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p. p. 306, SI-1001 Ljubljana, Slovenija
Tel.: (+386 1) 4706 485; Fax (+386 1) 4257 802
E-naslov / E-mail: mgliha@zrc-sazu.si
Spletna stran / Website: <https://ojs.zrc-sazu.si/twohomelands>
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MIGRATION STUDIES

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Revija ***Dve domovini • Two Homelands*** je osrednja slovenska znanstvena revija, namenjena objavi izvirnih znanstvenih in strokovnih člankov, ki obravnavajo različne vidike migracij. Revijo je leta 1990 ustanovil Inštitut za slovensko izseljenstvo Znanstvenoraziskovalnega centra slovenske akademije znanosti in umetnosti in izhaja dvakrat letno v slovenskem in angleškem jeziku. Vsi članki so dvojno anonimno recenzirani.

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TEMATSKI SKLOP

THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS AND MIGRATION:
INEQUALITIES, DISCRIMINATION, RESISTANCE

KORONAKRIZA IN MIGRACIJE: DISKRIMINACIJA, NEENAKOST IN UPOR

THEMATIC SECTION

THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS AND MIGRATION: INEQUALITIES, DISCRIMINATION, RESISTANCE

Francesco DELLA PUPPA^I, Fabio PEROCCO^{II}

Deriving from multiple ecological-social causes, the novel coronavirus and, subsequently, the COVID-19 pandemic, has affected all spheres of societies of the world. The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered and amplified an economic crisis that existed before the health crisis. The combination of the two crises into a double “ecological-healthcare” and “socio-economic” crisis has had multiple consequences for everyone on the economic, social, political, and cultural level; however, it has affected social classes, workers, genders, and territories in different ways, deepening social inequalities and worsening the social conditions of disadvantaged social groups: among the most affected social groups, we find migrants.

The purpose of this special issue is to critically analyze the relationship between the coronavirus crisis and migration, with particular attention to the condition of migrants in the global health crisis, new inequalities, discrimination, and their forms of resistance. Since international migration and the pandemic are two global phenomena, this special issue could only have a global look and approach at their intertwining. The articles consider, on the one hand, several national contexts across the world and, on the other, analyze the different dimensions of the relationship between the coronavirus crisis and migration globally.

Pandemics and migration also have other aspects in common. As global social phenomena, they share the profound transformative dynamic that the two enact on societies. Just as migration constitutes an important factor of social transformation, both in the contexts of origin and in those of destination of migrants – and even in those contexts of transit –, to the point of being identified as a factor characterizing this phase of capitalism, the pandemic will leave nothing “as it was before” and will constitute a watershed moment in what has been called the “age of migration.” Furthermore, again in their capacity as global social phenomena, pandemics and migration reveal the deepest contradictions and social issues of contemporary society, its political organization. Much has been written on the social transformations brought about by migration, as well as on the ability of migration – in the wake of Sayad’s lesson – to reveal what one has an interest in ignoring. Still, little has been

I PhD in social sciences, senior lecturer at Ca’ Foscari University of Venice; francesco.dellapuppa@unive.it, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1437-4719>.

II PhD in sociology, associate professor at Ca’ Foscari University of Venice; fabio.perocco@unive.it, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0991-0046>.

said about the global change that the pandemic is bringing about, as well as about its social revealing and political unveiling action. Therefore, in the next paragraph, before presenting the structure of the monographic section of this issue, we will try to fill a tiny part of this gap.

THE CORONAVIRUS FACTOR

If the novel coronavirus is a *symptom* of the current state of the environment and a *sign* of the progressive disease affecting the biosphere, the coronavirus crisis is a *litmus test* and a *mirror* exposing the structural problems of contemporary societies, highlighting the major crisis of our times. For instance, in the last decades, the national health systems of several countries have undergone a progressive deterioration or have been the object of strong attacks in the wake of neoliberal policies that have imposed a profound transformation under the banner of privatization/semi-privatization, individualization, and corporatization. In the so-called “first pandemic wave,” several health systems were overwhelmed by the pandemic due to the surprise effect, but also as a result of decades of state disengagement in public health, budget cuts, staff reduction, abandonment of territorial medicine, the concentration of medicine in large hospitals. The so-called second pandemic wave, which occurred in the fall of 2020, confirmed that the problems in national health systems were and, obviously, still are structural and could not be attributed to the surprise effect alone.

The coronavirus crisis has also been a formidable *social accelerator*, a potent factor in accelerating social trends that existed before the pandemic. It has expanded, generalized, and structured several social processes that predate the pandemic, entrenching them in the social structures and daily life of many countries. In addition to the “year of the global pandemic” or the “year of fear,” 2020 should also be titled the “year of the great acceleration.”

Among the many examples, suffice it to mention home food deliveries through apps and digital platforms, distance learning, smart working, the increased militarization of society and control over daily lives. All these phenomena predate – by far – the coronavirus crisis, yet it gave them new momentum, making a real leap in quantity that has sometimes turned into a leap in quality.

In particular, the coronavirus crisis has been an acceleration of social phenomena of a neo-liberal nature, for example, the individualization of education, which through the massive use of information technology has given a strong impetus for distance learning; or the social atomization magnified by the enormous growth of the web and digital labor. Above all, we should mention the sharpening of social inequalities and social polarization, the structural casualization of work, the increase in the number of the working poor, all phenomena that preceded the pandemic crisis but were extended and aggravated by it.

Moreover, as already mentioned, the coronavirus crisis provided the capital with an *opportunity* to expand further, to penetrate even more deeply into all the spheres of social and natural life, to reorganize and, at the same time, subject society to the laws of capital even more stringently. It has been an *occasion* to expand its field of action and control even further and expand its boundaries.

As has already happened in the past, in times of crisis, the capital reorganizes itself. In doing so, it transforms the whole of society, depending on capital – starting from the labor market, the workplaces, and the economic processes.

Last but not least, the coronavirus crisis has also been a *social detonator*, a detonating factor. Both in its role as a litmus test and social accelerator, the coronavirus crisis has converged and entangled pre-existing social contradictions, exacerbating social hardships and inequalities, increasing social risks. In this regard, see the United States at the end of Trump's term. Several studies from a historical-comparative perspective (Snowden 2021), including some commissioned by the International Monetary Fund itself (Barret, Chen 2021; Sedik, Xu 2020), warn about the social conflicts and revolts that are emerging on the horizon, albeit with different intensities in different global contexts, and which, in the history of capitalism, have followed the inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic crises.

MIGRANTS INTO THE STORM OF PANDEMIC

If the coronavirus crisis amplified the social problems and inequalities that already existed, it has had differentiated effects hitting harder the working class, women, young and older people, minorities. At the same time, it has transformed inequalities, changing old ones, generating new ones, intertwining the old and the new.

An example of these processes, particularly the differentiated impact of the crisis, may be observed in migration. Immigrant workers, asylum seekers and refugees, and migrants experienced conditions and problems similar to those of the native population, yet often more severe. As the different papers will show, for many reasons, they have been particularly vulnerable to the pandemic and its economic and social effects. It affects them all over the world in a particularly hard way. They are doubly affected as migrants (the object of a real war on migration for years) and workers (the long-time target of an attack on labor). They often carry out the jobs considered essential for our everyday life: nurses, basic social and health workers, care workers, porters, logistics workers, home delivery carriers, food sector workers, etc. That is, humble, poorly paid, precarious laborers, often working without contracts and protections, highly exposed to the risk of contagion. Yet, despite their essential role in production processes, during the pandemic, they have often undergone an invisibilization process, they have been made invisible; yet, they were talked about when propaganda used them as a scapegoat, pointing at them as contaminated, infected with the virus, a threat to national health safety.

Restricted in their mobility and stranded in countries of departure or transit, huddled in reception centers in precarious conditions and hampered in admission procedures and applications for asylum or international protection, forced to work despite health risks and made invisible to the public discourse, forgotten by public policies and discriminated against in their access to prevention or treatment, impoverished and more exploited in the labor market, accused of carrying the virus or being immune from it, segregated in the homes of the dependent elderly they assist, they are one of the most vulnerable groups at risk of suffering the heaviest consequences of this double crisis. The consequences are detectable in the process of their further impoverishment, with direct transnational and global implications on families left behind in the countries of origin. The first estimates of the World Bank for 2020 forecast a decline of about 20% of remittances: in absolute values, from 554 billion US dollars to 445 billion US dollars.¹ Furthermore, it is possible that, shortly, when humanity will have learned how to live with the pandemic and societies will be reshaped by its social-economic effects, the “virus issue” will be used instrumentally and ideologically in politics and rhetoric against migrants. That is, punishing legislation and propaganda against migrants – widely spread in Europe, the United States, and the world, but temporarily supplanted in the media by the theme of the pandemic – could become even harsher in affecting migrants, making entry and regular residence more difficult, discriminating them in the labor market and several areas of social life.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE THEMATIC SECTION

The thematic section is inaugurated by the article of Fabio Perocco, which provides a global framework on the origins and consequences of the coronavirus crisis, focusing on the effects of the syndemic on racial health inequalities and migrants, within which the other articles, the result of empirical cases, find their place.

