Protecting Migrants, Curbing Irregular Migration?

A Dutch Case Study on the Evaluation of Information- and Awareness campaigns

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Table of contents

Summary

Migration-related information and- awareness campaigns are defined as international public information campaigns, implemented in countries of origin with a relatively high number of 'irregular' emigrants. These campaigns aim at informing potential migrants on the dangers of the irregular journey, the difficulties of undocumented life in destination countries, or the futility of the journey as they are likely to be sent back to their country of origin. While the popularity of these campaigns has significantly increased among European member states, it is unclear whether they are effective for curbing irregular migration to the European Union (Schans & Optekamp, 2016).

This research analyses the evaluation discourses surrounding the *Migrants as Messengers* campaign and the *Preventing Unsafe Migration from Albania Towards European Member State* campaign (Fischer, 1999). *Migrants as Messengers* is focused on irregular migration from West Africa to the European Union and is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whereas the Albanian information campaigns are funded by the Dutch Repatriation & Departure Service. The *Migrants as Messengers* evaluation is far more advanced in measuring the impact of the campaign activities on the risk perception and migration intention of potential migrants. However, the evaluation of the IOM campaign in Albania allows for a more critical perspective on the relevance of information campaigns for irregular migration to the European Union. These diverging policy evaluations can be explained by institutional factors: the involved governance actors adhere to different organisational cultures, form different types of networks with other actors, and pursue different policy interests.

Although the evaluations did not prove that the campaigns were effective for the goal of curbing irregular migration, the information campaigns are still deemed successful enough by the involved stakeholders to continue with follow-up campaigns. Campaigns are deemed valuable because they can protect people on the move, because they can inform the public on job opportunities in the country, and because they can facilitate diplomatic relationships between the sending and receiving state. Furthermore, a relatively low number of potential migrants needs to refrain from irregularly migrating to the Netherlands in order to make an information campaign efficient. This research therefore draws attention to the fact that information campaigns should be analysed beyond the goal of changing migrant behaviour, in order to grasp their growing popularity in migration policy.

Chapter 1: Introduction

A piece of bread as the only meal for three days, Brown remembers as if it were yesterday. Back home in #Nigeria and currently a #MigrantsAsMessengers volunteer, he refers to the trip he undertook as a 'suicide mission' that he can't recommend to anyone (Migrants as Messengers, 2020).

This is the description of one of the many video posts on the Facebook page of *Migrants as Messengers,* an awareness campaign of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) conducted in several West African countries. In these videos, migrants who have returned to their country of origin talk about their personal experiences with irregular migration. The videos, among other campaign activities, aim to increase awareness on the risks of irregular migration among potential migrants, in the hope that they will make safer migration decisions. But how do you measure if these videos are successful? More importantly, for which purpose should they be successful? Can these videos simultaneously be used to reduce the number of irregular migrants to the European Union, for example? And if not, are these information campaigns also valuable for other purposes?

Evaluation research plays an important role in providing answers to these questions related to the policy field of information- and awareness campaigns (hereafter: information campaigns). Although public information campaigns are commonly used by governments to inform their citizens on issues related to tax or health policy for example, the target group of this type of campaigns are non-citizens across the borders of the nation-state. In this case, governments fund international organisations such as IOM to target potential migrants from countries with high irregular emigration numbers. The campaigns can differ considerably in content, depending on whether it is primarily focused on informing this target group on the dangers involved in irregular migration, the difficulties of undocumented life in destination countries, or the futility of the journey as they are likely to be sent back to their country of origin (Schans & Optekamp, 2016). Moreover, a variety of communication tools and media is used for these campaigns, such as social media platforms, TV shows, leaflets, or workshop-type activities in which dialogue is facilitated to raise awareness on these topics (Carling & Hernández-Carretero, 2011).

While the popularity of this policy tool has significantly increased among West European countries, these information campaigns have received considerable criticism, both from an academic angle (see for example Browne 2015, Nieuwenhuys & Pécoud 2007) as well as to

some extent in the media (Vermeulen, 2020). The criticism on information campaigns can generally be divided in two strands. Most significantly, their effectiveness and impact have been questioned, as their functioning is based on several poorly-evaluated assumptions. For example, policymakers assume that potential migrants decide to migrate irregularly out of a lack of objective risk information, that they automatically trust new information provided by these campaigns, and that staying instead of migrating is always a viable alternative (Schans & Optekamp, 2016).

Others argue that information campaigns, while presented to promote regular migration and prevent humanitarian issues, are implicitly used by ('Western') states that wish to avoid the obligations imposed by international law (Oeppen, 2016; Pécoud, 2018). Referring to concepts such as 'preventative *refoulement*', critics argue that these states and intergovernmental actors take on a 'victimhood approach' to justify their actions by underlining the need to protect potential victims from human traffickers (Geiger & Pécoud, 2010 p. 7). As a result, information campaigns promote the narrative that smugglers and traffickers are the primary cause of increasing irregular migration levels to the European Union, and serve as the main threat to the migrants' safety and wellbeing. However, this ignores the more structural reasons why people might want or need to leave their country, and fails to acknowledge that European border control is the key reason why people need to rely on the services of traffickers or smugglers (Oeppen, 2016, p. 11). Some even argue that the promotion of this narrative is to the benefit of European policymakers, because it shifts responsibility for the problems related to irregular migration to the individual migrant and his or her smugglers, rather than the European Union and its individual member states as political institutions (Weiss & Tschirhart, 1994).

This research seeks to reflect on these issues by explicating the discourses employed for the evaluation of two information campaigns funded by the Dutch government. Although other member states have been active in this policy field longer, the Dutch government has recently become one of the most important 'donors' of these campaigns in the European Union (European Migration Network, 2017). Funding for these campaigns runs through both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BZ) and the Repatriation & Departure Service (DT&V). These policy departments collaborate with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) for the implementation of these projects. After a critical report by the Dutch Research & Documentation Centre (WODC) on the topic (Schans & Optekamp, 2016), in which the researchers concluded that 'there are reasons to believe that information campaigns are not effective' for the goal of combatting irregular migration, the Minister for Migration and the

Minister for Foreign Trade & Development Cooperation communicated in a letter to the House of Representatives that the involved ministries will strive to enhance the effectiveness of information campaigns (Dijkhoff & Ploumen, 2017). In doing so, they recognised the importance of bringing attention to the evaluation component of these campaigns in the design of the project.

In order to explore how and why information campaigns funded by Dutch government actors proceeded to be evaluated in different ways, I will compare the institutional setting of the IOM *Migrants as Messengers* information campaigns with the institutional setting of the IOM information campaigns in Albania. The following research question is used:

How are information- and awareness campaigns evaluated and how can these evaluation patterns be explained?

This research question can be divided into the following sub-questions:

1) How are the *Migrants as Messengers* campaigns and the IOM information campaigns in Albania evaluated?
2) What macro-, meso-, and micro-institutional factors can be identified that are relevant for the evaluation discourses employed for these information campaigns?

1.1 Information campaigns in the context of migration management

Information campaigns should be contextualised within the broader global policy discourse of 'migration management'. Since the post-Cold war era, the general idea has arisen that a global and holistic regime of rules and norms is needed to successfully address the fact that migration can generate real 'crises', such as the 2015 'refugee crisis' inside the European Union. Instead of the sudden, unexpected influx of migrants to (Western) states, migration should be better 'managed' in order to turn it into a more orderly and predictable process, which structurally benefits the migrant, the sending and receiving state (Geiger & Pécoud, 2010).

Migration management has gone far beyond the state border, and is now also aimed at influencing or intercepting potential migrants in transit and sending regions. This extra-territorialisation of migration governance is not only driven by state actors: intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and other non-state or private actors, play a large role in the implementation of policies on behalf of governments. However, IOM is not only a service provider, but also shapes governments' decisions by providing scientific or technical expertise to them (Geiger & Pécoud, 2010, p. 5). In this sense, migration experts employed by these IGOs, but also NGOs, research institutes

and other corporations, engage in migration management discourses and reproduce what has been called the 'irregular migration mantra' (Handmaker & Mora, 2014). Indeed, the focus on making migration more orderly and predictable has been accompanied with the increasing problematisation of 'irregular migration', creating a dichotomy in which the movement of people is divided between mobility that takes place inside and outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving countries (Browne 2015).

In order to 'manage' these irregular migration flows, classical 'hard' migration control initiatives, such as border control surveillance or deportation of people to their country or origin, have increasingly been accompanied with alternative, 'soft' approaches that put more emphasis on persuasion and advice (Carling & Hernandez-Carretero, 2011; De Jong & Dannecker, 2017). Compared to most other policy tools, information campaigns attempt to produce policy results without altering incentives or authority systems (Weiss & Tschirhart, 1994). In this vein, information campaigns are not directly intended to stop or deter irregular migration, but to raise awareness on the fact that opting for irregular migration is often an irrational choice, considering the dangers of the journey and the likelihood of deportation back to the country of origin (Van Bemmel, 2020). Moreover, information campaigns are conducted in order to counter wrong information disseminated by human traffickers or 'criminal' smugglers (Oeppen, 2016). The assumption is made that if potential migrants become truly aware of these risks, they will refrain from migrating irregularly. In other words, information campaigns contribute to migration management with 'perception management': images, videos, or stories from returned migrants are used as a tool to govern mobility (Heller, 2014).

1.2 Societal and academic relevance

Migration-related information campaigns have increasingly gained attention in academia. As mentioned, most of these studies are focused on their lack of effectiveness and impact on changing irregular migration behaviour (Schans & Optekamp, 2016). These studies either reveal the assumptions that information campaigns make on their functioning (Heller, 2014; Nieuwenhuys & Pécoud, 2007; Pécoud, 2010) or refer to qualitative evidence suggesting that information campaigns have limited effect on migrants' decisions and behaviour (Browne 2015; Hernández-Carretero & Carling, 2012). The general argument is that it is impossible to control risk information in migration-sending countries, and that socio-economic factors play a (much) more decisive factor in the decision-making process of potential irregular migrants (McNevin et al., 2016; Van Bemmel, 2020).

Although the lack of adequate evaluation tools has been identified as one of the causes of the ineffectiveness of information campaigns, it is not clear *why* impact assessments are largely missing from this policy field (Brekke & Thorbjørnsrud, 2018). The existing literature hints towards several factors that provide for possible explanations. Firstly, Browne (2015), Heller (2014) and McNevin (2016) mention the methodological challenges related to evaluating the impact of these campaigns. It is nearly impossible to track any reduction in the number of irregular departures and to contain the precise impact of the techniques deployed in the campaign. In this vein, Schans & Optekamp (2016) refer to other public information campaigns, such as awareness-raising campaigns on health issues, to indicate that it is generally difficult to isolate the campaign effects on behavioural changes. Secondly, Van Bemmel (2020) and Nieuwenhuys & Pécoud (2007) argue that evaluations are generally conducted and financed by those who have implemented the programmes, which leaves little space for critical perspective. Related to this, McNevin et al. (2016) argue that IOM tends to evaluate its projects shortly after the project implementation and via 'compelling numeric indicators' in order to demonstrate campaign success and secure funding for future campaigns. Thirdly, Oeppen (2016) argues that evaluation components are deemed less relevant, because information campaigns have more of a symbolic function anyway, fulfilling the need of policymakers to do something about the 'migration crisis' in front of the European voting public. However, these arguments have rarely been substantiated by empirical analysis. Drawing on theoretical insights from public administration, an institutional comparison on the evaluation processes of two information campaigns contributes to filling this important gap in the academic literature.

Furthermore, the existing literature on evaluation processes primarily revolves around the main implementing organisation of these campaigns: the IOM (Heller, 2014; McNevin et al., 2016; Nieuwenhuys & Pécoud, 2007). Little is known about the role of European government actors in this regard, besides their alleged policy interests in funding information campaigns (Oeppen, 2016). This is striking, considering the fact that IOM 'donors' have large influence on the characteristics of information campaigns, including evaluation processes (McNevin et al., 2016). In this regard, it has been argued that the Netherlands, along with the United Kingdom, has 'one of the most broadly developed evaluation systems specifically on migration policy in the European Union'. Yet, 'it is unclear from the Dutch case how much direct impact this advice has on migration policy' (Van Selm, 2008, p. 92). By investigating the institutional characteristics of government actors on specific project evaluations, this research allows for a better understanding on these actors.

Besides its relevance to migration studies, this research also has wider implications for public administration literature. Although the role (and lack) of evaluation research in policy processes has consistently been subject to academic debate (Sanderson, 2000), the type of discourse employed for evaluation processes has rarely been linked to explanatory factors grounded in new institutionalist thought (March & Olsen, 1984). Considering that information campaigns are designed, implemented and evaluated in complex policy systems, their evaluation processes are influenced by a wide range of factors situated on the micro-, meso- and macro-level. Institutionalist frameworks are able to capture these processes by transcending 'the traditional dualistic treatment of society/individual and structure/agency' through the identification of informal rules that guide ideas about evaluation in policy systems (Sanderson, 2000, p. 444). This research -albeit modestly- contributes to the development of a holistic understanding on the institutional circumstances that determine how a certain type of evaluation is applied to a certain policy programme and why this is the case (Fischer, 1999). In other words, by combining public administration literature with migration studies literature, this research contributes to new theoretical insights for both academic fields, showing the importance of multi-disciplinary research.

Information campaigns have gained considerable prominence in migration policy and will likely become more relevant in the future. Coordination among the EU member states has been formally established with a specific European Migration Network (EMN) Working Group, and funding for these campaigns are now also possible through the shared Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) along with existing funds such as the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. The broader aim of this research is to contribute to understanding why these information campaigns are implemented, in order to raise attention on a topic which has rarely been covered by Dutch mainstream media, and has not been subject to substantial political debate. Moreover, this research draws attention to the importance of holistic evaluation research, especially for policy tools such as information campaigns (Fischer, 1999). Evaluators of soft policy tools, which are based on persuasion and advice, face multiple methodological challenges if they seek to measure whether campaign activities can cause behavioural changes (Weiss & Tschirhart, 1994). By making explicit why information campaigns are valuable regardless of these immeasurable effects, evaluators can push the current debate on the usefulness of migration-related information campaigns further.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

In this chapter, I build a conceptual model by focussing on literary themes in the field of public administration and migration studies. This theoretical framework, which seeks to combine insights from both academic fields, allows for a lens through which I will conduct my empirical analysis. After introducing the general academic debate on the role of evaluation research in policy processes in section 2.1, I introduce Fischer's evaluation typologies (1999) in section 2.2. In section 2.3, I elaborate on the institutionalist framework of this research. In section 2.4, I combine the insights from section 2.2 and 2.3 by deriving several expectations from the highlighted literature.

2.1 Evaluation in the policy process

Evaluation is understood in different ways, both academically and in the practical field of policy evaluation. I follow Wollmann's definition (2017), who defines policy evaluation as 1) an analytical tool which investigates all information pertinent to the *impact* and/or *performance* of a policy programme and 2) a policy process, demarcating a part in the policy cycle, which involves reporting this information back to the policy-making process. Evaluations are often a standard exercise in policy cycles, but this does not imply that policymakers plan and implement policy programmes that (scientifically) work most effectively and efficiently for the realisation of their policy goals (Bekkers et al., 2018). In fact, the call for policies to be 'evidence-based' has sparked notable academic controversy on the role of scientific evaluation research in public policy (Hammersley, 2005). Some question the empirical significance of evidence-based policymaking, especially for migration policy, as scholars have underlined that the efforts by states to regulate and restrict immigration are not effective (Castles, 2004; Czaika & de Haas, 2016). Others argue that evidence-based policymaking can lead to depoliticization by obscuring the relevant social values at stake (Wesselink et al., 2014). Similarly, migration scholars have argued that migration is increasingly approached from a technocratic perspective, 'obscuring the ongoing politics at stake in questions of human mobility' (McNevin et al., 2016, p. 225). I follow Parkhurst (2016), who argues that scientific evidence from policy evaluations can provide us with the benefits and limitations of policy programmes, but cannot tell us what the right choice is between different policy alternatives. This requires the establishment of evaluation systems that 'work to embed key normative principles about evidence utilisation into policy processes – systems that govern the use of evidence within policymaking' (p. 8).

Given that migration has increasingly become a mainstream policy area, and that electorates increasingly pressure for governments to be 'in control' of migration issues, have led to the

recurring argument that more elaborate and adequate evaluation systems should be established for this policy field (Chappell & Laczko, 2011; Van Selm, 2008). These evaluation systems constitute the structures, rules, and norms that dictate how evaluations are used, as well as when and by whom (Parkhurst, 2016, p. 132). I therefore adopt an institutional approach in this research (March & Olsen, 1984). This means that I acknowledge that the actors involved in evaluation processes are facilitated or constrained by the institutional rules of their operating field (Bekkers et al., 2018). These institutional rules are the outcomes of previous processes, preferences, and ideas. As a result, policymakers and evaluators are engaged in an imperfect form of analysis to evaluate future consequences of their decisions. They deliberately consider policy alternatives and make assessments of earlier policy outcomes, but they are ultimately bound by their institutional setting, that determines which information comes available and which information does not (Schulz, 2014). What 'counts' as evidence is therefore a reflection of the institutional setting in which this evidence is reproduced (Parkhurst, 2016, p. 113).

2.2 Four discourses on policy evaluation

In order to analyse the policy evaluation process of information campaigns, this research builds on the post-empiricist work of Fischer (1999), who has developed an elaborate framework on different discursive approaches to policy evaluation. Fischer's work is based on the notion that empirical data, based on 'objective criteria', cannot be offered as value-neutral evidence. Referring to instances in which the outcomes of policy evaluations have been contested by different interest groups, he argues that evaluation should therefore not be confined to the verification of project objectives only (Sanderson, 2000). By examining the wider impact and underlying ideological principles of policy programmes, evaluators can contribute to the resolution of controversies surrounding policy problems (Scholten & van Nispen, 2008).

