



Intercultural considerations for the creation of ICT tools for refugees: results from focus group discussions

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Agenda

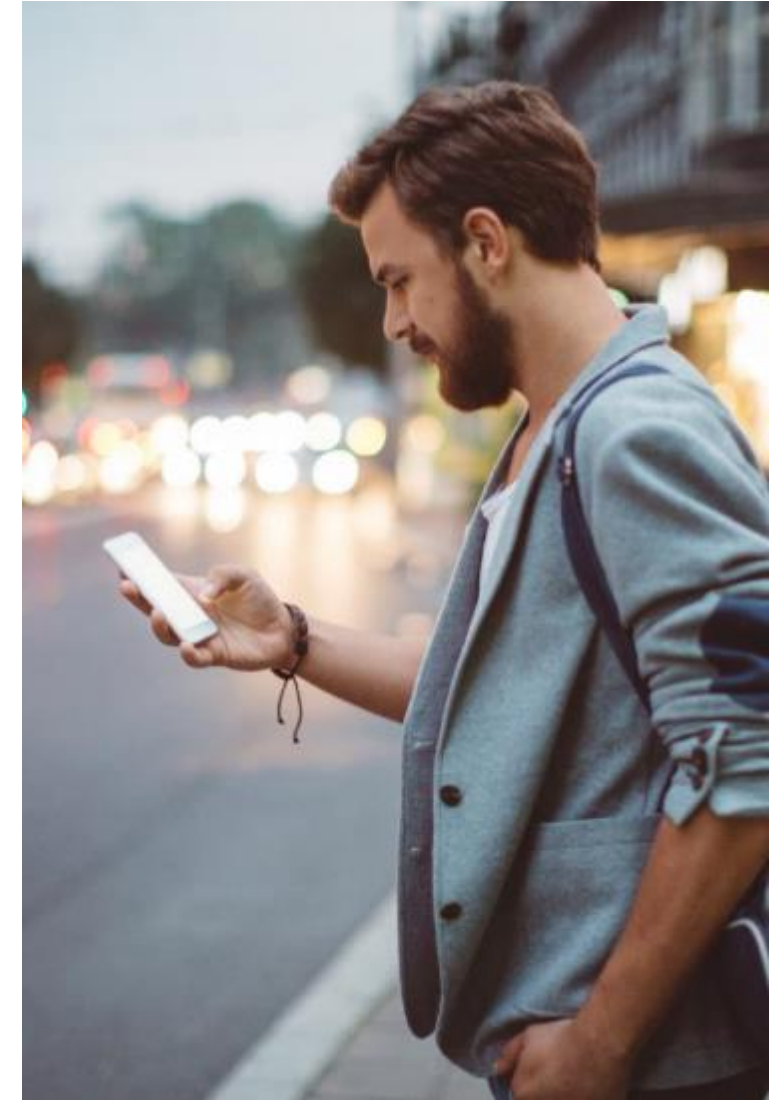
The REBUILD project and research context

Review of the literature

Research questions

Methodology and analysis of the data

Findings and implications for ICT development





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ICT-enabled
integration facilitator
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REBUILD



A technological tool to help integration of migrants by improving management procedures and communication among:

- displaced populations
- local population
- local authorities
- support services
- NGO's

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Review of the literature

ICT and displaced communities

ICT plays a fundamental role in the process of migration and has been identified as a useful tool for the integration of refugees in host countries (Frouws et al., 2016; UNHCR, 2016a; WPP, 2017).

Research shows the reliance of refugees on ICT

Proliferation of apps for refugees such as **Ankommen**, **App4Refs**, **RefAid**, I Sea, Refoodgee and Refugee.info.

Few studies focus on the impact of ICT on these communities (Hussain & Amin, 2018; GSMA, 2017; Marić, 2017)

Hussain and Amin (2018)'s study on the use of ICT by Afghan women

The authors argue that **ICT access and use is empowering** has to be **problematized and evaluated**

Research questions

What are refugees doing with ICT?

- What do they use ICT for?
- Is ICT a source of information? Do they trust the information?

Does current ICT enhance refugee's agency?



