



Working Paper Series

**Number 32, Summer 2017**

**Mapping the Qualitative  
Migration Research in Europe  
An Exploratory Analysis**

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***Abstract***

As the dynamics of migration in Europe has been continuously changing, diverse empirical, theoretical, and methodological challenges have defined the landscape of migration research. This paper aims to reflect on the current state and overtime development of Qualitative Migration Research in Europe (QMR-E). For this purpose, we have conducted paper-by-paper analysis on original articles published between 2000 and 2016 in the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (JEMS) and *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (ERS), two leading peer-reviewed journals in the field of migration research. Through this overtime analysis, we mapped the continuities and changes taking place in QMR-E with respect to their qualitative research methods, designs, research sites and groups, multi-level of analysis, and topics. In this respect, we aim to identify the dominant trends and existent gaps in QMR-E literature and invite scholars to further develop the existing research agenda and to engage in new research directions.

***Keywords***

Qualitative Research, Methodology, Migration Studies, Europe

***Author's biographical note***

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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

While half a century ago migration research was a peripheral area of study within traditional academic disciplines, today it has become a firmly established interdisciplinary field with an increasing number of research centres, publication outlets, and academic programmes. There is almost no university without an institutional recognition making migration studies visible. The key academic editorials increasingly publish collections, handbooks, textbooks and companions on the key issues of migration studies, such as diversity, citizenship, integration, mobility, borders, and migration policies. For instance, IMISCOE has recently released a textbook series edited by Marco Martiniello and Jan Rath (2010, 2012, 2014) that assembled the studies on international migration and immigrant integration in Europe. The European research agenda on migration studies is multi-varied, and always connected to social, political and economical processes in Europe. The program of the 14<sup>th</sup> IMISCOE Annual Conference clearly reflects this multi-sited, multi-disciplinary and multi-level analysis.

This chapter aims to reflect on the current state and overtime development of Qualitative Migration Research in Europe (QMR-E). For this purpose, we have conducted paper-by-paper analysis on original articles published between 2000 and 2016 in the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (JEMS) and *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (ERS), two leading peer-reviewed journals in the field of migration research<sup>2</sup>. In total, we have identified more than 2.400 articles

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<sup>1</sup> The final version of this Working Paper will be forthcoming as the first chapter of *Qualitative Migration Studies in Europe*. 2018. ed. by Ricard Zapata-Barrero and Evren Yalaz, Springer-IMISCOE Research Series. We would like to thank John Solomos and GRITIM-UPF researchers for their invaluable comments on the earlier versions of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> While mainly practical issues limited our analysis to two journals, we had some good reasons for selecting *JEMS* and *ERS*. First, both are the leading journals mapping migration studies in Europe and have a long publication history.

published in this period and looked for articles that are based on qualitative empirical research in migration studies conducted in Europe. 627 original articles met our search criteria of QMR-E and were examined further. The main objective of this exploratory analysis is to map the continuities and changes taking place in QMR-E with respect to their research methods, designs, research sites and groups, levels of analysis, and topics. In this respect, we aim to identify the dominant trends and existent gaps in QMR-E literature, so that we could invite scholars to deepen the existing research agenda and to engage in new research directions.

One of the striking findings of this exploratory analysis is that scholarly interest in migration studies unprecedentedly increased over the last sixteen years. Today, the number of issues and original articles released by the journals that we studied is three times more than in the early 2000s. In this period, the QMR-E articles kept on growing in quantity and accounted for approximately one-quarter of the total original articles released by these two journals. The analysis also demonstrates that QMR-E articles are diverse in terms of their qualitative methods and designs, groups and countries they study, the way they categorize migrants, levels of their analysis, and primary migration issues that they focus on. Despite this diversity, we can still argue that the increasing

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Therefore, they have made overtime analysis possible. Today, there are many other journals dedicated to migration studies, but relatively younger journals, such as *Migration Studies* (since 2013), *Comparative Migration Studies* (since 2015), and *Journal of Migration History* (since 2015) would not allow us to examine the state of QMR-E at the beginning of the millennium. Secondly, because of our European focus, we have opted for journals with editorials based in Europe. Therefore, other leading migration research journals, such as *International Migration*, which is currently edited at Georgetown University's Institute for the Study of International Migration (ISIM), and *International Migration Review*, by the Center for Migration Studies of New York (CMS) stayed out of our selection. Thirdly, we assume that peer-reviewed journals with relatively higher citation indices and impact factors would have more visibility and, therefore, potentially have more influence on the migration research agenda. Fourthly, we selected journals with an explicit focus on migration research. In this respect, other related journals, such as *Global Networks*, *Identities*, and *Ethnicities*, that publish migration-related work but do not prioritize migration research in their journal description were not taken into consideration.

strong interest in qualitative research in European Migration Studies makes it evident that migration scholars keep their focus in detailed examination of their cases and have direct contact with their objects of analysis.

Before articulating the findings of this exploratory analysis, we will first introduce the main methodological criteria we have followed to collect and analyse the information. In the second section, we will present the main findings on the increasing interest in migration studies and qualitative research. In the third section, we will examine the current state and development of QMR-E following the criteria of analysis we have proposed. The concluding section will try to go beyond the descriptive analysis and infer some generalizations in terms of patterns, gaps and new directions in QMR-E.

### **1. Methodology: Main Criteria of Analysis**

This analysis focuses on six main areas. Firstly, we examined the main *research methods* used in the QMR-E articles. In addition to learning about relative distribution of traditional qualitative data collection methods, i.e. interviews, participant observations, and document analysis, we asked whether and to what extent scholars adopt relatively new qualitative tools such as internet-mediated research and visual analysis. Moreover, we inquired the extent of which qualitative migration scholars working on Europe combine qualitative and quantitative tools.

