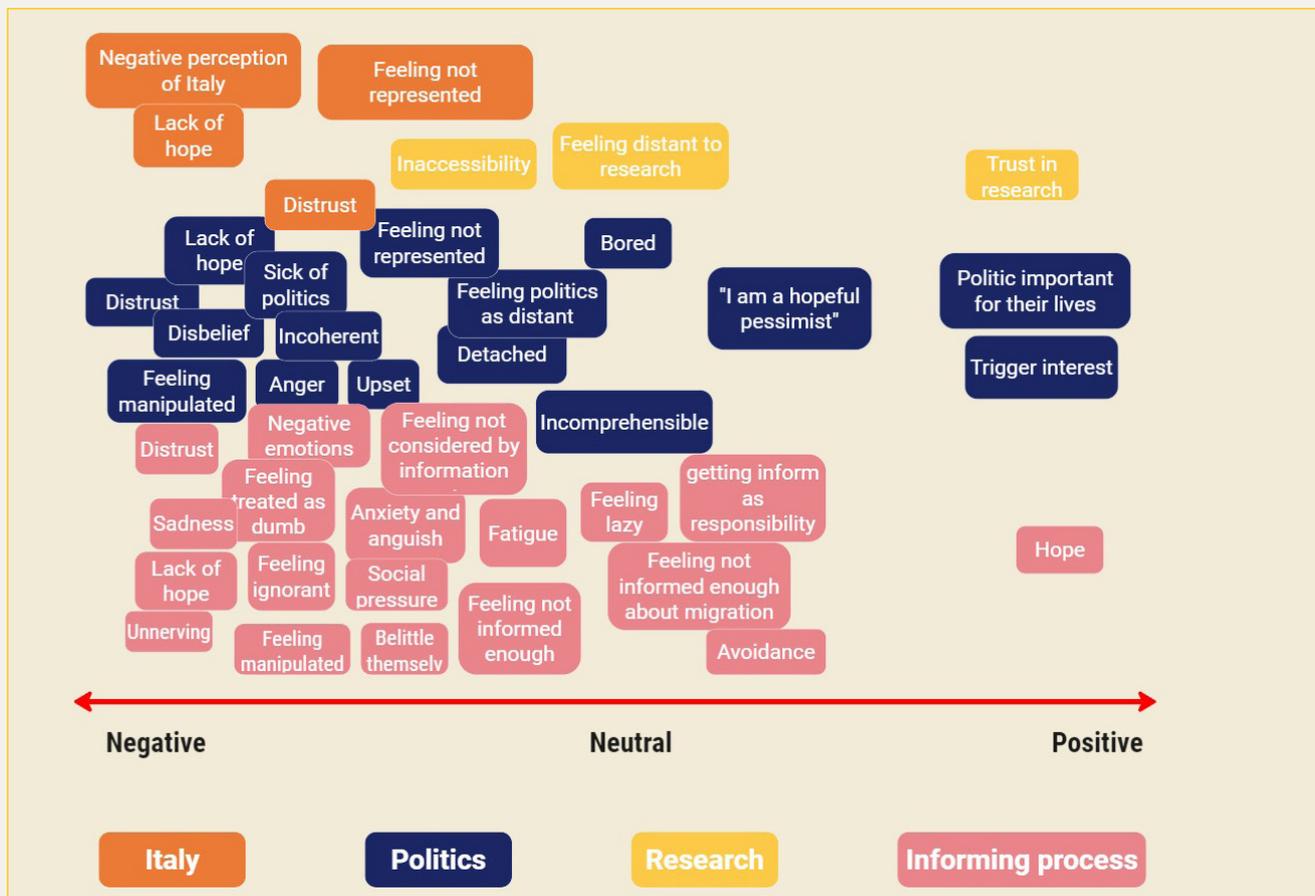


Figure 23. Representation of the variety of emotions and feelings expressed by the respondents during the interview analysis of the interviews.

*From the extensive analysis on the interviews, the concepts more relevant to the project have been extrapolated and elaborated in ten main insights. The insights were later validated with the respondents by asking them if these insights resonated with their thoughts during the interview.*

The insights developed through the interviews answer the RQ 2, How do native citizens experience the process of informing themselves? by detailing on the Italian emerging adults experience and describing their relationship with the stakeholders involved in the process, such as politics and media.

## 10 main insights

1

Respondents consider objectivity in information to be crucial for assessing its credibility, along with a critical approach that allows them to explore various perspectives and form personal opinions.

2

When confronted with the topic of migration, young Italians not only focus on data and numbers, but also show interest in human stories and comprehending the broader context.

3

**Although the Italian emerging adults interviewed express the willingness to gather information and feel driven to do so, this doesn't always translate into a conscious effort to inform themselves.**

4

Social media stands as their primary information source but also other channels are used, based on the influence of family or other social environments

5

Their view on politics and the state of Italy is sceptical and pessimistic, particularly regarding matters concerning their own generation

They also provide additional information for the main RQ (What kind of approach can PACES use to provide citizens with the scientific knowledge to better understand migration and migration policy, and consequently empower them in expressing well-informed opinions on the topic?) since the interviewees

described some best practices that in their opinion would improve the public debate on migration, and that can therefore be used to develop an effective strategy for PACES to provide them with their knowledge.

6

They place trust in academic research as an authoritative source but perceive barriers in accessing it due to its complexity.

7

They see a strong interconnection between media and politics, perceiving them as focused on ideological and sensational aspects

8

**The barriers in obtaining information are attributed both to a sense of insufficient personal commitment and external factors hindering their access to information. Moreover, obstacles arise from the media realm due to its polarisation and sensationalist approach.**

9

Prevailing emotions include distrust and a feeling of distance from all other stakeholders in the debate, yet they strongly believe in the importance of developing well-informed opinions on the subject.

10

They desire a debate on migration that is accessible (in terms of understanding and consumption), analytical, engaging, and respectful, making them feel valued, and avoiding sensationalism and polarisation.



# Chapter 5

## Role of expert knowledge

In the previous chapter, we looked at the public debate from the perspective of Italian emerging adults. This chapter shifts the focus to interviews with a group of migration experts. The primary aim is to understand the role these experts play within the discourse on migration and their own perceptions of it, thereby addressing Research Question 3 (RQ 3). Furthermore, these experts were approached to validate the theoretical research conducted earlier. Additionally, a consultation was given on the possible direction that PACES should take to intervene in the public debate and connect with citizens.

After investigating the perspective of Italian emerging adults, selected from the broader native citizen group, this chapter focuses on gathering insights from experts. The objectives can be summarised as follows:

- To gain insights into experts' perspectives and their experiences within the public discourse on migration.
- To obtain feedback regarding the validity of the research conducted and the contextual analysis done through the mapping process.
- To acknowledge their viewpoints and ideas concerning the feasibility and preference for the proposed direction in which PACES intends to intervene.

This exploration addresses Research Question 3, which examines the role of expert knowledge in citizens' information processes, while also offering valuable feedback to guide the transition into the design phase of the project.

## 5.1 Experts consultation and validation structure

### Data collection and sampling

For this study, three experts in the field of migration were consulted through unstructured online interviews. These experts were selected on the basis of their expertise, which is described below:

*Expert 1:* Doctor Assistant Professor - Senior Researcher - Department for Migration and Globalisation - Center for Migration and Globalisation Research in a European University

*Expert 2:* Master graduate in International Humanitarian Action, co-Responsible for the citizens' mobilisation in a European, maritime-humanitarian organisation for the rescue of life in the Mediterranean

*Expert 3:* DPhil Social Policy, Associate Professor of Sociology in the Department of Social and Political Science in a European University, part of the PACES project

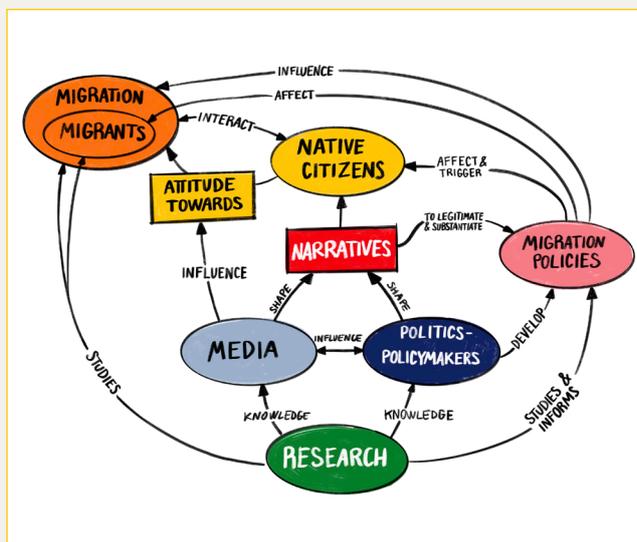


Figure 24. Map representing the public debate.

The interview conversations were initiated by explaining the main research question and presenting the map of the public debate, developed during the theoretical phase of the research, followed by requests for feedback on its effectiveness. Figure 23 shows the map of the public debate.

While all experts were asked about the suitability of the chosen area for intervention, the PACES researcher was specifically asked about which direction for PACES intervention might be most appropriate, given their familiarity with the project and status as field researchers.

### Data analysis

After transcribing the interviews, an inductive approach was utilised for coding, primarily utilising in-vivo coding to identify patterns (Saldaña, 2021). Once all the interviews were coded, the codes were systematically compared to identify overarching patterns. These patterns were then organised into categories and subcategories, following the guidelines outlined by Saldaña (2021). Finally, the categories were clustered to develop the themes that form the foundation of the generated insights (see Appendix D).

## 5.2 Consultation's results

The conversation was started by showing the map of the public debate (Figure 23) and by using it to provide a brief explanation of the insights gained through the theoretical research. The framed section of the map was also highlighted in the discussion to receive feedback on it. Looking at the map, the overall response was positive and triggered interesting conversation on the quality of the different relations represented. They also give feedback on the representation of the map itself and acknowledge the limitations that a two-dimensional visual can have in representing the dynamics of public opinion.

The results of the analysis of the discussions have been summarised in the following insights.

### Suggestion on learning process (alternative to media, myths and switching perspective)

During the discussion, the main research question of the project (*What kind of approach can PACES use to provide citizens with the scientific knowledge to better understand migration and migration policy, and consequently empower them in expressing well-informed opinions on the topic?*) was explained. This led the discussion to explore the current ways in which knowledge is currently made available to citizens. Some valuable insights were provided, particularly regarding how citizens perceive the process of acquiring information from the perspective of the research community.

One of the experts pointed out that there is often a lot of emphasis on facts, but providing facts is not always effective in getting people to understand the phenomenon. One of the reasons is that **"when confronted with information that's different from the information they believe to be true, people are motivated**

to reject it and in a very irrational way". This is called "motivated reasoning" and it explains how a person tends to favour information that can confirm what they already believe to be true. This could explain why people can hold different, contradictory opinions about something without realising it. For example, being against immigration because of the bad reputation of migrants, but not realising that they interact with migrants every day without problems.

Therefore, facts may not be enough, as it is not only misinformation that matters, but also beliefs and values. People create a lot of beliefs about migration, often based on myths, which help to make sense of such a complicated phenomenon.

The same interviewee recognised that this would be different if this kind of knowledge (scientific knowledge about migration, e.g. "why people come and live in our country") was integrated into the education system. Another expert also recognises the potential of the education system to have a far-reaching impact in creating awareness and skills to understand the situation.

He also highlighted how changing perspectives could be useful to create learning experiences, not only in an educational setting but also in a broader sense. For example, through games and role-playing, "It basically translates knowledge into a playful learning experience".

### **Need of understanding complexity**

These difficulties in the learning process and the need to rely on myths are related to the complexity of the phenomenon ("It's such a complicated phenomenon. Even with my students, they struggle to understand it. So it's quite normal"). Complexity and how to deal with it was a common theme in all three interviews ("understanding complexity is massive"), followed by the need to simplify in order to understand complexity ("in order to understand complexity, we have to simplify").

One of the experts pointed out that expertise is relevant in the process of understanding a phenomenon, but the weight it can have depends on whether the problems are simple or more complex. In the first case, expertise can help to provide a more technical and straightforward solution. But in more complex scenarios, such as "asylum policy [...] where you have competing interests [...] there is no good scientific answer".

They also highlighted, as did the literature review at the beginning of this project, how different perspectives on an issue tend to frame it in different ways. And how an issue is framed is also related to how it is dealt with, so that framing itself becomes a political process. What happens is that expert knowledge does not have the authority to choose between these perspectives.

Similarly, another expert highlighted how describing a situation related to migration as secure or insecure is used as a tool to develop policies that are often not in favour of migrants.

Similarly, another expert highlighted how describing a situation related to migration as certain or uncertain is used as an instrument to develop policies that are

typically not in favour of migrants.

### **Roles of migration policy in framing migration**

The same dynamic is at work in migration policy, where the measures required to deal with migration change according to the connotation attached to it. In the same way, the dominant perspective constantly shifts according to the political scenario. And according to one of the interviewees, the concept of migration policy is somehow an "artefact of scientific analysis", i.e. the framing of a concept. It does not exist as a singular, coherent field, but evolves on the basis of contemporary perceptions. Rather, it's what people think it is at any given time, influenced by the dominant actors and how they describe certain aspects of migration policy issues. In addition, there are other policies that intersect with migration policy and influence migration.

Put simply, politicians need to create a common framework to tie together different issues and make their arguments more coherent.

The same expert identifies this as one of the functions of the political system. The political system collects the various issues that affect people in complex societies and then streamlines them into a smaller set of topics for discussion. These issues are then reflected in media debates and strongly influence the narratives about migration.

### **Identity and emotions**

Another topic identified by the interviewees that has a predominant role in the debate about migration is identity. In the view of one of the experts, migration triggers the "us/them divide", that is the definition of who belongs and who does not to a specific group that is a nation. This is related to political and ideological tensions but to emotions as well. The experts argue then that if migration is linked emotionally to policy, this affects also the concrete interventions that would then "speak to the hearts and not to the minds". With this expression they meant that from here the necessity to address situations in the debate (also) from a more emotional point of view, which can be either positive or negative (like fears and threats). However, this should happen "without imposing certain emotional frameworks".