Subsequently, Arun Kumar Acharya and Sanjib Pate present a comprehensive analysis on the perspective of socio-economic vulnerabilities faced by internal returnee labor migrants caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in India and the socio-economic vulnerabilities they face back “home.” Yasmin Saikia examines the plight of migrant Assamese Muslim garbage pickers in India during the COVID-19 lockdown and their tribulations in trying to return to Assam, which were all exacerbated by social, political, and religious prejudices. The article of Mohammad Riduan Parvez deals with returned migrants, in this case, in Bangladesh and, specifically, focusing on the discrimination and social harassment experienced by Bangladeshi returned migrants during the COVID-19 crisis. Nicola Costalunga brings us to Japan, describing

1 World Bank, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/04/22/world-bank-predicts-sharpest-decline-of-remittances-in-recent-history> (15 Oct. 2020).

how the emergency has been handled in the country, concerning foreign nationals and the country's border restrictions in the time of the pandemic.

Then, from Asia, we move to the Balkan area, in Europe, with two ethnographic contributions. In her article, Reena Kukreja examines undocumented Bangladeshi migrants in the Greek strawberry sector to highlight how racial capitalism heightens health vulnerabilities for racialized low-class migrant workers, exposing them to greater risk for coronavirus transmission. She analyzes how structural and systemic discriminations increase health precarity for undocumented agricultural workers. Then, Marina Cenedese and Ivana Spirovska compare the potential social exclusion and further marginalization of children of migrant origin and/or belonging to vulnerable social groups (Roma people) in two local contexts in North Macedonia and Italy.

Thus, we arrive in Italy, one of the first countries to be intensely affected by the pandemic and which, by virtue of its geographical position in the Mediterranean, is, in many cases, the first landing place and transit land for refugees and asylum seekers. Paola Bonizzoni and Senyo Dotsey demonstrate how differently-precarious legal conditions embedded in the Italian immigration system have interacted with the coronavirus crisis to produce specific outcomes of legal and social precarity. Davide Filippi and Luca Giliberti focus on the reception system for refugees and asylum seekers within the context of lockdown, during which some of the contradictions in the government's reception policy emerged more visibly. Stefania Spada analyzes the "quarantine ships," observed as a device for the externalization of borders; her contribution demonstrates how under the pandemic, Italy sharpened and intensified repressive logics and practices that disrespect human rights while introducing elements of novelty regarding the repercussions on the material conditions of existence of refugees and asylum seekers. The article by Giulia Sanò and Omid Firouzi Tabar, which compares two local contexts in the North and South of Italy, shows how within the Italian reception system, practices and procedures of "assistance," "care," and "control" have intertwined and alternated in the context of the pandemic, verifying whether there has been a definite shift toward the dimension of control.

This special issue covers a wide variety of geographical, social, and cultural contexts (from the Indian subcontinent to the Balkans, from Japan to Mediterranean Europe) and themes – returned migrants and social stigma; asylum seekers, the reception system and quarantine ships; labor exploitation and racial discrimination; school and social exclusion; national policies, precariousness and civic stratification. Understandably, for reasons of space and opportunities, many other areas of the world and research topics could not be explored in these pages. However, we aim to overcome this limitation with a second thematic section of this journal that, shortly, will present theoretical and empirical insights which, from the Americas to the Middle East, passing through Europe, Africa and Asia, will provide new angles of interpretation of the impact of the coronavirus crisis on migrants and migration and will provide an update on the evolution of this intertwining.

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THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS AND MIGRATION: THE PAN-SYNDemic AND ITS IMPACT ON MIGRANTS

Fabio PEROCCO¹

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ABSTRACT

The Coronavirus Crisis and Migration: The Pan-Syndemic and Its Impact on Migrants

The coronavirus crisis exposed and exacerbated inequalities that already existed. Simultaneously, it has transformed inequalities, changing old ones, generating new ones, intertwining the old and the new. A test of these processes, in particular, of the differentiated impact of the health crisis, may be observed in migration. After examining the ecological-social origins of the novel coronavirus and the COVID-19 related racial health inequalities, the article analyzes the consequences of the pandemic on the health and working conditions of immigrant workers, asylum seekers, emigrants in travel. It highlights the syndemic situation affecting them.

KEYWORDS: coronavirus, inequalities, migration, pandemic, syndemics

IZVLEČEK

Koronakriza in migracije: Pansindemija in njen vpliv na migrante

Koronakriza je že obstoječe neenakosti še poudarila in povečala. Hkrati jih je tudi preoblikovala, spremenila stare, povzročila nove ter prepletla stare in nove. Te procese, zlasti diferenciran vpliv na zdravstveno krizo, je mogoče opazovati pri migracijah. Članek uvodoma analizira ekološko družbeni izvor novega koronavirusa in z njim povezanih rasnih zdravstvenih neenakosti, nadaljuje pa z obravnavo posledic pandemije na zdravje in delovne razmere migrantskih delavcev, prosilcev za azil in migrantov na poti. Osvetljuje sindemično situacijo, v kateri so se znašli.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: koronavirus, neenakosti, migracije, pandemija, sindemija

¹ PhD in sociology, associate professor at Ca' Foscari University of Venice; fabio.perocco@unive.it, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0991-0046>.

THE ECOLOGICAL-SOCIAL ORIGINS OF SARS-COV-2

This article, based on the study of the literature and secondary resources, aims to analyze the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health and working conditions of immigrant workers, asylum seekers, emigrants in travel. Before this, I examine some fundamental aspects such as the origins of the novel coronavirus, the social impact of this pandemic, the COVID-19 related racial health inequalities.

It is now accepted that the 2019 novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) – which is the result of the spillover of a bat virus (Burgio 2020) causing a very serious, often lethal, disease in humans: COVID-19 (COronaVirus Disease2019, acute respiratory disease from SARS-CoV-2) – has ecological-social origins. This fact is nothing new since most epidemics have been the result of major environmental and climate changes, partly and sometimes linked to human activity.

Such origins are manifold and have a name: climate changes, environmental disruption, deforestation, agribusiness, mass urbanization. Better yet: capitalism's attack on man and nature. If the novel coronavirus is a symptom of a progressive disease affecting the biosphere, this disease results from the ecological rift produced by the capitalist economy (Foster et al. 2011). The emergence of "new" pathogens and the resulting pandemics is not random. There are specific and structural causes: let's see.

Wallace (2016) points out that the emergence of new dangerous viruses is linked first and foremost to the processes of deforestation and human penetration into the last primary forest. Land-grabbing, the disappearance of small-scale agricultural land working for the local market, and extractivism in the primary forest release new pathogens that for millennia have been held in check by the forest ecosystem. The irruption of agri-business into virgin ecological systems brings pathogens out of the deepest hinterland. Through some reservoir-species (birds, bats, etc.), they are transported out of the forest into neighboring, peri-urban areas where human settlements and livestock are present, with the consequence that "the functional diversity and complexity these huge tracts of land represent are being streamlined in such a way that previously boxed-in pathogens are spilling over into local livestock and human communities" (Wallace 2020: 33). Besides, the impoverishment of local communities is forcing local people to go even deeper into the remote forest to collect food (wildlife), thereby increasing their encounters with new pathogens. After that, the passage to urban peripheries, to big cities, through the internal and international movements of things, animals, and men, is a relatively easy thing to do; the globalization of world trade and international migration do the rest, in the sense that they facilitate, feed, and widen the circulation and spread of the virus. Still, in these exchanges and passages of environments and hosts, pathogens mutate and develop more virulent and infectious phenotypes.

Deforestation and forest penetration are closely linked to the industrialization of agriculture, in which hyper-intensive, concentration-based animal production

constitutes, Wallace points out, a nursery for more or less dangerous viruses, a veritable breeding ground for zoonosis (Andersen et al. 2020):

Growing genetic monocultures of domestic animals removes whatever immune firebreaks may be available to slow down transmission. Larger population sizes and densities facilitate greater rates of transmission. Such crowded conditions depress the immune response. High throughput, a part of any industrial production, provides a continually renewed supply of susceptibles, the fuel for the evolution of virulence. (Wallace 2020: 34)

In destroying ecosystems, agri-industry pools together living beings expelled from their natural habitat with intensive livestock farming; these contacts are the source of spillover of viruses – which are not coincidentally given animal names (swine, cattle, avian). At the margin of agri-business, the incubation of coronaviruses (MERS-Cov, SARS-CoV, SARS-CoV-2) takes place.¹ Referring, for example, to the recurrent Ebola epidemics in Africa, Wallace notes the continuity of the link between the expansion of primary industries, the penetration of agribusiness, the destruction of local eco-systems, the displacement of populations, the attraction of reservoir species, and epidemics. While there was a cotton-related outbreak in Sudan in the mid-1970s (Wallace, Wallace 2016: 60), in recent years, palm oil industrialization appears to be responsible for recent Ebola outbreaks in Guinea (Wallace et al. 2016; Wallace, Wallace 2016).