Second, we examined the status of *comparative research* in QMR-E. While the importance of comparative designs for understanding migration-related topics is highly emphasized, we still do not know the extent of which comparative research is prevalent in QMR-E. This analysis included an examination of relative distribution of comparative QMR-E overtime and the types of comparisons – cross-location (among territorial settings), cross-group (among migrant groups), cross-meso level (among organizations and institutions), and cross-time (among different periods) – that have been conducted.

Third, we focused on the ways that *migrants are categorized* in the QMR-E articles. Our main questions included: are migrants

predominantly categorized with respect to their countries of origin, e.g. Turks in Germany, Poles in the UK? Is there an increasing attention to the category of generation and therefore second-generation migrants? What about the category of religion? Is the so-called *feminization* of migration flows (Castles & Miller 1993) and *feminization* migration scholarship (King et al. 2011) translated into categorizing migrants with respect to gender categories? What about legal status? Is there more research considering migrants in terms of their legal status (i.e. documented, undocumented, asylum seekers, and refugees) in their receiving countries?

Fourth, we wanted to find out about the *geographical distribution of country-cases* in QMR-E articles. We asked whether and in which ways some countries are studied more than others. Do migrants from certain countries tend to be studied more often than others? Is there an overtime change in the distribution of research contexts and countries of origin? Previous analysis on *JEMS* already demonstrated the changing geographies of host and sending country contexts (King et al. 2011). There has been a shift away from the UK as primary host country context towards Southern and Eastern Europe. Moreover, while the publications on UK's traditional sending regions such as South Asia and Caribbean have been declining, there has been a rise in the scholarly attention on "newer" sending regions such as Eastern Europe, Middle East, and East Europe. In this part, we checked whether these findings also hold true for QMR-E.

Fifth, we inquired the place of the multi-level analysis, which is the *status of national-level analysis* in QMR-E and whether local and transnational-levels of analysis are on the rise. Scholars have already been advocating for a turn away from researching migration at national-levels and have been critical of having nation-states as the basic unit of analysis (Wimmer & Schiller 2003; Amelina & Faist 2012). On the other hand, there has been growing interest in studying migration at local-levels (Schiller & Çağlar 2009; Zapata-Barrero et al. 2017) and at transnational-level (Vertovec 1999; Levitt & Schiller 2004; Levitt & Jaworsky 2007).

Finally, we examined continuities and changes in terms of the *topics studied* by QMR-E. We particularly focused on overtime distribution of eight main topics, i.e. identity, integration, policy,

discrimination/exclusion, citizenship, forced migration and asylum, borders and mobility, and youth and second generation.

**Fig. 1** Six criteria of analysis



To analyse the overtime patterns in QMR-E literature, we went over all the original articles published in *JEMS* and *ERS* between 2000 and 2016, and identified the articles meeting the general criteria of Qualitative Migration Research in Europe. The research included 4 main selection criteria: 1) *qualitative research* that excluded studies using only quantitative methods, but included mixed-methods; 2) *empirical research* that excluded field reviews, conceptual, and theoretical articles; 3) *migration research* that strictly focused on migration-related diversity and its related issues, and excluded studies on local minority groups, ethnic, racial, religious, and cultural studies without migration focus; 4) *research on Europe* that included the cases from Central and Eastern Europe and Turkey, multi-sited studies with European and non-European cases, but excluded articles with only non-European research sites.

Those articles meeting our research criteria are further examined and coded according to the six main areas<sup>3</sup>: 1) Qualitative

<sup>3</sup> Each article is coded by two researchers to ensure reliability.

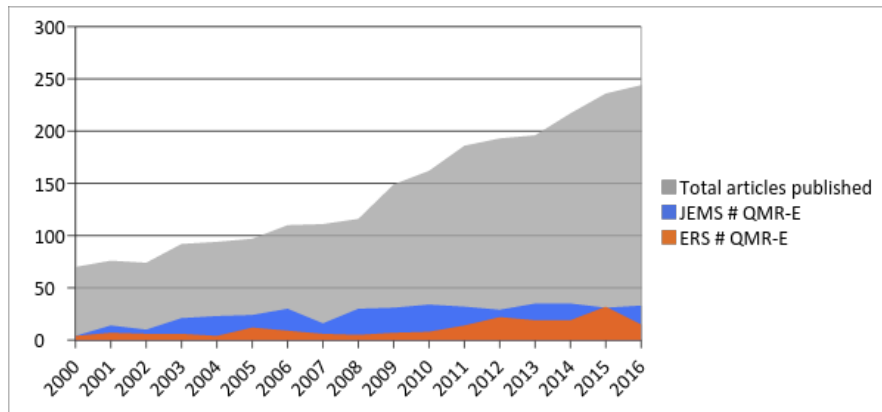
research tools, e.g. interviews, focus groups, participant observation, historical analysis, visual analysis, mixed-methods; 2) Comparative research design (in case it exists) and its types, such as cross-location, cross-group, cross-time, and cross-meso level comparisons; 3) Categorization of migrants, i.e. national, legal, class, religion, gender, geographical group categories; 4) Research sites (country and city information) and country of origin (if research includes a migrant group); 5) Multi-level of analysis including transnational, European, national, and local levels; and 6) Research topics: in addition to including the keywords provided by the authors, we coded each article according to the list of research areas provided by IMISCOE on researcher's profile page (see Annex). Each article could have multiple topics. Sect. 3.6 presents the findings on eight highly repeated topics.