### **To watch out in the relationship between people and researchers:**

In relation to the way migration is addressed in the public debate, several experts talked about the way experts and research interact with local citizens when discussing migration. .

### **Power imbalance**

Similarly to the expert that claimed that it is important not to impose emotive framing, another interviewee highlighted that researchers should not be "arrogant" when trying to reach people. What they described as arrogant behaviour is the attempt to impose their knowledge on people while assuming that they are more acknowledged. "I think the most important thing in

research, then, is not to believe that we know what people should think about something". Researchers should then find a balanced way to convey the information to avoid sounding paternal.

This same behaviour is described by another expert as in an "enlightenment frame", where the researchers hold the knowledge and they "disclose it to the citizens" in a sort of revelation of what is reality. In their opinion, this is one of the reasons why there is tension between citizens and experts.

### Trust

One of the reasons why this behaviour should be avoided, according to the respondents, is that trust is fundamental. When people are presented with new information, if they do not trust the source, they will find it difficult to accept it, especially if it does not fit in with their current thinking on the matter, so "trust is huge".

### Citizens participation

Although building a positive relationship with local citizens could benefit the debate on migration policy, one of the experts pointed out some drawbacks of citizen participation. The main concern, especially when involving citizens in decision-making processes, for example in the political sphere, is the difficulty of representing diversity of opinion. Any process involving citizens needs to be seen as legitimate by those who are not directly involved. This also applies to deliberative processes where problems are discussed. The risk is that not all cases are represented. For this reason, the same expert suggests that working with elites such as politicians could be beneficial in order to create greater sensitivity.

### PACES as infrastructure between research and citizens

In the interview with the expert collaborating with the PACES project, the results of the creative session (i.e. the directions coupled with their related guiding questions for possible future design directions) were shown. The purpose was to receive inputs and ask which of the possible design directions shaped in the creative session they found more relevant for the objectives of PACES. They found that the mission of PACES well overlaps with the idea of becoming a connecting infrastructure between citizens and expert knowledge (How can PACES become the connecting infrastructure between citizens and expert knowledge about migration and migration policy?). Other two themes were found interesting as future design directions, understanding of complexity and building trust and relationship between the citizens and PACES.

## 5.3 Conclusion

From the interview with experts as in the creative session, it emerged that the outcome of this project as action of PACES can intervene in the flow of information from research to native citizens (Figure 24). In this way,

PACES would have the possibility to propose alternatives to myths and mainstream narratives in the media, and be a direct connection with the research. Some interviewed experts pointed out the difficulties that people can have in acquiring and accepting

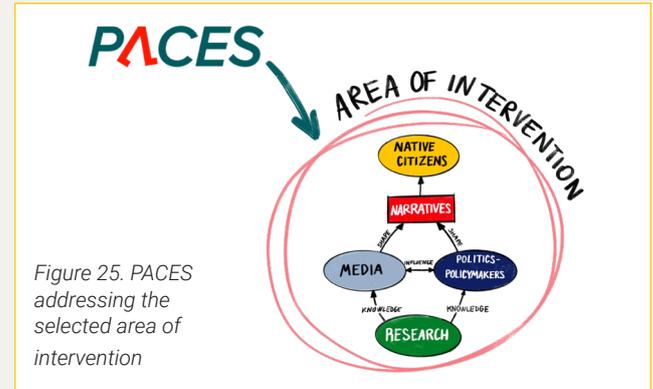


Figure 25. PACES addressing the selected area of intervention

information about migration and one of the reasons is the complexity of the phenomenon, which when not understood brings to rely on myths. This is why when the researcher of PACES was shown the possible directions for intervention highlighted "Infrastructuring the debate", thus on the question: How can PACES become the connecting infrastructure between citizens and expert knowledge about migration and migration policy?(Figure 26).

As already mentioned, there were also other themes emerged in the creative session that were considered crucial for the people from PACES and the other experts interviewed. One of them was understanding the complexity (thus on the question: How can PACES provide the citizens with "tools" to navigate through

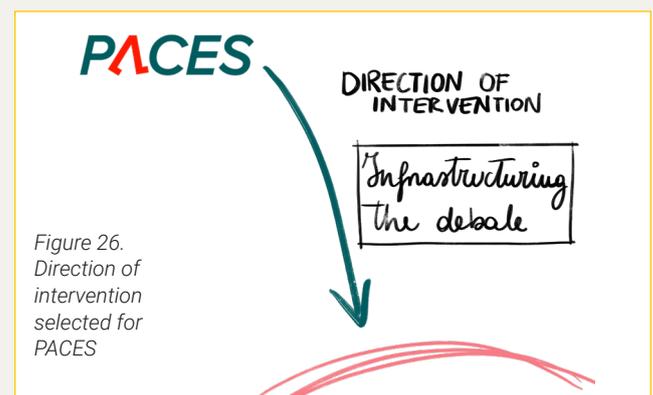


Figure 26. Direction of intervention selected for PACES

the complexity of the context/reduce uncertainty?). Particular attention was also given to the relationship between native citizens and research/researchers, highlighting that there is room for improvement especially for what concerns building trust and relationship between research and the public (thus on the question: How can PACES become a trustworthy source of knowledge about migration and migration policy for natives/citizens regardless of their ideology/political view?).

Therefore, these last two components, addressing complexity and creating trust, needs to be taken into account in the design phase.





Chapter 6

# **PACES as bridge between citizens and expert knowledge**

After identifying the challenges related to citizens' opinion formation and gaining insights into the experiences of Italian emerging adults, as well as the role of experts and expert knowledge, this chapter outlines the design direction aimed at helping PACES connect with Italian emerging adults and influence their opinion-forming process.

## 6.1 From research to design

# Project recap



Figure 27. This chapter as a bridge between research and design phase

Looking again at the overall structure of the project, this chapter represents the shift from the research phase to the design one (figure 27).



Figure 28. PACES that aims to convey knowledge to the citizens

The research phase started with the goal of understanding how the expert knowledge from PACES could be transferred to native citizens (Figure 28).

The exploration of the current literature revealed how the opinion of citizens is shaped by different factors and actors, mostly in the context of the public debate about migration and migration policy.

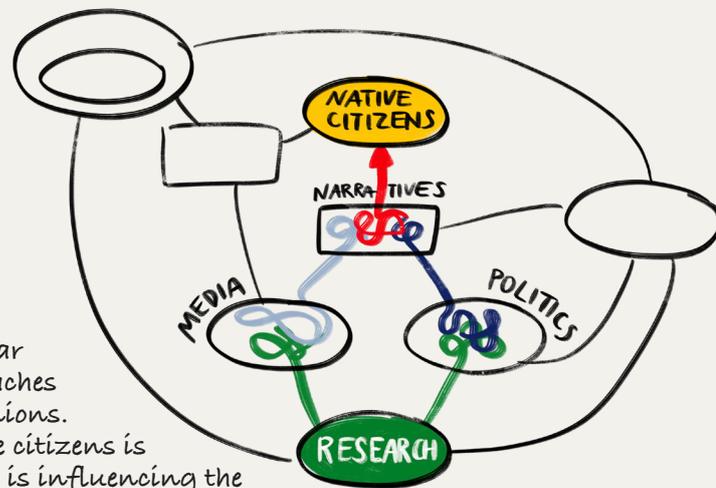


Figure 29. The information flow from research to citizens

By mapping the stakeholders within the debate and the relations that connect them, it was possible to draw a clear picture of the process through which expert knowledge reaches native citizens and how it contributes to shape their opinions. In Figure X the flow of information from expert to native citizens is represented by the line that changes colour based on who is influencing the knowledge. And it is possible to see how the knowledge provided by research before reaching citizens is shaped by media and politics into narratives.

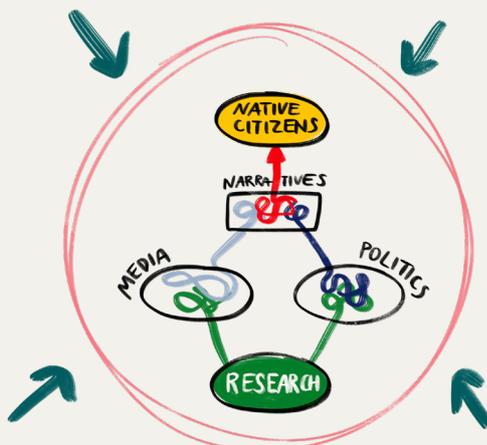


Figure 30. Area of intervention

After a creative session with the scope of framing the problem space, this process became then the focus for designing possible interventions to achieve the initial project goal. In the same session, some more specific design direction within the selected problem space were drafted (Figure 30).



In order to understand how PACES could play a role in this process, interviews were conducted on the experiences of opinion formation in the public debate on migration. A more specific target group was chosen to carry out an in-depth qualitative investigation, Italian emerging adults. Between the different insights that resulted from the interviews, an important one was the trust in research that was however perceived as distant (Figure 31)..



Figure 31. Italian emerging adults with trust and distance with research

## 6.2 Problem space and design directions

Between the design directions drafted in the framing creative session, one was chosen with the help of the researchers:

*How can PACES become the connecting infrastructure between citizens and expert knowledge about migration and migration policy?*

*Which can also be phrased as:*

*How can PACES become the bridge between citizens and expert knowledge about migration and migration policy?*

The need of connecting native citizens to the expert knowledge is generated by the current distance that stands between them, and it is perceived by both parts. This distance is the result of the dynamics of public debate, in which the media and politics play a considerable role in shaping narratives. On the other side, it is a necessary step if the amount of information provided by the academic world needs to be filtered to be digested by the general public (Balch & Balabanova, 2011). To bridge this gap, three different design directions have been individuated.

### Design direction 1

*How can the design outcome facilitate the exchange of knowledge between PACES and the Italian emerging adults?*

Since there is no direct access to expert knowledge, PACES could provide it by becoming an intermediary. The Figure 30 shows how PACES would be positioned as an alternative path for expert knowledge to reach Italian emerging adults. This should be a two-way connection, so that insight from the citizens can also arrive to PACES.

### Design direction 2

*How can the design outcome support PACES into becoming an alternative to the current media to provide evidence-based information on migration?*

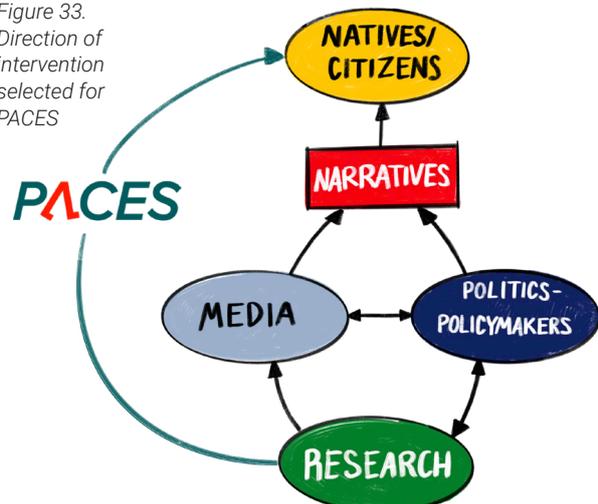


Figure 32. Image of PACES as a bridge between Italian emerging adults and research



The next step was then to understand the point of view of stakeholders on the other end of the information flow: researchers. This helped in defining what is the role of research in the process of informing of citizens and what could possibly be the role of PACES in the individuated problem space.

Figure 33. Direction of intervention selected for PACES



As demonstrated by the research phase, media has a pivotal role in influencing citizens opinions on migration and set the tone of the overall public debate about migration. PACES could be then positioned as shown in Figure 31 as an alternative media and engage with citizens to provide evidence-based information. This could happen for instance by creating a communication channel to reach Italian emerging adults, e.g. through social media.

### Design direction 3

How can the design outcome support PACES into shaping evidence-based narratives that fit the Italian emerging adults?

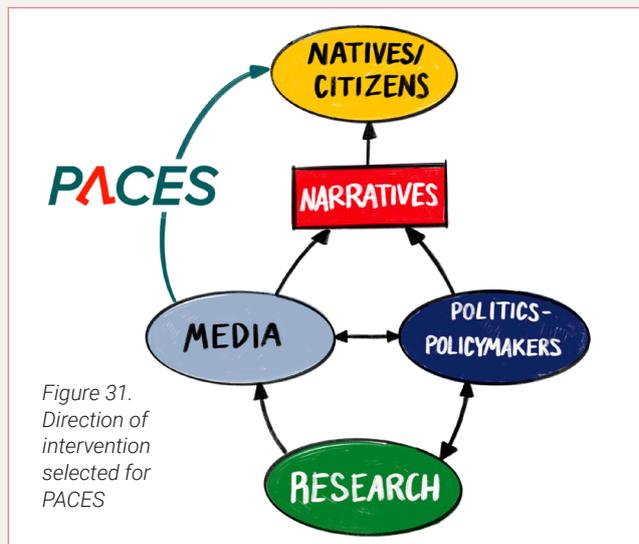


Figure 31. Direction of intervention selected for PACES

Similarly, to the design direction 1, this last design direction focuses on PACES sharing their knowledge. However, differently from the first one, in this case the focus would be on the concept of narratives. Narratives are necessary to make sense of reality by identifying patterns that give a meaning to it. PACES would guarantee that the starting point of these narratives are scientific facts and that this answers the questions of the Italian emerging adults. To do so, PACES would position as shown in Figure 32, between research and narratives, to reach the citizens.

These are the design directions that could be pursued to support PACES in bridging the current gap between Italian emerging adults and expert knowledge. A combination of the first and the latter was chosen, since they better align with PACES, that operates by intervening in the policy debate leveraging their knowledge.