Moreover, ever greater masses of the human population live in highly degraded environmental and rural contexts or are crowded into the suburbs of large cities. This factor is certainly not a primary cause, but it is a factor that facilitates the stabilization and circulation of viruses. In China, SARS-CoV-2 was born at the intersection of capitalist economics and epidemiology (Chuǎng 2020); Wuhan (11 million inhabitants), Chongqing (36 million inhabitants), Nanjing (8.5 million inhabitants), Changsa (7 million inhabitants), are “four furnaces” below which there is an evolutionary pressure cooker made of hyper-urbanization and agri-business. Therefore, the latest great epidemics (avian flu, SARS-CoV, SARS-CoV-2) originated in China not so much because of some mysterious Chinese specificity, but rather because, in this country, the historical and social conditions for the emergence of these phenomena have concentrated in recent decades.

THE GREAT EQUALIZER? COVID-19 AND INEQUALITIES

The double – economic and ecological – crisis, predating the novel coronavirus, is accompanied by the health crisis, combining in a triple crisis that has affected all

1 On the roots of H₅N₁ see Wallace (2016).

spheres of the social life of the populations and the countries of the world, and that has had multiple consequences on the economic, social, political, and cultural levels. The health crisis has affected social classes, economic sectors, professions, genders, and countries differently. The assertion that the virus is a great equalizer is not true: the possibility of contracting it, COVID-19 prevention and treatment, its severity and mortality, daily life at the time of the pandemic, are elements related to social class, to the position in the social structure and system of social relations.

As for virus *transmission*, wealthy classes had a lower risk of becoming infected by enjoying the possibility of protecting themselves more and better or keeping a physical distance (availability of big houses, private cars, devices, paid services). During the lockdowns of the first wave, people in many countries were told to “stay home,” but housing conditions are quite unequal – some people live in crowded, small houses with little equipment, and some people have no house at all. In terms of *exposure* to the virus, a large proportion of the working class could not avoid going to work, could not work from home as they were employed in essential jobs (shop assistants, nurses, cashiers, public transport, cleaning or personal care workers), could not work in a protected manner; for these categories of workers, exposure to the virus was particularly strong and prolonged. Working-class and deprived groups were found to have more *susceptibility* to COVID-19 due to worse social, economic, and environmental conditions. The resources available within the storm of the pandemics have been differentiated and unequal: it is not true that “we are all in the same boat,” if anything, we navigate rough seas with very different boats; some people do not even have a boat at all.

Syndemics and Health Inequalities

COVID-19 has more severely affected the elderly and individuals suffering from chronic diseases (diabetes, cardiovascular disorders, tumors, diseases of the immune system). However, such diseases are often the result of inequalities in the social determinants of health. They are linked to social factors (profession, income, education), the living conditions of the individual, their class condition. Thus, not only the possibility of contracting the virus but also the possibility of suffering serious complications or dying from COVID-19 is linked to the position occupied in the social structure. This position is manifested in the social gradient of health and affects the vulnerability to COVID-19.

Gravlee (2020: 1–2), while recalling that “pandemics always follow the fault lines of society,” underlined that COVID-19 presented the conditions of a syndemic (Singer 2009),² which is the result of the combination of disease concentration (“the

2 “The presence of two or more disease states that adversely interact with each other, negatively affecting the mutual course of each disease trajectory, enhancing vulnerability, and which are made more deleterious by experienced inequities” (The Lancet 2017: 881).

co-occurrence or clustering of multiple epidemics as a result of large-scale, political-economic forces and adverse social conditions”) and disease interaction (“the ways that overlapping epidemics exacerbate the health effects of adverse social conditions, either through biological interactions between disease states or through interactions between biological and social processes”). With COVID-19 there was a syndemic – “a set of closely interrelated endemic and epidemic conditions (e.g., HIV, TB, STDs, hepatitis, cirrhosis, infant mortality, drug abuse, suicide, homicide, etc.), all of which are strongly influenced and sustained by a broader set of political-economic and social factors” (Singer 1996: 99) – resulting from the interaction between infectious disease (contracted differently according to the social gradient) and non-communicable diseases (unequally distributed according to the social gradient). Thus, as it has happened in the past and recently during other influenza epidemics (Mamelund 2019), COVID-19 affected the population differentially; morbidity and mortality were unevenly distributed across class, race, gender, age, territory.³

COVID-19 and Racial Inequalities

Many studies have confirmed that the unequal impact of COVID-19 on population health is related to the “race” factor, to racism. Everywhere racial inequalities in health emerged for COVID-19, which are the result of systemic racism and structural racial inequality. I will quickly dwell on two contexts: the United States and Brazil.

Gravlee noted a peculiar syndemic situation in the United States. In terms of social factors, racism had significant weight on the health impact of COVID-19, with somewhat worse consequences for the African-American population. The historical condition of social inferiority of black people has been the humus in which the COVID-19 syndemic has developed, characterized by a more severe COVID-related health condition among blacks (but also among Latinos and Native Americans). The racism that structurally pervades the US society (from work to income, from education to the judicial system, from housing to urban planning, even to the air we breathe – Novick 1995) has constituted “a fundamental cause of racial inequities in disease concentration. This perspective sees the social patterning of hypertension, diabetes, and now COVID-19 as culminating from a system of racial oppression” (Gravlee 2020: 4). Laster Pirtle emphasized the importance of structural racism in COVID-19’s production of differential effects, of heavier consequences for blacks: “Racism and capitalism mutually construct harmful social conditions that fundamentally shape COVID-19 disease inequities because they [...] replicate historical patterns of inequities within pandemic” (Laster Pirtle 2020: 504).

In a country where access to health care is class-based and where even before the pandemic, there was exponential growth in the level of worker indebtedness

3 For the UK see Sage (2020), for Italy see Istat (2020a, 2020b).

due to healthcare costs, infections and COVID-19 mortality were characterized by racial disparities (Bassett et al. 2020; Chin-Hong et al. 2020; Zelner et al. 2020), already at the start of the pandemic (Barbieri 2020). This trend continued even more sharply in the months that followed: through mid-August 2020, there were 2.6 more cases among African Americans than among the white population, 4.7 more hospitalizations, and 2.1 more deaths⁴ (CDCP 2020). The second wave saw a worsening of mortality disparity, with “Black, Indigenous and Latino Americans all have a COVID-19 death rate of triple or more White Americans, who experience the lowest age-adjusted rates.”⁵ Over-represented in essential, low-skilled, dangerous and demeaning jobs, African-Americans – most affected by COVID-19 – are also most affected by diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular disease; they died more from COVID-19 and these diseases, i.e., from pre-existing comorbid conditions (syndemics).

In Brazil, the colonial, slave, and racist past of this country is alive more than ever and is still ingrained in its social structure and daily life (Fernandes 2008; Moura 1988). Deep racial inequalities are still present today and affect black and brown people, Indigenous populations at all levels: access to the labor market, jobs, unemployment rates, incomes, health status, and housing (Gonçalves 2018; Heringer 2002; Paixão et al. 2010). Whites hold 70% of managerial positions. The relative poverty rate is 15.4% among whites and 32.9% among blacks and browns (Ibge 2019). This racial system has been reflected in COVID-19 infection and mortality: higher levels of COVID-19 infection and mortality have been reported among the black population (Baqui et al. 2020; Goes et al. 2020; Oliveira et al. 2020; Santos et al. 2020), which is highly present in essential and informal jobs. A study of 29,933 cases registered up to May 18, 2020, found a mortality rate of 55% among blacks and browns and 38% among whites, across all age groups and education levels; a gradual decrease in mortality rate as education level increases; a mortality rate of 80% among unschooled blacks and browns versus a mortality rate of 19% among whites with higher education (Batista et al. 2020). The largest epidemiological study conducted in the country found that the poorest populations (including Indigenous people, who have long been experiencing an increase in cardiovascular and metabolic diseases) are twice as likely to become infected compared to the richest population (Hallal 2020). Poorer regions (Nordeste, Norte and Centro-Oeste) had higher mortality rates.⁶

4 <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html#footnote01>; <https://covidtracking.com/race>. Data as of 18 Aug. 2020.

5 <https://www.apmresearchlab.org/covid/deaths-by-race#counts> (data updated 22 Dec. 2020).

6 <https://covid.saude.gov.br/> (22 Nov. 2020).

