

Migration, gender and migrant struggles during COVID-19

Educational Material

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TARGET AUDIENCE, TYPES OF ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES

Target Audience

Undergraduate and postgraduate university students in the social sciences.

Activities

- Individual & Group activities
- Writing Activity
- Discussions
- Reflections
- Research Activity
- Video screenings

Objectives

- Participants will develop a more complex their understanding of gender and migration during the pandemic
- Participants will learn basic facts and debates about migration and migrant struggles in Greece
- today
- Participants will explicitly situate themselves in relation to migration and to migration research

Below you will find three activities on Gender, Governance and Migration. You can combine them according to the focus of your lessons, the time available and the interests of you and your students. Please also see other materials on the website concerning gender, Covid and migration.

The educational material is formulated in a direct way (“Please reflect now on your family history.”) so you can use it directly for addressing your student.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SUBJECT

The following educational material will deal with the subject of gender, Covid and migration.

The gender impacts of COVID-19 but also the responses to the virus may vary in different groups and communities. Especially groups that face housing precarity are more susceptible to experience great hardship during and after the pandemic. For migrants and asylum seekers living in temporary centres access to clean water, soap and food might not be guaranteed. Women are especially vulnerable when they find themselves in such precarious housing conditions which render them unable to take care of themselves and their children, or get support and protection from gender-based violence. Whereas more public attention has been focused on government measures, very little attention has been paid to the bottom-up strategies that groups and communities devise in order to become resilient especially in such difficult and demanding situations. These may include informal social support networks activated during times of crisis in order to promote sharing, exchanging and taking responsibility for everyday resilience. There are several examples of such initiatives, such as soup kitchens in neighbourhoods, support for refugees and migrants in crowded hot spots and prisons, and networks providing vulnerable groups with necessary items that illustrate how solidarity can act as a catalyst against the negative social impact of crises with gender equality at its centre. One example is the “rice bank” that was founded by the Filipino Kasapi organisation in Athens. Vulnerable people were supported with rice and other food by this community initiative. Women have played historically an important role in sustaining such informal practices, especially important amongst groups, who face precarity, such as the homeless, the unemployed, migrants and refugees.

One interviewee of the Sirius report stated that; „It is hard to say which problems occurred due to the lockdown and which not. What we can say for sure though, is that during the pandemic we cannot have a serious conversation about provision of services to MRAs. Covid-19 offers the government a justification to provide

inadequate services and an excuse for public servants to deny people on the move access to them.”

The educational material seeks to tackle first general questions of migration. In Activity 1 the participants trace the histories of migration within their own family or circles, in order to narrate your connections with the process of migration. In Activity 2 participants take up the challenge of adopting the position of migrant in Greece and trying to describe the ways in which they are made to feel like migrants. In Activity 3 participants learn about migrant struggles in Greece and design their own research project.

INTRODUCTION OF THE WORKSHOP (UP TO 5 MIN)

From the introduction above, choose the points that you consider important for you and fitting for your target group.

ACTIVITY 1: INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY: MY-MIGRATION STORIES (40MIN)

Objectives: Exploring the personal connection to the subject

Step 1: Introduction to activity (5min)

Refer in your introduction to the many different kinds of migration that characterises the histories of migration in the international and in your national context: For example, in Greece, there are many types of migration in the 20th century. Immigration from Asia Minor in the beginning of the 20th century, from mid-century there were large flows of labour migration from Greece to Western Europe, Australia, Canada, South Africa, as well as from the countryside to the larger cities. In the 1990s migration from to Greece from Albania and Eastern Europe started to become more central, as well from Africa and Asia.

Step 2: Individual activity (15min)

Please reflect now on your family history. If you can't think of anyone in the family who migrated, then you can write about someone you know. You can chose how to do it: The important thing is to include information about these items:

- From where to where did you/they migrate?
- When did you/they migrate?
- Why did you/they migrate? Was it their choice? What did they leave behind and what were they looking for?
- What factors (ie money, citizenship, family networks etc) made it possible for you/they to migrate?
- Describe significant moments/aspects of the journey: any challenges, any

joys, surprises

- Any difficulties when you/they arrived? Which ones?

Step 3: Share (10-15min)

Invite some participants to share the maps to the group and discuss.

Step 4: Video Interview (5min)

Note that the debate on who is made into a migrant is not only connected to having an international family history. There is a problematic distinction between refugee/economic migrants/expatriates that feeds into racialisation and classism. The term 'migrant' is used for "brown person from global south" while and the term "expat" is used for white middle class people living outside the country of their origin. So, the management and representations of migration are deeply embedded in wider political, economic and social processes and histories. Central here is the colonial organisation of nation-states and borders.

The importance of these is evident in the ways in which migration is discussed, even in academia. Certain economic or political facts get left out and others emphasised. For example, there little discussion about how Europe's borders exist well beyond its member states- they are externalised into Africa, as this video shows. Share the 2017 Video Interview with Malian Migrant Rights Activist Mamadou Goïta from the Pan-African-Network in Defense of Migrant Rights (<https://vimeo.com/226377232>, note that you have to be logged in to see the Video). Play the Video at least until minute 3:42.

