



## Transnational Network and Information Flow in African Refugees and Undocumented Migrants' International Migration Process

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper analyses the role of information flow under transnational (social) networks to understand African refugees and undocumented migrants' migration to Austria. Existing research pointed to the international refugee crisis with industrialised countries targeted border governance that has prompted the emergence of the transnational (social) network, which builds (kinship-based) connectivity and interchangeable acquaintances between migrants in host and country of origin to influence and facilitate migrants' pre and post mobility process. However, the network often faces weak ties with exploitation and subjugation to human trafficking. Based on twenty qualitative problem-centred face-face interviews, data are collected and analysed with content analysis technique to fill in the gap. The findings indicate that pre-mobility guidance, directive, and legislative decoder regulatory tools influence transnational networks with a lack of well-managed network that may impair pre and post mobility processes to shape African refugees and undocumented migrant international migratory pathways in an information flow setting. This study demonstrated actor-based network-driven advocacy governance. The outcome points to the strategic mobilisation of collective information to resource vulnerable people and refugees or undocumented migrants to meet their needs. This is relevant to collective action in contemporary neoliberal society targeting freedom and movements that may not only constrain ethnic minorities group mobility, but the universal human rights principles, public policy learning process, informal institution collaborative actions, and democratic values in times of crisis-related super-diversity societies.

**Keywords:** African; Austria; Information flow; Refugees, Transnational Network; Undocumented Migrants



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## INTRODUCTION

As recent years have seen a growing scene of Europe's refugee crisis that depicts an overwhelmed border to desperate people on the move across European countries, the

transnational (social) network has emerged as a major topic of inquiry among public policy scholars. Most researchers in the field agreed that transnational (social) network emphasizes the process of interpersonal and organizational ties which build interchangeable relations and social capital for migrants between host and sending countries ([Baker, 1990](#); [Bourdieu, 1986](#); [Boyd & Ellison, 2007](#); [Brettell et al., 2014](#); [Dekker & Engbersen, 2014](#)). On the one hand, transnational networks influence and facilitate migrants' mobility, kinship-based connectivity, and post-mobility integration ([Faist, 2008](#); [Gillespie et al., 2016](#); [Granovetter, 1973](#); [Massey et al., 1999](#); [Portes, 1998](#)). On the other hand, the networks often face weak ties or bridge connection with exploitation and subjugation to human trafficking ([Dekker & Engbersen, 2014](#); [Gillespie et al., 2016](#); [Granovetter, 1973](#); [Hampton & Wellman, 1999](#); [Poros, 2011](#); [Vertovec, 2003](#)). The limitation of all these interpretations is that there is still little research in Europe explaining information flow in the realm of transnationalism to understand African refugees' and undocumented migrants' experiences in international mobility. Specifically, understanding information flow under transnational (social) networks to shape African refugees and undocumented migrant journeys to Europe requires clarification. Hence, this article will deliver a careful investigation of the role of information flow under the transnational (social) network model that shapes refugees' and migrants' journey to Europe.

This paper analyses the role of information flow in the realm of the transnational (social) network that shapes African refugees and undocumented migrants' journey to Austria. The main research question of this study is: How does information flow under transnational (social) networks shape African refugees and undocumented migrants' journey to Austria? A sub-question concerns how information flow affects the functioning of refugees and undocumented migrants' aspirations?

Based on a qualitative in-depth semi-structured non-standardized problem-centred face-face interview with African refugees and undocumented migrants, data were collected and analysed by means of content analysis technique to shed light on this seemingly complex phenomenon. The research data analysis method is the technique of content analysis. The paper begins with section two discussing the transnational (social) network in the information flow model for migrants' mobility process. In section three, the author of this paper presents the methods of the study. Section four presents the findings of the case study to answer the research questions. Finally, this paper ends with some general remarks and a conclusion.

### TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS MODEL IN INFORMATION FLOW FOR MOBILITY NEGOTIATIONS

Analysing migrations and transnational (social) networks over the past few decades is essential to understanding international migration. This network builds relationships and social ties that involve linkage and acquaintance. The process is often negotiated by pioneer migrants already living in migrants' communities in a host country in Europe. Similarly, the process is in the form of interpersonal and organizational ties to sustain the pre-migration process from and to destination countries as well as regulate migrants' life-course trajectories. Migrants' mobility relies on the relationship and connection within their community in the host and destination country. The functionality of these multidirectional and resourceful ties serves as a catalyst to guide and steer migratory routes to Europe. The composition of such relation represents an interchangeable opportunity for support that impacts individuals' life-course trajectories to regulate and influence migrants' mobility. On top of that, the linkage determines the migrant's

connection to home and host countries as a transnational agent to facilitate integration and the societal development process

For migrants, information flows between host and sending countries ensure mobility and connectivity (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Brettell et al., 2014; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Massey et al., 1999). The connection consists of social relations coordinated by pioneer migrants (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; MacDonald & MacDonald, 1964; Poros, 2011). This serves as social capital and determines the mobility process to steer migrants' pathway trajectories (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014). From this perspective, social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (Bourdieu, 1986; Crane & Hartwell, 2019; Metz et al., 2022). Members profit from the aspect of solidarity and investment strategies to ensure a resourceful connection (Portes, 1998).