According to Fischer, evaluative discourses generally fall into four types, each representing a different practical discourse. The first two types fall into 'first-order policy evaluation', in which a policy programme is evaluated either on its specific programme outcomes on the micro-level, or the extent to which the intervention is relevant for the context in which it is implemented. With second-order evaluation on the macro-level, the policy evaluation focuses either on the instrumental impact of the policy goals on societal systems as a whole, or it evaluates the normative principles and values underlying this societal order (2003, p. 192).

Technical verification

Based on the rules of empirical inquiry in the social sciences, the goal of the first evaluative discourse is to verify the programme on its impact, effectiveness, or efficiency (1999, p. 27). Depending on which methods fits best for the specific research question, there are two general methods within technical verification: experimental programme research or cost-benefit analysis. Experimental programme research is generally targeted at measuring the impact of a policy programme. If the experimental data shows a positive correlation between the policy intervention and the treatment group's responses, this policy programme is considered to be 'effective'. Within these 'impact' or 'outcome' evaluations, an 'evidence hierarchy' for research methods has arisen, which puts systematic reviews and evidence synthesis at the top, followed by randomised controlled trials (RCTs) and cohort studies (Greve, 2017). Specifically, randomised controlled trials and other (quasi-) experimental approaches are considered the 'gold standard' for studying the causal relationship between policy intervention and outcome, as randomisation eliminates selection bias, thereby optimising the internal validity of the study (Liket, 2017, p. 183). However, the results of RCTs remain highly dependent upon on the context in which the policy intervention took place. The external validity of the policy intervention therefore remains unguaranteed (Peters et al., 2016).

As mentioned in chapter 1, discussions within migration literature exist on the impact and effectiveness of information campaigns. Multiple academics and IOM researchers have drawn attention to the fact that 'the evidence base for programming and policymaking in this area is strikingly limited', which obstructs knowledge on the full impact of these campaigns (Browne 2015). According to a systematic literature review on campaign evaluations related to *Migrants as Messengers*, a common issue is the lack of clearly defined project objectives or target groups. Often, the project objectives are aimed at 'awareness raising', which is hard to measure and does not reflect changes in (intended) migration behaviour (Tjaden et al., 2018). Furthermore, evaluations hardly make use of control-group designs or pre- and post-measurements, which means that they 'did not meet minimum standards for robust evidence on programme effects' (p. 20).

Through cost-benefit analysis, the tangible outputs of a policy programme can be balanced against the programme inputs (funds, human resources, or time) in order to establish whether the benefits outweigh the costs of the policy intervention (Fischer, 1999, p. 35). If this is the case, the policy programme is considered 'efficient'. In order to conduct a cost-benefit analysis, monetary values should be determined for the inputs and outputs of the programme. Regarding cost-benefit analysis, Weiss & Tschirhart (1994) argue that public information campaigns are

relatively cheap to implement compared to other policy instruments. Especially in countries where public resources are scarce and transportation and communication infrastructures are limited, information campaigns are cheaper to conduct than other sorts of government service or regulation (p. 96). This might apply to migration-related information campaigns as well, which are generally implemented in countries that may lack this type of infrastructure.

Situational validation

A policy evaluation can also examine the extent to which the specific programme objectives are relevant or appropriate to the situational context to which they are applied (Fischer, 1999, p. 20). Practically, this involves an assessment of the 'problem situation' in which the policy intervention takes place. Through qualitative measures, such as case studies, direct observation and in-person interviews, the evaluator seeks to find whether the programme objectives are relevant for this identified problem situation. Policy evaluations using situational validation can also mention whether certain aspects of this problem context allow for exceptions to be made on the policy objectives, for example if a policy intervention leads to secondary or unexpected outcomes that would compromise or negate the policy objectives (p. 73). Finally, this type of policy evaluation seeks to identify whether any conflicting policy objectives exist that raise different judgements on the way the project should be evaluated. When projects are evaluated on its effectiveness for one objective, this could raise objections by other stakeholders involved on the relevance of the project for other purposes (p. 75).

Often, the identified problem situation in the case of information campaigns is the rise of irregular migration numbers to a certain country or area. This is accompanied with the rise of trafficking victims, or the rise of asylum seekers with low prospects of obtaining asylum (Pécoud, 2010). Misperceptions or lack of information about the irregular journey and stay in country of destination are perceived as (one of the) causes of this irregular migration behaviour (Van Bemmel, 2020). Discussions in the situational validation discourse pertain to the question whether awareness-raising activities are relevant measures for solving this problem situation. As mentioned, migration scholars have argued that irregular migration is not necessarily caused by a lack of information or risk perception, but is primarily a result of a lack of socio-economic opportunities in the country of origin (Hernández-Carretero & Carling, 2012; Van Bemmel, 2020). Furthermore, awareness-raising activities are focused on measuring individual changes in perception or behaviour, whereas scholars have highlighted that irregular migration is often a collective decision-making process, or is the result of general social expectations (Nieuwenhuys & Pécoud, 2007; Mbaye, 2014). In other words, these discussions raise questions

on the validity of indicators probed to measure the value of information campaigns as tools to influence irregular migration behaviour (Fischer, 1999).

Societal vindication

On the macro-level, societal vindication can be conducted in order to investigate the effects of the policy programme on the societal system as a whole. This type of policy evaluation seeks to elucidate whether or not the policy programme is in line with broader societal arrangements (Fischer, 1999, p. 111). In order to assess this empirically, a policy evaluator must clarify the institutional arrangements which the policy project seeks to influence or facilitate. In this sense, Fischer compares the practices of social vindication with 'theory-testing models of policy research', (DeHaven-Smith, 1988) which involves the practice of uncovering policymakers' underlying assumptions about the functioning of the policy interventions. Secondly, the policy evaluator may choose to conduct a large-scale empirical evaluation to examine the policy's desired impact on these normative processes, and then compare these results with other policy goals that may have value for the same social system. This may come in the form of a 'systems-level' impact evaluation or cost-benefit analysis, in order to include a wider range of 'externalities' that are usually left out of first-order technical verifications (Fischer, 1999, p. 123).

Academics have highlighted several general assumptions that policymakers use with regards to information campaigns. In this vein, it is important to mention that the report of the Research & Documentation Centre (WODC), which laid the foundation of the Dutch policy on information campaigns, corresponds with this first step in societal vindication (Schans & Optekamp, 2016). On request of the Directorate of Migration Policy of the Ministry of Justice & Security, the researchers investigated the role of information campaigns in curbing irregular migration. The WODC report used a 'realist evaluation approach' (Pawson et al., 2005) by 'seek[ing] to unpack the mechanism of how complex interventions work or fail in particular contexts and settings'. According to the report, policymakers generally assume that potential migrants lack information or rely on false information from smugglers and/or traffickers, and automatically trust the information that the campaign seeks to communicate. Secondly, it is assumed that potential migrants rationally calculate risk and that fear appeal messages can therefore scare off aspiring migrants. Thirdly, by targeting individual migrants, it is assumed that migration decisions are made individually, rather than in family units. Finally, it is assumed that staying put in the country of origin is a viable alternative. Based on these arguable assumptions, the authors concluded that there is reason to believe that information campaigns

are not an effective policy tool for changing irregular migration behaviour (Schans & Optekamp, 2016).

Alternatively, discussions on the level of societal vindication may turn to the question how the policy project has symbolic value for society as a whole, regardless of its instrumental impact. For example, a public information campaign may be designed to promote and facilitate a basic value that must extend to all citizens in a country (p. 55). Weiss & Tschirhart (1994) mention that national governments can use information campaigns to create common understandings and bridge differences among different social groups (p. 93). A campaign may therefore still have value in ways that are not easily expressed in numbers. In a similar vein, Schans & Optekamp (2016) argue that information campaigns, despite their uncertain impact, remain a popular policy tool because 'they can also symbolize government concern to the general population in migrant receiving countries' (p. 23). This is particularly the case when information campaigns are conducted in countries with a high influx of asylum seekers with low chances of obtaining asylum to inform its population on stricter policies. In this respect, information campaigns fulfil the need of government actors to 'be seen to be doing something' to control migration to countries of destination and simultaneously prevent humanitarian atrocities (Weiss & Tschirhart, 1994, p. 94). Information campaigns are a well-suited policy tool for this, as they show that government actors are controlling the European borders, yet in an 'unaggressive' way without physical confrontation between migrants and border guards, which is unpopular among a significant part of the voting public (Oeppen, 2016, p. 9).

Ideological choice

The final type of policy evaluation seeks to test the ideological principles of policy programmes. In order to identify these paradigmatic assumptions and values that underlie the belief systems of policy programmes, the evaluator may envision an ideal model of society which provides for the 'evaluative standards and principles against which empirical reality can be judged' (p. 163).). In other words, apart from the methods to measure the empirical reality of a policy programme, the evaluator also deploys interpretive methods such as social imagination, political intuition, and moral speculation. If it turns out that the current social order is unable to resolve 'basic values conflicts', the evaluator may look at other social orders, in order to investigate whether these social orders 'equitably accommodate the relevant interest and needs that the conflicts reflect' (p. 165). For example, the evaluator can look beyond the utility of a programme -often expressed in cost-benefit analyses-, and take on a 'rights-based' approach to evaluate the intrinsic qualities of the actions of a policy programme. In this sense, the evaluation

examines the extent to which the programme has contributed to justice and has enhanced the rights for people to the most extensive total system of basic liberties (p. 167).

The global policy discourse on migration management entails several ideological principles that can play a role in the evaluation of information campaigns. Geiger & Pécoud argue that the ideal world of migration management is a so-called 'triple win', in which migration serves in the best interest of the migrant, sending, and receiving state. Ideally, 'good migrants are well-informed, respectful of the law, flexible to market needs, ready to circulate and eager to contribute to the development of their home country' (2010, p. 17). Moreover, potential migrants are 'perfectly cognisant of migration realities and, consequently, of how they should behave' in order to best serve the interests of the states in-between which they live (Pécoud, 2010, p. 187). Rather than assuming that migrants *are* rational actors – as Schans & Optekamp (2016) argue – information campaigns thus pertain to the idea that migrants *should become* rational actors (Heller, 2014).

The academic literature is divided on the extent to which migration management discourse relates to (human) rights-based frameworks (De Jong & Dannecker, 2017). Critics argue that migration management is inherently neoliberal and therefore prioritises market interests over human rights (Basok & Piper, 2012). In this sense, the 'triple win' narrative negates the fact that the best interest of the migrant does not always align with the interests of state actors (Geiger & Pécoud, 2010). Others argue that actors such as the IOM are part of the 'liberal global migration governance camp', that are struggling to become hegemonic as it falls between the national sovereignty project and the rights-based approach (Georgi & Schaltral, 2010). McNevin et al. (2016) argue that actors within migration management tend to use a *kind of* humanitarianism that ultimately serves the border security of nation-states, instead of the best interest of migrants or local populations (p. 237). Based on these insights, it can be argued that rights-based or humanitarian frameworks are interpreted and deployed for multiple reasons and goals in the context of migration management.

2.3 Institutional factors shaping the policy evaluation process

I define a *policy evaluation system* as the organisational norms and conventions of behaviour, the coordination structures and networks, and the habits and belief systems which are relevant for a policy evaluation (Turnpenny et al., 2008) For a conceptualisation of the institutional factors that determine the characteristics of this evaluation system, it is useful to distinguish between a rational and institutional model of policy analysis (Sanderson, 2000). The rational model suggests that the type of policy evaluation employed is the result of micro-institutional

arrangements, such as general political commitment and the availability of financial and human resources for the evaluation (Turnpenny, 2008, p. 760). Although these micro-factors are important, they only represent a part of the picture, and are often the outcome of broader or deeper institutional factors (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2012, p. 242). I therefore expand the scope of my research to an examination of the institutional opportunities and constraints on the macro-level and meso-level, referring to broader institutional norms and rules on evaluation processes, as well as the type of relationships and coordination procedures among the multiple actors involved in the evaluation (p. 768). Utilising institutionalism is in line with Fischer's work, that ultimately aims to identify which institutional factors are necessary for the democratisation of policy evaluation processes without abandoning the empirical methods that currently exist in mainstream policy evaluation. By designing processes and institutions whereby (second-order) evaluation frames can complement, or sometimes compete with, the currently existing evaluation discourses, this will ultimately enhance processes of deliberation and policy learning (Giorgio et al., 2002).

Macro-institutional factors

The macro-level is concerned with the institutional opportunities and constraints beyond the specific context of the information campaign, and refers to the broader organisational culture in which projects and their evaluations take place. In the context of information campaigns, McNevin et al. (2016) refer to developments of New Public Management in the public sector (Lane, 2000). Governments have increasingly outsourced activities that were previously conducted by their own departments to private and non-governmental actors (Duffield, 2001). As a result, IGOs such as the IOM are functioning as 'service providers', whereas the government actors function as 'donors'. IOM in particular receives little regular funding from its donors and depends largely upon ongoing project-to-project funding, which has considerable consequence for evaluation processes (Geiger & Pécoud, 2010). In this context, evaluations have the function to demonstrate campaign success, in order to quickly fulfil the terms of the contract and enhance the reputation of the IOM for similar contracts in the future (McNevin et al., 2016). Instead of measuring the long-term, holistic effects of IOM activities, evaluations thus tend to rely upon quantifiable measures, such as the numbers of people attending campaign events, or the number of people reporting change in behaviour. In other words, the 'existential' institutional constraints on part of IOM tend to produce evaluations within months of campaign delivery via numeric indicators, which give little indication of the length of time that changes

in behaviour might endure, or whether changes in perception may actually lead to migration behaviour (p. 233).

Furthermore, this indicates that governments acting as the 'donor' of the policy programme are often also in charge of the funding of the policy evaluation (Wollmann 2017). Based on this, it can be assumed that government actors have considerable influence over the characteristics of the evaluation process with regard to information campaigns, as they can ultimately determine the financial resources available for the evaluation (Turnpenny, 2008, p. 764). Information campaigns are not always funded by the Ministry of Home Affairs or Interior Ministry that are typically associated with migration policy. Since most information campaigns are also designed to inform and help migrants, rather than the sole purpose of deterring irregular migration, this enables funding from development and humanitarian budget lines (Pécoud, 2010, p. 195). The responsible ministry for the information campaign has a large influence on the design and evaluation of information campaigns, as its organisational characteristics can (partially) determine what the evaluation seeks to measure and which aspects of the evidence flowing from this evaluation is used to determine success or failure of the policy programme. For example, formal laws, regulations and procedures on part of the government actor may oblige that certain evaluation processes are systematically part of policy programmes (Turnpenny et al., 2008; Van Selm, 2008). However, these characteristics are also informed by the more informal 'values, norms, incentives and taken-for-granted beliefs' on behalf of the organisation (Sanderson, 2000, p. 444). The organisational culture towards the role of evaluation in policymaking is therefore also important to consider.

Meso-institutional factors

The meso-level is concerned with the networks and relationships between the actors involved with a specific information campaign. These actors interact in a governance network, in which the government and implementing agency of an information campaign 'develop processes of interaction and communication' with various individuals, groups, and organisations for the implementation of the project and the evaluation (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2012). As mentioned, information campaigns involve highly complex governance networks: IGOs are typically involved as service providers for the implementation of the project, government actors serve as the funders or 'donors' of these project, and local NGOs in countries of origin are responsible for conveying the messages of the campaign on the local level (Nieuwenhuys & Pécoud, 2007). Occasionally, authorities of the country of origin are involved as well, either in the

implementation of the information campaign or by providing assistance in less direct ways, such as determining the target groups of information campaigns.

The evaluation of information campaigns mostly adds to the complexity of these governance networks with the involvement of specific evaluation actors, and the characteristics of this specific governance network influence the policy evaluation process in multiple ways. Firstly, this is expressed by the type of actors involved in the governance network. Participation of think tanks, external consultants and independent academics can facilitate review processes of policy evaluations, or provide examples on how to conduct certain types of evaluation (Koon et al., 2013). 'Communities of practice', such as expert panels and technical working groups, are an institutionalised result of these networks, in which these experiences are shared in a more consistent manner (Gornitzka & Sverdrup, 2008).

However, an assessment of the types of involved stakeholders do not necessarily reflect the quality of the relationship between the stakeholders (Balthasar, 2009). Coordination procedures and intra-organisational communication intensity reveal how these relationships are manifested. Van Selm (2008) points out that mutual trust among the involved stakeholders is necessary in order to communicate openly and honestly about programme failures. Moreover, certain types of evaluations can be costly, but can be coordinated through multi-funder constructions, as long as the funders have mutual interests. However, building and sustaining these networks requires considerable human resources of policymakers, who need sufficient time and expertise to establish and maintain connections with the co-funders (Van Selm, 2008).

Finally, an important issue related to the meso-institutional setting is the independency of the evaluation. Independency is influenced by both the location of the policy evaluation (internal or external), but also the degree of control of the involved stakeholders over the policy evaluation (Halligan, 1995). Academics are divided on the importance of independent evaluations (Balthasar, 2009). Following the scientific nature of evaluation methodology, some highlight that external evaluations are required in order to facilitate critical perspectives on policy programmes and to legitimise the findings of evaluation reports (Conley-Taylor, 2005). However, hiring academic researchers or external consultants do not necessarily guarantee independent or critical thinking about the broader role of government actors and IGOs in information campaigns (Geiger & Pécoud, 2010, p.11). Moreover, a strand of 'interactionist' literature based on Patton (1997) argues that evaluations are in fact better utilised when the evaluators cooperate closely with the evaluated. This is because inclusion and participation of

the implementers and donors helps evaluators providing the right information for potential users to reach better decisions on future programmes (Balthasar, 2009, p. 251).

