



SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLE

Onward migration: An introduction

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In August 2016, Maslax Moxamed, a 19-year-old man from Somalia, arrived in Italy. He spent two months in Rome, first in via Cupa in the San Lorenzo district, where he met volunteers at the Baobab experience, an occupied social centre that had been turned into a reception centre for migrants in 2015 at the height of the “refugee crisis” (Dines et al., 2018). After eviction in September 2016, he followed volunteers to the various makeshift reception points around the city. His migratory project does not, however, involve spending the rest of his life in Italy. He decides to move on and one evening in October takes a bus to Milan from Piazzale Tiburtino, from where he reaches Belgium with a Sudanese friend, Azou. However, on 31 January 2017, he landed again at Rome's Fiumicino airport. The Belgian authorities sent him back to Italy as a result of the Dublin regulation, European legislation which states that asylum applications are examined by the first country of entry.

Maslax's is the story of a “Dubliner,” that is, an asylum seeker who is forcibly returned to the first country where he left his fingerprints on arrival. After a night in the Fiumicino police station, Maslax Moxamed is transferred on 1 February to an extraordinary reception centre in Pomezia, 30 kilometres south of Rome. To his friends, he speaks of the “slow life” at the centre, of the lack of stimuli and of not feeling welcomed. On 15 March 2017, he is found dead in a park near the centre where he was staying. Maslax Moxamed hanged himself. Those who shared the last months of his life took to the streets on 25 March in Rome, to denounce the situation in which Maslax Moxamed had been stuck along with the thousands of people unable to move because of the restraining character of European immigration policies (Montagna & Grazioli, 2019).

From Italy and continental Europe, we move to the UK and London, where we meet Mukul and his family (Della Puppa & King, 2018). He migrated from Bangladesh to Rome in the mid-1990s, then on to Veneto, where he was reunited with his wife and children and where they spent their years in Italy. Mukul worked in a factory, while his wife, Rokeya, worked as a housekeeper. After some years they, strategically applied for Italian citizenship (on the instrumental use of European citizenship, see Mapril, Ramos, McCarthy, and Morad and Sacchetto in this special issue). They thought this step would provide more rights and opportunities, including moving to another country within the EU. The economic crises in 2008 and 2012 hit the northern regions of Italy (and southern Europe in general) very hard. Although Mukul did not lose his job, the closure of many factories around him, mass unemployment and their children growing up made them consider a move to another EU country (see also Ramos, as well as

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McCarthy in this special issue). Thanks to his status of Italian citizen, Mukul was able to visit London, to reactivate his family networks and assess his opportunities in both labour and housing markets (on the role of “transnational explorative practices” see Dimitradis in this issue). Once he realized that they could start again, but not from scratch, they moved in 2015:

I chose to come to England because I thought first of all of the future. The future – not mine and of my wife, but the future of my children. Looking around in Italy ... knowing that there is a crisis ... I could not see any future for them in Italy, even young people [Italians] see no future in Italy ... I was afraid for the future of my children. So I came to England for them, because I feel that there are better chances here.

(Della Puppa & King, 2018: 1940)

Although the current job situation is not much better than in Italy and the salary is not higher than his factory income, Mukul is currently working as mini-cab driver and Rokeya as a cultural facilitator in state schools. He has a stronger sense of security and feels that his children have greater opportunities in a more open and tolerant country than Italy (see also Mapril in this special issue). However, after his relocation to the UK and London, the European and British scenario has changed, because of Brexit. Unless Mukul and his family apply for settled status before the deadline set by the government, their status of EU citizens may no longer be enough and they will be turned into EU migrants, with the risk of having to make their stay regular through a resident permit. This could also have negative repercussions on the possibility of accessing welfare – a driving force behind the onward migration to the UK of many Italian-Bangladeshis (Della Puppa & King, 2018) The outcome of the referendum of 2016 seems to have accelerated mobility projects to the UK of many European citizens, afraid of not being able to move there after the country leaves the EU.¹