## **2. A general Reading: The Number of Migration Research is Rising, but so Qualitative Migration Research in Europe?**

While two decades ago migration research had a tiny presence in social scientific inquiry, today, growing scholarly interest in migration and migration-related topics is undisputable. Both *JEMS* and *ERS* demonstrated unprecedented increase in the number of issues and original articles they publish a year (see Fig. 2). *JEMS* used to release four issues and around 35 original articles a year up until 2003. It increased the number of yearly issues from six to eight in 2004, from eight to ten in 2009, and from ten to twelve in 2014. In 2016, it released 15 issues and more than 130 original articles. According to the journal's editors, such an expansion was a necessary step to respond to increasing number of submissions, while keeping the acceptance rate the same (King 2009; Statham 2016). *ERS* has also followed a similar trajectory. While in the early 2000s, six issues and around 40 original articles were published a year, today *ERS* releases more than 100 articles and 15 issues yearly including *Ethnic and Racial Studies Review* since 2014. Such expansion is a clear signal of strong scholarly interest in issues of migration, mobility, ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity.



**Fig. 2** Number of articles published in JEMS and ERS between 2000-2016



Note: Figures exclude editorial introductions, book reviews, and debate articles.

Has this steep increase also translated into the number of QMR-E? Table 1 shows that the share of QMR-E had boosted in the early years of the 2000s. While in 2000 only 11% of the articles published in *JEMS* and *ERS* qualified for QMR-E criteria, this share increased rapidly over the next years and made a peak in 2005-2006. This period interestingly coincides with the times of rapid changes in Europe with the Eastern expansion of the European Union, the emergence of new European destination countries in the South, and expansion of public and political debates on migration and mobility. Since then, while there is a constant increase in the number of QMR-E articles, their share has been stable (approximately one-fourth of the total publications).

**Table 1** Number of articles published by JEMS and ERS between 2000-2016

	<b>Yearly issues</b>	<b>Total articles</b>	<b>QMR-E articles</b>	<b>% of QMR-E</b>
<b>2000</b>	10	70	8	11.4
<b>2001-2002</b>	20	150	37	24.7
<b>2003-2004</b>	24	186	54	29
<b>2005-2006</b>	28	207	75	36.2
<b>2007-2008</b>	32	227	57	25.1
<b>2009-2010</b>	39	311	80	25.7
<b>2011-2012</b>	44	379	97	25.6
<b>2013-2014</b>	48	413	108	26.2
<b>2015-2016</b>	59	480	111	23.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>2423</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>25.9</b>

Note: Figures exclude editorial introductions, book reviews, and debate articles.

### 3. Current State and Development of Qualitative Migration Research in Europe

#### 3.1. Research Methods

*Interviews* are essential tools of qualitative research. The analysis shows that 3 out of 4 QMR-E articles have used a typology of qualitative interviews. Some examples<sup>4</sup> include semi-structured in-depth interviews with migrants (Søholt & Lynnebakke 2015; van Meeteren et al. 2015), with migrant activists (Cappiali 2016), expert interviews (Menz 2002; Helbling 2010; Wiesböck et al. 2016), biographical/narrative interviews (Liversage 2009; Qureshi 2016),

<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that the articles we cite from our research are not the key-representatives, but just illustrations of our main findings. We are fully aware that we could have cited other articles from our research pool of 627 QMR-E articles, but practical reasons obliged us to limit our references.

and problem-centered interviews (Konzett-Smoliner 2016; Verwiebe et al. 2016).

Unlike interviews in general, *focus groups* have been much less common. Only 55 articles in the works collected have used focus groups. Having said that, we must also note the increasing tendency to use focus groups in QMR-E. We have found that in the last eight years the number of articles has more than doubled compared to the first eight years of the 2000s.

*Participant observation* has been another major tool of QMR-E. Near 34% of the articles that we identified conducted some type of fieldwork and used the tools of participant observation. It must be noted that overwhelming majority of the studies with participant observation (195 out of 210 participant observation articles) also conducted qualitative interviews. This confirms the already shared view that participant observation and interviews complement each other.

While it was relatively easier to detect the QMR-E articles using interviews, focus groups, and participant observation as data collection methods, the same was not true for finding out articles that used documents as primary sources. One obvious reason for this is that almost all studies use some sort of documents – let it be official documents, non-governmental reports, documents of political discourses, or written media sources. According to our analysis, 41% of QMR-E articles explicitly mentioned the use of documents in their analysis. As we will discuss later in this chapter, the majority of them were policy-related documents.

While the number of QMR-E has been increasing recently, we have found only 45 articles (7%) that conducted *historical analysis*, namely studying migration dynamics in the past and/or tracing continuities and changes over time. Many of them engaged in overtime analysis to explain the current situation of a studied topic, e.g. analysing the development of official perspectives on migrant transnationalism since the 1960s in order to explain the current political discourse (Bouras 2013). Just a few of these historical analysis were dedicated only to archival study of the past (see, for example, Dedieu & Mbodj-Pouye 2016; Ryan 2003; Walaardt 2013). While historical research is still at the margins of migration studies, we think there is a rising scholarly interest in this

field. The launch of the *Journal of Migration History* (since 2015) is a clear sign of this.

