

Roots & Routes

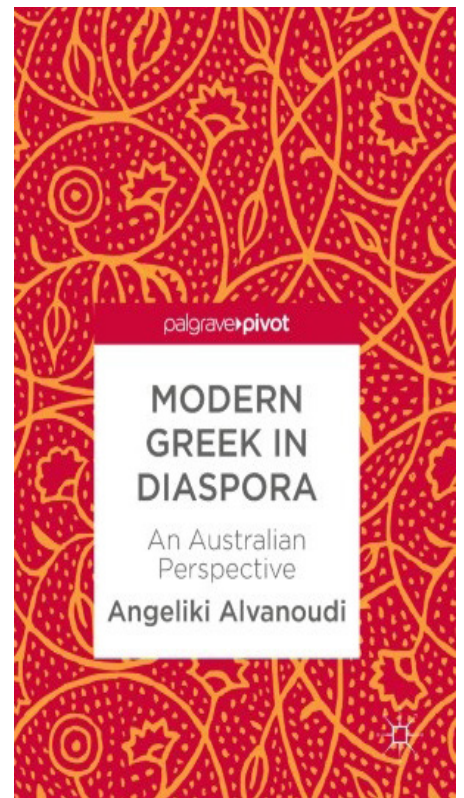
Vol 10, No. 4, April, 2021



Photo credits : <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1630027/>



Photo credit: FandimeFilmu



www.grfdt.com



Editor's Note



Contents

Movie Reviews
Book Review
Blog

Editorial Information
©GRFDT. Roots and Routes is printed,
designed & circulated by
GRFDT

Editor

Abhishek Yadav

Editorial Committee

Abhishek Yadav
Ani Yeremyan
Arsala Nizami
Feroz Khan
Gurram Srinivas
Kishlay Kirti
Mahalingam M
Monika Bisht Ranjan
Naziya Naweed
Nitesh Narnolia
Olatunbosun Emmanuel
OGUNSEEMI
Parul Srivastava
Pratik Satyal
Paige Fabry
Rahul Kumar
Rajiv Mishra
Rakesh Ranjan
Razia Sultana
Sabah Khan
Sadananda Sahoo
Sharlene Chen
Smita Tiwary
Srinita Bhattacharjee
Zohra Hassani

Design and

Production:

Rakesh Ranjan &
Feroz Khan

Email: editorinchief@grfdt.com

Website: www.grfdt.org

Dear Readers,
Greetings!

The adverse impact of the pandemic is on the rise, and migrants all over the world are largely getting affected. Although good initiatives are being taken by some governments and civil society organisations, many states are still not prioritising welfare policies for the migrants who have been hard-hit because of the mobility restrictions. There is a need for global solidarity as it is the only hope for the entire humanity to come out of the narrow nationalistic vision that has constantly neglected the importance of migrants. Therefore, bringing the voice of the migrants to the world community through all positive means is essential. On this note, Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT) is constantly striving to bridge the gap between the policy and implementation through its various activities. Depicting its monthly works, GRFDT brings to you its organisational newsletter “Roots and Routes” for April 2021.

The newsletter contains movie reviews, book review and one interview. Lina Mansour has reviewed the movie titled “Almanya: Willkommen in Deutschland”, providing the telling account of Turkish immigrants living in Germany. Fabrizio Parrilli has reviewed the movie titled “Bienvenue a Marly-Gomont” (The African Doctor), describing the integration challenges of an African family in France. Moreover, Richa Kundu has reviewed the book “Modern Greek in Diaspora: An Australian Perspective”, explaining the crucial role of language in carrying over the cultural legacy and how different generations of immigrants deal with their linguistic identity. At last, my interview published by the Global Policy Institute, Queen Mary University of London, has been given a place in this issue. It describes the challenges being faced by researchers in conducting migration research during the pandemic.

Hoping for your feedback on the issue and any suggestion for the betterment of the newsletter will be highly appreciated.

Feel free to email at editorinchief@grfdt.com.

Happy Reading!