*The focus will then be on creating narratives that allow the exchange of knowledge and try to reduce the distance between Italian emerging adults and expert knowledge.*

To develop narratives that are evidence-based and support the opinion formation process of Italian emerging adults, it is important to keep into account the needs of the different stakeholders involved. [maybe an icon with the Italian emerging adults with

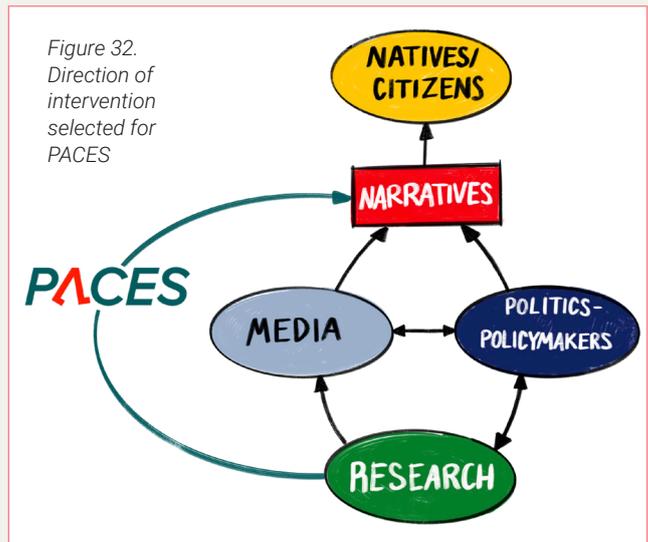


Figure 32. Direction of intervention selected for PACES

some “balloons” around that summarise the needs] From the interviews different insight were gained, and it resulted that when young Italians inform themselves, they have needs and preferences.

To summarise, they want

- **Neutrality to approach with a critical mindset**  
They want a certain level of neutrality that could give them an idea of what is the reality, not influenced by the interests of the various parties involved. At the same time, they consider essential having an overview of different perspective on the same situation, to approach with a critical mindset.
- **Human stories matter**  
On their account, human stories matter when talking about migration.
- **Understanding complexity (no sensationalism or oversimplification)**  
They understand how complex is migration, therefore welcome a simplified explanation, when it does not lead to oversimplification and spectacularisation of migration dynamics.
- **Trustworthy and authoritative sources**  
They hope to find trustworthy and authoritative sources. That is also why they already appreciate the contribution of research in the public debate.
- **Being engaged (not get bored, not too technical)**  
Their experience in the information environment is often not positive, one reason is that the way in which the information are given is not engaging enough and does not capture their interest
- **Access to expert knowledge**  
they feel research distant and not easy to access (i.e., its comprehension is not within everyone's reach).
- **Feeling “seen” (represented, considered, as opposite to distance)**  
they (as Italian emerging adults) do not feel represented or considered enough by the main stakeholders in the debate (i.e. media, politics, and research)

Another element to consider is the fact that the outcome of this project needs to be integrated in the context of the PACES project, therefore it needs to support PACES

in fulfilling their objective. This can happen by generating insights on the current opinions of people and how these would be affected by the contact with research. They want to have a positive contact with people that can bring to a fruitful dialogue, without ideological clashes that are not beneficial for the discussion. Finally, their hope is that this information helps them draw conclusions on what types of migration policy Italian emerging adults prefer.

To summarise, PACES needs:

- Get insights of knowledge on people about migration
- and how these changes when in contact with research
- Not triggering ideological clashes (that are not
- beneficial for the discussion)
- Understanding what types of migration policy Italian
- emerging adults prefer

### Design goal and requirements

After establishing the design direction and formalising the needs of the stakeholders, it is important to define more concretely how to structure a process for building narratives that fulfil the overarching goal and the above-mentioned needs. After discussing the project until this point with the PACES project lead, we agreed on developing a moment where PACES and Italian emerging adult could properly engage. This moment of encounter should facilitate a collaboration and the exchange of knowledge that can then be brought to build new narratives. Italian emerging adults do not feel seen in the current information environment, and they are critical towards the currently used communication modes. The modalities in which the narratives are going to be built should avoid re-creating this scenario.

For this reason, **co-creation** was chosen as a mean of building the narrative and establish a collaboration between PACES and Italian emerging adults.

Co-creation is a collaborative process where different parties work together to create an outcome (Sanders & Stappers, 2012). Through co-creation, Italian emerging adults are not just recipients of the narrative anymore, but they become co-creators of it, and the outcome can more easily meet their needs.

The next step is to formalise a design goal:

*The outcome of this project will facilitate PACES in collaborating with Italian emerging adults to co-create evidence-based narratives on topics related to migration and migration policies.*

To further define the design space and have guidelines for future decision-making in the ideation process, some requirements for the outcome have been outlined based on the previously explained needs of the stakeholders.

### Creating understanding of complexity

The objective of the encounter between PACES and the Italian emerging adults should be having a better understanding of the phenomenon of migration without oversimplifying it. As stated by the experts consulted, sharing facts might not be enough in triggering a reflection. Therefore, PACES should focus on explaining

processes, dynamics, and mechanisms of migration rather than data and numbers. This might facilitate a switch in mindset that together with showing different perspectives on the same topic can help them into approaching information in a critical way.

### Positive relationship between PACES and Italian emerging adults

The relationship between PACES and Italian emerging adults should avoid the “enlightenment frame” mentioned by one of the interviewed experts, which means imposing their knowledge as a sort of revelation of what is reality. This connection between PACES and young Italians should make them feel seen without assuming a position of superiority. In this relationship, it is also important to build trust, and this can be reached by having credibility and demonstrating reliability. Fortunately, this specific group of people already place trust in research as an authoritative source of knowledge. In any case, it is crucial to demonstrate competence and be transparent.

### Reducing distance from research

Helping Italian emerging adults in understanding migration while establishing a positive relation can already help in reducing their distance from research. Along with that, other things might help. Starting from making the content more comprehensible, by, for example, using a more accessible and comprehensible language. In the interviews of Italian emerging adults, they suggested different means that they find more engaging, for example videos, social media formats etc.

### Producing insights on the Italian emerging adults point of view

The final goal of the outcome, other than connecting Italian emerging adults with PACES, is to get insights from the firsts. Therefore, the final design should facilitate a two-way exchange of information, which is also beneficial for the objective of a positive relationship, since it shows that PACES is interested in young Italians’ opinions and thoughts.

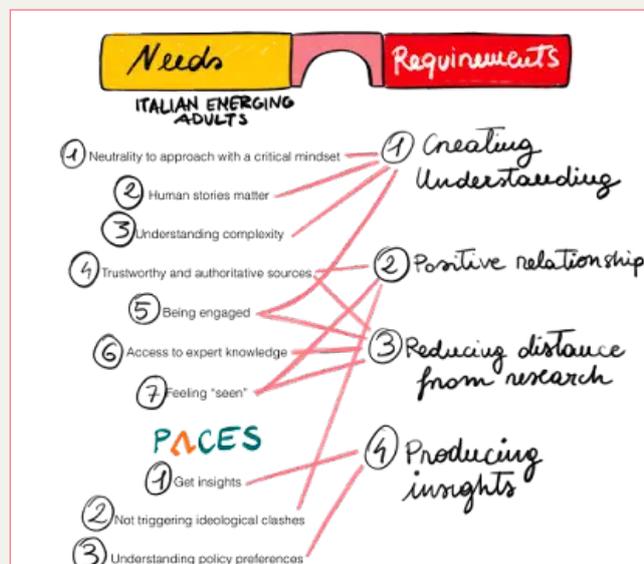


Figure 33. Connection between needs of Italian emerging adults and PACES and design requirements



## Chapter 7

# 7. Ideating a “moment of encounter”

The previous chapter described the transition from the research phase to the design one, with the formulation of the design goal and the requirements. In these pages the processes taken to develop the bridging solution, will be explained. Starting from the steps taken in the ideation phase to arrive to a first more concrete concept that has been then tested and evaluated. Finally, the workshop that derived from this process is explained and lastly the results from the testing session are outlined.

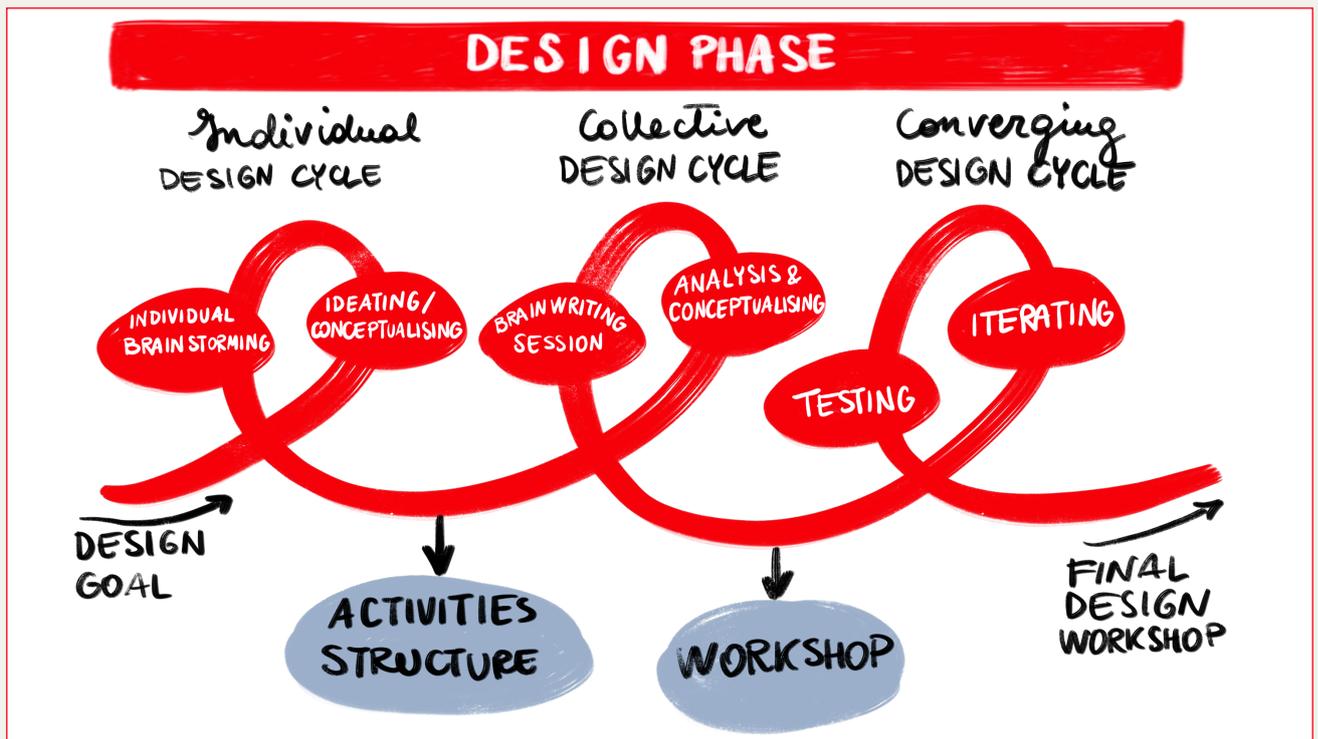


Figure 34. Overview of the ideation phase

## 7.1 Ideation Phase

### Individual design cycle

Looking at figure 34, the first phase of the ideation, I conducted a series of design actions individually, that brought me to define a set of possible activities for connecting PACES with the Italian emerging adults.

I started this process with a consultation with the client, where it was decided that the final outcome should be a moment where PACES researchers and Italian emerging adults could interact directly. This would also facilitate the creation of empathy between them, which is essential in co-creation processes (Sanders & Stappers, 2012).

To indicate this moment, the term “moment of encounter” was used, since the exact nature of this encounter was not defined yet.

In a second moment, the requirements of the design have been converted into key elements of the “moment of encounter”.

Then I used these elements as a starting point for brainstorming metaphors that could frame exactly the intentions and objective that each element should achieve.

This technique allows accessing the profound levels of understanding and creativity within an individual, while at the same time capturing the essence of the problem that one wants to solve (Heijne & van der Meer, 2019).

This also helped me to have clarity on what the different requirements meant for the final outcome.

In figure 35 is show an example. The requirement chosen is “reducing the distance from research” and the key elements individuated are “accessibility” and

“engagement”. To the latter I also connect understanding which comes from the requirement that focuses on “Creating understanding of complexity”, but it was important to connect to engagement because in this case the engagement should be functional for a better understanding.