Micro-institutional factors

The micro-level concerns the individual policy interests and goals of each stakeholder involved in this governance network. The general programme objectives of policies are typically the outcome of compromises between these stakeholders. The concept of 'discourse coalition' (Hajer, 1993) is useful in this regard, which refers to the fact that the relevant stakeholders can have alternating 'systems of values or beliefs', and therefore give their own interpretation to shared project objectives (Czaika & De Haas, 2016, p. 494). Especially in democratic states such as the Netherlands, governments have to balance popular concerns about perceived 'uncontrolled migration' with human rights or economic interests (p. 492). Information campaigns illustrate this issue well, as government actors in countries of destination are typically involved in information campaigns for their (potential) use in deterring irregular migration, whereas IGOs, NGOs and the countries of origin are involved for the protection of potential migrants (Pécoud, 2010). Furthermore, IOM and local NGOs may also be involved to secure funding for their organisation (Geiger, 2010). Pécoud (2010) argues that these actors find consensus on the widely-shared objective that everyone benefits from information provision related to the risks of irregular migration, particularly human trafficking as a severe human rights violation (p. 195). In other words, it is hard to argue that providing information is detrimental to potential migrants, especially if it prioritises the safety of the migrant (Oeppen, 2016; Schans & Optekamp, 2016).

For example, if the individual interests of the involved stakeholders are in line with establishing evidence-based policy programmes, this creates incentive to finance elaborate evaluations in the technical verification discourse. However, elaborate evaluations such as rigorous impact evaluations take time and are a costly investment, which may inhibit policymakers from investing in such a policy evaluation. Moreover, situational validation discourse, which pertains to the question whether a policy project has contributed to solving the issue, might be avoided in evaluation processes, especially in a highly politicised environment such as migration policy. Finally, designing a policy programme with elaborate evaluation components may imply that the political relevance of the programme has decreased once the project is implemented (Ardittis & Laczko, 2008). In other words, these political factors can significantly influence the presence of certain evaluative discourses, but may also determine why certain evaluative discourses are *not* a part of the (formal) evaluation process.

2.4 Expectations

Based on the theoretical observations highlighted above, which highlights both migration studies and public administration, I follow several expectations on the relationship between the institutional setting of the project evaluation and the employed evaluation discourses which will be empirically examined in this research:

1. *Differences in the type of discourses employed for the project evaluation are explained by macro-institutional factors that constitute general formal and informal rules about the role of evaluation in the policy process*

Given the fact that information campaigns are commissioned by government actors and implemented by IGOs, I expect that the funder of the policy intervention has a large influence on the characteristics of the evaluation of that policy intervention, because they are ultimately in charge of the financial resources of the policy project (Wollmann, 2017). Their organisational standards on evaluation processes, including formal and informal rules regarding evaluations, determine the extent to which certain evaluation components are included in the projects. For example, based on the fact that the Dutch government actors committed to enhancing the effectiveness of information campaigns after a critical report of the Research & Documentation Centre (WODC), I expect a focus on impact evaluations in technical verification discourse. Regarding second-order evaluation, I expect that ideological choice discourse is more relevant for campaigns funded with development or humanitarian budget lines, since these budget lines are also used to improve human rights (Nieuwenhuys & Pécoud, 2007).

I also expect that due to this macro-institutional environment, IOM tends to produce evaluations that can primarily be classified as technical verification, focused on the efficiency of project evaluations by measuring output indicators rather than the (long-term) outcome of the project activities (McNevin et al., 2016). I expect that situational validation, societal vindication and ideological choice discourse are less relevant in this regard, or only deployed if it can show a campaign's success.

2. *Differences in the type of discourses employed for the project evaluation are explained by the type of networks and coordination procedures mobilised for the evaluation on the meso-level*

I expect that more *elaborate* project evaluations are used if the governance actor and IOM form networks with external actors specifically for the evaluation process (Koon et al., 2013). Based on the literature, it is not possible to indicate whether the involvement of external actors, such

as consultants or think tanks, leads to more use of a certain evaluation discourse, such as critical situational validation discourse, societal vindication and ideological choice (Pécoud, 2010). However, the expertise of these actors does facilitate the more elaborate use of certain discourses, such as more rigorous methods in the case of technical verification, or better interview techniques in case of situational validation.

Coordination procedures established between government actors involved are also relevant for the type of evaluation discourses employed. For example, co-funding mechanisms can make more rigorous evaluation methods possible for technical verification discourse (Van Selm, 2008). Another important coordination procedure to consider is the coordination between the two Dutch government actors. For example, the policy on enhancing the effectiveness of information campaigns may be more relevant to one government actor than the other.

Finally, the literature indicates that the quality of the relationship between the involved stakeholders determines the extent to which a critical perspective is possible in evaluation processes (Van Selm, 2008). This may translate, for example, into more critical situational validation discourse, as this concerns the question whether the information campaigns are useful for 'solving' irregular migration to the European Union.

3. *Differences in the type of discourses employed for the policy evaluation are explained by diverging policy interests with regards to the policy project on the micro-level*

Given that the literature has indicated that the (implicit) policy interest of government actors is to reduce the number of irregular migrants to the European Union, I expect that technical verification discourse and/or situational validation discourse is used to measure and/or argue whether the project activities are effective for this purpose (Pécoud, 2010). I also expect that cost-benefit analysis within technical verification is used to indicate that information campaigns are relatively cheap compared to other policy alternatives (Weiss & Tschirhart, 1994). However, given that a discourse coalition is formed between the different stakeholders, I also expect that societal vindication and ideological choice discourse on the protection of migrants for human traffickers are used for evaluation purposes, in order to find common ground with countries of origin, the IOM, and other implementing NGOs (Nieuwenhuys & Pécoud, 2007, p. 1690). These discourses also reflect the policy interests of IGOs and NGOs.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter sets out the research design and methods used for this study. Firstly, I operationalise the theory highlighted in chapter two into indicators that can be used for empirical analysis. In section 3.2 and 3.3, I explain the research design used to answer the research question by elaborating on the selection of my case studies. Finally, in section 3.4, I explicate the data collection and analysis process of this research.

3.1 Operationalisation

The operationalisation of this research flows from the theoretical framework as outlined in chapter two. I operationalise the project evaluation process by using Fischer's prescribed 'basic questions' as indicators in order to identify the extent to which the four discourses are reflected in the evaluation of information campaigns (see Table 1). This means that if an answer to one or more of the 'basic questions' is discovered in the evaluation documents and/or interviews, the evaluation is relevant for that particular discourse.

Fischer argues that for a policy to be considered a normatively 'good' policy, it must satisfy all four discursive phases. Moreover, an evaluation 'can commence at any of the phases' and may contain elements of several discourses at the same time (1999, p. 19). Although each discursive framework has its own type of methods and internal logic, this means that for a sound analysis, all frameworks are applied to the same project evaluation. Secondly, it is the task of the policy analyst to discover how the discourses employed in official evaluation documents are justified, elaborated upon, negated, or criticised by the stakeholders involved in the policy project. The units for analysis are therefore not only project evaluation documents, but also interviews with the involved policymakers and IOM staff, as discussed below.

Table 1: Operationalisation of the concept *project evaluation* (Fischer, 1999)

Concept	Variables	Attributes	Indicators
Project evaluation *1) an analytical tool which investigates all information pertinent to the impact and/or performance of a policy programme and*	Technical verification *Does the project work?*	Impact evaluations Cost-benefit analyses Risk-benefit analyses	1) Does the programme fulfil its stated objectives? 2) Does the empirical analysis uncover secondary or unanticipated effects that offset the programme objectives? 3) Does the programme fulfil the objectives more efficiently than alternative means available?
2) a policy process,	Situational validation	Relevance evaluations	1) Is a programme's objective relevant to the problem situation?

demarcating a part in the policy cycle, which involves reporting this information back to the policy-making process *(Wollmann, 2017)*	*Does the project solve anything?*	Sustainability evaluations	2) Are there circumstances in the situation that require an exception to be made to the objectives? 3) Are two or more criteria equally relevant to the problem situation?
	Societal vindication *Does the project contribute to society as a whole?*	Goal identification strategies System-level impact evaluations System-level cost-benefit analyses	1) Does the policy goal have instrumental or contributive value for the society as a whole? 2) Does the policy goal result in unanticipated problems with important societal consequences? 3) Does a commitment to the policy goal lead to consequences that are judged to be equitably distributed?
	Ideological choice *Is it ideologically important to conduct this project?*	Identification of self-serving dogma's of ideology of the policy programme Application of 'ideologies' or 'social orders' to evaluate the policy programme other than utilitarian approaches	1) Do the fundamental ideals (or ideological principles) that organise the accepted social order provide a consistent basis for a legitimate resolution of conflicting judgements? 2) If the social order is unable to resolve basic values conflicts, do other social orders equitably accommodate the relevant interest and needs that the conflicts reflect? 3) Do normative reflection and empirical evidence support the justification of alternative principles and values?

For the operationalisation of the concept *policy evaluation system* I use the following table, which is loosely based on Turnpenny et al. (2008), who conceptualised a multi-layered institutional framework in the context of policy evaluation. It is important to note that I use sensitising variables and indicators for this institutional assessment, which means that the indicators used in this table serve as examples and are subject to redefinition or change throughout the research process (Bryman, 2012, p. 388).

Table 2: operationalisation of the concept *policy evaluation system*

Concept	Variables	Attributes	Indicators
Project evaluation system *System of organisational norms and conventions of*	Macro-institutional factors *The broader institutional opportunities and constraints that constitute general formal and informal rules about the*	Formally established laws, regulations, and policy procedures on policy- and project evaluations with regards to both the funding and implementing organisation	1) Formal laws on policy- and project evaluations 2) Formal and informal regulations on policy- and project evaluations

behaviour, the coordination structures and networks, and the habits and belief systems pertinent to the evaluation process (Turnpenny et al., 2008)	*role of evaluation in the policy process*	Organisational culture of the funding and implementing organisation	3)	Formal and informal policy procedures on policy- and project evaluations
	Meso-institutional factors *The formed networks and the established coordination procedures between the involved stakeholders*	The type of stakeholders involved in the evaluation process Coordination procedures established between the different stakeholders The quality of the relationship between the involved stakeholders	1) 2) 3) 4)	Participation of 'knowledge actors' such as think tanks, external consultants, independent academics in the governance network Involvement of the involved stakeholders in 'communities of practice', expert panels, technical working groups Existence of co-funding mechanisms Communication patterns between the involved stakeholders
	Micro-institutional factors *The policy or organisational interests of the involved stakeholders which reveal assumptions and belief systems about what the policy project should achieve*	Policy interests of the government actors and the implementing agencies Organisational interests of the government actors and the implementing agencies	1) 2) 3)	Explicit policy goals of the involved stakeholders Implicit/explicit policy subgoals Stated policy advantages and/or disadvantages of funding/implementing information campaigns

3.2 Research design

I use a comparative case study design, comparing the governance networks and evaluation processes of two information campaigns. Using this research design means that I follow the logic of comparison, which implies that social phenomena are better understood in relation to two or more meaningfully contrasting cases (Bryman, 2012, p. 73). In this research, I compare two governance networks that are more or less similar in their institutional setting, yet diverge on the dependent variable of policy evaluation. Using this research design therefore allows for a demarcated study on studying the specific reasons for these divergences (Gupta, 2012, p. 12).

The comparative case study research design is accompanied by a qualitative research strategy. Taking on an interpretivist position, I aim to understand the politics and implementation of

information campaigns by investigating how the involved participants interpret evaluation processes. Qualitative research lends itself best for this interpretivist position, because it is able to capture these interpretive processes in their specific context. Moreover, qualitative comparative research can contribute to the identification of the complex ways in which these contextual factors -in this case the institutional setting- shape the project evaluation process (Bryman, 2012, p. 380).

3.3 Case selection

The information campaigns under investigation are the *Migrants as Messengers* campaign as financed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the *Preventing Unsafe Migration from Albania Towards European Member States* as financed by the Dutch Repatriation & Departure Service. Both government actors have funded or are funding other information campaigns as well, but these specific information campaigns were chosen due to their relevance. For both government actors, this is the most important information campaign in terms of budget (see figure 1) after the letter to the House of Representatives was sent in 2017 in which the goal for effective information campaigns was highlighted. However, it is worth mentioning that the first phase of the *Preventing Unsafe Migration from Albania Towards European Union Member States* was already planned, and is in fact mentioned in the letter to the House of Representatives as well, whereas the *Migrants as Messengers* campaign did not take on its current form yet. Implementation for both campaigns, however, eventually started in 2017.

Apart from their relevance, the selection of these two campaigns is also based on their institutional similarity (Gupta, 2012). Although the Departure & Repatriation Service is part of a different ministry, the Ministry of Justice & Security, the specific policy on information campaigns as stated in the letter sent to the House of Representatives in 2017 is signed by both ministries, which politically binds them on this topic. Furthermore, an overarching policy programme exists which generally binds these two ministries on migration policy: the Integral Migration Agenda (*Integrale Migratie Agenda*). It should be mentioned, however, that the Integral Migration Agenda stems from March 2018, which means it was introduced after the start of the investigated information campaigns. However, it is indicative of the fact that the current government administration (Rutte III 2017-2021) aims for enhanced coordination among ministries with regards to migration policy. A second aspect of institutional similarity lies with the implementation of the information campaigns. Although the Dutch government

funds information campaigns through several executive parties[1], both campaigns are implemented by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Again, IOM campaigns were also chosen because of their relevance, as this agency is often responsible for information campaigns, both for the Netherlands and for other EU countries.

Yet, the evaluation for these projects are dissimilar. For the IOM campaign in Albania, an external consultant was hired to evaluate the project on relevance, effectiveness and sustainability based on in-depth qualitative interviews with the involved stakeholders, as well as pre- and post-questionnaires after campaign activities. The evaluation of *Migrants as Messengers* contained an impact evaluation, in which researchers from the Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC) assessed the evaluations of former information campaigns (Tjaden et al., 2018), and used a randomised control trial in Senegal to evaluate the causal impacts of the campaign on migrants' risk perception and intention to emigrate (irregularly) to Europe (Dunsch et al., 2019). Comparing these two 'similar-but-dissimilar' evaluations allows for a delimited study on the institutional factors that determine policy evaluation processes.

It should be highlighted that institutional similarity in this research refers to *organisational* similarity and not to the broader contextual setting of the campaigns. The Albanian information campaigns should be seen in the context of EU-enlargement procedures. Since Albania has entered the process of becoming part of the European Union, Albanian citizens are able to travel to the European Union with visa-free access and are able to stay for 90 days in any 180-day period in the Schengen area. At the request of the Netherlands, the European Commission investigated the possibility to temporarily reintroduce visas for Albania due to rising irregular migration numbers and Albanian criminality on Dutch territory in 2019. The European Commission eventually rejected this so-called 'visa suspension mechanism' (Schengenvisainfo, 2019). Albania is also officially declared a 'safe country' by the Dutch Immigration Service, which means that Albanian citizens applying for asylum are generally rejected and go through an accelerated procedure. With the exception of Senegal, this is not the case for the West African countries in which the *Migrants as Messengers* campaign is implemented. Moreover, the irregular journey of citizens from these countries has gained much public attention over the fact that it is often paired with human trafficking and exploitation in the North-African transit countries or death at the Mediterranean Sea (Baldwin-Edwards & Lutterbeck, 2019). Although these differences have relevant explanatory value for the diverging

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[1] Through NGOs and (social) enterprises, such as Caritas, Seefar, Internews, and the Danish Refugee Council (based on information provided by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

evaluation processes, the limited scope of this research does not allow for further analysis on the precise influence of these contextual factors.

Table 3: the *Migrants as Messengers* campaigns and the IOM information campaigns in Albania in detail

	Time Frame	Budget	Donor	Implementing agency	Countries of implementation
Migrants as Messengers	Phase I: 01-12-2017 – 31-03-2019 Phase II: 01-04-2019 – 31-03-2022	Phase I: EUR 1.25 million Phase II: EUR 13.9 million	Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Phase I: IOM Headquarters in Geneva Phase II: IOM Regional Office West and Central Africa (Dakar)	Phase I: Nigeria, Guinea, Senegal Phase II: Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria
IOM information campaign in Albania	Phase I: 14-07-2017 -– 07 -2018 Phase II: 01-01-2020 – 31-12-2020	Phase I: EUR 72.000 Phase II: EUR 95.000	Repatriation & Departure Service (DT&V)	IOM Albania	Albania

3.4 Data collection and analysis
Data collection

For this comparative research I use two methods, creating a triangulation of sources (Bryman, 2012, p. 635). I combine a key document analysis of written evaluation and policy documents with several semi-structured interviews in order to in-depth contextualise these documents. Data collection took place from January 2020 to May 2020. Evaluation documents of both the *Migrants as Messengers* campaign and the IOM information campaign in Albania were analysed, as well as several policy documents, in order to establish the multiple policy goals of information campaigns. In appendix I, a list of documents used for this research is attached.

Interviews were conducted with key policymakers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Repatriation & Departure Service, who are directly involved in the information campaigns. I also conducted interviews with a researcher at GMDAC who works closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the *Migrants as Messengers* campaign, as well as a representative from IOM Albania who works closely with the Repatriation & Departure Service. I perceived these interviews to be necessary in order to grasp how the policy evaluation process is perceived from the perspective of different stakeholders. In order to understand the establishment of the Dutch policy on information campaigns, I also conducted interviews with a researcher who was involved in the report of the Research & Documentation Centre (WODC), as well as a policymaker involved in the letter that was subsequently written to the House of Representatives. These interviews were conducted in order to understand the influence of WODC research in evaluation processes.