Similarly, social capital exists in pre-mobility networks as a set of kinship-based or diasporas community connections (Granovetter, 1973; Massey et al., 1999). For instance, this traditional network offers directives that connect migrants with potential resourceful information about their families (Faist, 2008; Gillespie et al., 2016), the journey, and diminishes the risk and cost of mobility. Migrants often utilize today's network differently (Vertovec, 2003). Due to the changing networks (Hampton & Wellman, 1999), weak ties (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014) or bridges (Granovetter, 1973) as migrants meet people from different nationalities during their voyage. This has a direct effect on migrants' migratory pathway trajectories (Poros, 2011). Owing to that is to accelerate and stabilize confidence through different pools of information for common interest (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Poros, 2011; Vertovec, 2003). For instance, migrants rely on the kin-based network to arrange everyday activities that serve as opportunities to connect (Poros, 2011). Notably, to offer resourceful guidance and the exchange of crucial resources such as information within the network to regulate migrant's migratory pathway trajectories (Poros, 2011). Conversely, several refugees and undocumented migrants have weak networks connection. They are often exploited and subjugated to human trafficking (Poros, 2011) which jeopardized their pathways. They also face unreliable information to seek asylum, healthcare issues, language barriers (they don't speak German), and practical difficulties (such as how to use the metro, buy at the supermarket, or open a bank account (Gillespie et al., 2016).

Secondly, they rely on a transnational set of interrelations regular social relations and contact linking migrants across countries with their families (Faist & Ulbricht, 2013) to share information as guidance. Hence, living a dual life, speaking several languages, and having a home in two or more countries (Poros, 2011; Portes, 1998). They vary from informal engagement to the transfer of knowledge and societal development process (Poros, 2011). This support regulates their journey over time (Itzigsohn et al., 1999; Portes, 1998) with resourceful information that enables migrant's pathway trajectories.

On top of that, regular contact is obtained through communities' activities and events that steer migrants' decision-making process. In Portes et al (1999) views, there are distinctive activities that connect migrants together in destination countries and homelands. The first role (or importance) of the activities is the economic purpose that offers transnational opportunities to mobilize migrants' skills and wealth transfer. Secondly, the political aim is to achieve and sustain influence in the home and destination country. This enables contact and information possibilities to facilitate migrant movement. Lastly, the socio-cultural events are oriented towards the

reinforcement of a national identity through events attached to migrants' country of origin. As [Faist and Ulbricht \(2013\)](#) emphasized, doing national identity through transnationality. For instance, inviting cultural groups from their home countries or musicians to come and play in their communities where they are residing abroad. As another example, in Germany, "Interfaces such as the national "Islam Conference" have been established in which Muslim organizations have begun to function as public agents to their communities. This activity is to keep their socio-cultural heritage in connection with the host country" ([Tezcan, 2012](#)).

Above all, this set of transnational social relations is an influential arena that hooks up migrants together with significant resources. There are available through long-distance telephone, cyber communication, and electronic mail ([Portes, 1998](#)). Indeed, digital platforms and technical innovations (such as Twitter, WhatsApp, telegraph, and Facebook) have enabled migrants to transfer information that diffuses into resourceful social capital to their life course. One example is the possibility of migrants to telephone, face chat or text a family member and friend at home or abroad to facilitate the migration process. This gives them access to reliable or trustful information about where to seek help and navigate their chosen routes ([Gillespie et al., 2016](#); [Portes, 1998](#)). Therefore, the accessibility increases the frequency and scope of information that negotiates the journey. Due to attachment, they are in connection to communicative infrastructure and activities on how to overcome the perilous pathways. Hence, a transnational network enables migrants with exclusive bond and command to resourceful information for their migratory trajectories.

Overall, social capital and transnational network are significant resources that facilitate migrants with a set of ties and dots that serve as a network-driven entity. This enables the acquisition of social capital along the transnational path. The transfer of resourceful capital is collectively exchanged through essential information that connects refugees and undocumented migrants to home and host countries to assist their journey to Europe. These transnational social relations guide migrants before migration to facilitate their journey to the host country, play an important role after migration in relation to their homeland country, as well as enable the possibility to build a bridge of participation for the destination country.