Abhishek Yadav

Almanya: Willkommen in Deutschland – A Cross-cultural Examination

Seventy years after Germany's infamous Wirtschaftswunder (economic miracle) and the bilateral deals with various countries to bring in foreign labor for the restructuring of the country, Germany's ethnic diversity has not been the same since. In the 2011 tragic comedy *Almanya: Willkommen in Deutschland* (Welcome to Germany), director and writer Yasemin Şamdereli presents us the story of three generations of a Turkish immigrant family in Germany that adapts and portrays identity politics and questions of belonging faced by the Turkish guest workers and their descendants.

Almanya spans two parallel storylines taking place in different time periods, one of a family moving from Turkey to Germany as foreign workers, the other is of the same family years later returning to Turkey for a visit as German citizens. When six-year-old Cenk Yılmaz, born to a German mother and a Turkish father, realizes that he was neither chosen for the German nor the Turkish football teams in his school as neither sides viewed him to be enough to belong to their group, he begins to question his identity and asks his family "am I German or Turkish?" In order to understand his heritage, his 22-year-old cousin Canan tells him the story of their Grandfather Huseyin who was among the 1,000,001 guest workers to arrive in Germany in the 1960s to fill in the labor shortage at the time. Huseyin who has just acquired his German citizenship tells his family that he purchased land in his home village in Anatolia in Turkey and he needs his family to

come "home" with him to help build the house. Throughout this road trip, the audience gets to understand the story of how they all came to Germany in the first place and how this has affected their struggle with their heritage now.

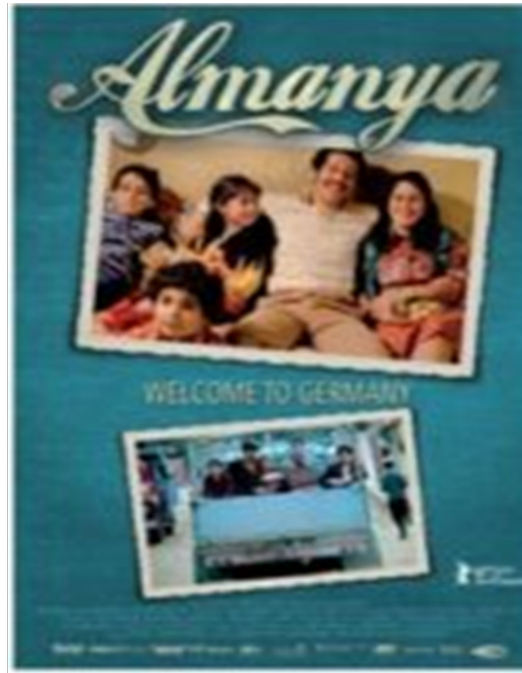


Photo credits : <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1630027/>

Almanya is a movie intended not only to bring Turkey to a wider audience, but to culturally examine what we know about the integration of guest workers in Germany in a balanced dramatic, and comic way.

Şamdereli pays attention to small details that eloquently bring to life realistic challenges of identity. In a lighthearted manner, the family attempts to celebrate Christmas just to feel like they belong with their surrounding society, but are soon faced

with the horror of their first time seeing Christ on a cross. Their grapple with the language is an experience that almost every immigrant faces upon arriving in a foreign country. Canan's storyline is of a Turkish girl who gets pregnant from her non-Turkish, non-Muslim boyfriend and this as well gives us an insight into how cultures and traditions are not easily preserved by generations born outside of them. The movie does a great job balancing comedy and drama and at times tugs at the audience's heartstrings. Although Turkish, Huseyin was refused burial on Turkish land due to his recently acquired German citizenship. We are presented with the harsh reality of the in-betweenness that immigrants live through, always a fine line away from being neither this nor that.

The question of ‘home’ becomes very prominent in this movie. What we know about the term ‘home’ ceases to exist and its place comes to a concept only an individual can identify for themselves. Additionally, the quotes used to accentuate the parallel between the family before and after coming to Germany resonate with the viewer and become impossible to resist.

“We are the sum of everything that happened before us, everything that was done under our eyes, everything that was done to us. We are every human being and everything whose existence influenced ours or was influenced by us. We are everything that happens after we are no more and what would not happen if we had not come.”