As it is possible to see in the Figure 35, I purposefully arranged some pictures around the key elements that they represented better. For example, between “engagement” and “understanding” there is an image of an escape room, where people try to understand how to escape but in an engaging way. Similar metaphors

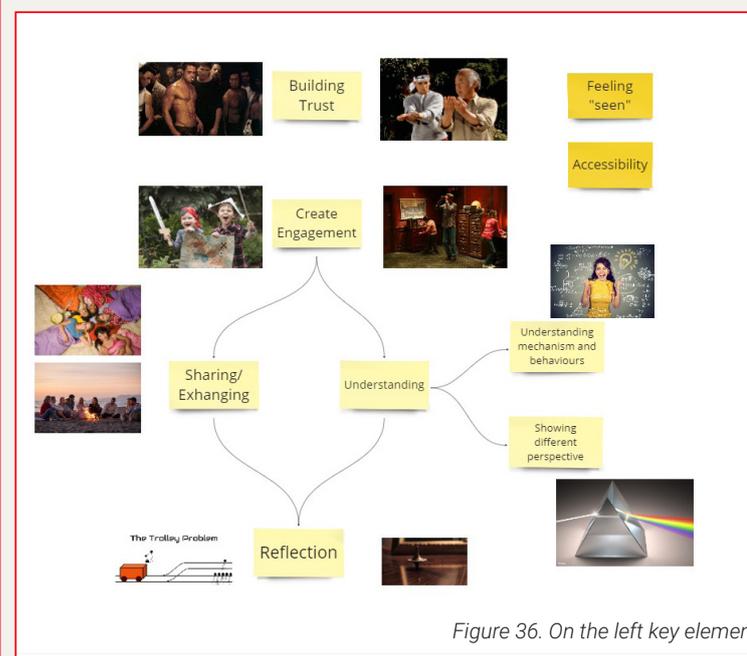


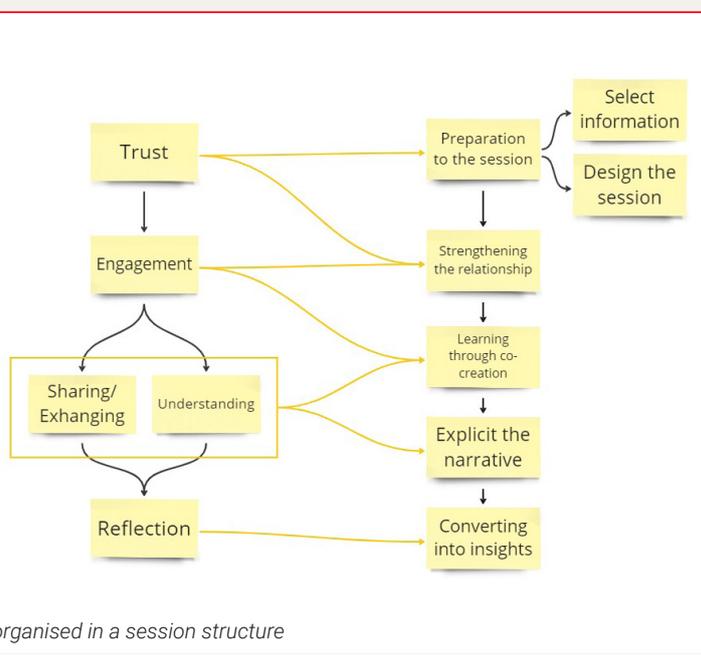
Figure 36. On the left key elements



are represented by the live-action role-play and the treasure hunting images positioned next to “engagement”. There is an image of a planetarium that is positioned in the middle because it covers all three elements, by giving an accessible, and engaging way to get some knowledge about astronomy. Finally, the Montessori bathroom for kids and the phone for elderly represent the “accessibility” key element, since they are objects adapted to the capabilities of their users.

This was done for the four requirements and helped in understanding the type of activities that could compose the “moment of encounter”.

With the metaphors in mind, I then started to use some key elements to define possible structures for a session between Italian emerging adults and PACES that could be used as guidelines for defining the activities. This process is shown in Figure 36 on the left, the key elements of the requirements are organised to create the flow of the moment of encounter and then derived from that. On the right, an example of possible structure



for the moment of encounter (others can be found in appendix E). “Accessibility” and “feeling seen” have been considered as overall requirements that should be kept into account during the whole encounter between PACES researchers and the Italian emerging adults.

### Collective design cycle

Following this individual design cycle, the ideation phase shifted towards a cycle of collective creativity through a session of brainwriting with post-its (Heijne & van der Meer, 2019) whose analysis became the base for the development of concepts.

Brainwriting with post-its is a type of creative session that derives from brainstorming, where participants write on post-its ideas generated starting from a proposed problem (Heijne & van der Meer, 2019). The goal of this session was to generate a greater range of ideas that could fit the design goal and its requirements. Furthermore, this session was conducted to integrate different perspectives on the given problem.

For this specific session two rounds of generating ideas were done, then the results were clustered and based on the cluster, themes have been identified. During the session I took the role of facilitator and problem-owner at the same time, while the participants were four fellow students from the three master tracks of Industrial Design Engineering at TU Delft (M.Sc. in Design for Interaction, M.Sc. in Strategic Product design and M.Sc. in Integrated Product Design).

The session was divided in three phases:

1. Introduction to the topic and design brief
2. Idea generation through brainwriting (two rounds)
3. Clustering and generating themes through analysis on the wall (Sanders & Stappers, 2012)

In the figure 37 the moment of sharing the generated ideas, and in figure 38. the clustering of the ideas.

In the appendix E the presentation used to guide the participants through the various steps of the session can be found, together with the results.

The themes used to categorise the generated ideas are the following:

Perspectives

*In the perspective cluster, the focus was about understanding others’ point of view related to migration topics, empathizing with the stakeholder in the debate, and about exchanging information between Italian emerging adults and PACES researchers in a sensitive way.*

Holistic Narrative

*This cluster focused on communicating cause and effect of migration related phenomenon and mapping out the different actions of stakeholders with the scope of providing a holistic view on migration.*

Values and beliefs

*This group of ideas highlighted the possibility*



Figure 37, 38. On top the moment of sharing the generated ideas, and below the clustering of the ideas.



*of differences between values and beliefs of the participants, and tried to address it by working on biases, and the differences between experiential knowledge and expert knowledge. There was a strong connection with the perspective cluster. In both clusters, the focus was in trying to understand others' way of thinking and consequently acting when it comes to migration discussions.*

Framing of the information

*This cluster focused more on how the information is communicated and the importance of framing in this process. The proposed ideas concentrated on engaging channel of communication, providing ways to elaborate news properly, working with narrative and storytelling tools.*

The specific ideas generated can be found in appendix x.

These themes were then associated to the key elements (see in Appendix z) and the generated ideas used as trigger for other iterations on possible concepts.

### **Converging design cycle**

At the end of the previous design cycle, the result was a combination of ideas for possible activities that could cover the design goal and the key elements identified for the 'moment of encounter'. However, none of the generated activities was able to enclose all the requirements at once.

Therefore, it was decided that the "moment of encounter" should be a combination of the most relevant ones that could efficiently fulfil the requirements. For this reason, a workshop with the goal of co-creating evidence-based narratives seemed a suitable format for the final outcome.

But what exactly is meant with workshop? For workshop is intended a collaborative space where practice and theory converge on a specific theme, maximising participant expertise and their learning needs (Candelo R. et al., 2003)

After brainwriting, one prevailing theme was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the perspectives held by all stakeholders and how these perspectives influence the overall situation.

Another aspect particularly recurrent in the proposals was the focus on the consciousness of the way in which information about migration is framed.

These two predominant aspects, that came out in the brainwriting and in the following iterations, became the starting point for the conceptualisation of a workshop to co-create narrative about migration through the collaboration of PACES researchers and Italian emerging adults.

During this design cycle and the previous one, different meeting with the client were held to guarantee alignment with the objectives of the PACES project.

## **7.2 Defining the workshop**

To fit the design goal, the workshop should be considered as a generative tool that would allow the construction of new narratives but also insights that can be used in the PACES project as part of their research. Generative tools are used in the academic context for different purposes, one of these is getting understanding of unknown contexts (Sanders & Stappers, 2012). In this case, it would be the perception of migration from the Italian emerging adults.

The format of workshop is also particularly indicated for as learning mean. As a matter of fact, they are commonly used for training and when the workshop is structured as a participatory process can bring different benefits (Candelo R. et al., 2003). The active involvement of people can bring to a more effective learning process since people can contribute with their own experiences and perspectives to address specific problems (Candelo R. et al., 2003).

Furthermore, a participatory process such as a co-creating workshop can tackle one of the key element of the requirements: "feeling seen". In participatory processes, people are seen as individuals responsible for their own decisions, rather than passive recipients of information (Candelo R. et al., 2003).

These reflections on the potential of a workshop for the "moment of encounter" and the results of the design

cycles brought to a series of iteration on the possible activities of the workshop and its structure (that can be found in appendix x), where some overarching ideas for the activities were drafted.

For the workshop, three main phases were individuated. These are:

**Introductory phase**

**Learning phase**

**Building (the narrative) phase**

In addition to these phases, there is also the **preparation phase**, necessary to prepare the materials needed for the workshop.

**Preparation phase**

A workshop's success is based on how well it is planned (Sanders & Stappers, 2012). This phase is crucial to prepare the necessary supplies for the workshop and align on the goal of the workshop. The people involved in the preparation are the participants part of the PACES project and the designated facilitator.

For this initial design, the material to use in the preparation are a presentation to guide the preparation step by step and a preparation canvas propaedeutic to develop the scenario and the characters for the role-play.

**Introductory phase**

The introductory phase has a preliminary function, to allow the participants to enter the workshop smoothly and create a pleasing atmosphere for the participants.

This first phase focuses on reducing the distance from research and create the basis for a positive relationship between PACES researchers and Italian emerging adults. As resulted from the interviews with Italian emerging adults, they tend to trust the knowledge of research, therefore highlighting the expertise of PACES at the beginning of the workshop can set a good start for their relationship. However, regardless of the trust in the expert knowledge that the participants might have, it is essential to initiate the project with activities that foster team cohesion (Sanders & Stappers, 2012).

This initial stage of the workshop can also be used to introduce the content that it aims to address (Sanders & Stappers, 2012). In this way the facilitator of the workshop and PACES can start to know better the participants and their language, and background, which can already give an understanding of what type of communication is best to use (Sanders & Stappers, 2012). It can also give insight on the opinions and knowledge of the participants about migration and test the water on their positions towards migration to calibrate the communication modes on that as well.

Finally, to encourage constructive team interactions and foster a positive group atmosphere there should be a moment of alignment on the behaviour to keep during the workshop (Justice & Jamieson, 1999).

After a series of iteration on the possible activities of this phase, it was decided for an introduction to the

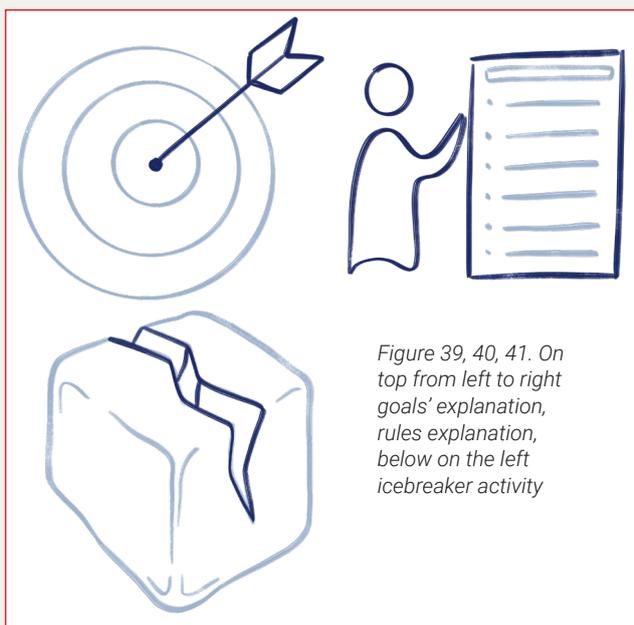


Figure 39, 40, 41. On top from left to right goals' explanation, rules explanation, below on the left icebreaker activity

workshop that would include an explanation of the goal of the workshop and the PACES project, then a moment dedicated to the rules for the workshop and finally an icebreaker activity. (visuals of the 3 mentioned activities)

**Learning phase**

This phase has the goal of giving an understanding of the topic that PACES wants to address. As said in the requirements, the workshop should provide understanding of the complexity of migration by discussing mechanism and behaviour behind related events.

To understand the subject more in depth, it might help to take others' perspective. The interviewed Italian emerging adults demonstrated interest in getting to know the point of view of different stakeholders regarding migration, to be able to form their own opinion.

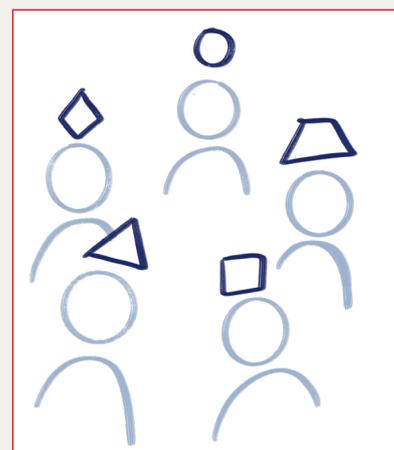


Figure 42. Participants in the role-play activity

This is why a role-play game was chosen for this phase, an activity where individuals adopt a "role" within a particular situation or scenario (Tsergas et al., 2021). As a matter of fact, role-playing fosters greater comprehension rooted in the specific context (Simsarian, 2003). It offers a secure space for expressing individual, and at times, unpopular perspectives and behaviours, and finally serves as a significant motivator since a majority of participants find these activities enjoyable and, as a result, become more enthusiastic learners (Oberle, 2004).

The role-play designed for the workshop consisted in an open discussion on a topic related to migration chosen by the PACES researchers beforehand, where each participant receives a passport with information about the character that they will interpret.

### Building (the narrative) phase

This last phase focuses on the design goal, by having an activity that support the collaboration between PACES and Italian emerging adults in building narratives on topic related to migration. In this phase, after a moment of explanation on the topic, Italian emerging adults will be asked to reflect on the knowledge acquired and elaborate a narrative suited to communicating with their peers. This request will lead them to shape the knowledge on their own understanding and needs. The objective of this activity is also to give relevance to their contribution, by showing them that PACES find valuable their point of view on migration.

To do so, the activity will start with a moment of debriefing of the role-play that can provide a better understanding on the topic. Afterwards, the Italian emerging adults will focus on building a narrative that is suitable to reach a

group of their peers. Since “a narrative is essentially a story” (Patterson & Monroe, 1998, p. 315) and a cognitive process to order facts in a coherent way and make sense of them (Patterson & Monroe, 1998) this activity helps the participants to develop their own story telling on the topic learnt during the workshop. To do so, an adaptation of the storytelling canvas designed by Kernbach (2018) was developed.

(visuals of debrief and then filling in the canvas)

## 7.3 Evaluating the initial design of the workshop

To further develop the workshop activities and its material, the initial design of the workshop is evaluated through a testing session.

The goals of this evaluation were:

- to assess the value of the workshop for the PACES project,
- to see how Italian emerging adults and PACES researchers experience the workshop,
- to verify the efficiency of the materials in developing and conducting the workshop.

### Method

The test started with the preparation phase done beforehand with me in the role of facilitator and the PACES project lead, to go then to the execution of the workshop with three Italian emerging adults between the ages of 25-28, recently graduated. The workshop was conducted in roughly two and a half hours, in the afternoon, and snacks and beverages were provided.