After the exploration of social capital and transnational network, it is certain that information serves as one of the main tools to facilitate migrant mobility. The crucial ties and transnational network are resourceful tools that facilitate migrants with a set of social network-driven connection that serves as assistance. This enables the transfer of resourceful essential information to connect refugees' and migrants' activities between home and host countries. Therefore, during the journey, they are attached through a technological connection that offers the opportunity to professionals and volunteers to reach out and provide 'digital care' as well as a rescue operation to refugees and migrants in need ([Gillespie et al., 2016](#)). Despite that current research shows limited information about the role of information in this process taking refugees' and undocumented migrants' personal experiences. The aim of this paper is to investigate how the flow of information shape African refugees and undocumented migrant perilous journey to Europe. This is to contribute to the knowledge of the existing literature and provide alternative information to policymakers, practitioners and the whole society on refugees and undocumented migrants' perilous journey to Europe.

## METHOD

My finding is based on ten qualitative problem-centred interviews ([Lamnek, 2005](#); [Lamnek et al., 2010](#)) of refugees and undocumented migrants. The structure composes of an open with a semi-structured non-standardized guideline. This is to allow the interviewees freely speak and get close to an open discussion ([Mayring, 2002](#)). The interview is purposely centred to enable an in-depth focus on the phenomenon. Hence, this paper focuses on the role of information in the realm of the transnational network that shaped African refugees' and undocumented migrants' journey to Europe.

I interviewed African refugees and undocumented migrants, who are different from other groups such as those from Islamic countries. The participants are Nigerian, Somalian, Guinean, Cameroonian, and Ghanaian refugees, and undocumented migrants moving to Austria in the cities of Wels and Linz in Upper Austria. That is four interviewees for each of the five countries African refugee and undocumented migrant groups. The interviews took place in two rounds during my short stay in Libya with the participants and in Austria. During the first round of interviews in Libya, ten participants were asked the following questions: "Who is your contact person in Europe and Austria" and "How did you meet your contact person". Furthermore, I conducted a second round of ten interviews after the participant's arrival in Austria. The second-round interview was about their situation at the beginning and end of the journey. I found the target group through connections in informal institutions (such as religious groups and churches with African priests, diaspora communities in WhatsApp, and Facebook social media groups), other African migrant communities in Austria and other European countries, and my personal networking connectivity across African diaspora platforms. I use the snowball technique through my vast network of non-governmental and civic society organizations assisting refugees and undocumented migrants to engage with more respondents and connect to existing partners in the field ([Przyborski & Wohrab-Sahr, 2014](#)). Technically, I also use a multiple purposely sample to reach participants with different socio-economic backgrounds ([Patton, 1990](#); [Yin, 2012](#)), gender disparities and from different African countries in order to interview their diverse pathway trajectories. Hence, the deliberate sample includes African refugees and undocumented migrants with diverse migratory project, different education attainment, gender disparity, legal status, and religious affiliation. This is to offer the result of a diverse perspective to understand African refugees' and undocumented migrants' communication dynamics throughout their journey to their destination country. Moreover, it is a contribution to mobility research, the public policy process in the migratory policy arena, and understanding of the diversity of cultural differences across African countries' communication peculiarities.

I conducted the interview in Libya and in Austria at different (none) institutionalized social organizations, detention centres, churches with African members, diaspora community houses, and local community refugees' premises. They are already in a more or less "controlled and institutionalized" process of socialization, assistance, and integration. It took place between Thursday, 15/09/2016 and Friday, 20/01/2022 from 10:00 - 11:30. Participants were 12 men and 8 women between 22 and 45 years old. The interviews were in English, Pidgin English, and French which is their preferable language and I do as well speak the languages. Furthermore, the interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribe from verbal to text. This procedure is to facilitate the process of analysis.