Perhaps one of the strongest ways to end a movie was the quote left on the black screen replacing the most commonly seen The End. The audience sees the words ***“Wirrieffen Arbeitskräfte,***

eskamen Menschen” (We called for workers, and people came) by the Swiss author Max Frisch in 1965. It felt like a strong reminder that in the midst of statistics and numbers, in the midst of headlines and news on immigrants, we forget the stories of individuals who are not just a collective identity meant to be solely discussed and talked about as policy issues. The quote serves as a beautiful conclusion to a movie that starts by painting itself as a historical retelling of a significant time period in Germany’s transformation, yet continues as a coming-of-age story of a family that finds itself in two completely different countries that come to create who they are as a whole.

Lina Mansour is currently pursuing a Masters in European Politics and International Relations. She previously worked for the International Organization for Migration (IOM Egypt) and has a particular interest in Euro-Mediterranean relations. She is an avid reader who enjoys books about cultural and identity politics.
 LinkedIn: @linamansour Twitter: @mindoflina

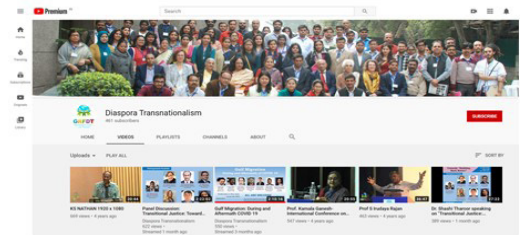
Subscribe to our YouTube channel



Diaspora Transnationalism



Visit www.grfdt.com for more information.



Bienvenue A' Marly-Gomont: A Tale of Integration beyond Stereotypes and Prejudices

'Welcome to Marly-Gomont' is a comedy movie based on a true story about the difficult process of integration of an African family in a small French community.

The story takes place in the 70s. At the Lille Faculty of Medicine, students are celebrating their graduation ready to practice the profession of a doctor. Among these students, Seyolo Zantoko, a native of the Democratic Republic of Congo (former Zaire governed by the eternal dictator President Mobuto), has the intention of [blob:https://web.whatsapp.com/3fc9d4cb-2b4e-4d9a-8f93-bd-3ba4c04fe4](https://web.whatsapp.com/3fc9d4cb-2b4e-4d9a-8f93-bd-3ba4c04fe4) refusing the opportunity of becoming Mobuto's personal doctor. His dream is to continue to live in his adopted country, but this time together with his family: his wife Anne and his two children Sivi and Kamini.

Not having French nationality yet, Seyolo takes advantage of the first and only job offer submitted to him by the mayor René Ramollu of the remote village Marly-Gomont, in the northern countryside of Paris, a place where no French doctor is willing to go. The doctor's family thus arrives in France, convinced that they are going to live in Paris. However, they find themselves in a peasant village with more cows than inhabitants, where no one has ever seen the shadow of a black man before. Consequently, it will be very challenging for the Zantoko family to be accepted in the village, and for Doctor, Seyolo to gain the trust of his patients.

The beauty of this film lies precisely in identifying the cold reception of citizens with an innocent ignorance due more to geographical than mental closure. As much as Seyolo tries to get into the

good graces of the community, the inhabitants continue to go to the doctor of the nearby village, and the few who go, claim not to pay since they do not consider him a real doctor. The distrust of fellow citizens is then pushed and increased by Jean-Marc Lavigne, the opposing candidate for the municipality elections against the more welcoming and tolerant Ramollu.

The climate of indifference and distrust changes after the Doctor helps a woman, who had always considered him a dirty monster, to give birth to

her child. However, the accomplishment gained by the confidence of the village's citizens does not last long. After his wife finds out that he has declined to be President Mobuto's personal doctor, she decides to leave Seyolo and moves to Brussels with her cousin.

In the end, the day of the municipal elections will be decisive for the permanence of the Zantoko family in Marly-Gomont and, in general, in Europe. With Ramollu's victory, Seyolo can continue to be a doctor and will remain in the little village with his family for life.