I sent preparatory questions to all respondents in advance, but followed a semi-structured technique during the interviews. All respondents were informed in advance about their rights as respondents for Erasmus University research and gave formal permission for these interviews on a consent form which explicitly states how their information is used in this research. Data was collected with a voice recorder and subsequently transcribed. Transcription documents were sent to all respondents so that they were able to comment on certain sections.

Table 4: list of respondents

Respondent number	Organisation	Position
R01	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BZ): Directorate of Stability & Humanitarian Aid (DSH)	Policymaker
R02	IOM's Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC)	Researcher
R03	Repatriation & Departure Service (DT&V)	Policymaker
R04	IOM Albania	Project coordinator
R05	Research & Documentation Centre (WODC)	Researcher
R06	Ministry of Justice & Security: Directorate of Migration Policy (DMB)	Former policymaker

Data analysis

Layder's adaptive theory (AT) approach (1998) is used for analysing the data. This means that I build on the principles of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), but I simultaneously use prior theory to provide order and patterns to the research data (Youssef, 2019). In this way, the

AT approach allows for an iterative process, in which inductive data collection is followed by a phase of theoretical reflection and deductive theory- and expectation testing, resulting in a constant weaving back and forth between data and theory (Bryman, 2012, p. 31). Practically, this means that I coded and analysed the empirical data with ATLAS.ti 8, following the guidelines of Strauss and Corbin (1990) of open coding, axial coding and selective coding. The first phase of open coding consisted of labelling all documents and interviews, resulting in an extensive list of codes. Secondly, I categorised and merged the coded fragments in code groups, simultaneously applying Fischer's preliminary concepts deductively (1999) as highlighted in the operationalisation table above to answer research sub-question one. For example, labelled fragments of documents and interviews were merged in the category of 'MaM societal vindication', referring to Migrants as Messengers. In order to answer research question two, I categorised the open codes in subcategories and subsequently into core categories of micro-, meso-, and macro-level. For example, several open codes were categorised into 'ALB policy goals' and subsequently into 'ALB MACRO-INSTITUTIONAL SETTING'. Finally, in the phase of selective coding, I re-read the documents for a final search of data related to the (sub) code groups developed during the processes of open and axial coding.

Chapter 4: The *Migrants as Messengers* campaigns

In this chapter, I present the empirical findings of the project evaluation of the *Migrants as Messengers* campaign as funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After introducing the project and its evaluation in 4.1, I analyse the evaluation process in 4.2, determining how Fischer's (1999) discursive frameworks are applicable to this project evaluation. In section 4.3, I elaborate on the institutional factors of the *Migrants as Messengers* campaigns which are relevant in explaining these evaluative discourses.

4.1 Introduction to the project

Migrants as Messengers is a 'peer-to-peer awareness raising campaign' targeted at potential irregular migrants from West Africa. The campaign is based on recent scientific insights from psychology, suggesting that 'presenting the facts' is not enough to change perception and behaviour (Dunsch et al., 2019, p. 10). Instead, *Migrants as Messengers* relies on return migrants, who are trained as 'volunteer field officers' (VFOs) to conduct video interviews with other return migrants on their experiences with irregular migration (p.12). These video interviews are compiled and edited in a documentary film and shown to potential migrants during town hall events. After the documentary, a discussion follows that is led by two or three VFOs (p. 12). Apart from town-hall events, the campaign also makes use of social media and radio shows. By watching personal (and often emotional) testimonies from return migrants, the potential migrant identifies with the video testimonies and witnesses how abstract risks of irregular migration become more tangible (p. 10). The assumption is that through this causal mechanism, potential migrants are more likely to change their perception on the risks involved with irregular migration, and are less likely to report intention to migrate irregularly (p. 10).

In order to test these causal assumptions, IOM's Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC) conducted an experimental impact evaluation in Dakar, Senegal. Respondents in the sample group, who were selected based on criteria such as age, intention to migrate, willingness to attend the screening, and residence in one of the hand-picked neighbourhoods, were randomly invited to either the documentary film as described above, or a placebo film (p. 19). Respondents filled out a survey or were interviewed by research staff at the moment of invitation, immediately after the screening, and in two end line surveys up to five months after the townhall events took place (p. 22). The impact evaluation showed that the treatment groups reported higher subjective information levels and risk perception on issues related to irregular migration, as well as lower intention to migrate irregularly than the control groups. Factual knowledge on issues related to irregular migration, such as the costs of the journey, did not

increase, which was not surprising for the IOM researchers as the events were focused on 'emotional identification with the personal experience of returnees' (p. 37). The impact evaluation also showed limited effects on perceptions of economic opportunities in Senegal (p. 56), as well as small effects on the perception on returnees (p. 60). The report of the impact evaluation, including a technical annex for academics, is public and can be downloaded from the website of the IOM (IOM, 2019).

This impact evaluation is considered a pilot study by the IOM researchers (R02). In the second phase of the campaign, which is expanded to seven West African countries, four follow-up randomised controlled trials are conducted in four different countries: Nigeria, Guinea, Gambia and Senegal. These four countries were selected based on a mix of irregular migration flows to Europe, feasibility in terms of access to social media platforms, and academic interests, such as the presence of former research or projects which can be built upon. These follow-up RCTs seek to examine differences between population groups (gender, rural-urban), differences between online and offline communication, the role of the family and social networks in migration decisions, as well as the direct impact on migration behaviour (R02).

4.2 Project evaluation analysis
Technical verification

By conducting this impact evaluation, this evaluation seeks to answer the question whether the programme has fulfilled its stated project objectives of increasing potential migrants' risk perception, as well as decreasing the likeliness to report intention to migrate irregularly (p. 10). Besides that, it also sought to increase information levels about migration, increase the perception of economic opportunities in Senegal, and increase the perception on return migrants, who often face stigma once they return to their country of origin. Although these objectives do not seek to alter behaviour, it should be mentioned that self-reported *intention* to migrate is considered a proxy variable for future migration trends. In fact, IOM researchers affiliated with the *Migrants as Messengers* campaign examined this positive correlation between migration intention and actual migration flows, confirming the 'usefulness of emigration intentions in contexts where migration flow data are not available' (Tjaden et al., 2019, p. 47). However, the direct link between information campaigns and actual migration behaviour is not (yet) confirmed. In other words, technical verification discourse is used to a high extent in this evaluation document.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs regards the *Migrants as Messengers* campaign as an experiment for raising the effectiveness of information campaigns. This raises the question *when* information campaigns are considered effective. There is no clear threshold in this regard, but the Ministry of Foreign Affairs considered the outcomes of the impact evaluation, which showed that the treatment group in Dakar was 20 per cent less likely to report intention to migrate irregularly within the next two years for example, successful enough. In this regard, the Ministry does not hold the expectation that information campaigns can be designed to prevent all irregular migration, as there are many potential migrants that are determined to go and cannot be influenced by the campaign activities. Moreover, if the campaigns can prevent irregular migration to a certain extent, but overall, there are other factors that cause an increase in irregular migration numbers, the campaigns are still regarded as successful (R01).

One of the policymakers involved in writing the Letter to the House of Representatives in 2017 on information campaigns mentioned in the context of the *Migrants as Messengers* campaign that a longitudinal design over multiple years would probably be more useful for measuring the effectiveness of the campaign:

What you really want is some sort of long-term research, and that does not exist at all. So that you follow people over multiple years. That does not exist. Which is really hard, but then you see what such a campaign really does (R06).

It should be highlighted in this regard that in the second phase of *Migrants as Messengers,* the respondents of the first phase will be interviewed again to measure the long-term effects of the campaign activities.

Although the impact evaluation did not measure the efficiency of the programme, Dutch policymakers did by making a rough cost-benefit analysis for information campaigns. With regards to migration management, information campaigns are of added value not only because they protect potential migrants from the risks involved in irregular migration, but also to prevent migrants from spending money on a futile journey to Europe. This would be a waste of financial resources, since many irregular migrants are rejected in a European asylum procedure and send back to their country of origin. However, pre-emptively changing the behaviour of irregular migrants with low prospects of obtaining asylum also means that money is saved for the Dutch asylum system, which is approximately €20.000 to €25.000 per asylum seeker. An information campaign, in this regard, is a relatively inexpensive tool to prevent 'unnecessary' costs made by both the migrant him/herself, as well as the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service

(R01). In other words, if you are able to prevent a small number of potential migrants from entering the Dutch asylum procedure, the benefits easily outweigh the costs:

It is already possible to conduct an information campaign from €10.000 onwards. One asylum seeker is €20.000 per year or so [IK: for the asylum procedure]. So yes… with a little bit of money you can start a campaign. If you deter a few people and other people go to another country... That's the idea – a little bit of investment, maybe success (R06).

Situational validation

Situational validation concerns the question whether the project objectives has contributed to the identified problem situation (Fischer, 1999). For the *Migrants as Messengers* campaign, the identified problem situation is the rise of Sub-Saharan African irregular migration to the European Union, whereas citizens from these countries generally have low prospects of obtaining asylum (Dunsch et al., 2019, p. 5). One of the causes of irregular migration, as the project rationale mentions, is that the expectations that migrants have of 'the quality of life in Europe, the risks of the journey and their chances of staying in Europe, are often misguided' (p. 9). The report mentions several studies that show that West African migrants start their journeys with limited or biased information (p. 6). One of the last sections in the report mentions that the *main* reason for irregular migration is the lack of economic opportunities and population growth (p. 56).

As mentioned, the report empirically examined whether the programme activities contributed to alleviating these identified causes of irregular migration. The impact evaluation measured knowledge levels of potential migrants about the journey and potential earnings in countries of destination, showing for example that 73% of respondents are not familiar with asylum procedures (p. 41). Moreover, the impact evaluation showed that one in three potential migrants in the study reported that they do not feel 'well-informed' about the risks and opportunities associated with migration, and that the campaign activities increased the subjective information level of potential migrants by 16 to 19 percent relative to the control group (p. 31). In this way, the report shows that project is relevant to the identified causes of the problem situation.

However, examining situational validation for this project necessitates a broader empirical inquiry on whether the project objectives of changing risk perception and decreasing migration intention are relevant to the *overall* problem situation. Firstly, this would entail that the evaluators empirically measure if the countries of implementation, Nigeria, Guinea, Senegal, are relevant settings for this identified problem. Although irregular migration numbers are the

main criteria when choosing countries for the *Migrants as Messengers* campaigns, other criteria, such as the general use of social media in that country are also important in choosing countries for implementation (R01; R02). It is therefore not unlikely that other countries were more relevant for the implementation of the project activities in terms of Sub-Saharan irregular migration flows to the EU. These evaluation components were not reflected in the document.

Secondly, situational validation 'probes the validity of the situational definitions and assumptions upon which the programme objectives have been constructed' (Fischer, 1999, p. 57). The report mentions the assumption that 'changes in knowledge and perception may affect overall intention to migrate irregularly', which in turn results in migration flows (Dunsch et al., 2019, p. 50). Interestingly, the report also mentions that the data showed that risk perceptions on the dangers related to irregular migration are generally high before leaving, and therefore 'might not be the main problem' (p. 45). Although there is a possibility that potential migrants do not apply this risk perception to their own situation, it therefore remains unclear whether risk perception levels are relevant for the purpose of decreasing irregular migration. The authors argue that it is possible that alternative factors, such as poverty and lack of economic opportunities, outweigh the high risks involved in the context of irregular migration (p. 46).

Furthermore, the report itself mentions that in some West African countries, a 'culture of migration' exists and that the choice of migration is a 'combination of limited employment opportunities, societal and family pressures and accepted social norms' (p. 6). This would entail that migration decisions are not individual decisions, but are structurally embedded in the family context, or even in the societal context (Carling & Hernández-Carretero, 2012; Mbaye, 2014). These situational factors could have influenced the results of the programme objectives, which are primarily focused on individual changes in risk perception and migration intention as catalysers for irregular migration behaviour. Although this impact evaluation did ask about parental influence (Dunsch et al., 2019, p. 32), there might be other contextual factors that raise questions on the relevance of the programme objectives for this problem situation. This type of research, which aims to identify the 'experience-related criteria for the contextual and longitudinal measurement' of irregular migration causes, is not highly present in the evaluation document (Fischer, 1999, p. 58). In short, although the second phase of the campaign will include an evaluation with more longitudinal and contextual components, this evaluation document is mostly focused on technical verification rather than situational validation discourse.

Societal vindication

Societal vindication concerns the question if *Migrants as Messengers* is instrumentally or symbolically valuable to broader societal arrangements. It moves beyond the situational context in which the programme objectives of the *Migrants as Messengers* are applied, in order to assess whether the campaign has consequences for the larger social system as a whole (Fischer, 1999, p. 59). For example, the report of the Research & Documentation Centre (WODC) illuminated the general assumptions that policymakers and practitioners may hold while designing and implementing information campaigns.

The *Migrants as Messengers* campaign frequently refers to this WODC report and seeks to test some of the mentioned assumptions, such as the assumption that potential migrants lack information, as highlighted above. The RCT in Dakar, however, was conducted on the micro-level. As stated in the evaluation report, it was not the intention of the study to 'extrapolate the results to a larger population (external validity), as other sampling techniques (…) would have been necessary' (p. 18). In order to fulfil the next step in societal vindication, an 'empirical assessment of the desired impact on the larger social system' should be conducted, such as a systematic review of multiple impact evaluations in different contexts (p. 19). This may be possible once the impact evaluations of *Migrants as Messengers* Phase II are finished.

Alternatively, *Migrants as Messengers* can be vindicated on its contribution to society in other ways than the possible impact on decreasing irregular migration. In fact, *Migrants as Messengers* is also designed for the protection people of people on the move and to secure the human rights of migrants (Fischer, 1999, p. 55). By providing objective information and facilitating dialogue on this issue, this campaign seeks to ensure that if people decide to move irregularly, they are more aware of the dangers and are therefore less likely to end up in vulnerable situations. Regardless of its effectiveness on reducing irregular migration, this information campaign is useful for spreading that awareness in West African societies. These effects cannot easily be expressed in numbers, since it is hard to measure how the campaign might have influenced decisions during the irregular journey. In this light, the involved policymaker mentioned that conducting an information campaign is perhaps already meaningful if, as a result of this campaign, one person is prevented from dying on the way to Europe (R01). In other words, societal vindication discourse is used to demonstrate that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs considers the goal to protect migrants just as important as the prevention of irregular migration.

Ideological choice

In the fourth discursive framework by Fischer, *Migrants as Messengers* is not evaluated on its instrumental or symbolic contribution to the existing social system, but on its contribution to its ideological foundations (1999). In more simplistic terms, this pertains to the question whether the campaign activities are evaluated as 'the right thing to do' in light of migration management and/or human rights-based discourse. In this context, the involved policymaker mentioned that ideally, potential migrants do not make use of irregular pathways, because it prevents them from ending up in precarious situations, and this also benefits the countries of origin, transit and destination (R01). However, it is unsure whether the information campaigns make a substantial contribution in this regard, considering the uncertainty of the impact that they have on irregular migration behaviour. In other words, information campaigns are not considered to be particularly valuable for the ideological basis of migration management.

However, as mentioned in the context of societal vindication, *Migrants as Messengers* is also valuable for the protection of migrants (during their irregular journey), regardless of its possible translation to less irregular migration behaviour. The ideological importance of these actions was most clearly expressed in the context of cooperation with the authorities of countries of origin. Although it was acknowledged that cooperation on issues of human trafficking is easier than the prevention of irregular migration to the European Union, the information campaigns are not considered an instrumental tool to get the authorities aboard. The information campaign is also conducted because the Ministry is involved with Official Development Assistance (ODA) and out of care for the protection of migrants (R01).

Conclusion

In short, the *Migrants as Messengers* campaign has primarily been evaluated on the level of technical verification, in order to measure the impact of the project activities on changes in risk perception and migration intention among potential migrants in Dakar, Senegal. However, whether the information campaign is effective for decreasing Sub-Saharan irregular migration flows to the European Union, remains unclear. Discussions on the level of societal vindication show that this is not necessarily considered problematic by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as information campaigns also serve the purpose of protecting migrants from human trafficking. Effectiveness in this regard is not easily expressed in numbers. Discussions on the level of ideological choice show that the 'triple' win narrative is used to evaluate that information campaigns do not highly contribute to the ideological basis of migration management (De Jong & Dannecker, 2017). Yet, the protection of migrants is considered just as ideologically relevant as preventing irregular migration.

4.3 Institutional setting of the project evaluation
Macro-institutional factors

The macro-institutional setting is focused on institutional matters beyond the specific context of the *Migrants as Messengers* campaign, which concerns both the organisational culture of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the International Organisation for Migration. The macro-institutional environment provides for multiple explanations why technical verification discourse is predominant in the *Migrants as Messengers* campaign. With regards to IOM, the establishment of IOM's Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC) is an important macro-institutional development. The centre was established in 2015 at the invitation of the German government in order to 'respond to calls for better international migration data and analysis'. One of its tasks is to conduct impact evaluations, specifically aimed at measuring the effects of IOM's activities on target groups. Usually, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in Geneva covers audits, monitoring and evaluation, and coordinates monitoring and evaluation offices around the world. As these offices usually do 'conventional donor reporting' that monitor how the project was put in place, 'a different type of exercise' such as impact evaluations have not been a systematic routine within IOM (R02). In fact, the authors of the *Migrants as Messengers* report mention that the broader aim of this impact evaluation is to contribute to 'a paradigm shift in programme evaluation in migration, add to the global evidence base and provide an example of mutual learning for all stakeholders in migration' (p. 8).