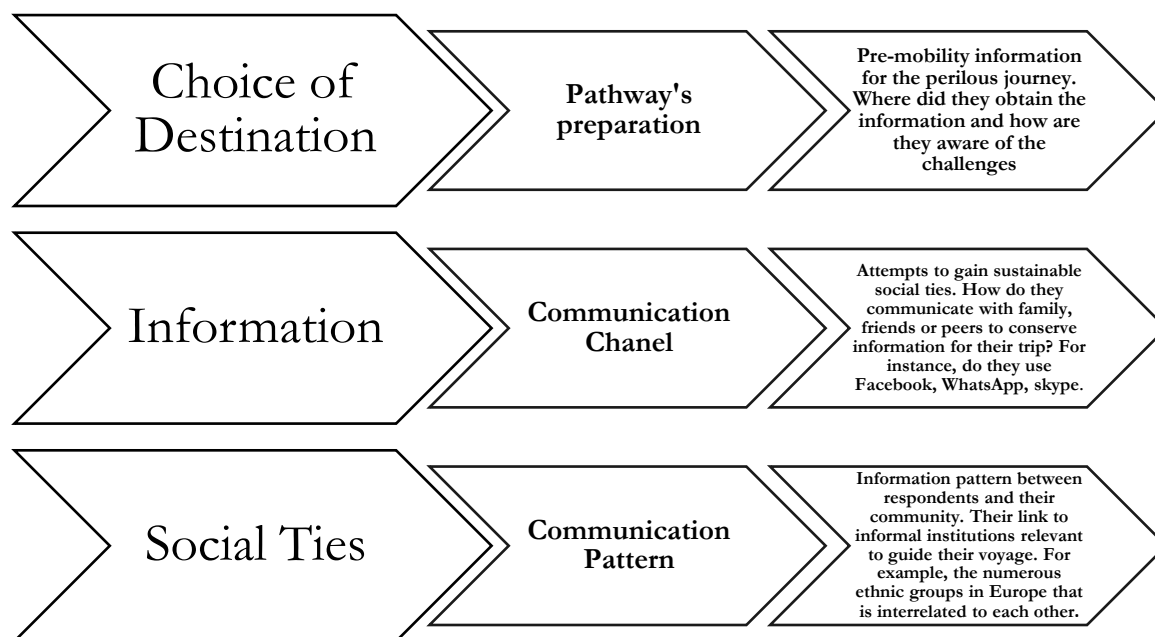
Hence, in the empirical part of this paper, I concentrate on the semi-standardized interviews that provide plausible information about respondents' migratory projects, travel pathways, and their sustainable networks that provide pre-and post-resourceful information. Besides questions about

transnational networks and information channels, the interviews also explore other dots of social crucial ties that enable respondents to steer their journey to Europe. Other parts of the semi-structured open questionnaire concentrate on impersonal resources about participants' lifestyles and other means of information through social networking in diaspora community WhatsApp and Facebook groups with other peer groups.

I used a qualitative content analysis technique ([Krippendorff, 1967](#); [Lamnek et al., 2010](#); [Mayring, 2002](#)) to analyse the data. It enables specific inferences from text to other properties that generate ample findings of the phenomenon to answer the research question. This approach enables the data to be systematically and gradually prepared in a chronological pattern ([Mayring, 2002](#)). In this case, I coded and analysed the data using themes derived from different theory-led deductive categories. In the first round of the coding process, I develop the following suitable categories to enable interpretation:

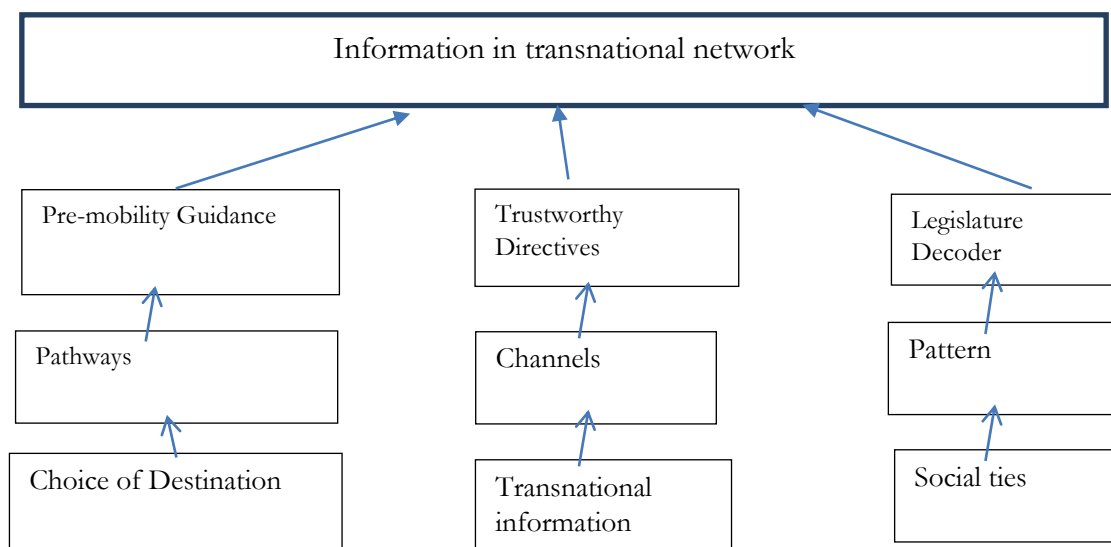
- i. Choice of destination – pathways preparation: this shows the information refugees and illegal migrants know or have prepared to complete the perilous journey to Europe. Where did they obtain the information and how are they aware of the challenges?
- ii. Information – Communication channels: This is about how refugees and illegal migrants attempt to gain social ties that sustain them across the Mediterranean to Europe. How do they communicate with family, friends, or peers to conserve information for their trip? For instance, do they use Facebook, WhatsApp, skype or
- iii. Social ties - communication pattern: This code offers information to migrants about the patterns of constant and continuous contact between respondents and their community to complete their journey. I also show their link to the country of origin, family and other ethnic groups that are relevant to guide their voyage to Europe. For example, the numerous ethnic groups in Europe that are interrelated to each other.