THE CONSEQUENCES OF CORONAVIRUS CRISIS ON MIGRANTS

The coronavirus crisis exposed the social problems and inequalities that already existed while at the same time amplifying and reinforcing them. It is accepted that it has sharpened social polarization within countries and global inequalities. It has increased inequalities in employment, economy, education, consumption, use of time, hitting harder the working class, women, young and older people, minorities. The coronavirus crisis has also transformed inequalities and the system of inequalities, changing old ones, generating new ones, intertwining the old and the new. A test of these processes, in particular of the differentiated impact of the crisis, can be observed in migration. Just as in the great economic crisis of 2008, during the pandemic, migrants suffered heavy consequences due to the double penalty of migrants, their dual status as wage earners and foreigners. They experienced conditions and problems similar to those of the native population, yet often more severe. As will be seen, for many reasons, migrants have been particularly vulnerable to the pandemic and its economic and social effects; specifically, because of their specific condition, they have a high level of exposure, susceptibility, and vulnerability and at the same time have suffered serious consequences at the labor and administrative levels, just to mention a few.

Immigrant Workers: More Exposed, More Precarious, More Exploited

Let's see in detail the impact of the coronavirus crisis on some dimensions of migrants' social life,⁷ distinguishing between immigrant workers residing in a foreign country, asylum seekers, emigrants in travel.

Concerning the former, two points must be made. Firstly, they reside mainly in the large urban and industrial centers of Europe, the Americas, Southeast Asia and the Gulf, in other words, in the most populated and crowded areas of the planet. According to the IOM in 2014, about twenty percent of international migrants lived in twenty major cities (from London to New York, Shanghai to Buenos Aires), where they accounted for a fifth of the population (but they were 83% in Dubai, 62% in Brussels, 46% in Toronto⁸). Secondly, they constitute an essential part of the workforce employed in key-sectors; in 2017, they constituted 20.6% of workers in North America, 17.8% of workers in Northern, Western, and Southern Europe, 40.8% of workers in the Arab States (ILO 2018: XII), primarily employed in low-skilled, dangerous, demeaning but essential jobs for so many economic sectors: logistics, transport, business

7 On risk factors and areas of vulnerability see OECD (2020a).

8 <https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/migration-data-relevant-covid-19-pandemic> (data updated 23 Nov. 2020). According to the IOM, as of November 3, 2020 immigrants "accounted for at least 4.5% of the population in 12 of the 20 countries with the highest number of COVID-19 cases, and this share is more than 10% in 8 of these countries."

and personal services (riders, retail, cleaning, domestic and care work), healthcare, the tourist-hotel and restaurant sectors, construction, food processing, agriculture. Low-skilled immigrant workers are over-represented in several essential jobs; in Europe, about thirteen percent of key workers are migrants (Extra-EU migrants or EU mobile citizens), but in some jobs such as cleaners or helpers, they account for more than a third (Fasani, Mazza 2020: 1, 10); in the United States,

sixty-nine percent of all immigrants in the US labor force and 74% of undocumented workers are essential workers [...] the percentage of undocumented essential workers exceeds that of native-born essential workers by nine percentage points in the 15 states with the largest labor force. In the ten largest MSAs, the percentages of undocumented and naturalized essential workers exceed the percentage of native-born essential workers by 12 and 6 percent, respectively. (Kerwin, Warren 2020: 1)

Due to their specific position in the labor market and their professional status, but in particular, due to their concentration in essential sectors and manual jobs, most immigrant workers were not able to work remotely, they were not able to abstain from work, they had to accept any working conditions to safeguard their residence permit or their job, they worked in places where anti-COVID precautions were not always applied, they continued to perform jobs characterized by close contact with colleagues or the public. Due to their general condition, they often use public transport and live in poor and densely populated areas, in dwellings with limited overcrowded spaces in which children, parents, grandparents, and uncles live together. For these reasons, they had high exposure to the virus, which more than a few times resulted in a high level of infection, concentrated in outbreaks that broke out in specific workplaces such as slaughterhouses, logistics hubs, food companies. This situation was compounded by a significant susceptibility resulting from general living and health conditions (syndemic).

At the moment, data on the diffusion of COVID-19 among immigrants is limited, inhomogeneous, and difficult to compare, also because of the different survey systems and demographic compositions. Nevertheless, we do have some initial indicative studies. In Sweden (Valeriani et al. 2020: the study covers the period March 13–May 7, 2020) and in Norway,⁹ twice the incidence of COVID-19 was reported among the immigrant population compared to the native population. In Spain (Guijarro et al. 2020), in France (Papon, Robert-Bobée 2020), in the Netherlands (Kunst et al. 2020: 14), in Sweden (Hansson et al. 2020), the significant susceptibility to the virus produced by general living conditions and difficulties in accessing health services¹⁰ has resulted in medical complications and sometimes excess mortality among the

⁹ University of Bergen, <https://www.uib.no/en/globalchallenges/139119/being-healthy-and-working-new-country> (22 Nov. 2020).

¹⁰ Due to language difficulties, lack of residence permit, etc.

immigrants. In Italy, a national study updated to April 2, 2020, has highlighted that the casuistry regarding foreign-born people presents a different demographic and clinical structure from the casuistry of those born in Italy. Among the former, the female component is higher (56.4% vs. 50.8%), the average age is lower (46 years vs. 64), there is a greater concentration in the northwest (72.8% vs. 57.5%) and urban areas (52.1% vs. 31%). Above all, there is a higher risk of hospitalization and admission to intensive care (1.4 times). There are more severe manifestations of the disease even in terms of age – due to delays in diagnosis and the use of health services (Idos 2020: 251).

As was the case with the economic crisis ten years ago, the coronavirus crisis has had a harsh impact on the work of immigrants, who have been among the hardest hit by precarity, unemployment and underemployment, worsening working conditions, and impoverishment. Although the impact on the employment of all workers has been heterogeneous, in the OECD area, the worst consequences have fallen on immigrant workers (OECD 2020b: 11–12) for several reasons: the strong presence in sectors affected by the crisis (hotel, restaurant, domestic work) or in sectors with a high level of informality, irregularity, and precarity; the concentration in low-skilled jobs, the first to be affected in times of recession and unemployment; an often unstable administrative condition, deriving from the link between work contract and residence permit; partial fruition of social rights, as they are linked to the migratory status. Workers who are structurally precarious by definition and de facto, precisely because of their concentration in precarious jobs, have been among the first to be affected by unemployment and more acute precariousness, falling into a kind of “precarity loop.” Moreover, the pandemic has enlarged and amplified their over-education and under-classification. In the context of high unemployment, to find or keep a job enabling them to obtain or renew their residence permit, immigrants have been forced to accept a lower classification. In some national contexts, they were penalized for enjoying social safety nets, and there have been cases of discrimination in welfare.

As far as unemployment is concerned, Hispanic women in the US (-21% compared to other women or men), immigrants (-19% compared to 12% US-born), young adults and the less educated were most affected by job loss (Kochhar 2020); immigrants – especially Latinos and women – were more acutely affected by unemployment than US-born citizens (16.5% vs. 14%; Capps et al. 2020). In Canada, in March–April 2020, recent immigrants – who are concentrated in short-term, low-paying jobs – were more affected by unemployment than Canadian-born workers and long-term immigrants (job-to-unemployment transition rates of 17.3%, 13.5% and 13.5%, respectively; Hou et al. 2020). The impact on the employment of immigrant women (regardless of education level) was particularly harmful. Between March and May 2020, the unemployment rate for immigrant women increased by about

7% compared to 4.5% for Canadian-born workers and immigrant men.¹¹ In Germany, unemployment grew faster among immigrant workers in March–June 2020 (27% vs. 20%).¹²

In some economic sectors or geographical contexts, there have been situations of worsening exploitation of workers, of exacerbation of discrimination at work. In Italian agriculture, the area of severe labor exploitation has widened, working conditions have worsened with the increase in irregular work, the lengthening of working hours, the intensification of work rhythms, the reduction of wages and break times, the reduction of labor disputes (Idos 2020: 289).¹³ In Spain, in the agricultural sector of Huelva, female farmworkers from a bleak pre-COVID condition have plummeted into a hellish condition.¹⁴

Asylum Seekers between Confinement and Abandonment, and the Migrant Odyssey

During the pandemic, asylum seekers suffered severe consequences – at the health and social level – due to their structural vulnerability and poor social status, which predated the pandemic. There are no systematic and updated data on infections among asylum seekers. However, various sources (specialized organizations, press, etc.) indicate that the reception centers and refugees camps were not able to ensure physical distance and public health; the crowding of the centers and refugees camps was, if anything, a significant factor of contagion. The dramatic case of the Moria camp in Lesbos, between COVID-19 and detention, was one of the darkest pages of the refugee tragedy and an example of the inadequacy of the camp model. Not only because these facilities are severely overcrowded and it is not possible to maintain distancing, but also because very often, the infected were not evacuated from the facilities and were quarantined within them, spreading the virus to the entire facility.