After the workshop, a round of open-ended questions to the participants was conducted to evaluate the different parts and activities of the workshop. The facilitator and the PACES researcher also provide personal reflections on the workshop.

An analysis on the wall (on Miro) was conducted to draw the results of the evaluation.

The specific materials used for preparing, executing, and evaluating the workshop can be found in the appendices x.

### Results

The preparation phase took longer than expected, and it needed to think of more aspects than the one considered in the guiding presentation. The preparation canvas was useful, but it needed adjustment since the structure of the role-play was modified while preparing it. Now that the workshop has been tested, it is clearer what it needs to be done in the preparation to carry it out efficiently.

The overall atmosphere and experience generated by the workshop was appreciated by the participants, also thanks to a good setting and the food and beverages provided.

Participants felt engaged and felt that it was a safe space where they could express their opinions without

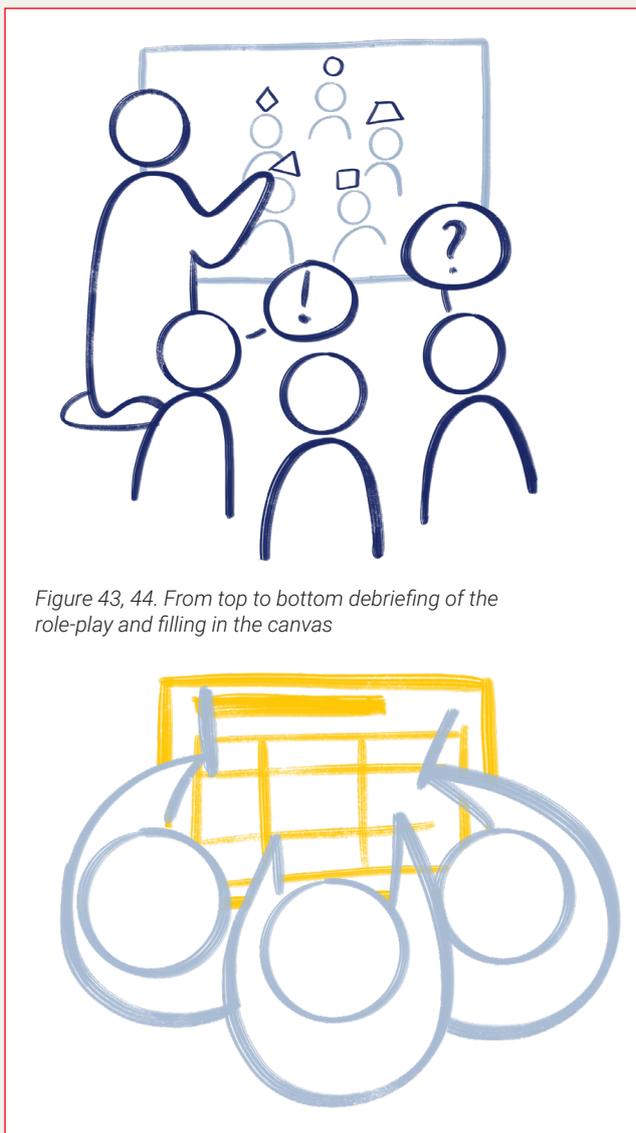


Figure 43, 44. From top to bottom debriefing of the role-play and filling in the canvas

being judged. They recognise that it was also a learning experience that helped them to get new knowledge. From both one of the participants and the PACES, researcher wondered what would have happened with a more diverse group of participants, especially in terms of social backgrounds. The overall timing was also perceived as good, and the interest for the topic brought the participants to stay and discuss also after the workshop end ("I really enjoyed it, I think it also emerged from the fact that we stayed until, like almost an hour past the supposed time for workshop"). However, one of the Italian emerging adults highlighted that they found that the activities sometimes "took a bit too long".

For what concern the interaction with the PACES researcher, positive feedback was given. They valued the facilitator and PACES researcher for their ability to provide clear explanations of a complex topic and found their communication diplomatic and reasonable, qualities they appreciate. It would be interesting to see also how the interaction would change with different participants, that might have a negative perception of migration.

The content and the information of the workshop were comprehensible for the Italian emerging adults, and they helped them to develop a clearer opinion on the topic. They found that even with no or little prior knowledge on the topic, they could understand it and that the material provided the right amount of information. Even so, one of them expressed the desire for more concrete examples to better understand the topic and its context, by incorporating real cases in the explanation and adding negative behaviours like corruption or political interests as elements of the role-play.

Finally, they enjoyed the combination of the activities and the material that supported it, especially the passports used for the role-play, that they even kept at the end of the workshop.

For what concern the icebreaker, the PACES researcher found that it could be already a moment of learning, where giving feedback and explanation. In contrast with this view, I felt it could be even more personal and engaging to create a stronger relationship between the participants. Therefore, I would avoid already correcting or explaining, since it could be perceived as a "teacher behaviour" (Sanders & Stappers, 2012). Another aspect to take into account of the introduction phase is that the rules should probably be thought also for more potentially conflictual audiences.

The conversation that took place during the role-play had a good flow, without a moment of silence or with people not knowing what to say. This was also thanks to the PACES researcher, who got a character with a role determinant in the given scenario. This allowed her to be more incisive and direct the conversation to

guarantee equal contributions and a smooth course of action. This was possible also thanks to the knowledge of the PACES researcher, therefore this brought to the conclusion that it is better if the roles that are more determinant in the conversation are taken by people that are part of PACES, to be sure that they have the necessary knowledge to support a good evolution of the conversation. As the PACES researcher mentioned in her reflection, it worked well to start with a more open scenario and then have a more detailed follow-up to trigger new reflections. However, it is important to remember to put explanations in the scenario when specific terms or expressions are used. The choice of characters was approved by the participants, even though one of them would have like to see more differentiation in terms of social backgrounds of the characters.

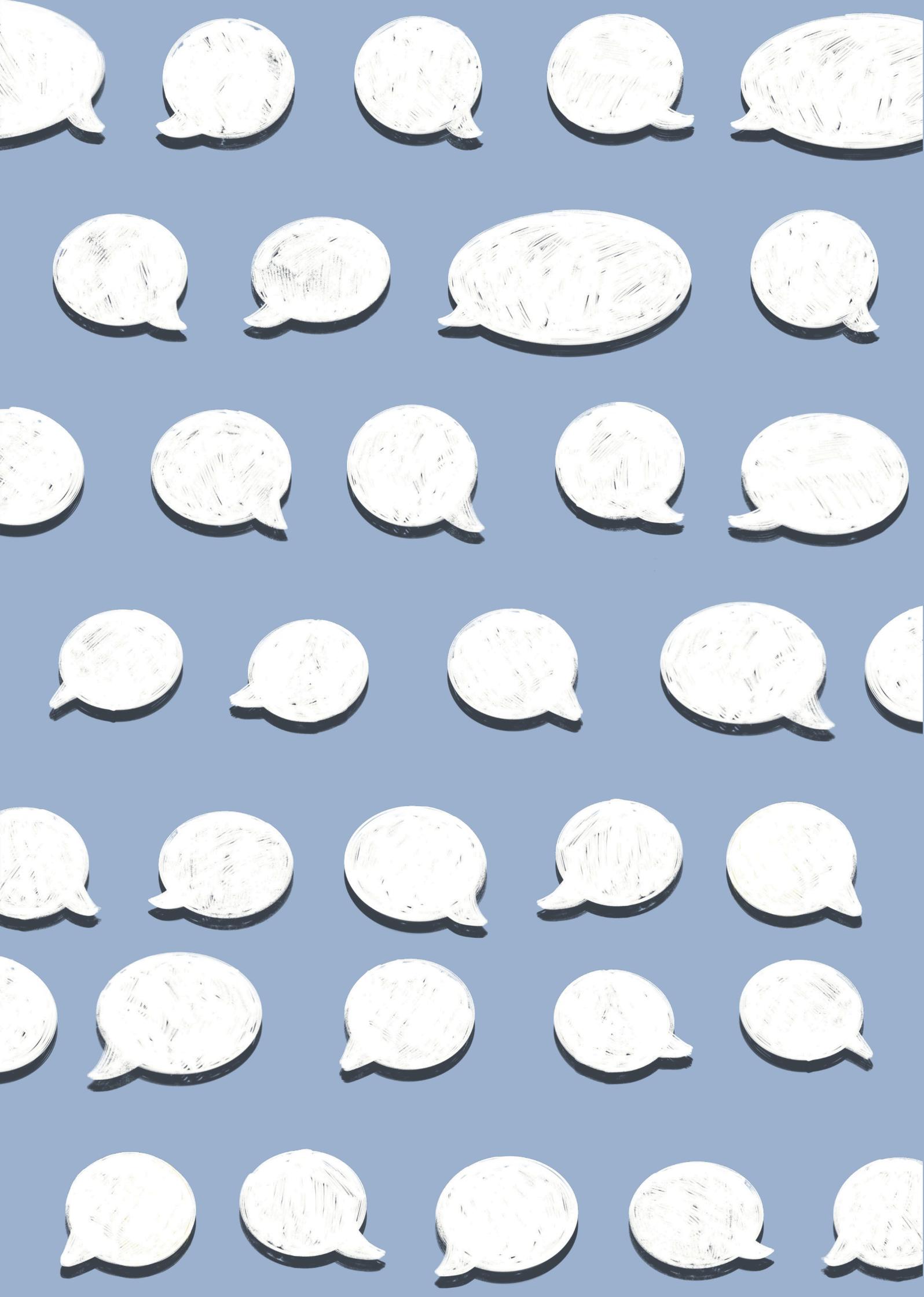
The narrative building part of the workshop proved to be very useful to spark reflection and discussion on the topic, but it lacked a more structured organisation. Starting from the debriefing moment, it would have been useful for the PACES researcher to have some explanatory material prepared to properly answer the questions. In addition to that, in the case in which the PACES researcher participating are more than one it is advisable that one focuses on taking notes during the role play, to address them during this dedicated moment.

Finally, the narrative canvas, that even though it was useful to provoke different thoughts, it resulted to be too long and complex to fill.

### **Limitations**

The testing was conducted with three Italian emerging adults living in the Netherlands, for more than 2 years. This means that the participants were also migrants, and this might have influenced their sensibility on the topic. Furthermore, they all completed a Master, so the sample was very uniform, both in terms of starting knowledge and social class. As also resulted from the evaluation, one question left by the workshop test is whether a different and/or more diverse group of participants would have affected the progress of the activities and the interaction with the facilitator and researchers.

Since this test has been conducted by me in the role of the facilitator, there was not a manual guiding the preparation and the execution of the workshop yet.



## Chapter 8

# Co-creating narratives about migration

After the evaluation of the initial design of the workshop the insights and feedback were incorporated into the final design that is explained in this chapter.



## Process

The final design of the workshop is composed of four main phases, Figure X shows them in their chronological order of execution. The figure also shows the materials needed to carry out each phase.

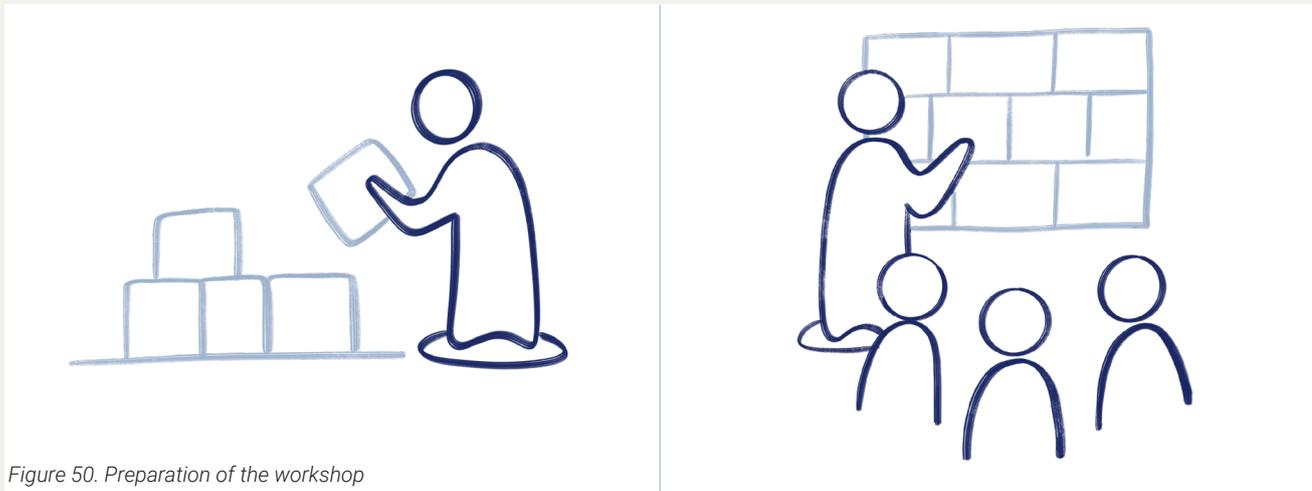


Figure 50. Preparation of the workshop

# 1

### Preparation phase:

The preparation phase is needed to define the direction they want to give to the workshop and to prepare the content and the materials necessary to run the workshop smoothly.

# 2

### Execution phase:

The workshop's execution phase establishes a connection between PACES and Italian emerging adults. During this session, the Italian emerging adults are exposed to PACES' knowledge about migration, while PACES gains insight into their perspective and effective communication strategies for this specific group.