Figure 1: Themes from different theory-led categories to interpret refugees' and undocumented migrants' communication dynamics in their migratory project



Furthermore, I conducted other rounds of coding based on the interview notes. I follow a content structure, which lies at the centre of the text interpretation (Atteslander, 1971; Lamnek et al., 2010). Thus, after several rounds of codes deductions, as illustrated in figure 2, a thick description is built with the theoretical proposition (Hennink et al., 2011) of transitional networks and social ties to show the role of information in African refugees and undocumented migrants' journey to Europe (Hennink et al., 2011).

Figure 2: From code to categories in data exploring information and social ties in refugee's journey to Europe



In the next chapter, the author of this article presents the findings of this study to understand the phenomenon and answer the research questions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### ROLE OF INFORMATION FLOW IN TRANSNATIONAL NETWORK TO SHAPE AFRICAN REFUGEES AND UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS' MIGRATORY JOURNEY TO EUROPE

The previous chapter examined the content analysis. This chapter will look at the findings. It begins with the three themes that emerged in the previous data analysis chapter, namely (I) pre-mobility guidance, (II) directives, and (III) legislature decoder as Informal Institutions public assistance welfare agenda action in the transitional (social) networks and answers the research questions.

#### Pre-mobility guidance as a sustainability vehicle in times of mobility uncertainty

I observed that information secures pre-mobility guidance perspectives and enable the idea to remain strong in the time of uncertainty during their perilous journey. This offers hope to overcome the challenges faced during the perilous journey. Before the journey, individuals communicate with friends and relatives from their destination country. They share the burden on their way to the seashore facing unprepared events (such as abuses, slavery, and trafficking) with numerous challenges. According to several interview partners, this information was distributed

through communication sources such as Facebook and WhatsApp providing them with relevant information about their desperate status quo.

*"I have so many friends in Nigeria that we always communicate. To be honest, during my journey to Europe, we communicated through Facebook and WhatsApp because at that time I couldn't use skype. We had no possibility in Libya. Nevertheless, I must say my friends help me a lot with relevant information the moment I reached the seashore." (Orock, 30 from Nigeria to Austria in 2018 as refugees)*

Also, old friends living in the diaspora counsel them with the idea of hope as they suddenly found themselves stranded at the shore of Libya with inaccurate plans to proceed with the journey. It occurs as friends in the diaspora propose to them other substitute routes to easily reach their destination. As Orock put it during the interview that it was helpful to support because if not he would have suffered a lot.

*"They were some friends who were already in Italy and other European countries. Sometimes, I had no money to call, but they were always in the position to call me and ask about my situation. They also proposed to me other possibilities and routes to reach Europe, which help me a lot. Indeed, without their support, I would have suffered a lot" (Orock, 30 from Nigeria to Austria in 2016 as refugees)*

Other participants stressed that networking guidance through many friends and relatives motivates and ensure them with new perspectives. This further provides them with a hopeful mindset to look at things in times of uncertainty.

*"I want to say that, knowing and having so many friends and family members around me despite such a distance was relevant for my life. The information they usually give me was pertinent because it gave me hope" (Agnes, 24, migrated as refugees from Guinea to Austria in 2019 and Mercy, 28, migrated as undocumented migrants from Nigeria to Austria in 2019).*

This serves as guidance to find valuable solutions for the destination. Even though, they are frequently entangled with the dilemma of depression:

*"I mean not only hope to succeed the journey but the aspect that they were guiding me how to go about my life and find the most advantageous solution to reach my destination. Even though I felt depressed some days, their words and time informing me give me a guide of hope for my future life" (Agnes, 24, migrated as a refugee from Guinea to Austria in 2016).*

In addition, the information offers refugees and undocumented migrants' relevant ideas to remain strong going through the pathways. It supports individuals to persevere and remain determined during the course.:

*"This made me stronger to focus ahead and be determined. These were the issue that kept me awake and encourage me to have the energy to complete the journey" (Tourre, 30, from Somalia to Austria in 2019)*

Hence, this shows the result that pre-mobility guidance information is a vehicle or agent to guide migrant's pathway trajectories (Poros, 2011). It determines valuable social capital of aggregate resources that link migrant's acquaintance to recognize durable possibilities (Bourdieu, 1986; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Portes, 1998) for their migratory project. Guided through long-distance communication systems to enable the vivid transfer of relevant information that diffuses into resourceful social capital to participants' journey.