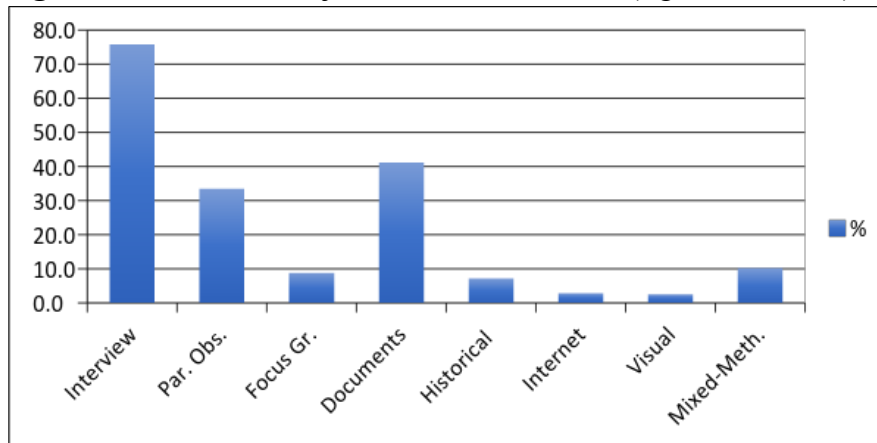
As we expected, new research tools such as *internet-mediated research* or *visual analysis* are rare. Only 18 of the articles were conducting internet-based research to collect qualitative data. While the internet-mediated research was almost non-existing up until 2005, since then there has been a rapid increase. Almost one-third of articles using internet as main data collection site were published between 2015 and 2016. Recent examples include conducting online ethnographic research on social network sites to study migrant mobility and transnationalism (Schrooten et al. 2016), using Google street views to study social changes in times of superdiversity (Maly 2016), and analysis of webpages and online actors to study online Islamophobia (Ekman 2015).

Fewer articles (only 16 in total) engaged in qualitative analysis of visual materials. While we found the first examples of visual research as of 2006, recently, more scholars have been engaging in this kind of qualitative research (for an overview of visual approaches to migration studies, see: Martiniello 2017). For example, Fedyuk (2012) inquires the role of photographs in transnational parental relations; Long et al. (2014) use mental maps and photo-elicitation to examine the role of leisure and sport spaces in new migrants' social inclusion; and Gawlewicz (2015) combines visual methods with qualitative interviews and a supplementary survey to study social remittances and transmission of attitudes between Polish migrants in the UK and their significant others in Poland.

While there has been a strong call for bridging the qualitative and quantitative divide by using multiple methods, our research shows that this call has not yet been translated into practice in migration studies of Europe. Only 10% of QMR-E articles combined qualitative and quantitative research tools. This ratio has been generally stable overtime. Among mixed-method research, it has been a common practice to combine qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys (Parella et al. 2013; Wiesböck et al. 2016) as well as bringing together qualitative and census data sources (Hickman 2011; McGarrigle 2016). Moreover, another form of mixed-method research included studies combining quantitative

media content analysis with different forms of in-depth-textual research such as discourse analysis (for example, see: Bauder 2008).

**Fig. 3** Distribution of major methods in QMR-E (figures are in %)



### 3.2 Comparative Designs

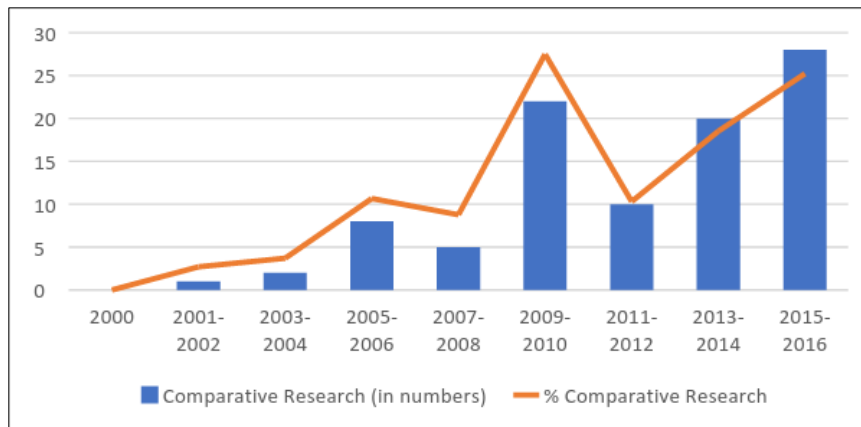
Comparative research is crucial to migration studies, since it is only through comparison that “we can de-center what is taken for granted in a particular time or place” (Bloemraad 2013, p. 29). We found that 15% of QMR-E articles used comparative research of various types. Despite its average low share, as Fig. 4 shows, the number of comparative research in QMR-E has been increasing recently. During 2015-2016, one-fourth of the articles that we studied conducted a type of comparative research.

We observed a wide-range diversity of comparative designs (see Table 2). The majority of comparative studies adopted cross-location comparisons, i.e. comparison across countries, regions, cities, and neighbourhoods. While cross-country comparisons have been the most common design (33 out of 96 comparative QMR-E articles), recently, there has been an increase in the number of articles with cross-city comparisons. This finding supports the recent claims for local-turn in migration scholarship (Zapata-Barrero et al. 2017). According to this exploratory analysis, the overwhelming

majority of the cross-city comparisons were published after 2015 (for example, see: Plöger & Becker 2015; Gebhardt, 2016; Graauw & Vermeulen 2016). On the other hand, one-third of the comparative QMR-E articles conducted cross-migrant group analysis. Some of the cross-group designs included: multiple groups (from different countries of origins) in a single national context, e.g. comparison of Ghanaian and Senegalese transnationalisms in Italy (Riccio 2008); multiple groups in multiple national contexts, e.g. comparing inclusion and exclusion of marginalized youth of North African origin in France and Turkish origin in Germany (Loch 2009); and different migration waves of migrants from the same country of origin to the same receiving country context, e.g. comparing early and late economic migrants from Central and Eastern Europe to the UK (McDowell 2009).