One of the peculiarities of the film is that it is based on a true story. In fact, the screenplay was also written by Kamini Zantoko, one of Seyolo's



Photo credit: *FandimeFilmu*

sons, who is now a famous rapper and comedian. The movie does not only deal with racism, stereotypes, and prejudices. The theme of the story is more nuanced and complex, but the director Julien Rimbaldi has been able to describe it in a very funny way which hits at the heart of every person regardless of the political, religious, and cultural belonging. It is never too excessive and, at times, moving. He has superbly depicted how a traditional community in Europe has managed to break down barriers and to welcome a foreign family, despite the solid prejudices and stereotypes.

The performance delivered by the actors is remarkable. The cast playing the family is composed of Mark Zinga (SeyoloZantoko), AïssaMaïga (Anne, Seyolo's wife), BayronLebli (Kamini), MédinaDiarra (Sivi). In addition to the principals, there is a superb cast of local characters. The ability to make people smile while dealing with important issues such as discrimination and integration, which for the current times remains a significant problem in Europe, is outstanding.

However, the movie does not only tell the story of a foreign family in another country, it also shows how to reach a peaceful integration in a foreign community. An impressive scene is that when the young Kamini refuses to go to school on account of being the only black boy. His father Seyolo advises him with the following words: "Only education matters. Especially when you're black". He demonstrates to his son how education, hard work, and respect may help him in every context and situation. Another touching scene is represented at the end of the movie, which displays Seyolo's funeral and his son Kamini saying: "At his funeral when I saw his patients arrive... it was like he'd given us all the same appointment. This last appointment was the proof of what he always wanted, some-

thing that had transformed into love. A simple love that said here we were at home".

Furthermore, the representation of distrust and racism that characterize the inhabitants of a little European village are dictated more by excessive stereotyping than by malice. It is just ignorance that separates the Zantoko family from the small and isolated community. Just imagine what would have happened if the story had taken place in a multicultural city like Paris or Brussels.

Finally, one of the most impressive and hilarious moments of the movie is the portrayal of the mixture between the varied and bizarre personalities of the village's inhabitants and the Zantoko's family relatives' explosive extravagance. The grey village becomes slowly lighted up with bright colors. The union between the two cultures produces a wonderful story of true humanity, mutual friendship, and respect.

I think the seriousness and the funniness of the movie make it adaptable to be watched by all people of different ages. I strongly recommend you watch it with your children, and I recommend all schools in Europe to show this movie to their students to discuss racism and integration. It is only in this way that the hope of a multicultural society will take shape.

Fabrizio Parrilli, Master's degree Student of International Cooperation on Human Rights at the University of Bologna, Italy. His areas of interest are mainly focused on international issues, contemporary history, protection of human rights, political and cultural dynamics. He loves traveling, discovering new cultures and having fun. My motto is live, love, laugh.

E-mail:parrillifabrizio@gmail.com

SAVE THE DATE

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION REVIEW FORUM (IMRF) 2022 CIVIL SOCIETY PRIORITIES WEBINAR SERIES

from 13 April to 11 May 2021

Organizers:

This is a collective civil society process by regional and global civil society networks including:



1 Migration, COVID-19 and a New Social Contract

13 April

2 Race and Discrimination

20 April

8 AM Mexico City

9 AM New York

1 PM Dakar

3 PM CEST

4 PM Beirut

8 PM Bangkok

3 4 May

3 Regular Pathways and Irregular Migration

11 May

4 Detention and Return

This four-part webinar series will be the beginning of an extensive civil society mobilization in the lead-up to the IMRF in May 2022.

More details to follow, incl. Zoom link

Simultaneous interpretation in ARABIC, ENGLISH, FRENCH, SPANISH

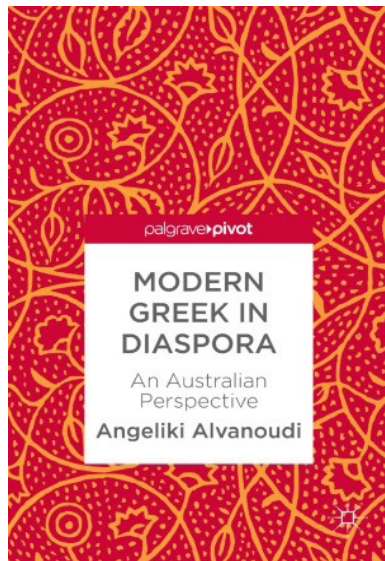
Turbulent Journey of Little Adu to Find a Secure Place