As mentioned in chapter two, where information campaigns are managed highly differs per government actor (R06; see also Pécoud, 2010). In the Netherlands, information campaigns are managed by policymakers working for two departments within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: the Directorate of Stability & Humanitarian Aid (DSH), as well as the Migration Policy Office (BMB) to coordinate policy within the European Union (R01; R06). The fact that information campaigns are managed from the Department of Stability & Humanitarian Aid implies that information campaigns are paid with funds that are officially designated for the promotion of economic development and welfare of developing countries (Official Development Assistance, so-called 'ODA' means). This gives the campaign a humanitarian purpose besides its migration management purpose, which explains the societal vindication argument that information campaigns are valuable, because they can potentially help (irregular) migrants with safer migration decisions.

Since the effectiveness of development aid has often been (politically) contested, the Ministry puts a lot of emphasis on the results of their development policy programmes. This is clearly

illustrated by the fact that the Directorate uses results frameworks for their migration and development policy programme, which explicates the envisioned impacts, long-term outcomes, medium-term outcomes and outputs, and the indicators that show how these aspects can be measured. Furthermore, the Directorate of International Research and Policy Evaluation (IOB) is actively involved in their policy programmes, an independent evaluation service which conducts evaluation research for past foreign policy, and works as as advisor for current and future foreign policy (R01). Finally, this Directorate collaborates frequently with other IGOs, such as the World Bank and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), that more regularly conduct RCTs to ensure 'evidence-based programming' (R02).

Finally, a relevant macro-institutional factor on part of the funder organisation are the policy practices concerning research conducted by the Research & Documentation Centre (WODC). The involvement of the WODC was rather coincidental, as this research centre responds to calls from the Ministry of Justice & Security, and not from the Ministy of Foreign Affairs (R05). At the time, the Directorate of Migration Policy of this Ministry was also interested in information campaigns for its possible usefulness for curbing irregular migration, which is why it submitted a research proposal to this centre. When WODC researches are published, it is common practice that this is communicated to the House of Representatives with a formal policy response from the involved ministries (R05; R06). The publication did not only require coordination between the two ministries, but also led the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to commit to the policy goal of enhancing effectiveness of information campaigns. This explains the focus on rigorous evaluation methods and, in turn, the use of technical verification discourse in the evaluation document.

Meso-institutional factors

The meso-institutional setting of this project shows intensive collaboration among governmental actors in EU-context, as well as between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and IOM. The idea of *Migrants as Messengers,* working with returnee migrants instead of top-down information provision, was the result of conversations between the Media & Communication Division (MCD) of the IOM and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry had taken note of the findings of the WODC report on information campaigns, co-wrote its reaction to this report in the letter to the House of Representatives, and subsequently approached IOM with the question on how to design an information campaign which takes into account the pitfalls of previous information campaigns as described in the WODC report. As mentioned in chapter two, one of the findings of this report was that information provided by peers or other networks

is generally considered more reliable than information directly from European governments (Schans & Optekamp, 2016, p. 18). Consequently, IOM developed the idea of mobilising return migrants for an information campaign (R01).

Policymakers in several European member states were already communicating on issues regarding information campaigns, providing financial opportunities for an impact evaluation. Dutch policymakers organised a workshop with German and Italian policymakers on the effectiveness of information campaigns, where they were notified on the fact that in light of the *Central Mediterranean Route* programme funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), another information campaign was evaluated with rigorous evaluation methods by GMDAC. This EU-collaboration can be explained by the fact that a common European information strategy is more effective than 'European countries competing against each other in convincing migrants not to come their specific country' (Schans & Optekamp, 2016, p. 24). Upon Dutch initiative, a regular European Migration Network (EMN) working group on information campaigns has since been launched with the aim of sharing practices on information campaigns and ensure coordination among the member states (R01).

The original project proposal of *Migrants as Messengers* did not envision an impact evaluation component, but a 'light touch' monitoring component (R02). As the *Central Mediterranean Route* programme was 'scoped to insert project components in there that were not initially planned' (R02), and because there were several funds left from the *Migrants as Messengers* project, GMDAC was able to conduct an impact evaluation relatively late in the project phase. Hence, the impact evaluation of the first phase is a result of a co-funding mechanism: both DFID and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were involved as funders. Although respondents highlighted that these collaborations were rather coincidental, or 'just grow that way', these collaborations clearly show how networks on the meso-institutional level can be mobilised to develop broader evaluation components in information campaigns (R01; R02). In other words, networks on EU-level specifically concerning the effectiveness of information campaigns explain the high level of technical verification in the *Migrants as Messengers* evaluation.

Since the impact evaluation was funded by DFID, communication and feedback on matters related to the impact evaluation took predominantly place with the British funders (R02). In the second phase of the programme, the Ministry is the only funder of the impact evaluation process. The researchers conducting the multiple RCTs for these campaigns have general meetings with the Ministry on the planning of these RCTs. Regarding these meetings, the researcher at GMDAC is positively surprised about the content of these conversations:

[…] they are very flexible. I'm surprised, not a lot of donors are like this, but they really care about the results and less.. the looks. That's very rare. DFID is similar in that regard. They really care about the evidence that comes out of it, that it is of high quality and reliable, and not so much the aesthetics of it, the looks of it. You know what I mean? The politics of it. That is certainly an important dimension, but I do have a feeling that there is sincere interest in running good quality studies, so the discussions we are having with the Dutch are very much on that. How can we do the best that is possible? It's not so much… It's different in other donor-related conversations (R02)

The Ministry deems it important to create a 'climate of trust' with the implementing organisations, in which the failures of the programme can easily be discussed. In this regard, it was mentioned that implementing organisations have a tendency to report more positively, or leave certain matters out of an evaluation report, in order to secure future funding. This tendency is not deemed effective by the Ministry, which seeks to achieve better results by facilitating learning processes (R01).

Policymakers at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs commented elaborately on the draft reports of the impact evaluation, in which the Directorate of International Research and Policy Evaluation (IOB) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was closely involved as well (R01). This feedback was regarded as helpful for GMDAC to 'beef up some sections of the report' and 'make certain things clearer' (R02). For example, the researchers added a section on the limitations of the study, such as social desirability bias, based on the feedback of the Ministry (Dunsch et al., 2019, p. 27). This shows that intensive communication between the funder, implementing agency and the evaluators has primarily resulted in more critical perspectives within technical verification discourse.

For the second phase of the *Migrants as Messengers* campaign, an Advisory Board is installed to safeguard the independency of the research (R01). The Advisory Board consists of experts and academics from universities and other institutions, such as the World Bank, and functions as a sounding board for technical advice. When the IOM researchers decide on a new design for the studies, the Advisory Board also has to endorse these new steps (R02). IOM proposed this unique setting to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ensure independency of the evaluation. This independent Advisory Board was endorsed by the Ministry because, as the involved policymaker explained, it is in the interest of the Ministry to credibly convene the message that 'what your doing actually works'. Other measures, such as that the staff of the project does not

have control over the budget and staff of the GMDAC researchers, were installed as well (R01). The installment of an Advisory Board with technical experts provides for a clear explanation for the high use of technical verification in the evaluation.

The respondents argued that conducting internal evaluations has clear advantages. For example, the IOM researcher mentioned that to be part of the same organisation is helpful, because he has direct access to everyone involved in the project implementation. Moreover, communication and coordination between the implementers and evaluators facilitates 'feedback loops' between the two parties: the evaluators are more aware of the reality on the ground, whereas the implementers are more aware of 'how they should be doing certain things, so that we can use them for the studies' (R02).

Micro-institutional factors

The information campaigns are part of the policy goals of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to 'protect people on the move', especially from human trafficking, and to 'decrease irregular migration'. Information campaigns are meant to contribute to these long-term outcomes by increasing awareness among potential migrants and their communities of the risk of irregular migration, their rights, and possible legal alternatives, as well as by 'changing their behaviour away' from irregular migration. This is measured by the number of potential migrants who demonstrate knowledge of safe migration procedures, risks of irregular migration and the number who report either abandoning, delaying or reconsidering their plan to migrate irregularly. This shows clearly how information campaigns serve a humanitarian aim of protecting people from the risks of irregular migration, while they are simultaneously deployed for purposes of managing irregular migration (Nieuwenhuys & Pécoud, 2007).

Conclusion

In short, the focus on evidence-based programming and technical verification discourse is explained by the fact that *Migrants as Messengers* is funded with officially designated development aid and financially managed by the Department of Stability & Humanitarian Aid. Furthermore, institutional change within IOM made internal impact evaluations possible with the establishment of GMDAC in 2015. Next to these macro-institutional factors, institutional factors on the meso-level explain that *Migrants as Messengers* is elaborately technically verified on its impact, because a network of European government actors on this topic provided opportunities for a co-funding mechanism. Moreover, the relationship between the funding and implementing organisation is focused on improving programmes through policy learning.

Finally, on the micro-level, it can be witnessed that the policy goals and interests of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are focused both on the protection of migrants and decreasing irregular migration. This explains why policymakers and researchers seek to technically verify whether information campaigns can be used as a means to control migration, but simultaneously keep implementing these campaigns with the uncertainty that information campaigns are effective for this purpose.

Chapter 5: The IOM information campaigns in Albania

In this chapter, I present the empirical findings of the *Preventing Unsafe Migration from Albania Towards EU Member States* information campaigns, as funded by the Dutch Repatriation & Departure Service. In section 5.2, I elaborate on the evaluation process, again examining how Fischer's (1999) discursive frameworks are applicable to this project evaluation. In section 5.3, I elaborate on the institutional factors that explain these evaluation patterns.

5.1 Introduction to the project

The IOM information campaigns in Albania are of a considerable different nature than the *Migrants as Messengers* campaigns. Firstly, the information campaigns in Albania are implemented in shorter time periods. Whereas the first phase of the *Migrants as Messengers* campaign was implemented over a period of almost 1,5 years, the actual implementation phase of the first information campaign was several months, from October 2017 to March 2018. Secondly, this project consisted of a wide variety of activities aimed at several target groups. In terms of outreach activities, IOM Albania created leaflets that were spread among local communities, and held 'bilateral dialogue' sessions at high schools to raise awareness on irregular migration among students and their teachers. Furthermore, a consultant was hired to monitor Albanian media and to conduct a workshop for journalists on how to portray irregular migration in media outlets. Finally, in order to create sustainability for the project activities, IOM Albania conducted workshops with civil society organisations, such as local anti-trafficking committees, as well as (local) government units (R04). A follow-up project of one year is confirmed and will most likely start in the summer of 2020 (R03).

Due to the high variety of implemented activities, the evaluation of this project touches upon more aspects than the impact of the outreach activities alone. An external consultant conducted the evaluation of the project after the implementation of this programme. She determined the extent to which the objectives of the campaigns have been met, assessed the likelihood of sustainability of the project, identified IOM's institutional strengths and weaknesses when implementing the campaign, as well as needs for further information- and awareness raising activities on the topic. The evaluation consisted of several methods, but the consultant primarily conducted qualitative interviews with a large variety of involved stakeholders. This was accompanied with a quantitative survey research among participants of the workshop activities on the high schools.

5.2 Project evaluation analysis
Technical verification

The project objectives were threefold: to contribute to increased awareness and understanding on the fact that asylum applications from Albanian citizens are rejected in EU countries, to increase awareness on the fact that irregular migration entails 'serious consequences', and to raise awareness and understanding on the practical implications of visa-free regime rules. The latter refers to the fact that Albanians are allowed to stay and move freely for a maximum of 90 days within any 180-day period in the Schengen area without a visa requirement. Breaking these visa regime rules usually means that Albanians reside in the Schengen area for a longer time period.

One of the aims of this evaluation was to measure the extent to which these project objectives have been met, by assessing the short-term effectiveness of the campaign activities. Based on feedback collected through questionnaires before and right after the information sessions in the high schools, as well as through the focus groups, in-depth interviews and direct observations, the consultant concluded that the misperceptions about asylum and visa liberalisation rules 'have been very well absorbed by the targeted population'. The consultant elaborated on this by arguing that 'it seems' that if someone is asking for international protection based on unfounded reasons, or is breaking the visa free regime rules, s/he is doing it deliberately, and not as a consequence of a lack of information. With regards to raising awareness on the consequences of irregular migration, the consultant found that the target groups already knew about the general risks before the informative sessions of the campaign. Even though the campaign itself was able to raise awareness among the majority of the targeted groups who participated in the surveys, the consultant argued that the economic reasons for migration prevail over the fear of the possible dangers of irregular migration. She concludes that information campaigns should therefore be accompanied with increased economic opportunities in Albania itself, as well as increased ways to migrate regularly, in order to effectively prevent irregular migration. Moreover, information campaigns should be more intensive and conducted over the longer term.

From the perspective of technical verification, the research methods employed for measuring the effectiveness of these campaign activities can be highly criticised. Although the questionnaires were dispersed before and after the informative sessions among a relatively large sample size, the consultant did not make use of control-group designs and randomised treatment allocations (Tjaden et al., 2018). Furthermore, there were no specific questions on asylum in

the questionnaires, which means that the conclusion that awareness on asylum topics was increased by the campaign activities is solely based on qualitative data from the focus groups and in-depth interviews. As a result, the evaluation does not measure whether the rise in awareness on irregular migration may be attributable to other factors, such as the return of rejected asylum seekers from the EU to Albania. Based on these evaluation techniques, it therefore remains uncertain how and to what extent the project activities have contributed to reaching the stated project objectives.

The consultant shortly touched upon issues related to efficiency, when discussing the strengths and weaknesses of IOM Albania in implementing this campaign. She established that IOM Albania was 'able to organise and manage the project efficiently with limited staff and time, covering all twelve regions of Albania' (p. 23). Regarding cost-benefit analysis, the Dutch policymaker involved in this information campaign is aware of the assessment in which the costs of information campaigns are compared to the costs of the asylum procedure. Yet, she deemed the absolute costs of information campaigns still high, considering that there is no guarantee that information campaigns will actually bring down the number of asylum applications:

If you assume the costs of one asylum seeker per year for the entire [IK: asylum] system, you assume €20.000. In that sense, an amount of €100.000 is not that high, perhaps. But if you look at it differently, purely €100.000, or even more in broader EU campaigns from the AMIF fund, it is a lot of money. Because you put it in something of which you have no guarantee that it will do anything (…). It does not create any jobs over there. Such a campaign should ultimately benefit the fact that we are less troubled by asylum applications with low prospects (R03)

This calculation takes into the account the risks of implementing an information campaign, as there is a chance that they are not helpful in bringing down the number of asylum applications from Albania.

Situational validation

In contrast to technical verification, the official evaluation document elaborately makes use of situational validation discourse. The identified problem situation of this campaign was the rise of Albanian asylum seekers to the European Union, although Albania has been qualified as 'safe country' by the Netherlands. During the 'migration crisis' of 2015, many Albanians travelled to the Netherlands to 'misuse' the Dutch asylum procedure for financial or medical

support, or used the Dutch (and Belgian) sea harbours to travel to the United Kingdom (R03; R06). In an interview with a Dutch news magazine, the former director of the Repatriation & Departure Service mentioned that the cause of this problem lies with wrong information among the Albanian population:

They are wrongly informed. They still think they have a small chance of obtaining asylum and hear stories that they can get a house and subsistence (Joosten, 2016).

Based on the qualitative interviews, the consultant elaborated on these causes by arguing in the evaluation document that Albania has a 'collective inclination towards lack of hope in opportunities offered within the country' and a 'perceived lack of trust that Albania will be part of the European Union soon'. Most emigrating Albanians do not necessarily migrate for 'real' economic aims, but rather for a more secure life. Relatives and friends residing in the European Union serve as a 'pull factor' as they can provide for a support network for newcomers.

To a large extent, the evaluation sought to determine whether the programme's objectives, targeted at 'raising awareness' on a number of issues, were relevant for this problem situation. This is primarily reflected by the fact that the consultant employed 'contextual and culturally appropriate measures' to question whether needs for information and awareness raising activities persist after this campaign. According to the evaluator, the in-depth interviews with the institutional stakeholders and teachers showed that 'a deeply rooted perception coming from relatives abroad that EU countries provide assistance for irregular immigrants in difficult economic situations' indeed existed among the Albanian population. However, these perceptions have recently changed, and the number of Albanian asylum seekers in the European Union slightly decreased in the first quarter of 2018 compared to the last quarter of 2017. However, the evaluator argues that these changes in both perception and behaviour are not only the result of the information campaigns, but are also due to the fact that people have seen acquaintances or relatives returning from the European Union after a rejected asylum application, or have been notified of stricter enforcement by the Albanian police. The consultant therefore concludes that, although there is a constant need to warn people on irregular migration risks, they are less relevant for the purpose of conveying information on asylum matters than in 2015.

Moreover, the consultant reports on multiple circumstances that may require additions, instead of exceptions, to be made to the awareness-raising objectives (Fischer, 1999). The consultant argued that these should be taken into consideration when assessing the effectiveness of the

information campaign. As mentioned, the evaluation argued that the economic reasons for migration prevail over the fear of the possible dangers of irregular migration. According to the consultant, 'Albania remains affected by high unemployment rates and poverty conditions, a fragile social welfare state, with remote communities isolated from access to available services', which makes it difficult to pass the message against irregular migration. The interviewed stakeholders mentioned that information campaigns should therefore not only be focused on the risks of irregular migration, but need to try to highlight positive alternatives which aims at building the future in the country. If information campaigns inform the Albanian population on available opportunities in the country, the tendency to search for economic alternatives abroad should decrease. The consultant found that this 'social dimension' was adequately taken into consideration by IOM staff, as they balance prohibitive and alarming messages with more positive messages of alternatives to irregular migration.