While not as frequent as cross-location and cross-group comparisons, one-fifth of comparative QMR-E articles adopted either cross-meso level or cross-time designs. Some examples of comparisons at meso-level included comparing across political parties, host organizations (Batnitzky & McDowell 2013; Simpson, 2015), and migrant organizations (De Tona & Lentin 2011). While some of the cross-time analysis compared policies over a period of time (Howard 2010), some others engaged in before-and-after type of comparisons, such as comparing high-skilled migration policies (Cerna 2016) or East-West cross-border labor mobility (Wiesböck et al. 2016) before and after the economic crisis.

**Fig. 4** Comparative research in QMR-E between 2000-2016 (in numbers and in % of total QMR-E)



**Table 2** Types of comparisons (% in total comparative QMR-E articles)

Types of comparisons	%
cross location	58.3
- cross country	34.4
- cross city	7.3
cross group	32.3
cross meso-level	11.5
cross time	11.5
Total comparative research articles	96

### 3.3. Categorization of Migrants

Today, it is a widely-accepted fact that migrants cannot be moulded into a single category. This is probably one of the first consequences of migration-related analytical frameworks such as transnationalism (Levitt & Jaworsky 2007) and super-diversity (Vertovec 2007). Migrants navigate across multiple and intersecting identities,

including their national-origin, ethnicity, race, class, religion, language, gender, and generation (Vertovec 2015). Our research shows that an overwhelming majority of QMR-E articles categorize migrants in relation to their national origin such as Turks in Germany, Poles in the UK, and Moroccans in France. In other words, almost one of every two QMR-E articles (47%) identified migrants with their ethnic/national backgrounds brought from their country of origin. While some of these articles also referred to multiple identity categories such as class, gender, and generation, still the national and ethnic origin has been the most frequent one. Especially since the mid-2000s, an increasing number of scholars have been critical of using ethnic and national groups as units of analysis in migration research (Glick Schiller 2008; Glick Schiller & Çağlar 2013; Runfors 2016). It is argued that studying migration through *ethnic-lens* results in under-examination of non-ethnic forms of settlement, importance of locality/city in migrant inclusion, and transnational connections (Glick Schiller 2008, p. 2). Fig. 5 shows that this call has been partly effective in QMR-E. While articles considering migrants as national/ethnic groups have made a peak in 2007-2008, there is a recent observable decline. Despite the calls for post-racial and post-multicultural era, where the nationality and ethnic origins are expected to lose their weight as category of analysis (Vertovec 2010; Matejskova & Antonsich 2015), national/ethnic forms of categorization of migrants is far more common than the other categories in the current state of QMR-E.

While European migration research has its origins in studying guest workers in the 1950s and the 60s (see, for example: Castles & Kosack 1973), today, the category of class has been largely in shadow. Only one in five QMR-E studies (97 articles) has categorized migrants with respect to their class/occupational status. Moreover, one-third of these articles classifying migrants with their class status had the UK as the country of destination. Another important observation is that the category of class has expanded beyond the concept of “guest workers” and included wide-range of diversity including migrant entrepreneurs (Kloosterman et al. 2016), high-skilled professional migrants (Ryan 2015), and domestic migrant workers (Anderson 2010).



As the so-called “refugee crisis” has hit Europe after the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, our expectation was to observe increasing number of studies that categorize migrants with respect to their legal status, such as refugees, asylum seekers, documented or undocumented migrants. However, Fig. 6 shows that the QMR-E studies considering migrants with respect to their legal categories have been more or less stable over time. One possible explanation for this is that such studies might be opting for specialized journals on the topic of forced migration, such as *Journal of Refugee Studies*, as their publication outlet. Another possible factor is: as qualitative data collection methods require longer duration of research, ongoing developments might not have shown their presence in QMR-E yet. A third potential hypothesis could be that many studies focusing on migrants' legal-status might be concerned with the issues of democracy, human rights and liberalism at normative and theoretical levels and therefore did not qualify our empirical research criteria.

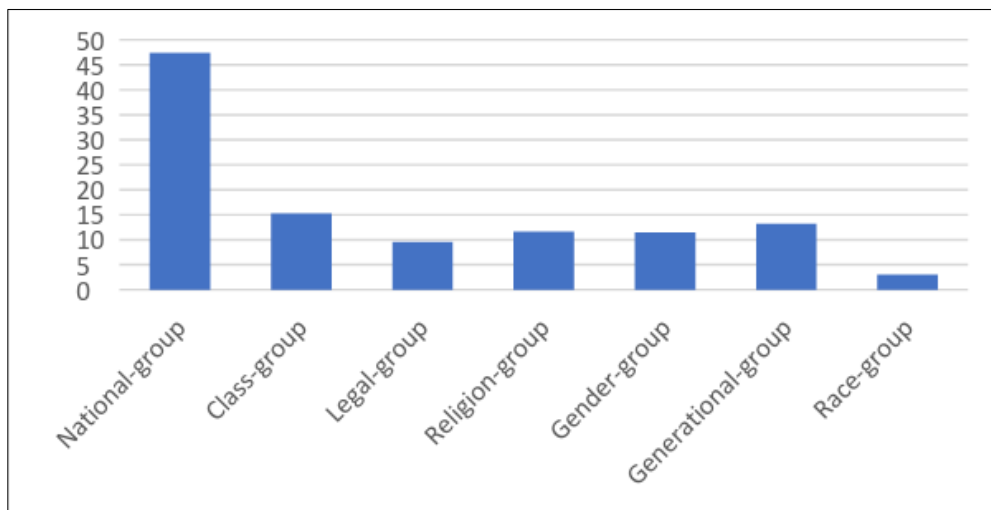
While migration/religion nexus has been at the centre of many policy and public debates, we observed that few scholars categorized migrants with respect to their religion. This is also true for studies identifying migrants with racial categories. Here, we must note that our article-selection criteria excluded certain research on religious and racial groups, if these groups are considered as local minorities without any emphasis on their migration background. For example, some studies on Muslims in European countries did not meet our criterion of “migration studies”, if they study Muslims as a minority group without referring to their migration history. Our findings show that 73 QMR-E articles used the category of religion while defining migrants in the study. What is more, almost half of them (30) studied the UK as the host country context.