“Modern Greek in Diaspora: An Australian Perspective” (2018) is a narrative, descriptive and qualitative study conducted by Angeliki Alvanoudi. This book underscores the fact that migration is not just relocation or movement of people from a place of origin to a place of destination. But migration is also about the transfer, amalgamation, exchange of cultures and languages in the place of destination. Angeliki Alvanoudi, a post-doctoral linguistics scholar at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece undertook this research of exploring the extent of the Greek language being spoken by the immigrant Greek communities in Cairns in Australia.

Alvanoudi delves deeply into how the earlier Greek immigrants, that is first-generation immigrants spoke in Greek within Australia, but with time there has been borrowing of language from English into the Greek language (among the second and third-generation immigrants). Through this study, Alvanoudi not only presented a breakthrough study on migration that is solely based on qualitative methods, but it is also the first proper study that has been conducted on the Greek diaspora in Australia. Her study thus opened up new possibilities for future research in the domain of migration and linguistics.

The sequencing of topics in the book is lucid and explicit. This book has a total of six chapters that deal with several aspects of Greek and English linguistics. With each chapter having its own separate introduction and conclusion. In the first chapter, titled -“Chapter 1: Introduction”, where she highlights the past studies conducted on the

Greek diaspora in the UK, USA, and other parts of the world. Within this chapter, the author then discusses the history of migration about how World War II and the Greek Civil War had affected the Greek population, and why the Greek settlers chose to leave their own country and migrated and settled in Australia around 1829 and 1974. This chapter also discusses the type of migration from Greek to Australia, a labor-induced migration, that comprised of both unskilled male and female workers with no prior knowledge of English migrating to Australia. And at the same time, the author tried to explore and understand the linguistic changes over time in terms



of migration.

Alvanoudi for her research study, first of all, selected the three generations of immigrants. First-generation are Greeks, who migrated to Australia from Greece in their adolescence. The second-generation are Greeks who migrated to Australia in their pre-school years. The third-generation are Greeks who were born in Australia to the second-generation people. Data for the study were collected from the first-generation Greeks aged from 50 to 90 years, with a sample size of 30. As well as from the second-generation Greeks aged from 40 to 80 years with a sample size of 15. Whereas data were not collected from the third-generation. Because the third-generation immigrants mostly comprised of young children and teenage population and they had very little or no knowledge of Greek (due to more interaction with the English-speaking world/community of Australia). For the research methodology, qualitative techniques such

as – Participant Observation were applied; then, Self-Reports of participants were taken into account; Content Checking Techniques were also used along with 23 hours of Audio Recordings and 2 hours of Video Recordings of the participants in order to obtain the “real-life language data” (by real-life language data, the author meant that – by directly conversing with the Greek immigrants she will be able to collect the most needed primary data, that is free of bias and errors, for the study of linguistics and the role played by migration in shaping up a language).

Chapter 2: Borrowing and Contact-Induced Change

The second chapter discusses the changes in Greek due to English. These changes in Greek are majorly due to lexical borrowings, loanwords, and loan shifts. These borrowings result from an intense, and active communication of the third-generation immigrants with English-speaking people in Australia, where English is the dominant language.

Chapter 3: Mixing Codes

The third chapter discusses the mixing of codes/code-mixing, which are a common feature of Greek conversation in Australia. The participants do insert certain English words while conversing in Greek, but these additions of English words do not change the meaning of Greek sentences, as these words do not have meaning. These inserted words generally include English adjectives, verbs, noun phrases, prepositional phrases, nouns, and adverbs. Alvanoudi denotes these inserted words into the Greek language led to the formation of bilingual compound verbs. Furthermore, Alvanoudi also talks about the “pragmatic marker” words that are found in the English language, such as: actually, almost, basically, and because. These words are generally used to open and close speeches or express the attitude of the speaker. Furthermore, these same words were later also used in Greek as pragmatic markers, thus creating hybrid structures in Greek conversation.