Apart from drawing attention to the fact that information campaigns should be accompanied with existing opportunities in the country, the report also recommends that information campaigns in Albania should be accompanied with options to migrate regularly. This issue illuminates conflicting objectives between the stakeholders involved in the Albanian information campaigns. The evaluation followed the general standpoint of IOM that, in order to prevent irregular migration, new programmes of regular migration should be created, including programmes for young people that want to study abroad. In this way, it is easier to present target groups with regular migration alternatives in information campaigns. On this recommendation, which is clearly aimed at Dutch policy actors, the policymaker involved mentioned that this is not realistic at the moment:

It sounds a bit rough, because we do take into account the recommendations, but they have to be workable for us, realistic. We can hardly support a recommendation such as that there should be more options for legal pathways, because it does not correspond to the reality and the [IK: Dutch] policy pursued. There are hardly any legal pathways and these are reserved for a select group (R03).

Reflecting on this issue, she mentions that the Repatriation & Departure Service, which ultimately aims to send back migrants who have no legal claim to reside in the Netherlands, could also benefit from foreign worker quotas in order to facilitate cooperation on return migration with certain countries. Yet, even if that would be possible in a new government coalition agreement, foreign worker quotas still do not represent an alternative for all Albanians that would like to migrate to the European Union. The focus should remain on creating

perspective and opportunities in Albania itself, in order to prevent Albania from 'deflating' and losing human capital (R03).

Societal vindication

The project evaluation document and the interviews with the involved stakeholders probed multiple implications on the level of societal vindication. Firstly, the campaign raised questions on the contributive value of information campaigns for Albanian society as a whole. According to the respondents, the information campaigns have both political and societal advantages. Politically speaking, Albania is risking its current right to visa free travel due to the rise of Albanian asylum requests in the European Union. The Albanian authorities therefore welcome the funding of information campaigns to 'reduce the pull factors' of the European Union. With regards to the follow-up campaign, the Dutch policymaker also explained that Albania is especially keen on its diplomatic relationship with the Netherlands, as the Netherlands requested a visa suspension mechanism for Albania at the European Commission to temporarily decrease irregular migration levels (R03). On societal level, the evaluation document, in line with IOM Albania's view, emphasised the fact that the information campaign does not only prevent Albanian citizens from migrating irregularly, but also functions as a means to inform people on existing job opportunities in the country of origin. Beyond its project objectives of raising awareness on irregular migration, the information campaign thus has a meaningful purpose for Albanian society (R04).

Secondly, from the Dutch perspective, the information campaign in Albania is considered by Dutch policymakers as a means to show the Albanian government that the Netherlands is willing to support the Albanian authorities in 'combatting illegal migration' (R03):

[IK: It is] valuable. In any case, it contributes to closer contacts and exchange of information. That is not the main purpose of an information campaign, but as a secondary goal it always has a positive effect on the relationship. The Netherlands will be put on the map, and our Embassy in Tirana can also convey that message. It is a bit of diplomacy; you can also put it that way (R03).

In other words, information campaigns are not only considered a tool for combatting irregular migration, but also as a tool to facilitate cooperation with the Albanian authorities.

Thirdly, a Dutch policymaker regarded this information campaign valuable for showing the Dutch audience that the authorities are actively undertaking steps to prevent irregular migration from Albania:

You could argue that (...) information campaigns are primarily conducted for the Dutch audience. To show that we really do something to stop this influx, with a campaign here and there (...) Ultimately, this [IK: information campaign] was physically conducted, all these schools and universities were visited in certain regions where many people would emigrate (...). But of course, you would also like to mention in the Dutch press, look, we have a Dutch campaign in Albania. So, you also want to emphasise that to the outside world (R06).

This is because, as the involved policymaker from the Repatriation & Departure Service mentions, there is general support among the Dutch population that Albanians should not make use of the asylum procedure, even among opposition parties. In this sense, information campaigns have the function of showing that the Dutch government is decisive by undertaking efforts to decrease irregular migration levels to the Netherlands. This should be seen within a larger set of policies aimed at citizens from 'safe countries', such as accelerated asylum procedures and simplified reception centres, which are implemented because 'even the Dutch Refugee Council' would agree with these measures (R03).

Ideological choice

Ideological choice refers to the broad question whether the involved stakeholders evaluate information campaigns contribute to their ideological principles. As highlighted above, the consultant conducted interviews with involved stakeholders, such as local anti-trafficking committees and staff from IOM Albania. The evaluation document showed that in terms of ideological principles, these actors took on a rights-based approach to migration:

Interviewees agree that migration is a human right: everyone has the right to move in search of a better life. In a global context of porous boundaries, it becomes even more easy to move. Therefore, the best choice to manage migration is to adequately channel irregular migration ways into regular programmes for migration. The latter also goes to the benefit of the EU Member States to balance requests for workforce.

Based on this, the consultant argued that information campaigns do not necessarily contribute to the underlying principle of freedom of movement, unless they are utilised for informing the Albanian population on their migration rights.

Conclusion

In short, the information campaigns in Albania are primarily evaluated with situational validation discourse. The consultant mainly aimed for understanding the wider societal context of Albanian irregular migration to the European Union and measured the extent to which information campaigns are relevant for this societal context. She mostly used qualitative techniques with relevant stakeholders to conclude that information campaigns are partially relevant for solving the issue of Albanian irregular migration to the European Union, but should be accompanied with more economic opportunities in Albania, as well as more legal pathways to the European Union. Discussions on the level of societal vindication, however, show that information campaigns are also deemed valuable for Albanian society and the Albanian-Dutch diplomatic relationship, which explains why a follow-up campaign is scheduled for 2020. Finally, the evaluation document includes an element of ideological choice, as it refers to the human right of freedom of movement.

5.3 Institutional setting of the project evaluation
Macro-institutional factors

The macro-institutional setting concerns the broader institutional context that reveal formal and informal institutionalised rules and ideas on the role of evaluation. In comparison to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Repatriation & Departure Service does not have in-house technical expertise on scientifically rigorous methods for evidence-based programming. When asked about the importance of achieving effective policy programmes, the involved policymaker mentioned that the organisation 'is used to work in an environment in which results are hard to achieve' and that they accept the uncertain results of information campaigns as part of the deal' since 'it is difficult to work in a recalcitrant reality' (R03).

The letter sent to the House of Representatives was signed by the Minister for Migration, formally the State Secretary for Justice & Security, who is politically responsible for the Repatriation & Departure Service. During the project proposal phase of this information campaign, which coincided with the research period and sounding board meetings of the Research & Documentation Centre, it was discussed that a broader evaluation component should be included in this information campaign. An involved policymaker, however, doubts the influence of WODC research on the activities of the Repatriation & Departure Service (R06). This might explain why the characteristics of the evaluation were to a large extent left to IOM Albania, that proposed to hire an external consultant for the evaluation (R04). Hiring

external consultants for their projects is not standardised for IOM Albania, as not all donors are eager to guarantee the independency of the project evaluation. For cost-saving purposes, these evaluations are sometimes also conducted internally. However, the organisation deems independency highly important in order to 'get the side of everyone' and establish 'the real impact of project activities' (R04). This is especially relevant for the evaluation of information campaigns, which are 'the most difficult to measure impact for' in comparison to other projects conducted by IOM Albania. The involved project manager mentioned that this is why they were happy that both the Netherlands and the Belgian authorities were sharing the same concern on the independency of the evaluation (R04). In other words, these macro-institutional factors are relevant to the high use of situational validation discourse in the evaluation document, as they provided an opportunity for hiring an external consultant that could undertake an elaborate evaluation on the relevance of the project.

Meso-institutional factors

The *Preventing Unsafe Migration from Albania towards European Member States* information campaign was the result of a visit of the Director of the Repatriation & Departure Service in 2016 (R06). During this visit, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Albanian police, and the IOM Albania office advised to implement an information campaign and to terminate additional reintegration programmes, which are considered to be a pull factor for requesting asylum in the Netherlands (Joosten 2016; R03).

Firstly, the campaign should be contextualised within a series of information campaigns. Previous information campaigns were funded by other European donors, such as Spain and Belgium. This information campaign was co-funded by the Belgian Federal Public Service of Home Affairs (IBZ) and the Dutch Repatriation & Departure Service, although IOM Albania only entered a contract with the Dutch counterparts (R04). A co-funding mechanism with Belgian counterparts provided an opportunity for a more elaborate evaluation component. This strategic partnership with Belgium is not a coincidence, as both countries face the issue that sea harbours are used by Albanians to reach the United Kingdom. The choice for IOM Albania as implementing agency for these information campaigns is primarily explained by the fact that the Repatriation & Departure Service already collaborated with IOM Albania on issues regarding return migration, and their broad network in the country would make them the most fitting implementing partner (R03).

Furthermore, IOM Albania mentioned that this consultant was the same evaluator as the Belgian-funded information campaign of 2015, which was considered to be 'a good thing' in order to evaluate the sustainability of the program, as well as challenges that exist 'from one information campaign to the other' (R04). As opposed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which provided considerable technical support to the IOM researchers, the Repatriation & Departure Service and the consultant had less contact throughout the evaluation process (R03). IOM Albania was more directly involved in the evaluation process, as they provided logistical support to the consultant. Furthermore, IOM staff was also interviewed by the consultant, which means that their perspective is included in the results of the evaluation (R04). Apart from that, state institution partners, including the State Social Service under the Albanian Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, regional social services and anti-trafficking committees, partners of related programmes, 'members of the communities' (families, returnees), and school directors and teachers were interviewed. The focus on situational validation can therefore explained by the fact that the governance network consisted to a lesser extent of technical evaluation experts, and to a higher extent of involved stakeholders that are locally involved in the Albanian migratory context.

On the relationship with the Repatriation & Departure Service, IOM Albania mentioned that the organisation is one of the most involved donors, which provides useful feedback to the project proposal of the follow-up campaign (R04). The Embassy of Tirana and the Repatriation & Departure Service provide coordinated input in this regard. Furthermore, IOM Albania regularly updated the involved stakeholders, including the Albanian counterparts, on the activities during the campaign by e-mail. This well-established relationship between the funders and the Repatriation & Departure Service might have facilitated critical perspectives in the evaluation document, which does not only focus on the achievements of the project, but also critically discusses the relevance of the project.

Finally, the Albanian information campaigns also show that communication between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Dutch Repatriation & Departure Service takes place on the issue of information campaigns. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided feedback on the proposal for this campaign and the follow-up campaign, in which the Repatriation & Departure Service was advised to use return migrants in a similar way as *Migrants as Messengers.* Although this feedback was considered useful, the implementation of the campaign was deemed more important than raising the quality of the campaigns (R01). On the issue of policy learning with regards to information campaigns, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is clearly seen as the

forerunner. For example, with regards to the future information campaign funded by AMIF, the policymaker involved mentioned that this information campaign is 'a positive thing for Foreign Affairs' if the Repatriation & Departure Service gains experience with 'these kinds' of campaigns. In other words, the lack of (elaborate) technical verification methods in the evaluation document can be explained by coordination procedures within the Dutch government, as these relatively expensive methods are funded by the forerunner on policy learning with regards to information campaigns, which is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Micro-institutional factors

As opposed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Repatriation & Departure Service does not have a specific policy programme for information campaigns. Formally, information campaigns are an 'ad hoc instrument' used as 'one of the capacity building instruments' (R03). The Dutch Repatriation & Departure Service is part of the Ministry of Justice & Security. A policymaker involved in writing the letter to the House of Representatives in 2017 noted that both ministries do not necessarily have opposing, but do have different views on the purpose of information campaigns:

Because information campaigns lie with two ministries, you naturally get two views on migration. Foreign Affairs is all about: provide that message, prepare that group for their journey, develop the region (…). That is the development side of Foreign Affairs. Justice, in that period, was way too busy, and migrants from all sorts of safe countries came in 2016, the Georgians… you name it. For this reason, we wanted to have included in that letter that they should also be aimed at preventing irregular migration. Both ministries have different visions or goals with information campaigns (R06).

It should be noted that the Repatriation & Departure Service does not manage information campaigns in name of the Ministry of Justice & Security. As mentioned, this information campaign was decided upon by the organisation itself, after the director of the Repatriation & Departure Service visited Albania. However, this quote does capture how the Repatriation & Departure Service exhibits a slightly different policy goal in comparison to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As stated by the involved policymaker, the primary policy goal of the campaigns in Albania is to curb the number of asylum applications with low prospects of obtaining asylum (R03). A clear distinction is made between this policy goal and the policy goals of IOM, which are more focused on raising awareness about the futility and risks of irregular migration:

IOM uses more terms such as 'we stand for regular migration, against irregular migration', but they will not say so quickly that fewer asylum applications should be submitted. That is a bit of a nuance difference. Ultimately it is about the same. I think that the Minister for Migration would say that we want to reduce the number of asylum applications, rather than tell the House [IK: of Representatives] that we would like to raise awareness. It is whatever tone you choose, too. It is kind of a derivative of each other, I guess (R03).

This explains why the evaluation document critically examined whether information campaigns contribute to 'solving' Albanian irregular migration to the European Union, but at the same time also includes elements of societal vindication and ideological choice. This is because the evaluator included the perspectives of IOM staff and local stakeholders in the evaluation document.

However, as the core task of the Repatriation & Departure Service is to facilitate the returns or deportations of rejected asylum seekers to their country of origin, it is also in the interest of this organisation to safeguard the diplomatic relationship with the Albanian authorities. The high priority of this diplomatic relationship is clearly seen in the events leading up to the follow-up campaign. In April 2019, the Minister for Migration visited Albania and spoke to IOM Albania and the Albanian authorities, after which a follow-up campaign was confirmed. In the same year, IOM Albania submitted a proposal to a call on the European Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), with Belgium and the Netherlands co-funding 10% of the budget. The latter provides more financial resources to implement an 'evidence-based' information campaign, such as the mobilisation of return migrants in a similar way as *Migrants as Messengers.* Yet, since the Minister for Migration had committed to an information campaign already, this information campaign will be implemented first (R03). This explains why the information campaign is societally vindicated on its role to facilitate cooperation with the Albanian authorities. As mentioned before, the Albanian authorities vice versa have a diplomatic interest in maintaining well-established relationships with the Dutch authorities in light of a possible visa suspension mechanism. This explains the discussions on societal vindication level as well.

Conclusion

Institutional factors on the macro-level show that this policy evaluation process can be explained by the fact that the WODC research and the subsequent letter to the House of Representatives brought attention to the value of a (more elaborate) evaluation component.

IOM Albania proposed an external evaluation as this was considered to be the best way to understand the 'impact' of the project. On the meso-level, a co-funding mechanism between the Netherlands and Belgium was established to release more funding, which provided opportunities to hire an external consultant that could undertake a more elaborate evaluation on the perspectives of the local stakeholders on the relevance of the project. On the micro-level, political interests show that, although the information campaigns are serving the policy goal of curbing irregular migration, they also facilitate diplomatic relationships, which benefits the core task of the Repatriation & Departure Service – returning migrants to Albania. The Albanian authorities also use the information campaigns to secure its current right to visa-free travel to the Schengen area. These macro-institutional factors explain why the Albanian evaluation document critically examined whether information campaigns contribute to solving irregular migration to the European Union.

Chapter 6: Comparative analysis

In this chapter, I analyse the empirical findings of the *Migrants as Messengers* campaigns and the IOM information campaigns in Albania by describing how and to what extent these differences in policy evaluation processes are explained in terms of diverging institutional settings. I also consider the extent to which the expectations of this study, which distinguished between micro-, meso-, and macro- institutional settings, have been met.

6.1 Evaluation analysis

This research started with the empirical observation that, although funded by the same government and implemented by the same IGO, the evaluation components of information campaigns show considerable differences. In both instances, the (academic) controversy on the effectiveness of information campaigns for the purpose of curbing irregular migration to the European Union, and the significance of evaluation components to measure the results of information campaigns, was known to the involved stakeholders due to a sceptical report by the Dutch Research & Documentation Centre (Schans & Optekamp, 2016).

The findings show that the involved stakeholders proceeded with the utilisation of different evaluative discourses to show the results of the campaigns (Fischer, 1999). The evaluation of the *Migrants as Messengers* campaign is primarily focused on verifying the extent to which the project activities are effective for reaching the project objectives with scientifically rigorous evaluation methods, which adheres to the technical verification discourse. In this sense, the implementation of this impact evaluation is a direct response to the criticism expressed by academia on the lack of adequate evaluation tools in this policy field (Brekke & Thorbjørnsrud, 2018). The responsiveness to earlier academic criticism is also reflected in the design of the campaign. The focus on return migrants and peer-to-peer communication is a result of the argument that top-down information provision from the European Union or its member states is generally not trusted (Schans & Optekamp, 2016). The findings of the evaluation suggest that working with returnees is more successful, as their emotional message has a large impact on risk perception and reducing intention to migrate irregularly.

The *Migrants as Messengers* impact evaluation confirms the methodological challenges related to evaluating the impact of information campaigns on irregular migration flows (Browne 2015; Heller 2014; McNevin 2016). Even with highly advanced scientific methods, migration *intention* is rigorously measured in this campaign, and not long-term behavioural change. Although the impact evaluations of the second phase of this campaign will reveal more insight

into long-term behavioural change, it should not be overlooked that the findings of randomised controlled trials ultimately remain highly contextual (Peters et al., 2014). In other words, this type of impact evaluations cannot show that information campaigns work everywhere, all the time, and in the same way (Parkhurst, 2016). This is especially relevant for a complex phenomenon such as irregular migration, which is influenced by many different factors 'ranging from individual characteristics of potential migrants and their transnational social networks, to macro level variables such as poverty, conflict and political instability' (Schans & Optekamp, 2016). In fact, the evaluation document reports that individual risk perception might not be 'the main problem' and that it is possible that these macro level variables outweigh individual risk perception in case of irregular migratory behaviour (Dunsch et al., 2019, p. 45). In short, the evaluation cannot prove that information campaigns are an effective policy tool for controlling irregular migration flows.