The execution phase is divided into three different activities:

Figure 52, 53, 54. From top to bottom, Introductory activity, then the role-play and finally a representation of participants filling the narrative canvas

#### 2.1 Introductory activity

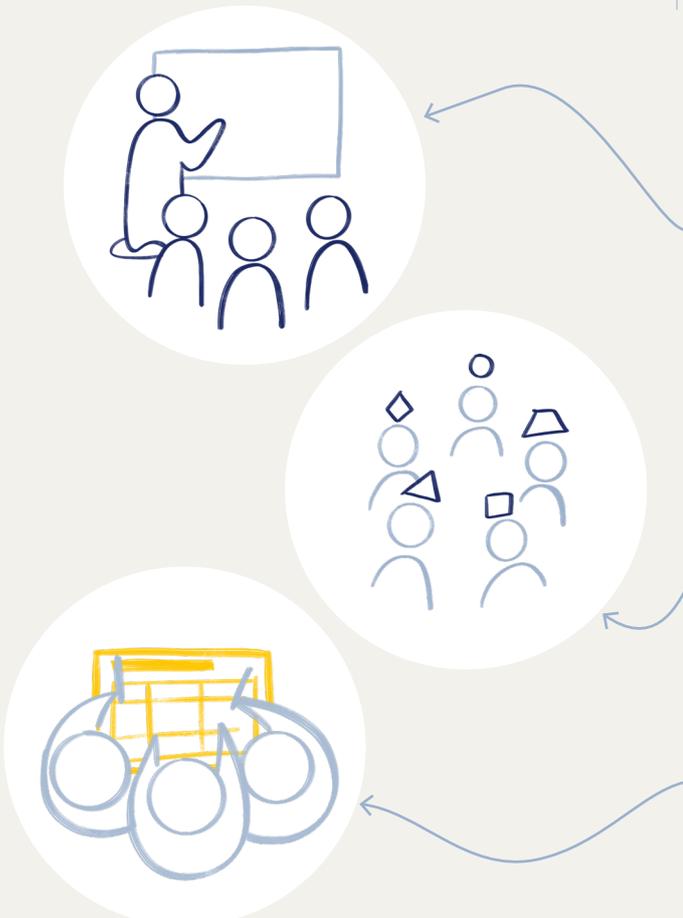
The introduction opens the workshop by providing participants with information about the context, goals, schedule, and guidelines on behaviour. Additionally, it serves as an opportunity for participants to become acquainted with one another and initiate the process of establishing trust within the group (Candelo R. et al., 2003).

#### 2.2 Role-play activity

The scope of the role-play activity is for the participants to understand the subject of the workshop more in-depth. This is achieved by having them assume the role of a specific character and acting out real or made-up situations (Candelo R. et al., 2003).

#### 2.3 "Building the narrative" activity

In this last activity, Italian emerging adults will be invited to think about the knowledge they have acquired and create a narrative that speaks to their peers. Through this activity, PACES can also gain valuable insights into how these young adults view the subject.



## 8.2 Workshop design

The workshop is carried out by PACES researchers when they want to gather insights on citizens' opinion on a specific migration topic. This might happen before participatory activities with policymakers, where the information gained through the workshop can be useful to discuss citizens positions towards specific topics.

The workshop can also be used to investigate what is the current public knowledge on a topic, when researching about it. Finally, it can be used to produce content for the PACES' dissemination, communication, and exploitation (DCE) plan, a plan that involves different communication channels to share PACES results to a non-academic audience.

### Roles

The workshop is conducted by a facilitator and the participants are Italian emerging adults and researchers from the PACES project. Now, let's have a closer look at these roles.

#### PACES researchers = Problem Owners

Since the workshop focuses on the co-creation of narratives, the PACES researchers that would want to take part in the workshop will be participants in it as well. They will be participants in the workshop, and at the same time problem owners. The problem owner is "the person who has an open problem and is or feels responsible for solving it" (Heijne & van der Meer, 2019, p.12). In this case, the problem of the PACES researcher is: *How to convey my expert knowledge about migration to Italian emerging adults effectively?*

This is a generic problem that refers to the scope of the workshop, but it can be adapted to a more specific topic.



Figure 55 (on top). Representation of the problem owner in this case a PACES researcher

Figure 57 (on the right). The facilitator connecting the problem and the solution given by the resource group.

#### Italian emerging adults = Resource group

Within this workshop they will have the role of participants and resource group, a group of people that is "willing and ready to use their knowledge, experience, and skills to help to solve the problem" (Heijne & van der Meer, 2019, p.13).

In this way, the participants are considered "experts of their experience" (Sanders & Stappers, 2012, p.24). In this case, the expertise is the knowledge and the experience about the group of their peers and their behaviours related to migration information. By giving Italian emerging adults this role, they could feel more seen and perceive the research world as less distant.

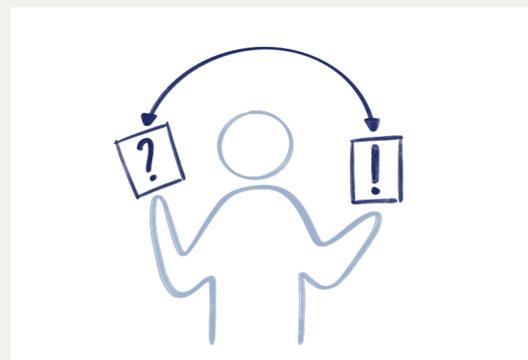


Figure 56. Italian emerging adult as part of the resource group

#### The facilitator

The facilitator is the person responsible for guiding and managing the group's discussions, activities, and processes (Heijne & van der Meer, 2019). The facilitators enable a group to effectively carry out their tasks while mitigating the typical challenges that arise during collaborative efforts (Justice & Jamieson, 2019), (1999). Even if the facilitator is part of PACES, they should position themselves as a neutral role (Heijne & van der Meer, 2019; Justice & Jamieson, 1999). This means showing that they are an outsider, and that they do not know much about the topic of the session and what Italian emerging adults might think about it, to allow tacit knowledge to come out (Sanders & Stappers, 2012).

However, it is useful if the facilitator has knowledge of the content of the session, even if not too extensive. They need to understand the problem to push the participants to give the most, and eventually to intervene to keep the workshop in the wanted direction if the discussion is going out of focus.



## Steps

### Preparation phase

This phase is necessary for a good performance of the workshop. Facilitator and PACES researchers should be aligned on the goal of the workshop and how to manage the different activities. The workshop manual provide a detailed and step-by-step guide on how to carry out every step of the preparation.

#### Steps:

1. **Define introduction and goal**
2. **Establish the guidelines**
3. **Go through the programme**
4. **Select the topic**

This moment helps in the first place in deciding on how to manage the workshop and the relationship with the participants, by defining the goal, the guidelines, the agenda, and, most importantly, the topic to address during the workshop.

#### 5. Define the ice-breaker

Then, the team preparing the workshop will focus on designing an icebreaker activity that can help enter the workshop, and in this phase they can decide if they already want it to be related to the chosen topic or not.

#### 6. Define the role-play

The preparation phase is crucial to arrange all the needed material. While going through the preparation of the activities, the facilitator and the PACES researchers will fill in the presentation that will guide the workshop. To plan the role-play, they will define the scenario and the follow-up scenario that will be the setting of the discussion and together with them, they will pick the characters.

For each character, some aspects need to be defined by filling in the passports sections of the role, social aspects of the character, their beliefs, goals, and intentions. This information will be needed to start the discussion.

#### 7. Prepare the break

In the agenda, right after the role-play, a break is contemplated. It is important to organise this moment as well, for example by assuring that there will be bathrooms in the location and by arranging food and beverages.

#### 8. Prepare the debrief

Since until that moment in the workshop the subject of the workshop is only presented through the role-play, there will be the need for a debrief moment. In the preparation phase, PACES researchers can prepare an explanation of the topic, by using possibly engaging material, like graphs or visuals, to position in one of the slides of the presentation.

#### 9. Prepare the "building the narrative" activity

Finally, they will fill in the upper part of the narrative

canvas that provide instructions on its goal and therefore indications for Italian emerging adults on how to fill it.

#### Material needed:

##### The manual

The manual is an essential tool for this phase, since it guides the facilitator and the PACES researchers through every step needed to have the workshop ready. The full manual can be found in Appendix X.

Since the testing of the initial design of the workshop has been conducted with me in the role of the facilitator, there was not a manual guiding the preparation and the execution of the workshop yet.

Therefore, to guarantee that PACES researchers will be able to replicate the workshop in autonomy, and to support the preparation and the execution of the workshop, the manual was developed with the following sections:

1. Workshop goal
2. Workshop roles
3. Preparation phase
4. Execution phase (which includes the three main activities)
5. After workshop
6. To keep in mind (final tips)

##### The worksheet

The worksheet is a template given to the team preparing the workshop that can be used to better organise and divide tasks. The layout is the one Figure X.

##### The presentation

The presentation is a PowerPoint file, that is a template built to guide in the workshop activities. The facilitator and the PACES researchers will fill it in with information needed for every new version of the workshop. The presentation is then used during the execution phase to help the facilitator and therefore the participants in the journey of the workshop.

In the presentation are also present some example and guidelines on how to fill in and formulate the slides.

##### The passport and the illustrations

As said in the explanation of the preparation phase, the passports are given to assign the characters of the role play. In each one of them, the facilitator and PACES researchers fill in the empty spaces. These are:

- Their role in the chosen scenario
- Social aspect of the character (Lankoski, 2002) like nationality, political affiliation, occupation, age...
- Beliefs: They strongly influence behaviour, and they help us navigate and make decisions in the real world. In other words, what we believe affects how we act because our beliefs help us figure out what to do based on what's actually happening around us (Castelfranchi

& Paglieri, 2007). However, the way in which the beliefs influence behaviour hinge on the aimed goal (Castelfranchi & Paglieri, 2007).

- Goal: guide and control an individual's actions to bring about that desired state. It serves as a guiding point for influencing one's actions to achieve what they want in the future (Castelfranchi & Paglieri, 2007). The goal, in role-play, is crucial as they serve as the foundation for immersing oneself in a character, facilitating shared emotions and consequently actions coherent with the character (Lankoski, 2002).

- Intentions: goals that the characters are determined to turn into reality through their plans and actions (Castelfranchi & Paglieri, 2007).

- Illustration: To complete the passport there is a set of illustrations between which the preparatory team can choose the ones that fit your characters the most, then cut and glue them in the passport.

### **Narrative canvas**

The narrative canvas is the main tool that will be used to build the new narratives during the workshop. In the preparation phase, they will need to be adapted to the specific workshop by pre-filling in some boxes. These would be:

The topic box: with a short title of the topic and possibly some main points on it.

The goal box: in this box the goal of the narrative should be stated, this can be the problem stated at the beginning or other functions that would want to give to the narrative.

The channel of communication box: this box can be left blank and leave the choice to the participants of what it is the best channel to communicate to other Italian emerging adults, or it can be already filled if for the purpose of PACES some specific types of outcomes are required (e.g., blogpost, Instagram post...).

The audience post will be already filled in, since the narrative is meant to be build for the same target group of the participants, in this case Italian

### **Execution phase - Introductory activity**

This phase can set the tone for the rest of the workshop (Heijne & van der Meer, 2019). Therefore, it is crucial to create a pleasant atmosphere that makes feel everyone at ease.

#### **Steps:**

- 1. Greet and welcome with introductions**
- 2. Explanation of the workshop goal**
- 3. Explanation of the guidelines of the workshop**
- 4. Go through the agenda of the workshop**

Following the initial welcoming phase, the facilitator outlines the various roles and the goal of the workshop. These, along with the guidelines and the agenda explanation, help establishing the session's expectations.

### **5. Icebreaker activity**

To properly enter the workshop dynamics and to break the initial social tension by encouraging interaction (Chlup & Collins, 2010), the facilitator proposes the icebreaker. This moment should help the group in building understanding and trust. In this specific case, it can also be used to have an initial idea of what is the current knowledge and vision on migration and on related themes. It is crucial to start the workshop with activities that both strengthen the team and advance the project's objectives simultaneously (Sanders & Stappers, 2012).

#### **Material needed:**

#### **The presentation**

#### **Execution phase - Role-play activity**

This phase aims to give an understanding of the theme or subject in more depth, because participants reconstruct or act out real or fictitious situations (Candelo R. et al., 2003).

The scope of the role-play activity is for the participants to understand the subject of the workshop more in-depth. This is achieved by having them assume the role of a specific character and acting out real or made-up situations. During the game, they start exploring the topic chosen for the workshop by taking the perspective of a given character in a given scenario.

Through the role-play, participants can gain first-hand insights into a variety of dynamics and perspectives related to the subject.

#### **Steps:**

##### **1. Explanation of the game and its phases**

After the icebreaker the participants are fully into the workshop, and they started to sense the topic, it is the moment for the role-play. If they are not familiar with the concept, it might be useful if the facilitator tells them what it is meant with role-play. Then proceed to explain how it will be done in the workshop (with the support of the dedicated slide).

##### **2. Distribution of the passport**

Afterwards, it is time to distribute the passport to the participants and the PACES researchers. These are distributed by the facilitator as first thing so that they can later hear the scenario with already their assigned character in mind.

It is important to remember to assign to PACES researchers the roles that require specific knowledge or if a character is expected to behave in a certain way to communicate the message of the session.

After explaining the content of the workshops, the facilitator should communicate them that the discussion, as mentioned in the right page of the passports, will focus on trying to find a solution. The goal is to reach the goals and intentions of their characters.

##### **3. Explanation of the scenario**

Next, the facilitator introduces the scenario and asks if it is clear to everybody or there are any doubt or question (Ardriyati, 2009).

#### **4. Discussion**

The facilitator can encourage the participants to start the discussion. It can be a good trigger to remind them to keep the character.

Every participant is expected to play their role as realistically as possible based on their given instructions. It is also important to pay attention to the others' behaviour. Once everyone comprehends the scenario and instructions, the performance begins (Candelo R. et al., 2003).

During the discussion, the PACES researcher can take notes about the information said that might be imprecise or wrong to discuss them afterwards, and do not interrupt or influence the discussion.

#### **5. Introduction of the additional scenario and discuss**

The follow-up scenario is an additional element of context to introduce in the discussion in these cases:

- If the discussion is repetitive or at a standstill, and it might benefit from an input to shake things up.
- If the follow-up gives other insight on the chosen topic
- To make the topic even more clear

However, if the facilitator notices that the conversation is interesting and giving good insights already, and interrupting the flow could be counterproductive, this step can be skipped.