Feminization of migration has been documented long time ago (Castles & Miller 1993). As women increase their share among international migrants, scholars expected to see *gender* becoming a prominent category in future migration studies (Lee et al. 2014). Despite these expectations, we have not observed an increase in the number of articles that categorized migrants with respect to gender categories. According to our research, 72 QMR-E articles (11%) focused on gender category while studying migrants. This insufficient attention to the gender category in migration studies

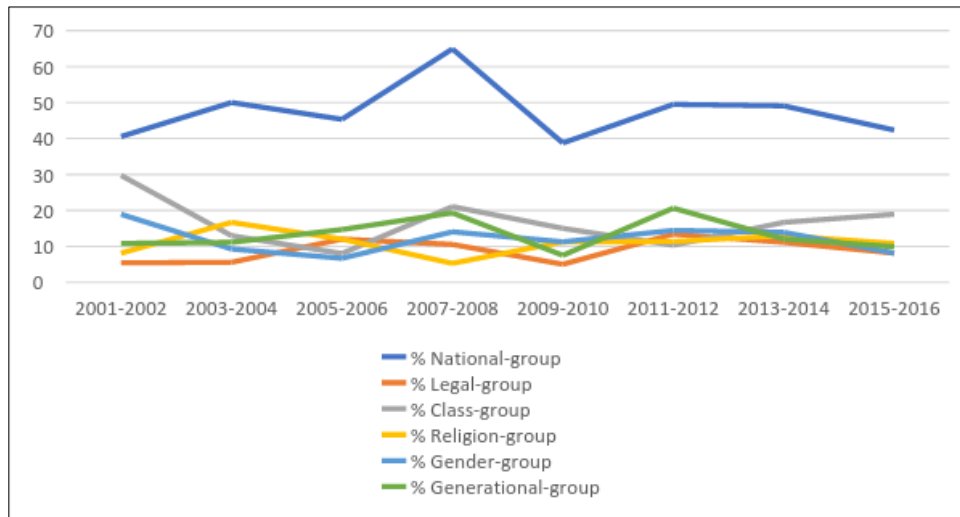
makes specific conditions and experiences of migrant women invisible and occults gender asymmetries that are (re)produced at different migratory and settlement stages (Lutz 2010).

Last but not least, despite the emerging research tradition on children of immigrants in Europe (Crul & Schneider 2010; Crul et al. 2012), the analysis shows that only 13% of QMR-E articles accounts for migrants' generation. While the generation was the second highly studied category between 2011-2012, afterwards there has been a decreasing trend. Considering the urgency of the problems surrounding the children of migrants, there is a need for immediate academic attention on this issue.

**Fig. 5** Distribution of categorization of migrant group categories (in % of total QMR-E)



**Fig. 6** Categorization of migrants over-time (figures in % of total QMR-E)



### 3.4. Geographical distribution

According to this descriptive analysis, the UK is the most frequently studied country. Together with Ireland, the UK counted for 41% of the QMR-E research sites. On the one hand, this finding is not surprising, since both data sources are based in the UK and are written in English. On the other hand, the journal selection and language biases are not the only factors that can explain the high share of the UK as the research case. We need to think of other conditions that make the British context a fertile soil for migration research in general and qualitative migration research in particular. Some of these factors include: long history of migratory movements, official acknowledgement of demographic diversity, longstanding academic institutions on migration, and their strong capacity to draw research funding. After the UK (238 articles), Germany (66) and the Netherlands (54) are the most studied cases by qualitative migration researchers. France (47), despite the long history of migration, lags behind other Western European cases.

As Table 3 shows, the distribution of country context has become much diverse over time. While in the first half of the 2000s the UK and Western Europe heavily dominated the country case selection of QMR-E, recently qualitative migration researchers study much diverse European contexts. This is probably due to the consolidation of more recent countries of migration, e.g. Spain, Italy and Greece, the enlargement of the European Union, and the incorporation of Eastern and Central European countries. The number of studies including a South European case is increasing steadily. While Italy is the most studied country in this European geographical area, Spain follows it. While we have found only few QMR-E articles focusing on one or more country cases from Central and Eastern Europe, this number has been increasing recently. One of the surprising findings from our research was the position of Northern Europe. As Table 3 demonstrates, in the aftermath of 2011, North Europe has emerged as one of the major sites of QMR-E. Three out of four QMR articles that consist of a North European case were published during the last six years.

**Table 3** Geographical distribution of research sites over time (figures are in numbers of articles)

	UK + Ireland	Western Europe	Northern Europe	Southern Europe	C. & E. Europe
<i>2000</i>	5	0	2	1	0
<i>2001-2002</i>	16	13	1	5	1
<i>2003-2004</i>	14	17	6	13	6
<i>2005-2006</i>	38	20	2	12	1
<i>2007-2008</i>	21	21	4	12	6
<i>2009-2010</i>	37	24	3	12	3
<i>2011-2012</i>	37	22	23	13	6
<i>2013-2014</i>	44	20	17	24	6
<i>2015-2016</i>	43	40	13	22	8
<b>Total</b> <i>(in % of QMR-E)</i>	<b>255</b> (41%)	<b>177</b> (28%)	<b>71</b> (11%)	<b>114</b> (18%)	<b>37</b> (6%)

Western Europe includes Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium and

Switzerland; Northern Europe: Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark; Southern Europe: Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Greece; and Central and Eastern Europe: Former Yugoslavia and former Soviet Union states in the region.