In sum, pre-mobility information is relevant to securing participants' migratory projects. It serves as substantial ideas of new perspectives and encouragement to reach destination countries in times of uncertainty. The available network ideas are durable transfer information to coordinate African refugees and undocumented migrants' perilous journeys. They often acquire these crucial resources through exchange and valuable contacts with the existing community at home and abroad.

### Directives as a trustworthy compass to gap missing ideas and wellbeing

Information and social network enable the exchange of crucial resources within the network ties. They are crucial and essential for a migratory journey across an international border and the link to the country of origin (Poros, 2011). For African refugees and undocumented migrants (Granovetter, 1973), these are "strong ties" that consist of a set of kinship-based or diaspora communities (Massey et al., 1999). They connect refugees and undocumented migrants with missing ideas to revamp their wellbeing. It occurs with directives (Faist, 2008) that serve as a compass to connect individuals to understand the risk and cost of mobility.

Refugees and undocumented migrants' frequent left home with insufficient information about the perilous journey. However, they are often in constant contact with kinship-based family members or diaspora communities who provide them with afterwards ideas during the journey.

*"I left home without knowing the danger of the journey but because of the contact I have with my family and other people from my village, I could always be in contact with directives. Honestly speaking, I paid a lot of money expecting the journey to be smooth. It wasn't like that even though I was fortunate to be in contact with others who gave me many ideas afterwards. I want to say without this connection I would have not understood the direction and how to precede the journey" (Agnes, 28, came from Nigeria to Austria in 2017 as an undocumented migrant).*

In addition, having lots of countrymen and women from the same country was a benefit to their journey safety. This connectivity serves as a sphere to exchange information about their situation. In this case, their family were aware of the position that gave them the courage to further the journey with lots of available directives.

*"We also have lots of members from our country in Europe that I contacted, and my parents also send them information to always be with me. Through these means, we exchanged lots of information about my whereabouts and situation. It was helpful to direct me as I had no idea about the continuation. Through this connection, I could find my way, where I am now" (Agnes, 28, came from Nigeria to Austria in 2018 as an undocumented migrant)*

Furthermore, one of the respondents explained that he is linked to their diaspora communities and family members in their home countries. For instance, he uses the telephone or text to reach his family member at home or abroad to facilitate the mobility process (Portes, 1998). Moreover, they lack the possibility in Libya to access the internet because of the fear of not being caught by the available systems. However, text messages such as WhatsApp serve as an information carriage to vehicle their situation and keep them intact with their family. This further help to secure the doubt of their existence and the idea of still living, which is important to participants and their respective family.

*"I must use the mobile phone my family gave me to communicate with others. We didn't have the possibility in Libya to access the internet because of fear not to be trapped by the authority. Most often, I use my telephone to*

*send a text message back home and to some of my friends abroad because it was easy and cheaper for me.” (Agbor, 42, came from Cameroon to Austria in 2016 as a refugee)*

In this case, the accessibility and frequency of information through texting serve as high-priced possibilities to negotiate and direct the journey. The exchange offers opportunities and resources that refugees, and undocumented migrants rely on to ensure connection to their family, continuity, and a possible update to travel across the Mediterranean

*“The exchange of this information was significant to direct my journey as it keeps me in touch with my family and they could also have a peace of mind that am still alive. The mobile phone they gave me helps me a lot and kept me updated about every possibility to get through the river. It was only through the ownership of this appliance that I was connected to information and relevant ideas about how to overcome the situation I was inside” (Ester, 25, came from Ghana to Austria in 2016 as an undocumented migrant)*

Moreover, connectivity serves participants and their families to be in touch without doubt about their current situation during the journey to Europe. It also shows the gender aspect of how important information is directive to women's migratory project.

*“As a woman, believe me, it would have been not easy if I didn't have this means of communication to always be in touch and find my way. I think my family and parents would have equally been in doubt. They keep these connections update between me and the other family members in Europe as well as those back home” (Ester, 25, came from Ghana to Austria in 2016 as an undocumented migrant).*

Likewise, some of my respondents say the exchange of information depends on directives from the same native-born individuals (Poros, 2011). It conditioned the experience of their journey across the border and arrival in the destination countries. The main agents of this network-driven ties compose of peer groups, families, and friends who deliver trustworthy directive information about happenings back home and possible contacts in the host countries. This is essential because most of the participants discover during the perilous journey that the traffickers provided them with unreliable information.