This type of management has occurred more than a few times in Italy. With the dismantling of the widespread reception system and the concentration of asylum seekers in large reception centers, the ground has been prepared for spreading the virus. A study carried out in June 2020 on 195 reception centers scattered throughout the country highlighted that the management of PCR-positive guests very often implied the adoption of uneven and improvised measures with DIY solutions.¹⁵

11 <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/october-2020/the-startling-impact-of-covid-19-on-immigrant-women-in-the-workforce/> (22 Nov. 2020).

12 <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL5N2EZ0XS> (22 Nov. 2020).

13 A journalistic investigation has documented a worsening of the conditions of foreign laborers in several European countries; <https://www.euronews.com/2020/07/17/invisible-workers-underpaid-exploited-and-put-at-risk-on-europe-s-farms> (22 Nov. 2020).

14 <https://www.openglobalrights.org/protecting-migrant-women-workers-in-food-supply-chains-during-covid> (22 Nov. 2020).

15 https://www.redattoresociale.it/article/notiziario/covid19_prassi_fai_da_te_improvvisate_e_difformi_ecco_cosa_e_successo_nei_centri_d_accoglienza (22 Nov. 2020).

Using a special “saturation index” of reception centers, another national study conducted on 5,038 facilities between May–June 2020 confirmed the close correlation between overcrowding and risk of infection. The same study showed that the isolation of positive subjects ordered by the health authority took place in a quarter of the cases at the same facility. Only half of these cases were in a single room with exclusive services (Costanzo et al. 2020).

Often, and in many parts of the world, to add insult to injury, the victim-blame effect applied: these structures and their “guests” have been singled out as spreading the epidemic, the carriers of the virus. Thus, to the traditional public image of the asylum seeker as a slacker, scrounger, and underdeveloped, the element of “asylum seeker as a health hazard” was added. With the pandemic, we witnessed the appearance – not new – of the link between otherness – health emergency – security policies, which was followed by exclusion practices and racism in the name of health security (also through the distinction between “native virus” and “foreign virus”).

There are still no systematic studies on the impact of the pandemic on the work of asylum seekers. Yet, from various sources (reports, press articles, etc.), it has emerged that in many parts of the world, people seeking asylum have lost their jobs, have had great difficulty finding new ones, and have seen an increase in irregular work. This situation led to an increase in inactivity and monotony in reception centers, especially during lockdown periods when these facilities became veritable prisons in which inactivity, discouragement, forced overcrowding, and a sense of abandonment took over. On the other hand, those who did not lose their jobs faced the problem of a high risk of infection by being employed in low-skill jobs in essential sectors.

In addition to the loss of jobs, there was the uncertainty of their residence status due to: the suspension of asylum applications and residence permits, the weakening of legal status caused by the state of emergency, the closure of borders and humanitarian corridors, the interruption of the provision of reception and integration services (especially during lockdowns), the absence of specific interventions in favor of this category in times of pandemic, the problematic access to social and health services and inadequate health care at a time when the health systems of many countries have been in crisis. All this further aggravated a situation that was already compromised and deteriorated by forced migration, poor mental and physical conditions due to the journey and life in the camps, repressive and punitive migration policies, and the anti-migrant propaganda that has long raged throughout a large part of the world. These elements have negatively affected their exposure to the novel coronavirus. They have damaged the first steps of integration and rooting, throwing thousands of people into limbo and negatively impacting those who have not obtained humanitarian protection or asylum and those who have left the reception and international protection systems, especially undocumented.

With the arrival of the pandemic, almost all the countries of the world (about 195) closed their borders, strengthened controls, imposed more restrictions. If most of the time these measures were due, sometimes the pandemic was a pretext to

apply ultra-restrictive measures and migration policies not justified by the pandemic. Of course, these elements have reduced migratory movements and limited departures. However, since the causes of emigration have not changed – on the contrary, with the coronavirus crisis, they have become even more profound in poor countries – emigration has continued, albeit in a more difficult, more uncomfortable, more dangerous, and more costly manner.

The closure of borders, ports,¹⁶ and legal channels, the worsening migration policies, and health restrictions have aggravated migration conditions for both those already on their way and those setting out during the pandemic. More than a few times, migrants have been stranded in transit countries, at border crossings, along the way, stranded with no means of livelihood, little access to services, with little public attention. The worsening conditions of migration have made them even more vulnerable; with the pandemic, they have seen an increased risk of inhuman treatment and have suffered escalated mistreatment, rape, violence. The reports and documentation regarding migration in different parts of the world – for example, the Colombian-Venezuelan area, Central America, the Mexico-US border, India, the Balkan route, the sub-Saharan route, the Mediterranean route – have painted a gloomy picture; a large part of the migrations have slipped into a foggy limbo, passing even more into the hands of traffickers and criminal organizations that have often operated undisturbed. In the situation of closed borders, forced vacuum (the absence of NGOs, journalists, rescues, public authorities), and state of emergency, migrations have become even more irregular, new services related to smuggling have arisen, smuggling activities have changed adapting to the new context, traffickers have changed routes and modes adapting to the new situations, finding new solutions (Sanchez, Achilli 2020).

CONCLUSION

The coronavirus crisis has taken place in the context of structural growth of inequalities in the four corners of the planet in recent decades. A context in which all forms of inequality have become more acute. Inequalities have been modified and exacerbated because of the considerable ongoing environmental crisis and the deep ecological rift – which, in combination with the acute economic crisis and the SARS-CoV-2 health crisis, have unified into a colossal triple crisis of contemporary society.

The pandemic has aggravated racial inequalities. Racialized groups were strongly penalized by it in all spheres of social life. Some social groups, such as emigrants and immigrants, who were already highly vulnerable and disadvantaged, have been hit very hard by their dual status as wage earners and foreigners. Many migrant women

16 In the Mediterranean, quarantine ships have also been added, fully-fledged floating hotspots on which hundreds of people have been kept at sea for days on end.

have seen their living and working conditions worsen dramatically due to the triple oppression that constantly weighs on them.

The pandemic has exposed the role and the condition of migrants within the world labor market, the nature of migration policies, the utilitarian (or pathological) conception of immigration in many countries. For this reason, the coronavirus crisis could be – and should be – an opportunity to rethink migration policies, to review the dominant conception of the immigrant as a man/woman bearer of needs for social emancipation.

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POVZETEK

KORONAKRIZA IN MIGRACIJE: PANSINDEMIJA IN NJEN VPLIV NA MIGRANTE

Fabio PEROCCO

Članek vpliv pandemije na zdravje in delovne razmere migrantov analizira na globalni ravni, a s posebnim poudarkom na zahodnih državah. Uvodoma obravnava ekološko družbeni izvor virusa SARS-CoV-2 (ob upoštevanju uničevanja okolja, krčenja gozdov, agroživilske industrije, množične urbanizacije oziroma vpliva kapitalizma na uničevanje narave), neenak vpliv pandemije na zdravje ljudi (obolevnost in smrtnost), povezan z družbenimi determinantami zdravja in sindemičnih pojavov, kakor tudi s Covidom-19 povezano rasno zdravstveno neenakopravnost kot posledico sistemskega rasizma in strukturne rasne neenakosti.

Izsledki študije kažejo, da so migranti iz različnih v članku opisanih razlogov utrpeli hude posledice, še zlasti pa so bili dovzetni za ekonomske in družbene učinke epidemije. Ob veliki izpostavljenosti virusu ter ranljivosti in dovzetnosti za okužbo so številne posledice, odvisne od njihovega družbenega in pravnega položaja, utrpeli tudi na trgu dela. Priseljenci so bili med družbenimi skupinami, ki so jih prekarnost, brezposelnost, podzaposlenost, slabše delovne razmere in revščina najbolj prizadeli; pogosto so bili bolj izpostavljeni in izkoriščani in v še bolj negotovem delovnem razmerju. Tudi prosilci za azil so bili zaradi svoje strukturne ranljivosti in neugodnega družbenega položaja tako zdravstveno kot družbeno bolj izpostavljeni epidemiji; sprejemni centri in begunska taborišča niso mogli zagotoviti zadostne fizične razdalje in javne zdravstvene oskrbe, njihov bivalni status je bil negotov, pravni položaj pa vse slabši, zato so bili pogosto prepuščeni sami sebi in se niso mogli svobodno gibati. Razmere so se naglo in dramatično slabšale tudi za migrante, ki so bili že na poti oziroma so se na pot odpravili med pandemijo. Pogosto so brez sredstev za preživetje, skoraj brez dostopa do socialnih služb, brez pozornosti javnosti in s povečanim tveganjem za izpostavljenost nehumanemu ravnanju oblasti obtičali v tranzitnih deželah, na mejnih prehodih in na poti.