In a third vignette, we move with a highly skilled migrant worker to Spain, where football champion Luis Suárez lives and works. Born in Uruguay in 1987, instead of moving to Spain as many South American migrants often do (see McCarthy and Ramos in this special issue) Suárez moved to the Netherlands in 2006, where he won several titles and was named Dutch footballer of the year. In 2011, Suárez transferred to Liverpool; in 2014 he migrated to Barcelona in a transfer worth €82.3 million (£64.98 million), making him one of the most expensive players in football history. In September 2020, Suárez's manager and Juventus football club were about to agree a further transfer. However, according to FA regulations, football clubs are not allowed to enrol more than two non-EU players per season; because the Italian team had already recruited two extra-EU players, Suárez needed Italian citizenship to make the transfer happen.

As far as the Spanish football association is concerned, Suárez is a EU citizen because his Uruguayan wife is the daughter of Friulians and has an Italian passport, as do their three children – but this is not enough for the Italian football association. Although he has been living in an EU member state for nearly 15 years and his wife is an Italian citizen, Suárez needed a language exam to become a national citizen to play with Juventus. The different regulations between Italy and Spain forced Suárez's entourage to race against time as the deadline for the transfer was in early October. Suárez had two paths to become an EU citizen: the years of work in Catalonia gave him the right to Spanish citizenship, but this possibility was abandoned for reasons of time. The other option was the Italian path, which should have been quicker, as he did not need to start from scratch, having started language courses some years beforehand. On 22 September, Suárez flew to the university for foreigners in Perugia to do a B1 Italian language examination. Although he passed the examination,² Juventus withdrew from their intention to buy the Uruguayan football player and the transfer was blocked.

These three vignettes are all examples of onward migration and exemplify the different characteristics and issues that this type of migration raises (see also Schapendonk in this special issue). First, they show the different paths and outcomes that onward migration can take. Maslax's case is a typical secondary movement of asylum seekers and migrants who arrive by sea through the different Mediterranean routes. Once in Europe, many do

not want to stay in their country of arrival, either Italy, Greece or Spain, but prefer to move on and reach other countries where they have links and can rely on them to build a new life (Benedikt, 2019; De Genova, 2017; Picozza, 2017). Most of the time, they manage to reach the country aimed at,³ but the outcome of this attempted movement is often a forced return to the first country in which they were fingerprinted following the Dublin regulation, as happened with Maslax. In this case, onward migration fails as it collides with EU migration policy and its constraints (De Genova et al., 2017; Montagna & Grazioli, 2019). The second case shows an alternative variant of onward migration, which is successful thanks to an instrumental use of European citizenship (see also McCarthy, as well as Morad and Sacchetto in this special issue). Mukul and Rokeya managed to reach the UK and settle in London, where they feel there are more opportunities for them and their children, notwithstanding that the Bangladeshi community is one of – if not the – most disadvantaged in Britain and is always at the lowest level of social mobility in the country (Gardner, 2010; Peach, 2006; Redbridge Borough, 2004). As several studies show (Della Puppa & King, 2018; King & Della Puppa, 2020, and Della Puppa et al. in this special issue), since the 2008 economic crisis onward migration from the hardest-hit southern European countries to continental Europe and Britain has been a growing phenomenon, involving thousands of migrants with regular status (see also Cillo in this special issue). As in the case of Mukul and Rokeya's family, they also use European citizenship instrumentally and take up the chances provided by freedom of mobility. Finally, the third case is typically a form of labour migration, aborted by a strict interpretation of the law and the time Suárez would have needed before being granted European citizenship. Although he has the advantage of being married to an Italian citizen and is a highly skilled worker who had lived in EU member states for nearly 15 years, this was not enough for him to move freely across the continent. Italian citizenship is not automatic. Marriage may facilitate it, but those who apply for it have to show that they have command of the language and tests still have to be successfully passed. The bureaucratic time required to be granted Italian citizenship caused Juventus to withdraw from the transfer.