*“You know my connection is mostly with people from my country and town because we have trust in each other. I have been deceived a lot that I usually don't trust anyone and what sort of information they gave me. They didn't give me the right information before I left my town. That is why I depend on people's information directive from my town and country whom I can trust” (Paul, 30, migrated from Cameroon to Austria in 2016 as a refugee).*

Similarly, they have lots of friends on social media with whom they remain constantly in contact to exchange possible directive information during the journey. This crucial exchange of information serves as a compass and directives to gap missing ideas about their well-being or issues happening in their native nation as well as destination country.

*“I have lots of school friends on Facebook where we have remained in contact. That is the only means we were in contact as I began the journey. We were in the same school and some of them are living abroad. Others are still at home and through this contact, we could exchange words and discuss the happenings. It always directed and kept me awake specially to know how they are doing and how is it in Europe” (Martin, 43, migrated from Guinea to Austria in 2016 as a refugee).*

In brief, several people frequent leave home without the necessary information about their destination. However, kin-based and diaspora communities' relational directives help to sustain people with trustworthy information that fuels participants with reliable ideas during the journey.

This frequent occurs through the exchange of regular social contacts and connections over time ([Itzigsohn et al., 1999](#); [Portes, 1998](#)). In this case, they remain in contact the dots about happenings in their native country and directives that steer their pathways to Europe. The directives are trustworthy kinship-based and diaspora communities' ideas that to facilitate African refugees and undocumented migrant's mobility process.

### Legislature decoder as informal institutions public assistance welfare agenda action

Information determines the width and breathes of migrant links to maintaining social ties to their diaspora communities that prepare their integration process into the host countries ([Poros, 2011](#)). The information provided by informal institutions help to decode information about laws, rules, and regulation in the host country to participate in welfare production sub regimes (such as the labour market, employment system and housing). Diaspora organizations, ethnic communities or churches provided the informal information with services tailored to meet African refugees' and migrants' needs. The members are often individuals of similar ethnic groups. In this case, diaspora members do the translation of information from German to English through social media networks (such as WhatsApp) to help facilitate refugees' smooth integration into the society.

The information from informal institutions offers refugees and undocumented migrants the destination country's important idea on how and where to find a job. This is an important aspect as work plays an important role in the well-being of humans both in financial and contributively aspects.

*"When I was still on my way to Austria, I received many information and ideas from different people and in Europe where it's easy to find a job" (Akpan, 31, came from Ghana to Austria in 2016 as a refugee).*

Similarly, informal institutions also deliver pertinent information to refugees and undocumented migrants about the functionality of society. Through this aspect, they find possible means to socialize in the society, understand the peculiarities of their destination country, and participate in the societal development process.

*"There also gave me information on how the society functions so that I can easily find my way. This was an important issue for me because I had no idea about my destination and was at that moment confused with my life" (Akpan, 31, came from Ghana to Austria in 2016 as a refugee).*

For my respondents, this information is attached to organizations and informal institutions which care for refugees and undocumented migrants. These include diaspora organizations, civic societies, ethnic communities, some nongovernmental organizations, religious or prayer communities or groups with similar ethnic members and cultural organizations ([Poros, 2011](#)). They know these organizations and special agencies that offer them legal, social, and human rights information from their family and friends at home and abroad. Similarly, the informal organizations offer them information to frequently remain in their ethnic group for relevant ideas and protection.

*"I know from my family and friends that there were many organizations that are caring for refugees. They told me to contact one of them immediately as I reach Europe. This was helpful for me because through such information I realized that there were special agencies that are responsible for refugees, and I have the right to go there. I also got information there are churches and some other people from my country who have their organizations but are*

*responsible for refugees. This gave me a good idea to remain with my countrymen together for interesting information” (Ibrahim, 20, migrated from Somalia to Austria in 2016 as an undocumented migrant).*

Hence, the process of informal assistance supports their mobility and socialization process to adjust to the destination country upon arrival (Poros, 2011). In this case, information serves as a springboard to overcome uncertainties, socially integrate into the destination country, and participate in societal resources. This helps to ameliorate the fear and abuses they face during the perilous journey.

*“But, due to this information about my destination country, I could understand what to do. You know the experience I faced during the whole journey scared me that I was so grateful to understand that with the information from my people will adjust myself into any sector where I can earn some money in life” (Akpan, 31, came from Ghana to Austria in 2016 as refugees).*

However, these informal institutions' networks are “nodes” (Poros, 2011) or “bridge” (Granovetter, 1973) of strong ties that offers opportunities and resources. It predetermines an integrative bridge for migrant integration, determines interpersonal and organizational ties across home and host countries, and stabilizes confidence through different pools of information for common interest (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Poros, 2011; Vertovec, 2003). Most especially the members serve as decoders of host countries' refugee institutional settings that provide participants with ideas to easily understand the respective host countries' legislative arena and welfare system.