VULNERABILITIES OF INTERNAL RETURNEE MIGRANTS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN INDIA

Arun Kumar ACHARYA¹, Sanjib PATEL¹

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ABSTRACT

Vulnerabilities of Internal Returnee Migrants in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic in India

The study surveyed 227 returned labor migrants in four districts of western Odisha to comprehensively analyze the socio-economic vulnerabilities faced by internal returnee labor migrants caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in India. The results show that the partial and complete lockdown caused factory and workplace closures in the entire country. Consequently, millions of migrants suffered a loss of income and faced an uncertain future which motivated migrant workers to return to their home villages. Upon arrival, they met socio-economic vulnerabilities, encountered social and economic discrimination, and were excluded by their family members and fellow villagers, which impacted their behavioral health.

KEYWORDS: internal returnee labor migrants, COVID-19, vulnerabilities, India

IZVLEČEK

Ranljivost notranjih migrantov povratnikov med pandemijo Covida-19 v Indiji

Študija zajema 227 notranjih migrantov povratnikov s štirih območij zahodne Orise in prinaša temeljito analizo socialnoekonomske ranljivosti, ki so ji bili zaradi pandemije Covida-19 v Indiji izpostavljeni notranji migranti povratniki. Rezultati kažejo, da sta delni in popolni *lockdown* povzročila zaprtje tovarn in delovnih mest po vsej državi. Milijoni migrantov so zato izgubili dohodek in se soočili z negotovo prihodnostjo, kar jih prisililo k vračanju v domače vasi, kjer pa so naleteli na vse oblike socialno-ekonomske ranljivosti, družbeno in ekonomsko neenakopravnost, iz skupnosti pa so jih izključili tudi družinski člani in sovaščani. Vse naštetje je negativno zaznamovalo njihovo duševno zdravje.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: notranji delovni migrant povratnik, Covid-19, ranljivosti, Indija

¹ PhD in anthropology, UNAM, Mexico; professor, Department of Anthropology, Sambalpur University, Odisha, India; acharya.iinso@suniv.ac.in, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2696-3038>.

¹¹ M.Phil in anthropology, Sambalpur University, India; research scholar, Centre of Excellence: Regional Development and Tribal Studies, Sambalpur University, Odisha, India; sanjibpatel356@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2476-1069>.

INTRODUCTION

Since the first cases of COVID-19 were confirmed in December 2019, to date, just over 108 million people have been infected worldwide by the new SARS-CoV-2, and around 2.3 million have lost their lives (WHO 2021). Governments of all countries have implemented different measures since the beginning of the pandemic. One of the strongest measures has been the need for physical isolation and distancing, suspension of non-essential activities – all intending to curb the spread of the virus among inhabitants and its spread in their territories (Rajan et al. 2020, de Haan, 2020).

India reported its first case of COVID-19 on January 30, 2020 (Government of India 2021). As of April 4, 2021, India has the largest number of confirmed cases (12,485,509) in South-East Asia and the second-highest number of cases worldwide after the United States (WHO 2021). Among the pandemic's innumerable impacts, it has widely affected the migrant population due to the total closure of economic activities (Rajan et al. 2020).

The country-wide complete lockdown during March and April 2020, followed by the imposition of partial lockdown in many states, caused an exodus of migrants workers. As factories and workplaces closed down, millions of migrant workers had to deal with the loss of income, loss of jobs, food shortages, and an uncertain future (Kakar 2020; Pandey 2020). Some media reported that millions of migrants have returned to their home states (The Hindu 2020a; The Hindu 2020b). However, the four states Odisha, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal have seen the maximum arrival of migrant workers. Odisha has received more than 600,000 internal migrants; a substantial part is from rural areas (*Hindustan Times* 2020).

Migrants' vulnerability manifested itself in extreme ways in India. When the government announced the lockdown, labor migrants found themselves in a void of economic vulnerabilities as large numbers of migrants lost their income; with no alternatives for their livelihood, migrants returned to their home villages (Haan 2020). Nevertheless, the flow of reverse migration from cities spread the viral infection from the urban "hotspots" to the rural villages. This homecoming became bittersweet for migrants (Sengupta 2020). They were labeled as "carriers of the virus" and stigmatized in their homes and the village, which caused many socio-economic vulnerabilities such as anxiety, unemployment, discrimination, and associated violence (Rajan et al. 2020; Pande 2020; de Haan 2020). Thus, the present study examines the socio-economic vulnerabilities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic among returnee internal labor migrants in India.

PANDEMICS, MIGRATION, AND VULNERABILITY

Migration from one area to another in search of improved livelihood is a key feature of human history. While some regions and sectors fall behind in their capacity to

support populations, others move ahead, and people migrate to access emerging opportunities (Acharya 2020). Migration has become a universal phenomenon in modern times. It has been observed that industrialization and economic development have been accompanied by large-scale movements of people from villages to urban centers (Lusome, Bhagat 2020). However, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has produced a flow of reverse migration from urban to rural. Literature on these topics indicates that, historically, migration during a pandemic period is a phenomenon that negatively impacts the socio-economic conditions of migrants (de Haan 2020).

The study of Rajan, Sivakumar, and Srinivasan (2020) highlighted that the pandemic precipitated a severe “*crisis of mobility*” and caused the vulnerability of India’s internal migrants in terms of their mobility, economic, and health status. Moreover, the pandemic has also affected migrants by various factors, including living and working conditions, service provision, and xenophobia (Liem et al. 2020). Even though the COVID-19 crisis is unprecedented, similar instances have already implemented during different period, for example; Leyva Flores (2018) points out that the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, which originated in Mexico, prompted other countries to implement isolation (quarantine) mechanisms in populations that had been in Mexico during the period of the epidemic.

Many of these diseases, also called “emerging infectious diseases” because they reach places where they never existed or re-emerge in areas where they had already been eliminated, continue to be linked to migration and mobility population because they can spread throughout the world in a matter of days (Leyva Flores 2018). The impact of these diseases on migration varies from region to region. It similarly happened in 2008 with the cholera outbreak in Zimbabwe, which forced thousands of people to migrate to South Africa. Upon their arrival, many Zimbabwean migrants met discrimination and xenophobia (Edelstein et al. 2014).

A recent study by Guadagno (2020) on migrants and the COVID-19 pandemic pointed out that migrants constitute one of the most vulnerable groups amid the measures taken by the governments to prevent the spread of infectious diseases or in times of epidemics and pandemics. Migrants are stigmatized or blamed for the spreading of the virus. This situation translates into both short and long-term systematic negative socio-economic as well as psychophysical health consequences.

In India, during the pandemic period, millions of migrants returned home. Most of them left with nothing but a keenness to reunite with their families (Rajan, Sivakumar, Srinivasan 2020). People undertook a hazardous journey; they walked hundreds of kilometers with no money to spend and often without food for days together (Ghosh 2020; Jadhav 2020). Law enforcement officials arrested migrants for violating the lockdown; some died due to exhaustion or road accidents. Documents pointed out that upon arrival to the native place, migrants stare at another crisis. Many migrants were stopped at the periphery of their village and were not allowed inside by the fellow villagers for fear of spreading the virus. Some were also forcefully sent to quarantine centers, isolated by family members, friends, and villagers (Ghosh 2020).

Although the vulnerability faced by migrants has been covered and discussed in media, so far, no systematic study has been conducted in India to understand these phenomena. This paper also aims to contribute to these gaps in the literature on COVID-19 and migration.

METHODOLOGY

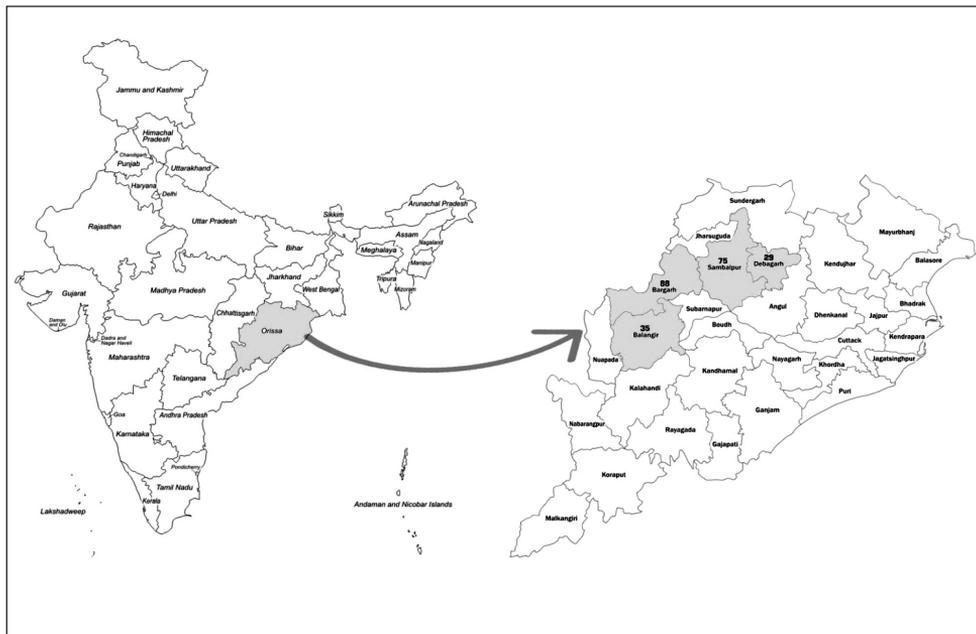
In 2018, the World Bank and the Odisha Higher Education Department jointly established the Centre of Excellence on Regional Development and Tribal Studies. One of the center's main objectives is to analyze the migration and livelihood patterns of the people of western Odisha, India. As a part of this project, we studied the problems, prospects, and perspectives of internal returnee labor migrants due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on their social and migratory status in western Odisha. During June and July 2020, the authors surveyed 227 returned labor migrants in four districts of Odisha¹ (Sambalpur, Bargarh, Bolangir, Deogarh) (see Map 1) by telephone using close-ended questions. The selected four districts have received 30 percent of the total returned labor migrants in the state of Odisha (Mishra 2020).