These different paths depend on policy arrangements across the EU. Therefore, onward migration interrogates EU migration policies and their role in facilitating or preventing mobility. In particular, the opportunity to move onwards and continue with the migratory project is linked to policy measures such as EU citizenship and the Dublin regulation (Della Puppa and Sredanovic, 2016). EU citizenship is one of the key achievements in terms of intra-EU mobility since the Maastricht Treaty and maintains that all people holding nationality of any of the 28 EU member states are also EU citizens with extra rights and responsibilities (Geddes et al., 2020), including the possibility of intra-EU mobility. Of the three cases looked at here, the only successful movement was made possible because Italian citizenship entailed the right to move across EU member states. For Mukul and his family, as well as for many other migrants who take EU citizenship, the opportunity to move on is a form of protection from the unfriendly attitudes of public authorities, welfare discrimination, inadequate conditions of social reproduction, precarity, unemployment and a lack of social mobility (Della Puppa and Sredanovic, 2016; Kofman & Raghuram, 2018). In this sense, citizenship can become instrumental and be turned into a resource, a form of capital providing migrants with more useful resources for their onward movement (on mobility capital see Della Puppa, Montagna, and Kofman in this special issue). Neither Maslax or Luis Suárez possessed such capital when they were refused mobility.

As we have seen, onward migration also interrogates the Dublin Convention, with its aim of containing asylum seekers' mobility⁴. Maslax was prevented from moving freely to another country by this piece of EU policy that does not allow asylum seekers to choose the country where they apply for asylum. Instead of being allowed to travel to where they can rely on already-existing social networks, asylum seekers are forced to remain in the country where they have been fingerprinted and wait until their application is processed. This irrational mechanism, which was elaborated in order to prevent what has been dubbed "asylum shopping," forces thousands of asylum seekers to illegally cross internal EU borders, increasing the risks to their health and security, including being trapped in smuggler networks. Maslax, who could not rely on family ties⁵, was one of thousands of people trying to circumvent the Dublin Convention and risking being deported or losing their lives. While many do manage, others face deportation or are stranded in one of the many camps set up across the EU.

Onward migration, whether successful or unsuccessful, is very much an outcome of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990). As the case of Mukul's family shows, friendship and familial ties, as well as knowledge of fellow countrymen already migrated to the "new" destination country and their community organizations, constitute an important support for new migratory projects. Similarly, employers may play a role in connecting the different dots of the network, as was supposed to happen for Luis Suárez. They are bridgeheads in the first period of asylum seekers' arrival, "social guides" who help newcomers with the "new" social context, smoothing their access to local and national welfare, public benefits, the labour and housing markets, and the aforementioned associations (Coletto and Fullin, 2019; Dimitriadis et al., 2019; Jokinen et al. 2008). Within the rather broad category of social capital, we can also add the "mobile commons" (Montagna & Grazioli, 2019; Papadopoulos and Tsianos, 2013), that is all those forms of knowledge, information, mutual care, social relations and solidarity that facilitate migrants' mobility. Maslax's attempt to move onwards relied on the knowledge and information shared at the Baobab experience camp where he resided between his arrival in Rome and departure to northern Europe. Maslax used these resources in order to not be stuck in Italy and to look for new opportunities elsewhere. They constitute what Kaufman identifies as "motility," that is those assets that increase people's capacity to be mobile in social and geographical space and that are activated, as in Maslax's case, or re-activated in Mukul's and Suarez's cases, to move onwards in the migratory project (Kaufmann et al., 2004).

Finally, the three cases illustrate another recurrent theme in research on onward migration: the search for opportunities as a driving factor (see Dimitriadis as well as Salamońska and Czeranowska in this special issue). In all three cases, our subjects are aiming for better opportunities, regardless of the huge differences in terms of starting conditions, socio-economic background, resources, etc (see also Dimitriadis in this Special Issue). Maslax's aim was to find his friends, who would have given him support in the process of settlement in the EU. He thought Italy could not provide the kind of life chances that other countries could, so he decided to move. There is a mix of agency, networks and pulling factors, they merge in a way that makes it difficult to grasp the prevailing factor (see also, Schapendonk in this special issue). Mukul and his family also thought that a different EU country (as the UK was at that time) would give them, and especially their children, more opportunities, better welfare and a more friendly society. Even Suarez's attempted migration was driven by similar factors, although these were mostly economic (better pay) and symbolic (playing in a different team) than social (access to better welfare).