Informal institutions such as diaspora organization are vital game players to assist and support African refugees and undocumented migrants' mobility and socialization process. They assist them to translate refugee laws, legislative information that they cannot read from German to English or French, and to getting jobs or adjusting to the destination country upon arrival. In this case, the information is a springboard to overcome challenges, integrate into the destination country, and participate in the redistribution of societal resources in times of uncertainty.

In sum, pre-mobility information in migrant's transnational (social) network before and during the journey indicate resourceful information to participate in the society. The obtain the connections through constant ties with Kinship-based members and informal institutions. The latter (such as diaspora communities and peer groups) are valuable game players to decode legislative text and deliver migrants with resourceful information about the destination diverse welfare state production sub-regimes and trustworthy possibilities for societal participation. This negotiates migration process with relevant information to overcome the perilous journey. Similarly, African refugees and undocumented migrants remain in contact with their host or home country for future crucial ties. Likewise, to participate in the societal development process through the involvement in political, socio, and economic activities. Hence, the activity shows active participation and informal institution (such as diaspora communities) role as a vital migratory game-changer in the public policy learning process of institutions. The evidence serves as a contribution to transnational network research. Similarly, this may offer a kind of recommendations to policy makers' knowledge of the subject matter and other practitioners about the phenomenon and informal institutions' role in information flow.

### CONCLUSION

Information flows in transnational (social) networks are resourceful in the migration process. It generally supports the mobility process to keep people in connection. That is why the purpose of this investigation is to explore the perception of a sample of African refugees and undocumented migrants to understand the role of information flow under transnational (social) networks that shape their journey to Austria. Due to several reasons in contemporary times, there is an influx of international migration. Migrants' mobility relies on interpersonal relationships and trustworthy connections within their community in the host and destination country to reach their destination. The composition of such relation represents an interchangeable opportunity for supports and meaningful assistance that impact refugees and migrants' individuals' life-course trajectories to regulate and influence international mobility.

In addition, the network and exchange of ideas provide refugees and migrants with crucial resources and social relations to share information ([Portes, 1998](#)). This occurs through a regular exchange of social contacts and connections over time ([Itzigsohn et al., 1999](#); [Krippendorf, 1967](#)). Such connection allows (African) refugees and migrants to remain in contact with their host country. Furthermore, they acquire crucial resources through the exchange of pre-mobility information about the journey and early stage of integration in the host country. This resourceful information serves as valuable resources for future adaptation, participation, and social inclusion.

Moreover, informal institutions networks serve as "nodes" ([Poros, 2011](#)) or "bridges" ([Granovetter, 1973](#)) of strong ties that offer refugees and migrants information opportunities and resources. This indicates an integrative bridge for migrants' integration-related process in their destination countries. Likewise, they use it as a springboard and or compass to socialize, participate and active navigates in their destination country. In this case, the approach may ease the burden of host country welfare state intervention and nurture the idea of public policy learning through informal institutions (such as diaspora community) interventions ([Esien, 2019, 2020](#)). Furthermore, information flow in transnational (social) network demonstrates the maintenance of interpersonal and organizational ties ([Dekker & Engbersen, 2014](#); [Poros, 2011](#); [Vertovec, 2003](#)) between (African) refugees and undocumented migrants with their families, and peers, friends etc. at home and host countries. This transnational (social) network connectivity and crucial ties may have something to do with stabilization, security, increase self-esteem, and confidence through different pools of resourceful information flow for common interest that is relevant to negotiate African refugees' and undocumented migrants' migratory pathway trajectories.

However, a few limitations need to be considered. The study, for instance, has primarily concerned Austria and cannot be generalized to explain other countries leading to low external validity. Nevertheless, it may be generalized to a theory in the way scholars' theory-generate findings from one case study to the other ([Yin, 2012](#)). In addition, I have addressed only the role of information flow. The study appears to support the argument for a policy regulation in the transnational social networking environment that influence information and communication to foster vulnerable (African) refugees and irregular migrants' migratory pathway trajectories. Further research should concentrate on government and informal institutions' information flow under transnational (social) networks for refugees and migrants migratory and integration-related pathways and decision-making processes.

In sum, transnational (social) network information flow indicates a form of network-driven social capital with decoding regulatory informative tools that serve as public and social policy

learning process in times of neoliberal selective targeting redistributive politics and shape (African) refugees and undocumented migrants' journey to Austria. If lack of well-managed communication and ineffective digitalization politics in the complex transnational policymaking environment persist, problems of vulnerability, inequalities, human rights abuses, and informal public policy learning process may prevail not only jeopardize migrants' life-course trajectories and socialization process but impair belongings, democratic values, global economy, and sustainable peacebuilding and development in times of contemporary crisis-related super-diversity society.

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