Chapter 4: Conversational Code Switching

The fourth chapter deals with the general interaction of immigrants and the underlying reasons why the immigrants switch to English while speaking in Greek. Alvanoudi from her conversation excerpts (provided in both English and Greek versions) highlights the reasons, why the participants switch languages. These reasons are a selection of the next speaker, pursuing response of recipient, accomplishing actions that invoke asymmetry between speaker and hearer, closing or opening of sequences, reporting direct speech, making strong positive assessments, delivering new information, redoing the second pair parts, showing disagreement with the prior speaker, and lastly dealing with the possible trouble in hearing or understanding any word or sentence.

Chapter 5: Participant –

Related Code Switching

The fifth chapter discusses how the preference of participants and speakers switches from Greek to English, or English to Greek depending on their competency in one language and incompetency in another language. Through excerpts of conversations between participants that highlight in which language the participants had competence, it was found that the first-generation immigrants had problems in switching to English while conversing in Greek. However, those participants did use one or two English words without knowing their meaning and they repeatedly used the same English words in conversation with Alvanoudi, so as to receive the correct word or confirmation (from Alvanoudi) that they have spoken it correctly. Whereas in the case of second-generation, they have more competence over English, but they do struggle to find Greek words while conversing in Greek.

Chapter 6: What Can We Conclude?

The sixth chapter deals with the findings from the study and basically summarizes the entire study along with clearly underlining the social factors,

that help immigrants to maintain their language within their community. These factors include marital status, friendships, education, religion, employment, and generation.

Alvanoudi gives here detailed evidence of all those social factors (mentioned above), such as – in the case of generations, the first-generation and second-generation immigrants used their native language to converse in daily life as compared to the third-generation. Then, in marital status, endogamous marriages were practiced as such marriages will lead to less induced changes in the minority language. In terms of family, both nuclear and joint families promoted the maintenance of language and in the case of friends, it was observed that first-generation immigrants used to make friends or created network ties with people from their own ethnic background. Apart from that media in Cairns is also helping in maintaining the language as news reports, current affairs and other television shows are being broadcasted in Greek.

But at the same time, the study also highlights how English being the predominant language has become one of the most important and driving factors of upward social mobility. Furthermore, it was also found over time, that conversing in Greek became seriously limited among the third-generation as compared to the first-generation people, to which Alvanoudi predicts that if this continues then slowly the Greek language will lose to English in terms of maintenance.

Furthermore, limitations of this study have been observed and they are – firstly, the participant

observation approach used in the study does not provide any other research techniques to deal with the error of Observer's Paradox, as Alvanoudi has also mentioned in the book that while doing her audio and video recordings, she did not interrupt her participants which might lead to a different type of code-switching. Secondly, the structural aspects of how there is a convergence between English and Greek have been depicted. Still, it remains very hard to comprehend the nuances of linguistics, which are acknowledged by Alvanoudi as well. Thirdly, there has been no discussion whether there is any effect of borrowing or switching in terms of English being influenced by Greek. Lastly, the study had been conducted only in Cairns, so the results of the Greek diaspora, maintenance, and borrowing of linguistics cannot be generalized for all those Greek diasporas living in different parts of Australia.

Lastly, it can be concluded that the overall lucidity and comprehensibility of this study on Greek diaspora makes it a brilliantly written book which makes it important academic reading for any scholar who is interested in migration, diaspora, and linguistic studies and specifically for those who want to study/understand the usage of qualitative techniques in migration studies, history of migration and struggle of immigrant people to preserve their ethnicity through language and culture.

Richa Kundu, Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL), Oxford Brookes University, United Kingdom.

Migration, Pandemic and Civil Society: Reflections on Online Fieldwork in India

Suyash Barve and Abhishek Yadav

On 14 September 2020, in response to parliamentary questions, the Union Minister of State for Labour & Employment (India) said that there was no state-wise data available on assistance provided to workers. Indeed, in the early phases of the lockdown the government lacked information about living and working conditions of many workers, many of whom were contracted to work on public infrastructure projects for instance. The role of fieldworkers and surveyors from CSOs in filling this gap was vital and was even acknowledged by the Minister in his response, which illustrates an important factor of governance in India which has more than 1.2 million non-government organisations.