This special issue aims to address and explore in more depth some of the themes that emerge in these three vignettes: the role of social and mobility capital, the importance of the policy framework, migration as a multiple path, family and economic constraints and the role of agency. It stems from a panel we organized at the Migration Conference in 2019 under the title "Onward Migration in a Changing Europe." Not all the panel participants from that conference feature in this special issue, and not all the authors included here were present at the conference. Nevertheless, the panel represents the first important moment when we began to collect case studies and insights into a phenomenon that is not necessarily new historically (Bhachu, 1985), but which has emerged, with disruption, in new forms, shapes and trends in Europe, profoundly modifying its social, economic, political, demographic and cultural balances.

When we thought about this special issue, our interest was not just in the mechanics of onward migration as another form of movement. Our focus on it is as a strategic movement, where agency – migrants' decision to move either forward or back and forth, as the case of posted workers, that is workers who are posted from an EU country to another member country – plays a major role (see also Cillo in this special issue). As the three cases show, we look at the strategic decisions that migrants take to circumvent constraining policies, to challenge and resist unfriendly socio-economic environments, or simply to look for better opportunities.

More specifically, this special issue is structured as follows. In the first contribution, Francesco Della Puppa, Nicola Montagna and Eleonore Kofman give a theoretical introduction on onward migration and provide a review of empirical research in the EU on this topic. Existing studies on this growing area of research have looked at different, often overlapping, dimensions of this type of migration and how it may be an effect of mobility capital or influenced by variables as diverse as economic crises, gender, country of origin, age and skills. In the first part of

their review, the authors show how ongoing migration and different types of mobility have been conceptualized. These include transit migration, secondary migration, stepwise international migration, multiple and serial migration, and posted migration. In the second part, the authors examine what has been written on onward migration and identify some common issues emerging from the research, such as the role of socio-economic factors and the importance of different forms of capital, including “migration capital,” of which EU citizenship is one. In the concluding section, they highlight some missing areas and discuss how Brexit may impact on onward migration in the EU (see also Sredanovic in this special issue).

Justyna Salamońska and Olga Czeranowska focus in their article on a specific aspect of onward migration. Arguing that migration is a more complex phenomenon than a one-off movement, their article aims to shed light on diverse migration patterns, including those encompassing more than one destination country within the migration trajectory. The authors aim to bridge the gap between different literatures on repeat and multiple migrations. These strands of literature developed separately, and each took one-off migrations as a frame of reference. In their empirical analysis, based on the European Internal Movers’ Social Survey (EIMSS), Salamońska and Czeranowska quantify the volume of one-off, repeat and multiple movement between selected EU countries. Referring to information on migration patterns, they construct three migration types – those of one-off, repeat and multiple migrants – and show how these types are socially structured.

Joris Schapendonk’s article takes a critical look at how onward migration is conceptualized and how the lexicon surrounding it frames migratory processes as a staged process, involving a south-north directionality and hinting at a gradual progress for the migrants in question. While wondering why scholars also adopt this conceptual frame and look solely to south-north secondary movement, he argues that this “grand narrative” is politicized and reproduced by the EU’s overarching policy frameworks. Based on a qualitative research project that longitudinally followed African trajectories inside Europe, Schapendonk’s article provides analytical space to discuss African mobilities in Europe that deviate from the conventional notion of “onward migration” from the peripheries of Europe to the self-declared core of western Europe. Its aim is to offer a counter-narrative of im/mobility dynamics involving zig-zag routes, circulations and shifting horizons.