**Table 4** Country distribution of research sites between 2000-2016. (figures are in number of articles)

<b>Western Europe</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>South Europe</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>Northern Europe</b>	<b>71</b>
Germany	66	Italy	55	Denmark	23
Netherlands	54	Spain	39	Sweden	21
France	47	Greece	15	Norway	21
Belgium	17	Portugal	13	Finland	8

When we look at the distribution of countries of origin<sup>5</sup>, Central and Eastern Europe is by far the most studied sending region. This is followed by South Asia, which consists of former colonies of the British Empire. According to our analysis, Turkey by itself was the third highly studied sending country. While migrants from Middle East and North Africa did not have much presence in QMR-E between 2000-2016, we expect that this situation will change in the coming years. It is important to note that Morocco has been the major sending country that is studied in the MENA region. Almost half of the QMR-E articles studying migrants from MENA focused on Moroccans.

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<sup>5</sup> Note that only those QMR-E articles studying one or more migrant groups had a code for country of origin. Not all QMR-E articles included a migrant group into their study.

**Table 5** Geographical distribution of countries of origin

	<b>Number of articles</b>	<b>% in QMR-E</b>
<b>Central and Eastern Europe</b>	68	10.8
<b>South Asia</b>	37	5.9
<b>MENA</b>	28	4.5
<b>Caribbean</b>	14	2.2
<b>Turkey</b>	34	5.4
<b>China</b>	10	1.6

Central and Eastern Europe: former Yugoslavia and former Soviet Union states in the region; South Asia: Pakistan, India, Bangladesh; MENA: countries in Arabian Peninsula, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and North Africa (Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, and Egypt)

### ***3.5. Multi-Level of Analysis***

In this part, we examined different levels of analysis that each QMR-E article focused on. We have distinguished four different levels: national (level of nation-state), local (level of sub-national regions, cities, towns, municipalities and neighbourhoods), European, and transnational. These levels, for us, signify the level of generalization that each study targets. In this respect, it is different from study's location or unit of analysis<sup>6</sup>.

According to our research, national-level analysis has dominated the QMR-E. More than half of the studies consider their research

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<sup>6</sup> For instance, Kreuzberg can be the single research site of a study, then we classified the level of analysis depending on the scale that the findings are discussed: only referring to Kreuzberg (local-level), or generalized for Berlin (city-level) or for Germany (national-level). If the study aims to bring an explanation at the level of Europe, then it is coded as European-level. Lastly, if the study explicitly adopts a transnational perspective, then it is coded as transnational-level. It must be noted that the same article can be coded with multiple levels of analysis.

within the scope of nation-states. However, as Table 6 shows, there has been a rise in the number of studies at local levels. This follows the emerging trend to go from a state-centric to a local-centred analysis, where cities are becoming units of analysis of diversity policies. This has been, for instance, at the centre of a special issue on ‘the local turn’ in migration studies, which argued for the need to promote multi-level analysis from the city point of view (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017).

The analysis also shows that the calls for transnationalism as a distinctive research framework of analysis in migration studies in the early 1990s (Schiller et al. 1992; Basch et al. 1994) demonstrate a strong presence in the post-2000 era. One fourth of the QMR-E articles referred to transnational-level in their analysis.

**Table 6** Distribution of different levels of analyses over time (figures are numbers of articles)

	<b>National</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>European</b>	<b>Transnational</b>
<i>2000</i>	5	1	0	0
<i>2001-2002</i>	19	8	8	9
<i>2003-2004</i>	28	12	5	16
<i>2005-2006</i>	43	10	6	17
<i>2007-2008</i>	42	7	2	25
<i>2009-2010</i>	41	13	7	14
<i>2011-2012</i>	60	11	10	31
<i>2013-2014</i>	59	24	4	29
<i>2015-2016</i>	61	25	9	16
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b>358 (57%)</b>	<b>111 (18%)</b>	<b>51 (8%)</b>	<b>157 (25%)</b>

### 3.6. Topics

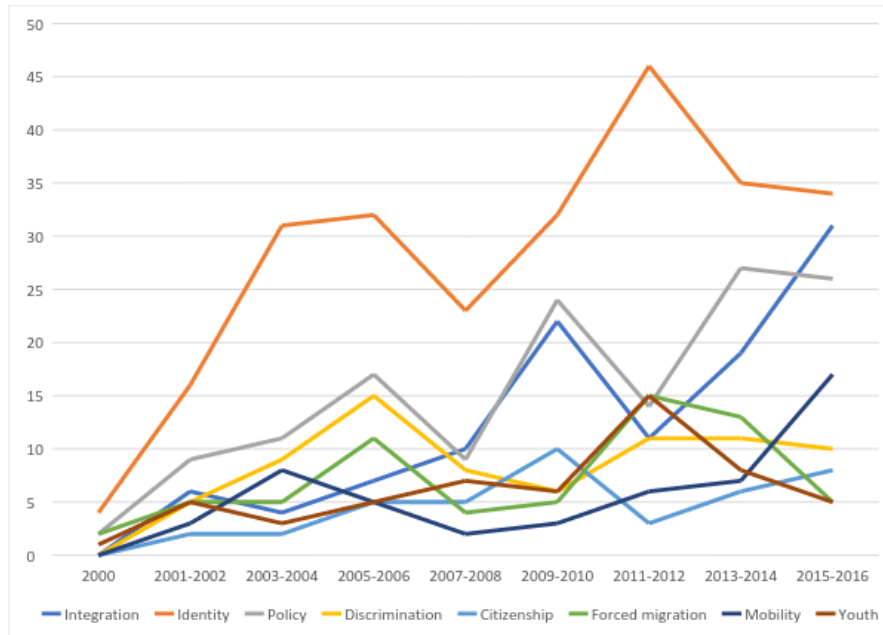
In this last part of the analysis, we examined the key topics that QMR-E articles have been focusing on. The first striking finding is the dominance of the topic of identity in QMR-E in the last sixteen years. This topic included the studies working on ethnicity, belonging, culture, race, religion, and language. 40% of QMR-E articles have focused on one or more aspects of the identity topic. After the topic of identity, policy and integration have been highly studied topics by qualitative migration researchers in Europe. As Fig. 7 demonstrates, there has been a growing scholarly interest on the topics of policy, integration, and mobility.