ACTIVITY 2: GROUP ACTIVITY: A SCENE FROM THE PANDEMIC (40-50MIN)

Objectives: Understanding how people are made into migrants

Step 1: Introduction to activity (8min)

Now we will go into a group work phase. You will write a scene, like a scene from a novel or a film, that describes a moment in which the fact that a person or family is a migrant becomes important. Basically one moment in which a person feels they are being 'made a migrant'. It can be a big thing or a little thing, but something that is meaningful for the characters – a moment where they really feel that they are migrants. There are a few rules:

- set in the present day, in Europe: we are in a pandemic situation and all the restrictions, social distancing, fear etc – these should be somehow clear in the scene
- involves some kind of interaction that involves migrants – either with each other, or with the state authorities or with non-migrants
- Make it clear whether in this moment the character(s) feel that being a migrant is a positive or negative thing
- Describe the scene in detail – the place, the time of day, what's happening around them, the atmosphere etc. Be as poetic or not as you want.
- type it up so you can share it in the chat afterwards (you can use the chat to write it also- taking turns)

Example 1: a young Bangladeshi man who was born in Athens walks down a city street at night and a white woman walking on the same street crosses the street to go away from him. Describe the street, the area, the time of day etc. Chose which perspective to write from (the man, the woman, a witness or all of them) Do they speak to each other? What happens? How do the characters feel?

Example 2: a Danish 'digital nomad' who works in marketing and leaves part time

in Athens tries to book an appointment for a vaccine in Athens in a pharmacy. She doesn't understand Greek or the rules about vaccine access. Chose which perspective to write from, how do the characters communicate with each other, what do they think?

You have 25 minutes to come up with an idea and to write the scene. Please use up to 10 minutes to come up with an idea and plan it and at least 15 minutes to write it.

When we share, be ready to: 1) read out the scene 2) say why you chose these characters and 3) why this interaction?

Step 2: Group Activity (25min)

Work on the activity

Step 3: Share the Scenes (5minutes per Group, max. 20 minutes)

Be sure that there are at least 5 minutes for every group to share their scene.

Key questions can be depending on the scenes:

- How does the character's race, gender, religion, nationality matter in this scene?
- In what positions do the scenes imagine the migrants? Is the migrant portrait as a victim or as a person, actively acting for her/his rights? Why are migrants imagined so often in victimised positions? This can lead to a discussion of construction of victimized identities.
- How do these stereotypes fit in with current debates on migration and migration policies in the EU?

Ressources:

Manos Tsakiris (2021): Refugees in the media: how the most commonly used images make viewers dehumanise them.

URL: <https://theconversation.com/refugees-in-the-media-how-the-most-commonly-used-images-make-viewers-dehumanise-them-171865>

Bani Gill & Marie Mallet-Garcia (2021): Reflecting on the Interplay between Race, Ethnicity and Migration. URL: <https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/2021/reflecting-on-the-interplay-between-race-ethnicity-and-migration/>

ACTIVITY 3: MIGRANT STRUGGLES AND RESEARCH (60-80MIN)

Objectives: Learned about local (Greek) and Europe wide migrant struggles and organisations and designing a research project

Step 1: Introduction and Videos (20min)

This activity is focussing on struggles of migrant communities in Europe. It focusses on the struggles of migrant diasporas from the Global South in Europe (Greece). We will watch two videos. One is produced by a Migrant Women Network before the pandemic, the other one is produced by an Italian filmmaker and shows the situation of male agriculture workers in the beginning of the pandemic.

- Melissa Network (2018): Mahboubeh feeds Athens. 4:11 Minutes. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7XaMLFMB-M>
- Claudio Feliziani (2020): Land workers of Manolada. 7:03 Minutes. URL: <https://vimeo.com/405603629>

Background Info: Greece's agriculture relies heavily on migrant labour, especially from South Asian countries. In 2013 workers in Manolada demanded their wages and got shot at. In 2017 they won a court case at ECHR (The Guardian, 30.03.2017: Bangladeshi fruit pickers shot at by Greek farmers win human rights case, URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/30/bangladeshi-strawberry-pickers-shot-at-by-greek-farmers-win-european-rights-case>).

Key points for discussion:

- What kind of struggles are documented in the videos (legal struggles vers. community work)
- What are the differences between the experiences described in these films (individual vers. Collective struggles, focus on positive vers. negative

actions, isolation vers. integration)?

- What other kind of struggles do you know of (demonstrations, social media initiatives, political campaigns, podcasts/radio stations etc.)

Step 2: Designing a research projects (30min)

Design a research project that would support migrant struggles, for example by researching the power structures that make the lives of migrants difficult, and that even lead to death for them. Focus on one of the following three groups:

- male farm workers in rural Greece
- female domestic workers in Athens
- Syrian asylum-seeking families in a camp on an island

The groups will be divided in small groups of four students (or divide the group in three, one for each case study). Discuss the following questions in your group:

First:

- What knowledge or information would be directly useful, ie to the migrants themselves? You can put this in the form of questions: ie how can they keep up to date with changing policies on access to healthcare?
- What kinds of knowledge would be indirectly useful, ie that help them all understand why migration is so difficult and dangerous in Europe today? So these are more structural questions about the systems that shape migrant experiences, abilities to organise, solidarity and so on. For example, you could research how some media reproduce racist notions.
- For each of these, write down at least 5 questions.

Second: How would you go about researching these questions.

Who would you talk to? What kinds of questions would you ask? Would you do any statistical research, or research into media, or research into companies and government or EU policies?

Third: How would you go about disseminating, ie distributing your research

findings?

Especially for the first question: how would you make sure that those who you are doing the research for actually are able to access it?

Step 3: Share your research ideas (at least 8min per group)

Ressources:

Vivetha Thambinathan & Elizabeth Anne Kinsella (2021): Decolonizing Methodologies in Qualitative Research: Creating Spaces for Transformative Praxis. URL: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/16094069211014766>

Please be sure that you allow some time for feedback in the end of the last activity. Each participant should have some time to voice her/his opinion on the activites.

And, if you have any feedback for us as the producer of the educational material, please let us know!



ProGender

A Digital Hub on Gender,
the COVID-19 Crisis and its Aftermath

The project is implemented by:



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