The evaluation of the Albanian information campaign is primarily focused on validating the relevance of awareness-raising activities in the context of rising irregular migration numbers to the European Union, which adheres to situational validation discourse (Fischer, 1999). The evaluation is in line with earlier research suggesting that irregular migration is not caused by a lack of information on the dangers related to irregular migration (Van Bemmel, 2020; Hernández-Carretero & Carling, 2012). Moreover, the decrease in irregular migration numbers from Albania to the European Union, together with an increase in 'accurate' perceptions on EU asylum procedures in the period of campaign implementation, are also due to the fact that acquaintances have returned from the European Union. The evaluation therefore advocates that the problem of irregular migration should be tackled with institutional solutions (Weiss & Tschirhart, 1994), in this case by opening up additional channels for regular migration. This is not a new idea in migration management, as the pioneers of migration management discourse widely advocated for more regular pathways in the 1990s (Ghosh, 2000). Yet, this 'regulated openness' is not considered a realistic option by the Dutch government, which shows how the perceived interest of the receiving state does not always align with the perceived interest of the sending state (Geiger & Pécoud, 2010).

The findings provide for multiple explanations why the involved stakeholders deem these information campaigns successful enough to continue with follow-up campaigns, despite the fact that the evaluations did not prove that they were effective for the purpose of reducing irregular migration flows to the European Union. Firstly, both campaigns highlight that

information campaigns are relatively inexpensive compared to the costs of one asylum seeker in the asylum procedure. This cost-benefit analysis shows that a relatively low number of potential migrants needs to refrain from irregularly migrating to the Netherlands in order to make the information campaign efficient (Weiss & Tschirhart, 1994). In the Albanian case, however, the uncertain results of the project activities were also taken into account, which caused the information campaign to be considered relatively expensive. This consideration is more related to a risk-benefit analysis, although the risks remain unquantified in this case (Fischer, 1999, p. 38).

Secondly, these explanations can be found on the level of societal vindication, although they differ considerably between the two information campaigns. In the context of *Migrants as Messengers,* it was argued that the campaigns have broader societal value, because by preventing irregular migration, they can protect migrants from human trafficking or drowning in the Mediterranean Sea. The possibility that migrants' lives can be saved is therefore reason enough to continue the project activities. The Albanian evaluation document highlights that information campaigns have broader societal value, because they have the potential of informing the public on existing job opportunities in Albania. Furthermore, the respondents highlighted in this context that the activities are useful to facilitate diplomatic relationships between state actors, and that they have a (symbolic) function of showing the Dutch public that measures are undertaken to stop irregular migration to the European Union.

This confirms the arguments made by Oeppen (2016) and Schans & Optekamp (2016), since information campaigns are indeed used symbolically by European government actors to 'be seen to be doing something' to control migration and prevent violations of human rights by the (voting) public of their countries. Furthermore, information campaigns can be used symbolically in order to facilitate diplomatic relationships between countries of origin and destination, confirming the argument by Nieuwenhuys & Pécoud (2007) that information campaigns facilitate cooperation with sending states. However, this also shows a more nuanced picture: better information campaigns are considered to be useful to provide factual information on key security measures during the irregular journey, which may prevent severe human rights violations and/or death by drowning in the Mediterranean Sea. This is a goal that should be considered separately from the migration management purpose, and is solely focused on the protection of the migrant. If the campaign is able to prevent irregular migration to a certain

extent but overall, irregular migration numbers increase due to other factors, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs still regards the information campaigns as successful.

Interestingly, the Albanian evaluation document also verifies the information campaign from an ideological perspective. Considering the human right to freedom of movement, the interviewees in this evaluation document argue that irregular migration should be tackled by providing more regular programmes for migration. Information campaigns do not necessarily contribute to this human right, unless when they are utilised for informing Albanian population on their migration rights. Contrarily, *Migrants as Messengers* is considered ideologically important from a rights-based perspective, as the project activities can help in making safer migration decisions, safeguarding human rights to life and torture and forced labour, for example (OHCHR, 2014). This shows how rights-based frameworks are mobilised both in favour and against the deployment of information campaigns (McNevin et al., 2016).

6.2 Institutional analysis

This research departed from the theoretical notion that information campaigns are designed, implemented and evaluated in complex policy systems, which means that multi-level institutional factors explain (diverging) evaluation processes (Sanderson, 2000). The empirical findings show that institutional factors on the macro-level, meso-level and micro-level all prove to have explanatory value in this regard, although in different ways.

Macro-institutional factors

Firstly, the diverging project evaluations can be explained by the broader administrative culture in which the information campaigns and their evaluations took place. The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs makes use of technical verification discourse for its policies by utilising results-based frameworks, and has in-house technical expertise on impact evaluations with the existence of the Directorate of International Research and Policy Evaluation (IOB). Furthermore, it has wider experience with (scientifically rigid) impact evaluations through collaborations with development partners, such as the World Bank. This 'results-oriented culture' is based on the fact that the effectiveness of development aid has often been politically contested (Cracknell, 1996). In this sense, it can be argued that the high focus on technical verification for the *Migrants as Messengers* campaign is a result of the informal rules that guide ideas on evaluation processes (Turnpenny, 2008). Furthermore, policy procedures regarding WODC research (Schans & Optekamp, 2016) ensured that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

formally committed to raising attention on the evaluation components of information campaigns. Finally, *Migrants is Messengers* is funded with Official Development Assistance (ODA), which gives the campaign a humanitarian purpose besides its migration management purpose. This explains the societal vindication argument that information campaigns are valuable, because they can potentially help (irregular) migrants with safer migration decisions.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs approached the recently established GMDAC, IOM's data analysis centre, for the implementation of the impact evaluation. The establishment of GMDAC within IOM is meant to contribute to a 'paradigm shift' in international migration policy analysis by conducting scientifically rigorous impact evaluations (Dunsch et al., 2019). This indicates that IOM will most likely conduct more impact evaluations to demonstrate the impact and effectiveness of its policy programmes. This macro-institutional factor partially contradicts McNevin et al. (2016), who argue that the commissioner-producer principle which underlies the project management of IOM tend to produce 'light-touch' evaluations (for example, measuring the amount of people attending campaign activities) that safeguard the funding of follow-up campaigns. The mission of GMDAC clearly contradicts this criticism. However, it should be noted that this impact evaluation was conducted only several months after the campaign, which means that it was not able to capture the long-term effects of the campaign on migrant behaviour. This confirms the observations made by McNevin et al. (2016).

Compared to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Repatriation & Departure Service is less focused on results-based programming. In the context of the Albanian information campaigns, IOM Albania requested an external evaluation from the donors, which the Repatriation & Departure Service agreed with in light of the formal commitment that the Minister for Migration made in the letter to the House of Representatives to raise the effectiveness of information campaigns. Although external evaluations are not standardised for IOM, hiring external consultants usually takes place whenever the donors ensure funding for it. The subsequent evaluation process confirms the remarks made by McNevin et al. (2016), since the evaluation falls short on measuring the (long-term) effectiveness of the campaign. Although the evaluation argues otherwise, it cannot be concluded that the campaign activities had a large impact on the project objectives. However, the evaluation report does provide a more critical, holistic picture of the relevance of the campaign with regards to irregular migration, arguing that other contextual factors and policies might have more impact than the campaign activities. This

contradicts McNevin et al. (2016), who argue that IOM evaluations have the primary function of showing campaigns' successes.

In other words, the macro-institutional environments of the information campaigns generally show that the 'existential' institutional constraints on part of IOM are partially mediated by the fact that the donor organisations committed to raising more attention on evaluation components of information campaigns. The expectation that both evaluations are focused on technical verification due to this commitment is only partially met, as the Albanian information campaign was more focused on situational validation discourse. This macro-institutional assessment hardly explains why the evaluation of the Albanian information campaign pertain mostly to the situational validation discourse. Hiring external consultants for more elaborate evaluations in order to gain insight on the perceived impact of the campaign by relevant stakeholders may be institutionalised practise within IOM, but this remains unclear. Furthermore, the expectation that societal vindication and ideological choice discourse are more relevant to information campaigns funded by development and humanitarian budget lines is refuted. In fact, these discourses were explicitly mentioned in the Albanian evaluation document, whereas they were largely absent from the *Migrants as Messengers* document.

Finally, the assessment only partially confirms the expectation that funders have a large influence on the evaluation process. Although the funders are in charge of the budget, institutional factors on part of IOM, as well as networks with other relevant stakeholders, determine how an evaluation process unfolds. This is illustrated most clearly by the fact that the impact evaluation of the first phase of *Migrants as Messengers* was not funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but by the British government. This shows the importance of meso-institutional assessments.

Meso-institutional factors

Factors on the institutional meso-level show that both evaluations should be contextualised within complex governance networks (Sanderson, 2000). In both cases, governance networks with other EU member states provided opportunities for co-funding mechanisms, which means that both campaigns were able to include more elaborate evaluation components (Van Selm, 2008). The more elaborate governance networks of the *Migrants as Messengers* campaign compared to the Albanian information campaigns explain why technical verification was used

more elaborately and with more rigorous methods. Firstly, this is because networks with several EU member states on the topic of enhancing effectiveness for information campaigns were formed, which have now grown into a regular technical working group facilitated by the European Migration Network (Koon et al., 2013). Secondly, this is because, through these governance networks, the involvement of GMDAC was manifested with funding from the British Department for International Development. GMDAC, in turn, invited external consultants to assist in the evaluation process. In the case of the Albanian information campaigns, the collaboration with the Belgian Federal Public Service of Home Affairs (IBZ) did not concern the funding of the evaluation component, but the overall funding of the campaign. The participation of technical experts in the evaluation process therefore remained relatively limited.

The more elaborate governance network of the *Migrants as Messengers* campaign can also be explained as a result of coordination procedures within the Dutch government. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is established as the forerunner on Dutch policy on information campaigns. The Repatriation & Departure Service therefore leaves issues related to policy learning for information campaigns to this Ministry. For this reason, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has more budget available for the funding of larger information campaigns with more innovative approaches, such as the use of return migrants. More importantly, the Ministry has the funding to implement impact evaluations, which is costly compared to other types of evaluations considering the high amount of required human resources (Ardittis & Laczko, 2008).

In both governance networks, the respondents underline the respectable relationship between the government actor and the IOM offices. Communication on the information campaigns takes place on a regular basis, in which (technical) feedback from the donor organisations is common (Van Selm, 2008). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs highlighted that implementing organisations indeed tend to report more positively on project results to ensure future funding (McNevin et al., 2016), so it is important to establish mutual trust in order to facilitate policy learning. IOM Albania regularly updates the Repatriation & Departure Service on their campaign results and receives elaborate feedback from the donor organisation on project proposals. This might explain why both evaluation documents included critical components, such as the limitations of the impact evaluation in case of the *Migrants as Messengers* campaign, and the critical opinions on the relevance of information campaigns in the Albanian context.

Both campaigns hired external consultants for the evaluation process, but the consultants had a different function in the evaluation process, which resulted in a more 'external' evaluation for the Albanian information campaign (Balthasar, 2009). With regards to the *Migrants as Messengers,* the consultants provided more technical assistance in the first phase, resulting in the more elaborate use of technical verification discourse. The involved respondents explained the benefits of the fact that GMDAC is formally part of IOM, as it facilitates interaction between the evaluators and the implementers. These feedback loops constitute policy learning through participation of the implementing and funding actors in the evaluation process (Patton, 1997). In this governance network, elaborate communication between the evaluators and the involved 'donors' takes place, although only to a small extent with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the first phase of the campaign. IOM Albania expressed that the independence of the evaluator is necessary to make the research findings more accountable and to make sure that different perspectives on the functioning of information campaigns are included. Communication between the evaluator and the 'donors' did not take place during this evaluation process. This fits the assumption that government funds are more legitimate if evaluated by an external evaluator (Conley-Tylor, 2005). The notion of IOM Albania that different perspectives should be included in order to measure 'impact' also explains the research methods of this evaluation, which resulted in the more elaborate use of situational validation, as well as elements of societal vindication and ideological choice, in the evaluation document.

In short, the meso-institutional environment shows that the focus on technical verification in the *Migrants as Messengers* evaluation can be explained because a co-funding mechanism with the British government facilitated a relatively costly impact evaluation, confirming the theoretical expectation that more elaborate evaluations can be established with multiple donors (Van Selm, 2008). Moreover, coordination within the Dutch government established that information campaigns are primarily funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which means that this Ministry has more budget available for funding impact evaluations than the Repatriation & Departure Service. The focus on situational validation, societal vindication (and to a small extent ideological choice) in the Albanian evaluation document can be explained because it concerned an evaluation in which the external evaluator included the perspectives of the involved stakeholders in the evaluation document. This led to an assessment in which the project's relevance was established for the overall problem situation, as well as for Albania's society as a whole. The quality of the relationship between the funder, implementing agency and/or evaluator is not of high explanatory value with regards to situational validation. In fact,

more communication takes place between the funder and evaluators in the *Migrants as Messengers* campaign, which is highly focused on technical verification. This expectation has therefore not been met.

Micro-institutional factors

The policy interests of the involved stakeholders provide for multiple micro-institutional explanations for the (diverging) evaluative discourses. Both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Repatriation & Departure Service have a policy interest in decreasing irregular migration to the European Union, and regard information campaigns as a potential policy tool for this migration management purpose (Nieuwenhuys & Pécoud, 2007). This is especially the case for the Repatriation & Departure Service, which deploys these information campaigns to curb the number of Albanian 'climbers' (*inklimmers*) from the Dutch sea harbours to the UK, as well as to prevent Albanians from 'misusing' the Dutch asylum procedure as they are citizens from an identified safe country. The informal cost-benefit analysis illustrates most clearly how this policy interest translates into technical verification, which demonstrates that the costs of information campaigns outweigh the costs of one asylum seeker in the Dutch asylum procedure. This policy interest also explains why *Migrants as Messengers* is technically verified on its effects on migration intention in Phase I, and directly on irregular migration behaviour in Phase II. Finally, it explains why the Albanian evaluation document critically examined whether information campaigns contribute to solving irregular migration to the European Union.

However, both government actors also possess other policy interests for which information campaigns are utilised. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has committed to the policy goal of protecting migrants on the move, specifically from human trafficking. This is not necessarily a 'by-product of the cooperation between sending and receiving states and nonstate actors which need to find a common ground to develop common actions' as Nieuwenhuys & Pécoud suggest (2007, p. 1690). Indeed, human trafficking issues are recognised as an easier topic to cooperate on with the authorities of countries of origin, because the countries of origin have an interest to protect their citizens from human trafficking. However, the Ministry shares humanitarian concerns related to human trafficking in sending and transit countries. This explains why information campaigns are societally vindicated on their contribution to human rights, as they can help migrants in making safer migration decisions after they have embarked on their irregular journey.

The instrumental use of information campaigns to facilitate cooperation with the sending state is more prominent in the case of the Albanian information campaign. The Repatriation & Departure Service utilises information campaigns for maintaining a respectable relationship with the Albanian authorities and vice versa. This relationship is important for its primary mission: the (forced) return of rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants to their countries of origin. The Albanian authorities, risking its current right to visa-free travel in the Schengen area, also regards the information campaigns as a tool to maintain this diplomatic relationship. These policy interests differ from IOM Albania, which primarily advocates for opening up more regular pathways to the European Union to tackle irregular migration. Such 'nuance differences', as one respondent framed it, show most directly that information campaigns are indeed formulated in discourse coalitions, in which the objectives of the stakeholders involved differ under the umbrella of the shared 'awareness-raising' project objectives (Czaika & De Haas, 2016).

Interestingly, the policy goals of IOM Albania explain the presence of societal vindication and ideological choice in the Albanian document. This is a direct result of the fact that the consultant included the perspectives of IOM staff on the usefulness of information campaigns for reducing irregular migration in her research. Furthermore, the notion that information campaigns can contribute to local development by informing Albanians on job opportunities in the country may be a result of the fact that state institution partners were interviewed by the consultant, including the State Social Service under the Albanian Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and regional social service offices.

In short, this micro-institutional assessment on the policy interests of the involved actors explain why *Migrants as Messengers* is technically verified on its impact on migration intention, because the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a policy interest in reducing the number of irregular migrants to the EU. Similarly, the IOM information campaign in Albania is situationally validated on its relevance for irregular migration to the European Union out of policy interests of both the Repatriation & Departure Service and the Albanian authorities to reduce the number of irregular migrants. This confirms the expectations highlighted in chapter two. The differences in societal vindication discourse are explained by the fact that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, IOM and the authorities of the West African countries of origin have a policy interest in protecting people on the move, who face multiple life-threatening dangers in transit

countries and while trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea. Unlike the expectation highlighted in chapter two, which argued that this Dutch policy objective is purely to facilitate cooperation with the sending states, this is because the protection of people on the move is an explicit policy goal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Nieuwenhuys & Pécoud, 2007). This is less prevalent in the Dutch-Albanian case, where the policy interests of the Repatriation & Departure Service and the Albanian authorities are more focused on curbing irregular migration flows to the European Union. However, the policy interests IOM Albania and local stakeholders, such as social services, explain why social vindication and ideological choice are used to highlight the broader societal value of information campaigns and to advocate for the human right to freedom of movement.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and policy recommendations

In this final chapter, I make concluding remarks on this research in section 7.1. After that, I situate these conclusions in the general academic debate on information campaigns in section 7.2. Finally, I discuss the limitations of this research, as well as alternative interpretations of the research findings in section 7.4. Finally, in section 7.4, I explicate multiple policy recommendations that can be derived from the findings of this research.