We have also had some surprising results such as declining number of QMR-E articles on youth and forced migration. While the topic of migrant youth was rising rapidly between 2009 and 2011, today, we observe a declining pattern. Considering the pressing problems of youth with migration origins, this topic needs urgent retaking by qualitative migration researchers. The other topic that demonstrated a declining pattern was forced migration. In the view of recent refugee flows into Europe, this was an unexpected result. Yet, we must note that there are ample specialized academic journals on forced migration. Therefore, rather than a declining academic interest on the topic, as we noted earlier, scholars working on forced migration might prefer journals such as the *Forced Migration Review*, the *Journal of Refugee Studies*, etc. as their primary publication outlet.

While the topic of discrimination ranked as the third highly studied issue between 2003-2007, in the recent years it left its place to the studies of integration and mobility. The studies on citizenship have been more or less stable during this period.



**Fig. 7** Number of topics studied by QMR-E articles between 2000-2016



Note: Each topic included a set of codes that served to identify research area/topic of each article: *identity*: identity, ethnicity, belonging, culture, race, religion, and language; *integration*: integration, incorporation, inclusion, and assimilation; *discrimination*: discrimination, exclusion, inequality, and islamophobia; *policy*: policy and policy-analysis; *citizenship*: citizenship and naturalization; *forced migration*: asylum, refugee, and forced migration; *mobility*: mobility and border; *youth*: youth, young, and second generation.

**Table 7** Number of topics studied by QMR-E articles between 2000-2016

	Number	% to Total QMR-E
<b>Integration</b>	110	17.5
<b>Identity</b>	253	40.4
<b>Policy</b>	139	22.2
<b>Discrimination</b>	75	12.0

<b>Citizenship</b>	41	6.5
<b>Forced migration</b>	65	10.4
<b>Mobility</b>	51	8.1
<b>Youth</b>	55	8.8

#### **4. From Description to Generalization: Identifying Patterns, Gaps, and New Directions**

The purpose of this exploratory chapter has been to identify patterns and analyse continuities and changes in QMR-E. This research has necessarily been descriptive, but from this level of analysis we can reach some generalizations.

The first, and probably most important one, is that QMR-E is not one unified body of studies, but highly diverse in terms of their qualitative research methods, designs, research sites and groups, multi-levels of analysis, and topics. Overtime patterns show that qualitative migration research is not separate from the context it studies. On the contrary, it reflects unfolding migration dynamics, social and political agendas, rising conflicts and controversies with respect to migration issues. Therefore, empirical reality in Europe and in the world continuously defines and shapes the landscape of QMR-E.

As the research has shown, migration studies in general and qualitative migration research in particular are rapidly growing in numbers. Despite this significant quantity, there are some research tools and areas that have received less academic attention than others. While QMR-E has become much diverse over the last sixteen years in terms of the research tools and data collection methods used by the researchers, the field can still benefit from incorporation of certain under-used qualitative tools. For instance, historical analysis has been largely ignored by qualitative migration researchers in Europe. New research tools, such as visual methods and internet-mediated research still have a marginal place in the field. Despite its increasing numbers, comparative research in European migration studies can gain more presence. We believe that qualitative

migration research can highly benefit from inclusion of new qualitative techniques and comparative designs.

Despite the recent calls for going beyond methodological nationalism, we observed that the nation-state based analysis still preserve their dominance in the field. Drawing on the relevant literature, we propose two ways of encountering methodological nationalism: first, accounting for multiple and intersecting identities of migrants rather than reducing them only to their ethnic/national origins. Second, considering migration phenomenon at the intersection of multiple levels including local, national, and transnational.

This exploratory analysis also demonstrated that some of the research areas have been less studied than others. While the issues of integration, identity, and mobility have framed the current state of art, the issues of gender and youth have been largely overlooked in qualitative migration research. While feminization of migratory flows has been demonstrated a long time ago, there is still not sufficient attention on how migration processes affect men and women differently. Moreover, beyond including women migrants as objects of analysis, scholars need to pay more attention on gendered power relations and how gender intersects with race, ethnicity, and class. In the same way, young people with migration background has been another understudied area. While in the US there is a well-established research tradition on children of immigrants (for example, see: Portes & Zhou 1993; Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Kasinitz et al. 2009), in Europe, qualitative research on second generation demands more attention.

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**Annex: Selected research topics provided by IMISCOE on researcher’s profile page**

- Assimilation
- Asylum
- Border
- Citizenship
- Culture
- Discrimination
- Diversity
- Education
- Entrepreneurship
- Ethical issues
- Ethnicity
- European Union
- Exclusion
- Forced migration
- Gender
- Globalization
- High-skilled
- Human Rights
- Identity
- Immigration
- Incorporation
- Inequality
- Institutions
- Integration
- Interculturalism
- Islamophobia
- Labor
- Media
- Minority Rights
- Mobility
- Multiculturalism
- Nationalism
- Naturalization
- Organizations
- Policy
- Public Opinion
- Race
- Radicalization
- Refugees
- Religion
- Return migration
- Second-generation
- Security
- Segregation
- Social Capital
- Transnationalism