Methodology

- 9 focus groups between April and May 2019

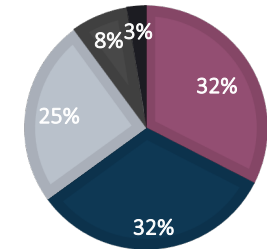
7 face-to-face in Bologna, Kilkis, Barcelona and Mallorca

2 online residing in Rome and Rimini

- Average duration of 2 hours
- Total of 41 participants
- Special considerations when conducting the focus groups

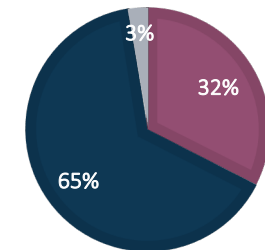
AGES

■ 18-24 ■ 25-34 ■ 35-44 ■ 45-54 ■ No answer



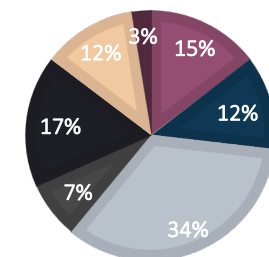
ORIGIN

■ Africa ■ Asia ■ Latin America



FORMAL EDUCATION

■ No schooling ■ Primary School
■ High School ■ Trade/technical training
■ Bachelor's degree ■ Master's degree
■ Doctorate degree



Analysis of the data

Researching interculturality

Away from conventional practices of coding data that 'essentialise people and their experiences' (Jackson, 2013, p. 742)

Researcher, data and those researched are irreducibly intertwined (Holliday & McDonald, 2019)

Influence of multilingual research on the data (Holmes et al, 2013)

Findings presented in the form of quotes

'Phones and computers are very important for us'



In Nigeria I didn't use the phone. I started using the phone here. When I arrived, I realized I had to have a phone. When I don't have credit, I can talk to my family on Facebook.

(Participant in FG7)



"The smartphone is indispensable for everything. I use it to call friends and family, keep up to date on news, watch football matches..."

(Participant in FG2)



"Receiving information through radio and television implies passivity. Doing an internet search implies that you, as a user, are moving in first person and actively seeking information"

(Participant in FG9)

'Red Cross tells me everything'



"We need something like a website or an app to explain to migrants how to get for example Tarjeta Roja, because nothing is explained. And refugees are doing groups on FB in Germany and Holland to tell you how to do something, but that does not exist officially. We need trustworthy information [...] Nobody knows anything".

(Participant in FG6).



"[I am informed by] my peers. But that is not official information. I may get misinformed. I actually have. I am a refugee. The system is not well-established. The organisations don't give the same solutions to all refugees. The organisation that is supporting my case, for example, is not well-established. They give one thing to one refugee and then another thing to the other. And it is the same case (other participants agree).

(Participant in FG6)



"The organisation monitoring my case has lawyers and informed me that my interview is in one year. My friend visited a private lawyer instead and his interview is in five months. How is that possible? We need information about legal issues."

(Participant in FG4)

'Robots cannot discriminate but humans make discriminations'



'The couch surfing app in my current Italian town was useless because nobody wants to host a person with my nationality.'

(Participant in FG2)



'We have other organisations here (Cruz Roja, ACCEM, CEAR), each person has a different organisation and it is going to affect the quality of the life that they have. For example, I was with Red Cross and I know another person that was with ACCEM, they gave him home (accommodation) but I didn't get it. How should I handle that? I was three months on the streets. Government is supporting you, but I was on the streets.'

(Participant in FG6)



'There are many apps but none really useful to a foreign person. [...] It must be a real "Guide for the foreigner". There are apps for everything but not specific for foreign people.'

(Participant in FG9)

'The problem is always the language'



This problem [not having information] can be solved if you go to the government to ask for a paperwork but here in Spain, especially in Spain, nobody speaks English so there is no way to get anything official. (Participant in FG6)



I am a Kurdish-Kurmanji speaker. I am not from Syria and so I had no rights to education there, so I do not know how to read and write in Kurmanji either. (Participant in FG5)



I cannot use anything because I am illiterate. Since I was in Afghanistan, I didn't have the opportunity to study due to culture and location issues. (Participant in FG1)

'As a refugee, as a foreigner here, your phone is your window to the world'



'We have nothing to do'
(Participant in FG 2)



'I cannot sleep at night, so all the time I am on my smartphone and there is a reason: when you do not work and stay at home you spend one hour with your family, one hour with your child and after that you are bored, confused. The only thing to do is to use your mobile'.

(Participant in FG4).



'In Syria you have no way of getting out of the crisis mentally unless you have internet. There is no other way. '

(Participant in FG6)

Agency and empowerment

Mobile phones an essential part of their new realities: support system *to be* with their loved ones and as a way to *escape* their new realities

Struggle with Non-human agency: new spaces, the phones, regulations

How do the risks of ICT intersect with their existing vulnerability? Do ICT aggravate this vulnerability?

‘Existing power relations in society determine the enjoyment of benefits from ICT; hence this technologies are not gender neutral’ (Gurumurthy, 2004, p. 1)

Implications for ICT development

Provision of multimodal and multilingual information for accessibility

Official sources of information that are reliable, accessible, updated and easy to find and understand

User-centric and co-creation designs that ensure that technologies cater for the needs of vulnerable groups

ICT designed to provide refugees the power to challenge structural disadvantages

Thank you

For more information on the project or the research, please contact:

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