#### **6. Break**

When it reached the established time for the discussion, the facilitator would stop the conversation and announce the break.

Before the break, it is important to instruct the group on the exact time to return, which it can indicate on a designated slide. Since breaks tend to run longer than expected, the facilitator should ensure that all participants are back in the session room on schedule. Also, make sure they know the locations of restrooms and any designated smoking areas, if necessary.

The break can be used for the following purposes:

- Preparing the space for the next activity.
- Communicating with the facilitator and the PACES researchers.
- Interacting with participants in a friendly manner.
- Reviewing the manual for upcoming steps.

Both the facilitator and the researchers should keep in mind that also informal moments as the break can be insightful. The participants, out of a more formal setting, might feel free to express thought on the experience that they are living (Sanders & Stappers, 2012).

#### **Material needed:**

**The presentation**

**Passports filled in**

**Food and beverage**

### **Execution phase – Building the narrative activity**

In this phase, the participants will rework the content of the workshop after asking questions on the role-play and after having a more in-depth explanation of the topic. The goal of this phase are several.

First, the participants have the chance to review the topic by putting themselves in the mindset of having to explain it to others. This will probably bring them to try to have that concept clear in their mind, since they have to convey a convincing story. Narratives stimulate thought about "what's happening", act as tools for testing, and lead to new insights and meaning through actions (Kernbach, 2018). They convey the who, what, when, and why, serving as instruments for individuals to explore and understand various ideas and emotions about a subject while trying to gain deeper knowledge (Kernbach, 2018).

Second, the filled canvas will provide insights on the understanding and view on the topic and preferences of the Italian emerging adults, precious data for the research of PACES.

Finally, the reworked knowledge can be shared with other people in the same target group, since is made by Italian emerging adults to suit them and accommodate their needs.

#### **Steps:**

##### **1. Debriefing of the role play**

After the break, the facilitator will start a moment of debriefing of the conversation in which the situation and the different roles' characteristics are clarified, and Italian emerging adults can ask questions (Candelo R. et al., 2003).

This moment of the workshop is also useful for PACES researchers for clarifying information said that might be imprecise or wrong.

To better answer the possible questions and explain the topic, the PACES researchers can take the floor and use the slides prepared in the preparation phase to answers the questions or provide additional information. It is better if this moment keeps an informal setting, to, once again, avoid "teacher" behaviours, and the possibility of them feeling judged (Sanders & Stappers, 2012).

The explanation should take into account that Italian emerging adults prefer discovering processes and the mechanisms over solely facts, and appreciate communication modalities that can make the content stimulating.

##### **2. Filling in narrative canvas**

The facilitator will then go to the activity, "Building the narrative", and will explain that it consist in filling in the narrative canvas. Then they will proceed, supported by the dedicated slide to explain what the different boxes stand for and the content of the already filled in.

While the Italian emerging adults fill in the narrative canvas, the PACES researchers can stay around the groups and eventually ask or answer questions.

##### **3. Sharing the content of the canvas**

In this step, the Italian emerging adults will act as

the representative for the outcomes of the “build the narrative” exercise, presenting and sharing their narratives (Heijne & van der Meer, 2019).

**Material needed:**  
**The presentation**  
**Narrative canvas**

## 8.3 Recommendations for next iteration

The workshop has been tested and most of the feedback has been implemented in the final version of the workshop. However, here there are some suggestions on possible improvements that due to time constraints and lack of resources haven't been integrated in the workshop yet. Improvements on the manual will be detailed in a following section.

### **The overall workshop:**

The workshop takes a long time and if it is done during week days it might be difficult to reach participants. Consequently, an option could be to conduct it during weekends or evenings. Otherwise, it can be separated into multiple sessions to distribute in more convenient times of the day.

The group of the testing was highly educated and open-minded. Therefore, the workshop should be tested with a broader audience, even within the Italian emerging adults group, and have a greater focus on how to reduce the conflicts that can rise.

The workshop should be tested with PACES researcher as facilitator. A suggestion is also to include researchers external to PACES, in this way they can also become more aware of the distance between people and research and lose a bit of “arrogance” (expert 3).

### **The preparation phase**

The preparation phase is time-consuming, therefore it can be divided in multiple preparation meeting, with an activity to prepare for each, for example.

If the workshop is proposed in the same content to different groups, it may be useful to have a sort of database with the previous workshop organised to reduce the timings.

### **The role-play:**

The role-play was appreciated by the most, however the elements that help to understand the characters (i.e., beliefs, goals, and intentions) can be further iterated, by looking more into serious gaming and role-play literature or successful case-study.

Also for the scenario having a set of prepared one, used in the past or just prepared in advance, can be useful to reduce the time in preparing it.

### **The “build the narrative activity”:**

The narrative canvas could be further developed with the intention of creating a greater collaboration between PACES researchers and Italian emerging

adults. It can be tested for example by pairing PACES researchers and Italian emerging adults.

Make the narrative canvas even more collaborative, maybe a deeper research on how narratives are shaped in this type of contexts

The workshop takes a long time so maybe it can be divided

It is quite long so to do it during the day is difficult because people work so finding participants for such a long time it's not so easy

Further iterations on the manual to make it even clearer Divide tasks if the preparation is too time consuming

The group of the testing was highly educated and open-minded, the workshop should be tested with a broader audience and have a greater focus on how to reduce the conflicts that can rise

Difficulties to find participants -> time and incentives Participants can be even more participants: maybe in the workshop can be inserted a part where they understand how narrative works so that they can take ownership on it

In addition to the possible future developments of the workshop already mentioned, other aspects related to the improvement of its execution are as follows:

The narrative canvas could be further developed with the intention of creating a greater collaboration between PACES researchers and Italian emerging adults.

The manual should be further tested and ma

Make the narrative canvas even more collaborative, maybe deeper research on how narratives are shaped in this type of contexts

The workshop takes a long time so maybe it can be divided

Further iterations on the manual to make it even clearer The group of the testing was highly educated and open-minded, the workshop should be tested with a broader audience and have a greater focus on how to reduce the conflicts that can rise

Try it with PACES as facilitator, taking notes but with external researchers, in this way they can also become more aware of the distance between people and research and lose a bit of “arrogance”

## **Evaluation of the manual**

The manual was prepared later than the rest of the workshop, consequently it has been tested in the following ways.

### **1. Simulation of use:**

Two designers took the roles of the facilitator and the Problem owner, and simulated the preparation phase of the workshop.

In the meanwhile, they were given sticky-notes to write down notes on the manual.

After the simulation, they have been asked to answer a survey to provide final general feedback.

## **2. Feedback from the client:**

The project lead of PACES was given the manual and the other material to review and give feedback on them.

## **3. Feedback from an external expert in the field:**

An external expert was consulted and asked to review the manual. The review was done by commenting on the manual directly and by answering a survey to provide final general feedback.

## **4. Feedback from an external expert in the field:**

An external expert (M.A. double degree in Intermediterranean mediation: Crossing the Mediterranean towards investment and integration) was consulted and asked to review the manual. The review was done by commenting on the manual directly and by answering a survey to provide final general feedback.

What came out from the evaluation is that the manual is well-structured and helpful in preparing and executing the workshop. However, some improvements are needed:

- Having a clearer overview of the various activity at the beginning, in this way the instructions in the preparation phase are easy to follow.

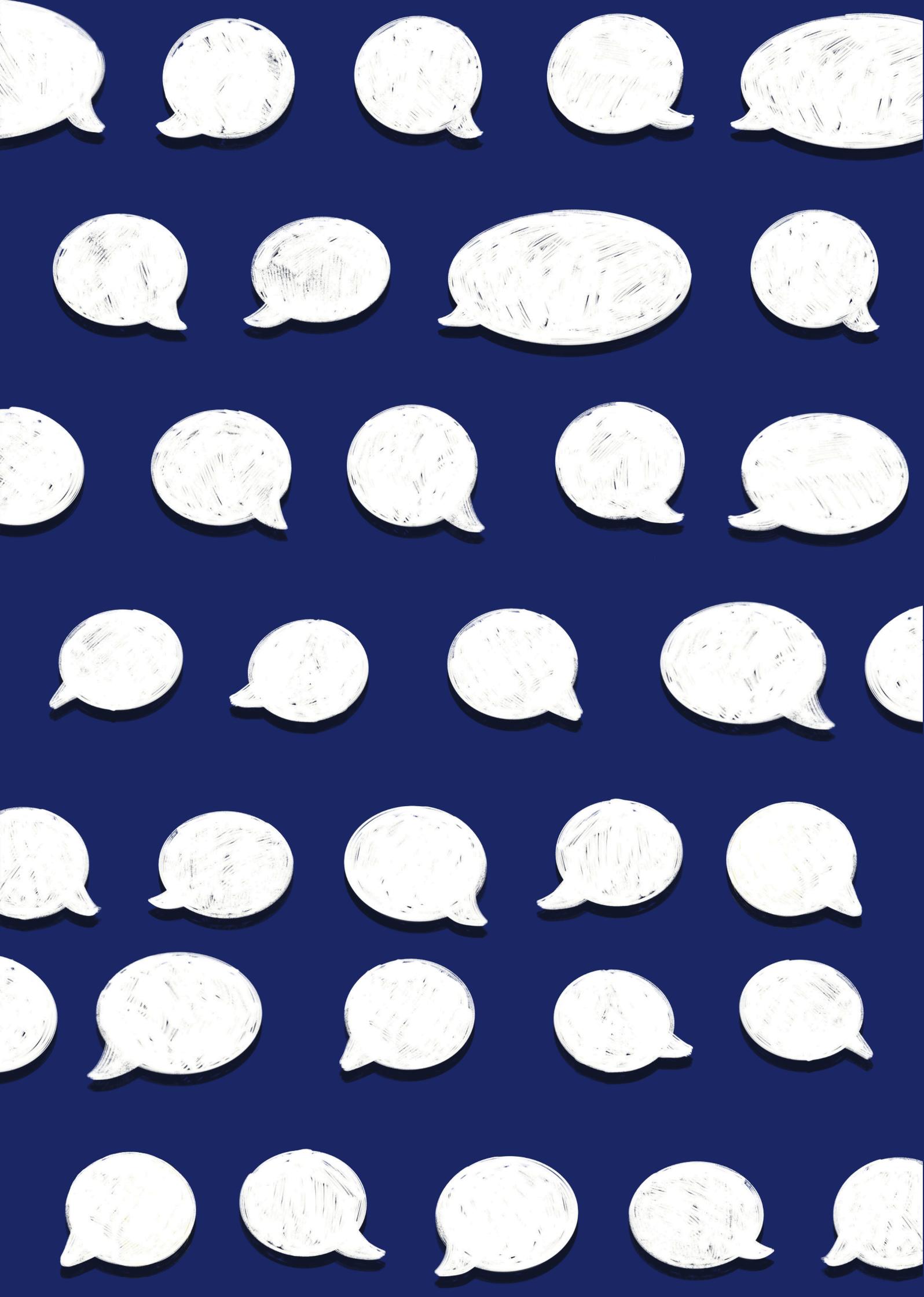
- In general stating clearly in the preparation phase why each step is being made, so for the researchers is easier to know what to prepare.

- Using a language that is smoother and easier to follow.

- Make it clear that the role-play is the first learning moment, and that then there will be the debriefing for a more detailed explanation.

- A more detailed explanation of the narrative canvas, also including the sections that the facilitator and the PACES researchers do not have to fill.

Due to time constraints, the received feedback has been only partially implemented in the final version of the manual. The ones that have not been integrated are left out for future iterations.



# Chapter 9

# Conclusions

This conclusive chapter presents a final recap of the project followed by the insights and contributions drawn from this project. Afterwards, the limitations of this study and some recommendations for future works are discussed. Finally, the chapter will end with a personal reflection about the experience of this graduation project.

## 9.1 Project Recap

*What kind of approach can PACES use to provide citizens with the scientific knowledge to better understand migration and migration policy, and consequently empower them in expressing well-informed opinions on the topic?*

The intention of this project was to support PACES in providing citizens with the scientific knowledge to better understand migration and migration policy, and consequently to empower them to express well-informed opinions on the topic.

This starting point brought to the exploration of the factors that are currently shaping citizens' opinions about migration. This focus led to a broader examination of the public debate surrounding migration. The debate plays a crucial role in shaping citizens' views, but equally important are the participants in this debate and the connections between them. Particularly relevant to mention is the triangular relationship between media, politics, and research, where the first two are significantly responsible for selectively translating research findings into narratives.

These narratives are the primary means through which expert knowledge reaches the general public since the majority of the public does not engage directly with research materials. They are frequently utilized in public discourse to frame and make sense of migration and its consequences. Narratives are not intrinsically negative; however, this type of framing is often subjected to media-driven criteria and political interests and tends to remove the complexity out of the phenomenon to privilege overly simplified, sensationalized, and polarized representations.

Through this exploration, it was possible to acknowledge that the information environment or public debate influences citizens' perception of migration and therefore their opinions. Research knowledge plays an important role in the public debate as well, and it is somehow connected to native citizens, but not in a direct way. The result of this is the misperception of migration and its impact.

The problem space was then reframed to position PACES in the picture and directing the project to support PACES in becoming the connecting infrastructure between citizens and expert knowledge about migration and migration policy.

Even though thanks to the initial exploration it was possible to get an understanding of how citizens receive information about migration, what was missing was the perception of the citizens themselves. Therefore, the group of Italian emerging adults was selected to investigate how they experience the process of informing themselves. What resulted was that this specific group of people is deeply unsatisfied with current information environment, but they don't perceive research accessible enough to rely on it in their process of opinion formation.

A similar perspective was given by researchers in the

field that they complain a lack of quality in the way of framing migration in the public debate and the desire for a better engagement of academia with native citizens. In both groups, the perception of the distance between research and native citizens emerged. For this reason, the project oriented towards supporting PACES in bridging this gap by shaping evidence-based narratives tailored to the needs of Italian emerging adults.

This focus on narratives was driven by their effectiveness in helping to make sense of complex phenomena such as migration.