In her article, Helen McCarthy shows how Latin Americans who had been living in Spain have taken the opportunity of dual citizenship to move onwards to the UK to escape unemployment caused by the economic and financial crisis in the late 2000s. Drawing on qualitative interviews, the article explores how families seek to negotiate within the opportunity structures afforded to them to make the most of the possibilities for both physical and social mobility. She shows that, while the initial migration from Latin America to Spain enabled Latin American migrants to gain some economic stability and, in some cases, gain citizenship or residency, it often involved periods when families had to cross different countries. Onward migration adds a further layer of complication to this: different legal statuses combined with family dynamics create situations in which some family members become trapped in immobility while they await residency or citizenship papers. McCarthy’s article therefore aims to explore how Latin American families negotiate with the citizenship constellations they find themselves in.

Christina Ramos’ article also looks at Latin Americans migrating to Spain and how they reconfigured their future after the 2008 economic crisis in that country, and its impact on their employment and livelihoods. The crisis initiated a new migratory cycle in Spain, involving increased departures and decreased arrivals. Many of those leaving the country either returned to their countries of origin or migrated onwards. According to Ramos, the new mobilities were not just the result of the 2008 economic crisis, but should be understood within a broader context in which *multiple moves* are not uncommon. Relying on qualitative data collected in Madrid and London with Ecuadorians and Colombians who migrated to Spain and onwards from Spain, she shows that migration is a continuously evolving process in which migrants adapt to structural changes by showing individual agency, but where the options available are also determined by class and gender constraints.

Using in-depth interviews with EU27 citizens residing in the UK, and Britons residing in Belgium, Djordje Sredanovic examines the role of Brexit in both triggering and obstructing onwards and return migration. As is well known, one of the consequences of Brexit will be a reduction in the freedom of movement and settlement for both

EU and British citizens, an increase of xenophobia and potential economic instability, particularly in the UK. In this context, both EU27 citizens in the UK and Britons in Belgium can consider onward or return migrations, although Brexit may complicate this. The author argues that the realization of migration plans is therefore mediated both by individual resources and by imaginations about the future of the UK and the EU.

In his article on Bangladeshi-Portuguese migrants in London, Jose Mapril aims to investigate why well-off Bangladeshi migrants living in Portugal decide to move on, and what are their expectations and the consequences of their new migratory project. Relying on a longitudinal ethnography with Bangladeshis in Lisbon and London, Mapril examines how the temporalities of kinship and intergenerational reciprocities are mobilized through onward migration, and the ways in which these are connected with care and the future in uncertain social and economic contexts. He shows that the decision among some Bangladeshis to migrate again was connected with the education of their children, namely to allow them the possibility of studying in British secondary or higher education. Thus, these “new beginnings” become part of a larger *horizon of expectations* in which the redistribution logic associated with kinship and domestic units becomes the core of the new migratory movement.

The 2008 economic crisis and its consequences are the context of Iraklis Dimitriadis' contribution. His focus is on the aspirations of Albanians living in Greece and Italy to move on, and the transnational practices they need to activate if they want to turn aspirations into reality. Drawing on qualitative data, Dimitriadis examines how the desire to migrate again emerges as a reactive strategy to cope with poor working conditions and discrimination. Of particular importance are what Dimitriadis calls “explorative transnational practices,” which are social spaces between Italy or Greece and a range of different countries and comprise occasional visits or short trips to work abroad. These practices can reconfigure aspirations when migrants grasp that new destinations cannot meet their needs and desires.

Mohammad Morad and Devi Sacchetto also consider Bangladeshi migrants who move from Italy to the UK. They investigate the driving forces of onward migration for Bangladeshi migrants with Italian citizenship in Europe, and the factors associated with their intention to relocate to the UK. Their fieldwork, based on 50 in-depth interviews with Bangladeshi-Italian migrants living in the UK and Italy, illustrates three main points. First, Italian-Bangladeshis move to the UK because they see the destination as more appropriate for the cultural reproduction of Bengali traditions and the religious upbringing of their children. Second, the colonial legacy, on the one hand, and the political climate, on the other, are crucial in the selection of the UK as an onward migration destination. Finally, employment is a strong motivating factor for remaining in Italy for those Bangladeshis not interested in onward migration.