The migrants were contacted through the Gram Panchayat² office, as the Government of Odisha instructed all panchayat of the state to collect data regarding migrants' migratory status and contact information. We checked the accuracy of the verbatim interview transcriptions and replaced all personal information with unique pseudonyms to protect participants' identities. In this study, we analyzed the information using SPSS version 22 software, which served to systematize the data on perception and knowledge on COVID-19 and the information on the social and migratory status of migrants. All variables were coded and COVID-19 recoded as frequency and percentages for the descriptive statistics. We also grouped and regrouped codes until the analysis yielded a comprehensive set of themes.

1 The state of Odisha has 30 districts.

2 Gram Panchayat consists of a village or a group of villages divided into smaller units called "Wards". Each ward selects or elects a representative who is known as the Panch or ward member. The members of the Gram Sabha elect the ward members through a direct election. The Sarpanch or the president of the Gram Panchayat is elected by the ward members as per the State Act. The Sarpanch and the Panch are elected for a period of five years. Gram Panchayat is governed by the elected body and administration. The secretary is normally in charge of the administrative duties of the Gram Panchayat.

Map 1: Enumerated returnee labor migrants in four districts of western Odisha, India



RESULTS

Socio-demographic Characteristics of Returnee Labor Migrants

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of returnee labor migrants, and as seen, 85 percent ($n = 193$) of migrants are below the age of 35. In terms of educational status, 15 percent of migrants never attended any formal education, nearly fifty percent (46.3 percent, $n = 105$) have completed primary school, and 26.9 percent ($n = 61$) have completed secondary level of education. The majority of migrants (48.9 percent, $n = 111$) belong to scheduled caste (SC)³, 58 percent ($n = 132$) are unmarried, and more than 87 percent ($n = 198$) identified themselves as very low and low socio-economic groups (see Table 1).

3 The Scheduled Caste (SC) in traditional Indian society is known as Dalit, Harijan, or Untouchable. Traditional Indian society is divided into five main categories of castes: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Sudras, and Dalit. Dalits are members of the lowest social group in the Hindu caste system; the word *Dalit* means “oppressed” or “broken.” A Dalit is considered to be born below the caste system, which means below the four primary castes. In 1950, the Constitution of India (including 12 Scheduled Castes) integrated the Dalits into the Schedule of the Constitution for their social, economic, and political development.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of returnee labor migrants, India (N = 227)

	Number	Percent
Current Age		
17–20 years	29	12.8
21–25 years	79	34.8
26–35 years	85	37.4
36–45 years	25	11.0
More than 45 years	9	4.0
Education		
No education	34	15.0
Primary completed	105	46.3
Secondary completed	61	26.9
College	27	11.9
Caste		
Scheduled caste	111	48.9
Scheduled tribe	42	18.5
Other backward class	50	22.0
Other	24	10.6
Marital status		
Unmarried	132	58.1
Married	95	41.9
Socio-economic status		
Very low	97	42.7
Low	101	44.5
Medium	29	12.8

Source: Fieldwork, 2020.

Occupational Pattern of Returnee Labor Migrants

As the data indicates (see Table 2), more than half of the total studied migrants (55 percent, n = 126) of four districts migrated to the southern part of India, such as Tamil Nadu (n = 49), Andhra Pradesh (n = 33), Telangana (n = 23), Karnataka (n = 19), and Kerala (n = 2). Some migrants migrated to northern India, such as Delhi, Uttarakhand. Regarding the occupational pattern, migrant workers gained employment through a *sardar* (middleman). As the data indicates, about 21 percent (n = 48) of returned migrants had worked as agricultural and farm laborers at their place of destination. Further, 19 percent of migrants worked in the textile industry in the

states of Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, and Tripura, and 11.5 percent worked in the brick kiln industry in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Chhattisgarh. Nearly 12 percent ($n = 26$) worked in hotels and restaurants as service boys or waiters in Delhi, Karnataka, Uttarakhand. Also, 8.4 percent ($n = 19$) worked in the construction sector in the states of Delhi and West Bengal. Some migrants worked as machine operators, others worked in cereal factory, motor parts company, electrical parts shops, poultry farms, or as taxi/auto-rickshaw drivers, among others. Most of these migrants had no contracts and were only employed temporarily.

Table 2: Occupational pattern of returnee labor migrants at the place of destination, India (N = 227)

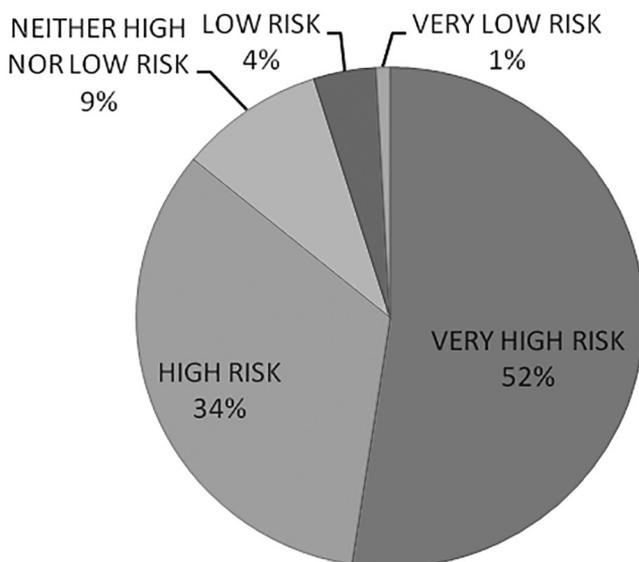
	Number	Percent
Destination state		
Tamil Nadu	49	21.6
Maharashtra	20	8.8
Tripura	15	6.6
Andhra Pradesh	33	14.5
Telangana	23	10.1
Karnataka	19	8.4
West Bengal	9	4.0
Chhattisgarh	9	4.0
Delhi	14	6.2
Uttarakhand	6	2.6
Madhya Pradesh	11	4.8
Gujarat	17	7.5
Kerala	2	0.9
Occupation		
Agriculture and farm labor	48	21.1
Textile industry	43	19.0
Brick kiln industry	26	11.5
Work in hotel/restaurant	26	11.5
Work in construction sector	19	8.4
Machine operator	17	7.5
Motor parts company	16	7.0
Work in cereal factory	16	7.0
Electrical company	13	5.7
Others*	12	5.2

*Employed in Motor garage, Poultry farm, Colour making industry, Plastic industry, Taxi/auto-rickshaw driver
Source: Fieldwork, 2020.