Fiscal incentives, relief packages and other subsidies announced by the government to alleviate the economic burden of lockdown relies on the mix of regional governmental authorities, local bodies, self-help groups, non-government organisations and professionals for effective on-ground implementation. Civil society organisations (CSO) have proven more effective in some cases than government machineries in distributing immediate relief to the affected, as a result of their networked presence. Despite severe structural, capacity and funding issues many CSOs carried on with providing vital relief work despite the stringent lockdown.

From a governance and policymaking perspective, there are important lessons to learn from how organisations overcame these challenges since their work uncovers systemic gaps. Researching development sector organisations presents complex methodological challenges as well, not least with understanding the role of local bodies, regional authorities and government departments and CSOs.

Abhishek Yadav, from the Global Research Forum

on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT) is Research Associate on the ‘Migration, Pandemic and Responses from Civil Society Organisations: Lessons from Brazil and India’ a project supported by QMUL Global Policy Institute’s Research England QR Strategic Research Priorities Fund that maps the best practices from the work of civil society organisations. The project report will be launched on April 21st 2021.

Speaking to Suyash Barve, Policy Associate at Global Policy Institute, Abhishek Yadav discusses the impact CSOs had during the lockdown as well as some practical fieldwork challenges he faced.

When we talk about CSOs, it can mean a broad range of organisations from corporate foundations to grassroots NGOs - how did you define the range in terms of this research?

For our project titled “Migration, Pandemic and Responses from Civil Society Organisations: Lessons from Brazil and India”, we specifically categorised Indian civil society organisations (CSO) into three categories- Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) working for migrants; faith-based organisations; and migrant led organisations. Therefore, we interviewed representatives of these above-mentioned organisations. To give you some insights from the project report : we selected specific states including Bihar, Delhi, Kerala, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh to understand the challenges faced by the migrants during the pandemic. Kerala was chosen specifically to understand the complexities associated with return migration from the Gulf countries and also to understand the impact of pandemic on remittance practices as

Kerala is the largest remittance receiving state of India. Metropolitan cities like Delhi (administrative capital) and Mumbai, Maharashtra (financial capital) were chosen as they attract a large number of migrants from different parts of the country for their infrastructural projects and heavy industrial/construction work. Organisations representing Tibetan refugees in Delhi and Southern part of the country were also interviewed. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar were chosen as large part of out-migration is taking place from these states due to many factors. We noted the presence of push factors leading to out-migration such as lack of employment or lesser wages, lack of industrial development, lower living standards, lack of affordable better education and health facilities. During the pandemic and subsequent lockdown, heavy internal migration was witnessed from Delhi, Mumbai and other major metropolitan cities to Bihar and UP. For the purpose of research, an attempt was made to assess the existing policy gaps, identify good practices (local, state and national level), and understand new partnerships or collaborations of CSOs among themselves or with governmental agencies.

Civil society frequently has to invoke the state to provide relief at scale to vulnerable populations - does the work of government agencies reflect in the collected data?

Yes, we did get to know of many initiatives taken by local agencies, state governments and central government to assist migrants. Food Corporation of India warehouses were opened and CSOs received foodgrains at a very lower price. At local level, Fair Price Shops also helped migrants in distributing foodgrains under the Public distribution system.

Lots of collaboration took place formally and informally with the governmental agencies. At many places both NGOs and government agencies worked together to help migrants. However, in overall terms, it was observed that due to the massive demand of relief and assistance, governmental initiatives fell short in providing relief to the migrants.

Religious sanction of charity has a long tradition in India - was this factored in from the point of view of data collection/selection of organisations? It is very true that India is known for its religious diversity and for its associated welfare work. Yes, we interviewed many faith based organisations representing various religions including Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism and Christianity. We found that religious organisations played a crucial role during the pandemic in providing humanitarian assistance to the migrants without any sort of biases relating to religion.

What are some of the key limitations of collecting data on the COVID-19 pandemic that is sure to have a long-term social, economic and psychological effect?

Mobility Challenge- In person meeting and interview could not be conducted to gain more realistic perspective from the ground.