The special issue concludes with Rossana Cillo's article on another phenomenon related to onward migration. Her focus is on posted migrant workers and their use in the construction of the Rive Gauche shopping centre in Charleroi (Belgium). These workers are mostly from Albania, Egypt, India, Kosovo and Romania and are used by Italian companies to increase flexibility, particularly in terms of labour contracts, and reduce their costs. As the author argues, the expansion of posted migrant workers is favoured by a number of conditions, including the reorganization of the construction sector's production model: the uncontrolled expansion of subcontracting; the transformation of the EU labour market's stratification; and the need to maintain high profitability rates by lowering labour costs. The article shows how these workers are forced to accept conditions of extreme exploitation because of the lack of job opportunities and the impossibility of emigrating to other EU countries due to their migration status.

Finally, despite the wide range of issues, perspectives and critical views focused on the phenomenon of onward migration and collected in this special issue, we must point out some shortcomings here and, more generally, in the debate on onward migration. Among these, for example, we may highlight the lack of quantitative studies – for example cross data on education and the decision to undertake an onward migration – as well as the paucity of gender or generational perspectives (but see Della Puppa et al. in this special issue and Ortensi & Barbiano di Belgiojoso, 2018) from which to observe intra-European mobilities and capture its complexity.

Moreover, at the time of putting together this special issue, we were taken by surprise by the intensity of the pandemic and its profound consequences on policy and international and intra-European mobility. As it has been recently written, while the long-term consequences on mobility are still unknown.

Behind the sharp decline in global mobility in 2020 lies a complex story of travellers stranded abroad and awaiting repatriation, migrant workers getting locked out of destination countries where they might have performed seasonal or temporary work, displaced people facing severe difficulty in fleeing conflict and disaster zones across borders, and asylum seekers struggling to access the procedures to apply for international protection. (Benton et al., 2021: 23)

Among those who will suffer the most from the situation created by COVID-19, there are the huge number of people who had planned or were about to plan onward movement. If policy discussion on the future of mobility has to contend with the issue of whether travel restrictions contain the virus (Ibidem), any discussion of health policy must consider the complex stories of migrants, including those who aim to start a new onward migratory project, and their rights. These themes pinpoint the scientific limits of our work, providing, along with the new global scenario transformed by the COVID-19 crisis and its policy management, important vectors for further research on onward migration in an increasingly changing Europe.

ENDNOTES

1. The Italian National Institute of Statistics reports that, in 2016, of the 29,000 Italians with a TCN background who left Italy (an increase of 19% compared to the previous year), over 2,500 were of Bangladeshi origin while 92% of Italians of Asian origin who migrated abroad moved to the UK.
2. Some members of staff at the University of Perugia are now under investigation for allegedly telling Suarèz the answer to the examination questions.
3. According to the Italian Institute for International Political Studies (Ispi), in 2018, the number of “Dubliners” pushed back to Italy was around 6,400. According to Eurostat, around 72,000 applications have been submitted for implementations of the Dublin Regulation in the EU in 2016.
4. The Dublin Convention aimed to harmonize the asylum procedure across the EU. By establishing which Community member state should process an asylum seeker's application, the Convention means that asylum seekers are allowed to enter the EU and apply for asylum but not to move freely. Its aim was to prevent migrants from making applications in more than one Member State in the hope that limited opportunity of movement would reduce the number of applicants.
5. According to Article 10 of the Dublin Regulation. Family members are eligible for a Dublin transfer if they can prove that they are dependent on the assistance of their child, sibling or parent in another European country. The child, sibling or parent must be “legally present” in the country where they are living (British Red Cross, 2018).

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How to cite this article: Montagna N, della Puppa F. & Kofman E. Onward migration: An introduction. *International Migration*, 2021;59:8–15. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12882>