7.1 Conclusion

Migration-related *information- and awareness campaigns* have been criticised for their lack of effectiveness to reduce 'irregular' forms of migration. Although the lack of adequate evaluation tools has been identified as one of the causes for this ineffectiveness, an in-depth assessment of the evaluation processes of these information campaigns is still missing (Brekke & Thorbjørnsrud, 2018). In order to fill this important gap in academic literature, the aim of this research was to answer the following research question:

How are information- and awareness campaigns evaluated and how can these evaluation patterns be explained?

Although both funded by the Dutch government and implemented by the International Organisation for Migration, the evaluations of the *Migrants as Messengers* information campaign and the *Preventing Unsafe Migration from Albania Towards European Member States* information campaign show considerable differences. Adhering to technical verification discourse, the *Migrants as Messengers* evaluation is far more advanced in measuring the impact and effectiveness of the project activities. However, the evaluation of the IOM campaign in Albania allows for a more critical perspective on the relevance of information campaigns for the identified problem of irregular migration to the European Union with the use of situational validation discourse (Fischer, 1999). These differences in first-order evaluation can be explained by institutional factors on the micro-, meso-, and macro-level (Turnpenny et al., 2008). The Department of Stability and Humanitarian Aid of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the main funder of information campaigns within the Dutch government, and has a results-based culture with technical expertise on impact evaluations through its engagement with international (development) organisations. Moreover, the establishment of a data analysis centre (GMDAC) within IOM, as well as a GMDAC impact evaluation project funded by the British Department for International Development, explain why *Migrants as Messengers* is

primarily technically verified. Contrarily, a co-funding mechanism between the Dutch Repatriation & Departure Service and the Belgian Federal Public Service of Home Affairs (IBZ) provided an opportunity to fund an external consultant to evaluate the Albanian information campaign. This consultant captured the perspectives of the involved stakeholders on the relevance of the project activities in the context of 'solving' the issue of irregular migration to the European Union.

Both campaigns also induced second-order evaluative discourse. On the level of societal vindication, *Migrants as Messengers* is evaluated on its value to inform potential migrants on the dangers related to the irregular journey, which can help them in making safer migration decisions. The Albanian case highlights that information campaigns are valuable for spreading information about existing job opportunities in the country. Moreover, the campaigns facilitate diplomatic cooperation between the Dutch and Albanian authorities and they are symbolically valuable for showing the Dutch public that measures are undertaken to deter irregular migrants from 'safe countries' (Oeppen, 2016). On the level of ideological choice, rights-based discourses are mobilised in different ways (McNevin, 2016). From the perspective of the human right to freedom of movement, interviewees in the Albanian evaluation document argue that information campaigns are only ideologically contributive when combined with regular migration channels and if utilised for informing the Albanian population on their migration rights. Considering the human rights that are violated in cases of human trafficking, *Migrants as Messengers* is evaluated as valuable for protecting migrants, which is ideologically important for its potential to safe migrant's lives. These differences can be explained by the fact that *Migrants as Messengers* is funded with Dutch Official Development Assistance, as well as the humanitarian policy goal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to protect people on the move. The Repatriation & Departure Service deploys the Albanian information campaigns more instrumentally for the goal of curbing irregular migration and, as a secondary goal, to facilitate diplomatic cooperation on return migration. However, since the consultant included the perspectives of stakeholders such as IOM Albania and local social services, the document expresses the broader societal potential of information campaigns, as well as their ideological contribution to the right to freedom of movement if combined with more regular migration channels.

7.2 Theoretical and empirical contributions

This research offers multiple significant contributions to the field of migration- and public administration studies. Most significantly, it seeks to link Fischer's (1999) conceptual framework on evaluation discourses with new institutionalist thought (March & Olsen, 1984), in order to gain a better understanding on the institutional circumstances that influence the deployment of technical verification, situational validation, societal vindication and ideological choice discourse. This research shows that, although micro-institutional factors have significant explanatory value, meso- and macro-institutional factors are of explanatory value as well, underlying the importance of institutional assessments compared to rational assessments (Turnpenny et al., 2008). This is especially relevant for international policies where projects are subcontracted to IGOs or other third parties. The governance networks of these evaluation processes are highly complex, which necessitates a multi-layered conceptual framework that is able to capture the influence of informal rules that guide ideas about evaluation within multiple organisations (Sanderson, 2000). However, this research is only a modest contribution to this theoretical notion. Wider research into the meso- and macro-institutional factors is needed in order to reveal how the relationship between these institutional factors and evaluation discourses manifests itself beyond a small case study.

Secondly, one of the questions which has preoccupied academics in the field of migration studies is why EU policies 'seem to have had little success in preventing unwanted flows and effectively managing immigration' (Castles, 2004, p. 205). This case study on information campaigns contributes to understanding why this is the case from both a policy and implementation perspective (Czaika & de Haas, 2016). Although the formal policy objective is to decrease irregular migration, information campaigns are also designed to help (irregular) migrants in making safer migration choices (during their journey), to symbolise government concern to the Dutch public, or to facilitate diplomatic relationships between state actors. These objectives do not require information campaigns to be highly effective for a migration management purpose. At the same time, this study also illustrates the challenges of conducting information campaigns for the purpose of migration management, as it is a soft policy tool based on advice and persuasion. How the information that these campaigns try to convey will translate into behaviour, remains highly dependent on both individual and societal characteristics (Schans & Optekamp, 2016). It is therefore important to point out that the evaluations of these information campaigns should not only be focused on measuring the impact on behavioural changes prior to the irregular journey, but also on measuring their contributions

to the purposes highlighted above, especially on their value for protecting migrants on the move. Only with this more holistic understanding on the multiple purposes of information campaigns, a balanced assessment can be made on the benefits and limitations of these policy projects (Mendelsohn, 1973).

Thirdly, this research is one of the first academic studies which highlights the role of GMDAC within IOM. This is an important empirical finding for two reasons. Firstly, the impact evaluations that GMDAC conducts for *Migrants as Messengers* are interesting developments, not only for the field of migration but for the general policy field of public information campaigns, as an attempt will be made to reveal the direct causal mechanisms between campaign activity and migration behaviour (Weiss & Tschirhart, 1994). Secondly, the establishment of GMDAC shows how IOM has not only responded to calls for better international migration data and analysis, but also to establish more evidence-based programming in order to increase the effectiveness of migration policies. This shows the empirical significance of the so-called 'EBP-movement' for the field of migration policy (Parkhurst, 2016). Although it is highly important to provide better answers to the question 'what works' in migration policy, this research has indicated that this is primarily a step forward in evaluative technical verification discourse (Fischer, 1999). Moreover, some critics argue that this focus on evidence-based programming risks obscuring the wider political and social values at stake (Pécoud 2010; Wesselink et al., 2014). These empirical observations provide for interesting starting points for comparative research on the use of evidence-based policymaking by IGOs, for instance on the role of evidence-based policymaking within IOM compared to development agencies such as the World Bank. As mentioned in this research, these development agencies have wider experience with rigorous impact evaluations. An investigation on the formal and informal rules that guide these evaluation processes might reveal which institutional circumstances are needed to 'embed key principles about evidence utilisation into policy processes' (Parkhurst, 2016).

In the fourth place, this study is significant for showing how evaluation systems established within governments can impact international migration policies (Van Selm, 2008). Formal policy procedures, in which research conducted by the Research & Documentation Centre (WODC) is generally communicated to the House of Representatives with an official policy response, are important mechanisms that can ensure the use of evaluation findings in policy processes. This underlines the significance of institutions such as the WODC, which produced

a research that is not only important for the Dutch policy environment, but is also significant for international policy circles, including the IOM (Schans & Optekamp, 2016). Secondly, this research highlights the importance of the Directorate of International Research and Policy Evaluation of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to provide for a critical perspective on IOM evaluations. These mechanisms, which 'governs the use of evidence within policymaking' (Parkhurst, 2016), are interesting starting points for more comparative research on evaluation systems within migration policy in a similar vein to Van Selm (2008), in order to establish how institutions influence to role of evaluation research in the policy process (Giorgio et al., 2002).

Most importantly, the findings of this research provide for multiple explanations why the information campaigns, despite the fact that the evaluations did not prove that they were effective for the policy goal of reducing irregular migration, are still deemed successful enough by the involved stakeholders to continue with follow-up campaigns. In order to come to a better understanding of the benefits and limitations of information campaigns, academics should therefore pay as much attention to delineating the elements of success of information campaigns as has previously been allotted to demonstrating their failure (Mendelsohn, 1973, p. 61). In other words, these 'soft' policy tools focused on persuasion and advice should be analysed and evaluated beyond their goal of changing 'undesired' behaviour. Only then we are able to fully grasp their growing popularity in migration policy.

7.3 Limitations

In contrast to its valuable contributions, this research also contains multiple limitations, resulting from the chosen theories and methods, as well as the case selection. Firstly, there are multiple gaps in the macro-, meso- and micro-level institutional assessments. Compared to the meso- and macro-analyses, the macro-institutional analysis is less elaborate, especially for the IOM information campaign in Albania. It could be institutionalised practise for IOM Albania that in evaluation processes with an external consultant, in-depth qualitative interviews with the involved stakeholders take place on the relevance of the project for the problem situation. In this case, the macro-institutional environment does explain why this particular evaluation mostly used situational validation. On the meso-level, it is uncertain how the co-funders of these campaigns, the United Kingdom and Belgium, have influenced the evaluation process. Especially in the case of *Migrants as Messengers*, the respondents argued that the British focus on evidence-based policymaking has a relatively large influence on the way DFID funded projects are evaluated. Moreover, the organisational interests of IOM, especially GMDAC in

the case of *Migrants as Messengers*, are largely missing from the micro-institutional assessment.

Secondly, this institutional assessment is not able to capture the links between the micro-, meso- and macro-institutional factors. For example, in the case of *Migrants as Messengers,* the research-based culture of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs influenced the fact that governance networks were formed on the effectiveness of information campaigns. Furthermore, evaluation patterns can often be explained by multiple institutional factors. For example, the technical involvement of the Directorate of International Research & Policy Evaluation is both a macro-level explanation for technical verification discourse, as well as a meso-level explanation. In other words, although this conceptual framework is useful for capturing complex policy systems, it does have practical limitations when applied empirically.

Thirdly, although the campaigns have similar organisational settings, it should not be overlooked that the broader context of these information campaigns are highly dissimilar. *Migrants as Messengers* is implemented in West African countries: increased irregular migration from these countries to the European Union has been accompanied with the high increase of missing migrants or migrant deaths, which makes the humanitarian concern on irregular migration naturally pressing. Although human trafficking still prevails in Albania and from Albania to the European Union, Albanians are able to travel without visa to the Schengen area, principally without the help of smugglers and traffickers. Secondly, Albania is in the process of becoming an EU-member state and is declared a 'safe country', which practically means that Albanian asylum seekers go through an accelerated asylum procedure in the Netherlands. This is not the case for the West African countries targeted in the *Migrants as Messengers* campaign, which are, with the exception of Senegal, not on the Dutch list of 'safe countries'. These factors could have played a role in the different project evaluations, but due the limited scope of this research I was unable to capture how they could have influenced the evaluation processes.

Finally, an important limitation related to the case selection is the time frame of this research. The IOM information campaign in Albania will have a second follow-up campaign in 2021, which is supported by the AMIF-fund and will make use of the innovative approaches of *Migrants as Messengers,* such as the mobilisation of trust networks through return migrants. It is not unlikely that the project funding for this campaign will allow for a more similar

evaluation component as *Migrants as Messengers,* which will make this institutional comparison less relevant. Moreover, although this was not the purpose of this research, this indicates that a definitive reflection on the practical implications of the letter that was sent to the House of Representatives is too early.

7.4 Policy recommendations

Based on the empirical and theoretical observations of this research, several policy recommendations can be made that apply both to the Dutch government actors involved in information- and awareness campaigns, as well as to the International Organisation for Migration.

1. Complement current impact evaluations of information campaigns with longitudinal research designs

A recurring theme in this research is the fact that the project evaluations were only able to capture the short-term impact of information campaigns on migrant behaviour. As a result, it is currently unclear *how long* the information campaigns are able to influence risk perception, and if risk perception and knowledge levels are relevant catalysers for migration intention and behaviour at all (McNevin, 2016). Longitudinal research designs that track potential migrants over multiple years, aimed at understanding which factors determine why someone decides to stay or leave the country of origin after campaign activities have taken place, can increase understanding on these programme theories. Furthermore, research should be conducted on how the campaign activities have influenced the irregular journey, in order to investigate in which ways the activities were able to help migrants in making safer decisions not only before, but also *during* the irregular journey.

2. Clarify the different policy objectives of information- and awareness campaigns

The project rationales and problem definition describe irregular migration flows to the European Union as the 'problem', which can cause confusion on whether information campaigns are aimed to 'solve' this problem. As this research has showed, information campaigns are used for a variety of policy goals that are not always clearly communicated. As a result, the main focus of the controversy surrounding information campaigns is about their lack of effectiveness when used for migration management purposes. If it is explicitly mentioned that information campaigns also, or perhaps primarily, aim to be effective for informing migrants on the dangers they may encounter along their irregular journey, this can

enhance understanding on why information campaigns do not necessarily have to be highly effective for curbing irregular migration flows to the European Union. This type of goal clarification also enhances the legitimacy of the evidence resulting from evaluation research (Parkhurst, 2016, p. 142).

3. *Integrate second-order policy evaluation in policy- and project evaluation systems*

In their review on public information campaigns in multiple policy domains, Weiss & Tschirhart (1994) argue that information campaigns raise both positive and negative normative concerns. This necessitates a division between campaigns with 'good' and 'bad' effects, which is impossible, because all information campaigns seem to possess both (p. 100). Migration-related information campaigns are no exception to these concerns. Some academics argue that, although they can balance harmful information provided by human traffickers, they also perpetuate the idea that irregular migration is the result of human traffickers and 'misbehaving' migrants only (Oeppen, 2016). Others raise the idea that European policymakers cynically design information campaigns to 'confer a sympathetic and human face to their migration-control policies' (Nieuwenhuys & Pécoud, 2007, p. 1690).

In order to contribute to the resolution of these controversies, evaluation research has a role to play in investigating these normative concerns, by complementing existing evaluation research with second-order policy evaluations (Giorgio et al., 2002). The debate on the effectiveness of information campaigns has led to more impact evaluations, which is an important step forward and can bring significant insight to which strategies work better to raise awareness on the implications of (irregular) migration or enhance risk perceptions. However, besides bringing nuance to the variety of information campaigns that exist, they do not contribute to resolving these normative concerns. The question why information campaigns are useful beyond their purpose of controlling irregular migration flows has shortly been touched upon by the research conducted by the Dutch Research & Documentation Centre (WODC) (Schans & Optekamp, 2016), but can and should be further elaborated upon. Project- and policy evaluations can contribute to the resolution of these normative controversies by elaborately explicating the underlying ideologies of information campaigns, in order to reveal which social values are at stake (Wesselink, 2014).

4. *Install (more) policy procedures that ensure the appropriate use of evaluation research for policymaking*

In order to guarantee the 'good' use of evidence for migration policy, evaluation systems should 'work to embed key normative principles about evidence utilisation into policy processes' (Parkhurst, 2016). An important finding of this research is that the policy procedures regarding WODC research led to the formal commitment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Repatriation & Departure Service to raise the effectiveness of information campaigns, by paying extra attention to evaluation components. This underlines the institutional importance of the WODC, which has an important role to play in bridging academic circles with policy circles. At the same time, this raises questions about the democratic potential of the WODC. The WODC could more actively communicate its research findings to the Dutch public in order to facilitate public deliberation and engagement (Parkhurst, 2016). This is especially relevant for a topic such as information- and awareness campaigns, which is an abstract topic for many Dutch citizens.

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Appendices

Appendix I: list of analysed documents

General

Document name	Type of document
Dijkhoff, K. & L. Ploumen (2017, 22 March). WODC onderzoek informatiecampagnes [Letter to the House of Representatives]. Accessed on: https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2017/03/22/tk-bijlage-raising-awareness-changing-behavior on 1 February 2020	Policy document

Migrants as Messengers

Document name	Type of document
Dunsch, A.F., J. Tjaden & W. Quiviger (2019). *Migrants as Messengers – The Impact of Peer-to-Peer Communication of Potential Migrants in Senegal. Impact Evaluation Report.* Geneva: International Organisation for Migration & GMDAC – IOM's Global Migration Data Analysis Centre.	Evaluation document – to be downloaded from: https://publications.iom.int/books/migrants-messengers-impact-peer-peer-communication-potential-migrants-senegal-impact
Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken (2018). *Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking: Theory of Change, Migratie en Ontwikkeling Narratief.* the Hague, the Netherlands	Policy document – to be requested at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken (2020). *Annual Plan 2020. Results Framework Migration & Development.* Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken: the Hague, the Netherlands	Policy document – to be requested at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Preventing Unsafe Migration from Albania towards the European Union Member States

Document name	Type of document
Nepravishta, R. (2018). *Final evaluation report: Project 'Preventing unsafe migration from Albania towards European Union member states.* International Organisation for Migration: Tirana, Albania.	Evaluation document – to be requested at OIG/Evaluation at Headquarters IOM (eva@iom.int)

IOM (2018). *Evaluation Brief: Final evaluation of the project: 'Preventing unsafe migration from Albania towards European Union member states.* Tirana: International Organisation for Migration.	Evaluation document – to be requested at OIG/Evaluation at Headquarters IOM (eva@iom.int)
Pema, S. (2018). *Media reporting on Migration Issues in Albania: Monitoring/Research study.* International Organisation for Migration: Tirana, Albania.	Evaluation document – to be requested at OIG/Evaluation at Headquarters IOM (eva@iom.int)
Joosten, C. (2016). 'Topvrouw Justitie: Het kinderpardon frustreerde ons werk'. *Elsevier Weekblad,* 10 November 2016. Accessed via LexusUni on 19 May 2020.	Newspaper article