Technological Challenge- Not all NGOs working in India are quite efficient at using new means of technology including virtual meeting applications or platforms. Even if they know, there might be issues regarding the network fluctuations in certain rural and remote corners of India.

Probability of Bias- Since we could interview only those representatives who responded to our email request and follow up call, it may be considered that it led to methodological complexity and covered only those respondents who were somehow comfortable with any sort of digital mode of interview (Phone, Zoom Application, Google Form etc.).

Though we have taken responses from 27 organisations across India, we do not claim to have all India representation due to the limiting factors like paucity of time and restriction in mobility due to the pandemic.

What challenges did you face while doing the field research - remotely coordinating interviews, internet access etc?

We used to send official emails to the organisations (which were involved in humanitarian work during the pandemic) to request them for interview. Then we used to call them through mobile or telephone to know their response and availability for the interview request. Afterwards as per their convenience, we conducted interviews through various channels including Zoom application, mobile/phone calls and Google Form.

We did face many challenges, some of them are as follows:

- Network Issue- We faced issue of fluctuation of internet network during the course of interview. It also led to the voice distortion for which we had to ask questions multiple times in some cases.
- Technical Challenge- Many representatives from the selected organisations were not technically very comfortable over new virtual platform applications and hence we adopted flexible approach by conducting few interviews through mobile calls and by using Google Forms.
- External Voice Distortion- Since many of our interviewees and interviewers were either at their workplace or their home, some external voices used to create some sort of distraction to both sides.
- Lack of Familiarity- The familiarity which usually develops during in-person interviews, could not be developed due to the digital or remote sort of interviews.

In addition to it, we had to ensure that an additional team member from our side always remain there during the interview as in case due to some technical or network related challenge, interviewer could not connect, then the back-up interviewer initiated the interview proceedings so as to value time of the interviewee.

Some academic research on the effects of COVID-19 suggest the impact of the pandemic is intersectional - class, gender, caste-based - what are your reflections on this following data collection?

We came to know that interplay of intersectionality did matter a lot. The lack of sufficient health-

care facilities and restriction in mobility affected women and elderly more. Many respondents told us about the rise in cases of domestic violence towards women. Children also got affected by the lack of nutritional diets due to shut down of Aanganwadis (child care centres), the elderly were more vulnerable due to underlying health complications and mobility restrictions. In terms of class, poor migrants specifically living in slums or streets were more vulnerable comparatively.

What is it like to do field research in your own community (ethnic, regional, linguistic) versus field research in other regions?

We allowed our respondent to speak in their preferred language so that language does not become a barrier, in fact it became a more positive factor. We conducted interviews through remote means in several parts of India. In terms of advantage, the common language (linguistic affiliation) helped the interviewer to familiarise oneself with the interviewee in a very short time. It also helped the interviewee to become more comfortable while answering the questions.

If interviewer is from the same region from where the interviewee also belongs, it provides a better atmosphere to understand the issues of each other because of common geographical and cultural legacy factors importantly in it thereby providing deeper context of the migration related issues associated with the region. Common linkages from the region does provide more connectedness and frankness during the interview process.

During interviews we found that interviewees belonging to different regions were also very comfortable in answering our questions irrespective of linguistic, regional or religious factors. Respondents wanted to share their inputs and insights regarding their humanitarian work during the pandemic thereby showcasing that humanity is much more important rather than language, region or ethnicity and more so during such an unprecedented pandemic.

Migration, Pandemic and Responses from

Civil Society Organisations: Lessons from Brazil and India, is a collaborative project that explores the role and work of civil society organisations working with migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil and India. Funded through Queen Mary's Global Policy Institute's Research England QR Strategic Research Priorities Fund, the project is led by Professor Parvati Nair from Queen Mary's School of Languages, Linguistics and Film and Dr Marcia Vera Espinoza from Queen Mary's School of Geography. The project report will be

launched on April 21st 2021.

You are welcome to republish this blog post which is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

This blog has previously been published by QMUL on April 9, 2021. URL: <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/gpi/projects/migpanbrin/blog/items/migration-pandemic-and-civil-society-reflections-on-online-fieldwork-in-india.html>

GRFDT Publications