Following three iterative design cycles, a collaborative creation session involving PACES researchers and Italian emerging adults was developed. This effort led to the final design of a workshop with the objective of co-creating narratives about migration. The next sections will delve into the contributions this project has made to the PACES project and its implementation, as well as its academic significance. However, the design proposal presents some limitations, which will also be explored in this chapter, along with recommendations for future iterations.

## 9.2 Contributions

This project aimed to investigate how design could facilitate PACES in connecting with native citizens and effectively convey its knowledge to them.

To contribute to this goal, the project focused on exploring the dynamics within the public debate on migration. In the research phase, the project analysed this context through a literature review and synthesized the findings using an iterative system mapping approach. The insights derived from this analysis and the resulting map constitute two of the main contributions of the project.

The context analysis in the research phase revealed a gap between the research world and native citizens, which became the foundation for subsequent actions. This identified gap and the dynamics it generates have been further validated during the empirical research phase by both Italian emerging adults (representing a sample of the native citizens for the project) and researchers specializing in migration. Bridging this crucial divide between research and citizens is essential for involving citizens in the PACES project and for initiating dialogues within the public debate.

Another crucial element emerged from the analysis is the importance of narratives in framing migration in the public debate. Narratives have a massive influence in shaping people perspective on migration. Therefore, the analysis highlighted that to create a shift in these perceptions, it was crucial to leverage the role and capabilities of narratives.

The map generated offers a comprehensive overview of the context. While this map represents a necessary

selection of information through a design lens to effectively organize and convey knowledge from migration research, it might not fully capture all nuances from a social science perspective. The synthesis process, however, driven by a design perspective, has the potential to spark new discussions about well-known challenges in migration research.

Another key contribution of this project is the workshop for co-creating new narratives about migration. The workshop serves as a tool ideated with the objective of supporting PACES in engaging with Italian emerging adults and elicit well-informed opinions by providing them knowledge about migration.

The workshop is specifically designed to bridge the gap between research and citizens, mentioned earlier. This is achieved by creating an environment built on trust, allowing Italian emerging adults to acquire information from PACES that aligns with their needs. Furthermore, the workshop seeks to empower Italian emerging adults with the ability to shape their narratives based on research knowledge, assuming a more active role in forming opinions about migration-related topics. This approach fosters an environment for discussions about migration within and beyond the workshop, conversations driven by the insights provided by PACES. This aligns with the commitment of PACES of stimulating dialogues that highlight the complexities of this phenomenon.

The activities of the workshop are strategically designed to ensure that PACES gains valuable insights into the participants' perspectives on the selected topic. This insight is derived from the reflections and discussions generated during the role-play activity, as well as the reinterpretation of information guided by the narrative canvas. The latter can also be used as material for the dissemination of knowledge to a non-academic audience, a crucial component of the PACES plan.

In combination with the results of the public opinion survey, the overall insights from the workshop can contribute to generating new evidence on public migration-policy knowledge and public opinion regarding alternative migration policies.

Finally, the workshop can serve as a starting point for the practice of research through design. In this capacity, the workshop can be further developed through an iterative process with the goal of generating knowledge for research purposes.

## 9.3 Limitations

### **Limitations of the theoretical framework**

In constructing the theoretical framework, I primarily drew upon literature from the social sciences. This literature served as a reference for analysing the

key aspects relevant to the project. The resulting analysis was presented in a manner that aims to offer a comprehensive view of the public discourse on migration, including its underlying dynamics, while ensuring it remains easily comprehensible.

However, it's worth noting that, coming from a design background, some elements from the social science background might have been unintentionally omitted during this process.

A related limitation is that there could have been a broader exploration of the role of narratives in socio-political contexts and on how they are built. However, due to time constraints, theories related to narratives have been explored mainly in relationship to the context of the public debate about migration and migration policies.

### **Limitations of the empirical research**

For this project, it was chosen to focus on Italian emerging adults as a group of reference for the development of the workshop. The need of selecting solely one sample derived by time and resource limitations, however it could have been beneficial to take multiple groups as reference target to develop a more versatile outcome.

For the same reasons, it was not possible to include migrants in the project as active contributors. This is a great limitation since they could give an inside point of view that could enrich the knowledge provided by experts and be determinant in shaping new narratives.

### **Limitations of the workshop**

One of the main limitations presented by the workshop itself is the time needed both to prepare it and to conduct it. Even though the contribution of the workshop to the PACES project is valuable, it might be difficult on an organizational level for PACES researchers to reproduce multiple times. However, the preparation timing can be significantly reduced if the researchers get acquainted to its organisation or if they divide the tasks to do in autonomy.

Similarly, the workshop execution can be time-consuming, and this can also make it more difficult to reach participants. Based on what is more convenient, it can be translated into a series of smaller workshops.

The workshop was the result of three design cycles and one testing session. Yet, it could have been beneficial to conduct further testing and iterations, also with other groups of people, as already mentioned in the limitations of the empirical research.

For what concern the materials developed for the workshop, the set for the role-play worked well and was appreciated by the participants. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the success of the material is highly dependent on the preparation of both the scenarios and the characters. It could be useful to define

more detailed guidelines on how to formulate them properly. Another factor that influences the success of the discussion is the knowledge and the engagement of the participants. In the case of a faltering discussion, the facilitator and the PACES researchers should be able to lift the tone and the level of involvement of the participants.

One aspect of the feedback received from the testing of the workshop was the difficulties encountered in filling the narrative canvas, therefore in the final design it was improved based on the received feedback. Alternatively, other techniques for narrative building could have been explored.

Finally, the manual has been tested through the preparation of a fictional workshop to assess its understandability. Consequently, the next step would be assessing it in the development and execution of an actual session of the workshop. (implemented the feedback or not)

### **General limitations**

Even though the workshop was tested, due to time constraint and the fact that this workshop is thought of as a stage that the PACES project hasn't reached yet, it was not possible to entirely assess the impact that it would have if integrated within PACES project plan.

I have previously discussed how this project represents a small intervention that can be implemented and scaled for a more substantial impact. Nevertheless, I believe the project would have been even more valuable if it had explicitly incorporated the systemic mindset that supports it and incorporated additional systemic design practices.

Overall, the project would have greatly benefited from a longer timeframe and more resources, this would have also allowed to integrate more reflective moments between the phases, enabling evaluation and adjustment before moving on to the next one.

Finally, this project focused primarily on supporting the formation of evidence-based opinions about migration, thus it explored mainly how to do it through the workshop. It does not offer a comprehensive investigation into the methods for reaching and choosing the participants.

## **9.4 Future recommendations**

To suggest some direction to further develop the workshop and to better implement it in the PACES project, the concept of scaling is taken as reference, in particular the interpretation given by Marradi & Mulder (2022). Scaling in the context of social innovation means increasing the societal impact of an initiative by fostering a shift in mindset (scaling deep), by increasing the audience that would benefit from the change

(scaling out) and possibly by influencing the rules that govern the considered system (scaling up) (Marradi & Mulder, 2022).

### **Scaling deep**

To guide future iterations and maximize the impact of the project, it is important to explore the concept of "scaling deep". This concept aligns with the idea of reshaping the narrative surrounding migration, and it can significantly enhance the impact of this project.

Scaling deep means to provoke a transformation in people's mindsets (Marradi & Mulder, 2022). This project focused on shifting the way of narrating migration by connecting citizens with research. This effort aims to change the perception of people towards migration and the way in which it is portrayed. Thus, it set the basis for a shift in mindset.

To increase the impact of the project on the dialogue about migration in future iterations, it is advisable to develop an extensive portfolio of topics that PACES could cover through the workshop. Touching upon a wide range of migration aspects is important to eradicate the many misconceptions that people might have rooted in their perception of migration. To cover better some topic, a suggestion is to involve in the workshop also migrants. They could provide the knowledge coming from their experience and add a significant value to the workshop.

Narratives play an essential role in shaping people's ideas and perceptions. Future iterations should leverage narratives as a tool to facilitate a significant transformation in people's mindsets. In a deeply polarised society, this approach can be interesting also applied to other topics other than migration that generate flash in the public debate.

Another area worth exploring to advance the project's goal of shifting the perception of migration is the concept of "motivated reasoning," which experts mentioned during the interviews. Motivated reasoning refers to the tendency for people to use biased thinking in order to support or align with their pre-existing beliefs. This plays a significant role in shaping people's perception of migration.

### **Scaling out**

Having explored the concept of 'scaling deep' and its potential to reshape the narratives about migration, the next step is to consider how to 'scale out' to extend the reach and impact of the project. 'Scaling out' involves reaching a wider audience to promote positive change (Marradi & Mulder, 2022), and it is related to the extent to which perceptions of migration can be changed.

Within the timeframe and the resources available for this project, it was only possible to focus on Italian emerging adults. A recommended next step to scale out the workshop is to broaden its target group. A

suggested starting point is to open the workshop to emerging adults in general. In this way it would be easier to test and adapt the current workshop as it is designed for this particular age group, and the content is not designed to speak exclusively to Italians.

Afterwards, the workshop can be adapted to the educational system. All the experts interviewed believe that if the expert knowledge on migration was integrated in the educational path, it would have a wide-reaching impact in creating awareness and skills to understand the situation. This could start by re-designing the workshop to suit an audience of adolescents, leveraging the similarities with the emerging adults, and then gradually modify it to be executed also with younger kids.

The potential impact of this future action extends beyond the confines of the PACES project, aiming for a systemic change. The ultimate goal could potentially be to introduce the topic of migration into the educational curriculum, bringing about a fundamental shift in how society engages with and understands this critical topic.

To broaden the audience of the workshop, another way could be to propose the workshop to people based on their flexibility and openness to discuss the topic. The people who are more willing to participate voluntarily could be the starting point to then gradually explore and adapt the workshop for people who are firmly attached to their current beliefs, exploring what are the best practices for opening a dialogue with them. One suggestion might be to create a pathway, rather than a one-off workshop, to slowly build a relationship of trust that will allow fruitful discussions. By gradually building these relationships, we can increase the likelihood of reaching individuals who may initially be hesitant to participate in the workshop. This incremental process allows for a more nuanced and effective approach to changing perceptions and promoting meaningful dialogue.

Finally, a less time-consuming way to expand the reach of PACES is to take advantage of the already existing dissemination, communication, and exploitation (DCE) plan of PACES presented in figure x. Within this plan, one of the key objectives is to reach non-academic audiences, to “communicate new knowledge on migration and other relevant policies and facilitate the exploration of alternative policy options” (PACES Consortium, 2022, p.24). The narratives developed during the workshop could be integrated into this communication strategy, specifically targeting the audiences that actively participated in their creation. This strategic alignment allows for the effective dissemination of the narratives to a wider and more diverse audience, extending the project’s impact without significant additional time or resource investment.

### **Scaling up - integrating**

Having covered “scaling deep” and “scaling out” as key elements for further project development, it is now time to shift our focus to “scaling up”. Scaling up is about having a significant impact on institutional systems, including policies, rules, and laws. It may involve the gradual integration of innovations into the existing system, while seeking compromises and common grounds (Marradi & Mulder, 2022).

The PACES project already incorporates engagement with the policy world as a fundamental component of its mission. The project aims to involve various stakeholders in policy discussions, among these native citizens. The insights generated through the workshop represent valuable information that can be used to start dialogues on potential alternative policies.

Furthermore, the strategy of the PACES project emphasizes a participatory approach to foster collaboration between policymakers and stakeholders, including citizens and migrants. Thus, the workshop can serve as an additional participatory tool to engage citizens in these dialogues. In future developments, there is potential to adapt the workshop to include both migrants and policymakers. Such an evolution would significantly contribute to PACES’ objective of creating “active communities of practice that have the potential to outlive the project” (PACES Consortium, 2022, p.24).

### **Suggestions for future research**

Future research should further explore the systemic potential of the project by applying techniques from the field of systemic design in synergy with the knowledge coming from social science. This synergy should be further explored, allowing for more contamination of methodologies and expertise.

This could be particularly fruitful in the exploration of the roles of narrative. Using the applied research methodology of design research (such as research through design) could be beneficial in uncovering the potential of narratives in a complex and heated topic such as migration.

This research individuated a gap between research and the wider public in terms of accessibility, in a historical moment where it seems that information is within everyone’s reach. Future research could direct their effort in exploring what is the potential of design in this particular instance.

## Personal reflection

Now that this project is coming to an end, I would like to add a few personal reflections on this journey.

When I approached the graduation project, I was determined to find a topic that could spark my enthusiasm, but I never imagined that I would find such an interesting project that could be built for me. Exploring this context as a designer was an intense and enriching experience, motivated by the strong drive generated in me by the mission of the PACES project.

As often happens, the final project did not turn out to be what I planned to, but my expectations were not disappointed. When I initially approached PACES, in fact, I was inspired by the idea of creating something that could make a significant contribution to PACES development, and I am not sure I was willing to settle for less. But then I got to the heart of what became the goal of this project, namely an intervention aimed at acting in the public debate to change the narrative on migration, I realised how complex such a context can be. This confirmed to me once again how crucial it is to think of change as a set of small actions, rather than a sudden overturn.

Realising, or rather confirming, this vision of change helped me to focus on how with my 'small' contribution and skills, I could make the biggest impact possible and accept it, whatever it is.

Another thought that matured during this project was in relation to systemic design. I started this project with the idea of using methods and approaches that were as systemic as possible. Although my idea of systemic design has been redefined, I think that the contribution made by this project can still be placed within the framework of systemic change. And I did this by focusing on native citizens, an area of intervention in which I felt I could best contribute within the limited context of the graduation project. But if I could hypothetically continue the project, I would address the topic by going deeper, including migrants and their demands in the dialogue. An action in order to really have an impact must seek to involve as many actors as possible.

Finally, an important aspect I wanted to emphasise in this project, which I believe is as relevant today as ever, is the relevance of narratives in shaping our reality, especially in the public debate on any subject. Today, more than ever, it was essential for me to emphasise that placing certain delicate realities in the right or wrong can cost human lives. 🗨️



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