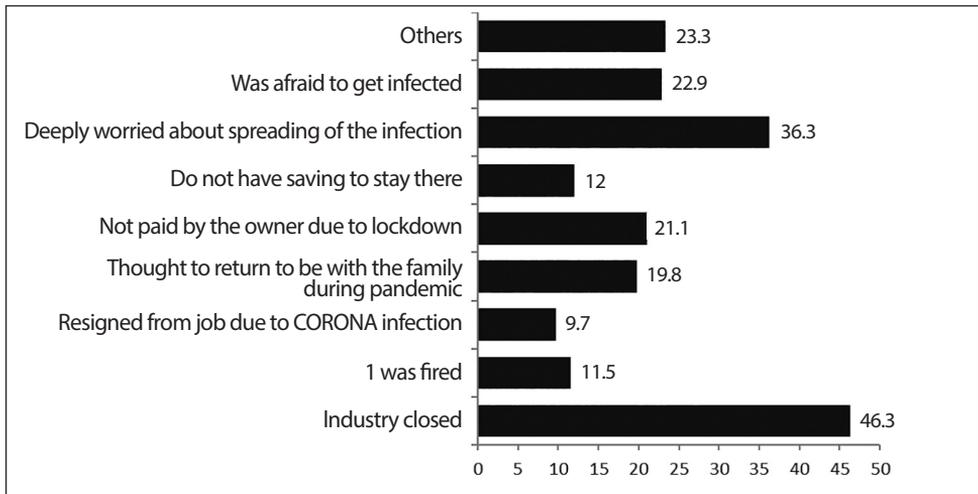
Migrants Perception on COVID-19

As in many other populations, migrant workers are more vulnerable to the direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19. Their ability to avoid infection largely depends on the preventive measures they take, including their living and working conditions. We asked a few questions about the migrants' perception of getting infected with COVID-19. As the results indicate, more than half of the total migrants (52 percent, $n = 118$ and 34 percent, $n = 77$) perceived very high and high risk, respectively, to get infected of COVID-19 looking into their awareness level, living conditions, and absence of social protection measures (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Migrants perception to get infected by COVID-19



Similarly, on reasons behind returning to the native place, nearly 50 percent (46.3 percent, $n = 105$) left the place of work as industry closed due to COVID-19 lockdown, and 36 percent ($n = 82$) migrants returned as they were deeply worried on the spatial spreading of infection. Many migrants also cited other reasons such as economic complications, fear of getting infected by the Coronavirus, family problems, and no jobs (see Figure 2). Migrants used special train services sponsored by the Government of India to return their homes. Some migrants also rented vehicles and used special bus services sponsored by different non-governmental organizations.

Figure 2: Reasons behind return to native place

Returnee Labor Migrants and Challenges

When the Government of India announced mandatory lockdown, migrants in cities found themselves in the void of having lost their job and income. Many of them had no alternative and thus returned to their home villages. Upon arrival to native places, migrants faced various social, economic vulnerabilities such as harassment, discrimination, forced quarantine, and abuses. Table 3 categorizes the vulnerability faced by migrants: Social vulnerability, Economic vulnerability, and Abuses and violence. Concerning Social vulnerability, nearly 81 percent ($n = 183$) of returnee labor migrants faced discriminatory attitudes by their native villagers; for example, a migrant said: "When I reached village many people said I am virus carrier and now going to spread virus in the region. They even didn't talk with me. Whenever I come out of home, young people shouted at me, 'Hey Corona.' They also used slang and bad languages against me ..."

Similarly, 86 percent ($n = 196$) of migrants were forcefully sent to quarantine centers by fellow villagers, 71 percent ($n = 161$) suffered evasive behavior, and 59 percent ($n = 134$) were isolated by their own family. However, almost all migrants (98 percent, $n = 223$) were not allowed to use common public spaces, including exclusion from social networks (WhatsApp, Facebook, etc.). Although they had come out from the quarantine center, some migrants said their return had caused conflict within their own family members. Moreover, 63 percent ($n = 143$) of migrants were barred from entering their neighbor's house. Another Delhi returned migrant worker quarantined in a house with his family explained how terminology or languages used by fellow villagers could be traumatic. He said: "We were aggressively shouted at and told not to leave the house. The next day two policemen came to the house and threatened us instead of providing necessary information to deal with the quarantine. Their behaviors made us feel like that we are involved in an illicit operation."

Concerning Economic vulnerability, 73.5 percent (n = 167) of migrants said they currently do not possess any job or employment, and a further 88 percent (n = 200) responded they had lost their previous job. Migrants also said they were buried in debt (51.5 percent, n = 117) and had lost savings (99 percent, n = 225) (see Table 4). Concerning Abuses and violence faced by returnee labor migrants, 93 percent (n = 211) have faced verbal abuses such as bad language, and 47 percent (n = 107) have suffered physical violence by fellow villagers and local authorities, as mentioned by a young migrant:

Upon my return to the village some people complained to village head that probably I have Covid symptoms and may transmit virus in the village, when it came into my knowledge, I explained my health status. However, they didn't convinced and asked me to leave the village. Next day, when I stepped out from house to buy some essentials commodities, while walking I coughed, at that time two men came and accused me that villagers will die because of my fault and suddenly they started beaten me and asked to leave the village immediately.

Table 3: Vulnerabilities faced by returnee labor migrants in their community, India (N = 227)

Vulnerability	Number	Percent
Social vulnerability		
Discrimination	183	80.6
Forced quarantine	196	86.3
Evasive behavior	161	70.9
Family isolation	134	59.0
Not allowed to use common space	223	98.2
Conflict within family	97	42.7
Excluded from social networks (Whatsapp, Facebook, etc.)	82	36.1
Barred from entering neighbor's house after quarantine	143	63.0
Economic vulnerability		
Not employed currently	167	73.5
Loss of previous job	200	88.1
Debt	117	51.5
Loss of saving	225	99.1
Abuses and violence		
Physical	107	47.1
Verbal	211	92.9

Source: Fieldwork, 2020.

Behavioral Health Issues of Migrants

Table 4 describes the behavioral health of returnee labor migrants, where we have classified their responses into two categories: not at all and almost every day. Data shows that the socio-economic vulnerability and abuses (verbal and physical) have deeply impacted migrants' behavioral health, as seen around 52 percent (n = 117) of returnee labor migrants said almost every day they consume alcohol. However, when we asked migrants about their self-assessment of psychological behaviors, 83 percent (n = 189) reported that almost every day they feel depressed, nearly 88 percent (n = 199) feel anxious, and 97 percent (n = 221) feel irritated and angry for everything and nearly 91 percent (n = 206) migrants have lost appetite due to the current pandemic, economic situations and behaviors encountered upon their arrival. Also, nearly 12 percent (n = 27) of migrants almost every day have suicidal ideation as they feel they only exist to overcome the socio-economic damages caused by the pandemic, particularly economic debt, discrimination, prevailing unemployment situation, and other social and economic hardships. In this regards, an adult migrant who returned from the state of Tamil Nadu said:

After the lockdown, the owner of the industry telephoned and said: now it is not possible to pay salary as industry is closed. He also asked us to vacate the house at immediate effect. I was not having sufficient saving, so decided to return to village. Once I reached nearby the village, some people stopped me in mid-way and had a meeting with village committee, and thereafter prohibited me to enter the village territory. They also said I am "virus carrier" and may transmit and infect other people. Many fellow villagers categorized me as "enemy" of all villagers. I tried to convince them about my good health. However, they didn't listen and forcefully sent me to quarantine center, where I stayed nearly 20 days. Now I do not have any job, and I am the only bread earner of my family. Do not know when the pandemic situations get better [...] This caused very tense and anxious [...] Although right now cannot do any things, however, once pandemic over, I may migrate again in search of an opportunity [...]

Similarly, another young migrant who returned from Delhi narrated:

The day when government declared country-wide lockdown, at the very moment, I felt this lockdown definitely caused severe damages in our life. I along with my other friends who were working in a hotel lost our job. We tried to return our village as soon as we can, however, due to non-availability of transport could not make it soon, but after a month with the little saved capital, we returned. On my arrival to village, I encountered with many obstacles. They (family) didn't allowed me to stay in home and sent quarantine center, after that, villagers also excluded in all fronts, which complicated my life to get an employment. Without any job it is hard to maintain life [...] I have taken loans from village head, however, due to absence of earning

sources at present moment, I am finding difficulty to repay [...] my father is also very sick, and we need money for his treatment. The pandemic has hit us so hard [...] I'm struggling to sit [...] it makes feel very tense, and my head is reeling and do not know what to do ... the situation is so worst that it is better to "quit life" [...]

Table 4: Impacts of vulnerabilities on returnee labor migrants, India (N = 227)

Vulnerability	Not at all		Almost every day	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Consumption of alcohol	110	48.5	117	51.5
Depression	38	16.8	189	83.2
Feeling anxious and nervous	28	12.4	199	87.6
Feeling irritated and angry	6	2.7	221	97.3
Lack of appetite	21	9.3	206	90.7
Suicidal ideation	200	88.1	27	11.9

Source: Fieldwork, 2020.

CONCLUSION

It has been almost a year since the Government of India induced nationwide lockdowns due to COVID-19, and close to 60 million people moved back to their "source" rural areas. The displacement of people has been described as the second-largest since the Partition of India. However, the reality of migrant workers' existence is much more complicated and vulnerable than those sharply defined numbers (Misra 2021). This study provides insight into the socio-economic vulnerability caused by the COVID-19 pandemic among internal returnee labor migrants in India. The lockdown disturbed both the supply chain and demand, causing labor markets to shrink. The sudden paralyzation of economic activities has resulted in deeper shocks and vulnerability among employers and workers. Many migrants who were employed in these sectors have lost their jobs and returned home with limited savings.

For decades, millions of unskilled rural workers have migrated to urban areas, looking for livelihood opportunities. As the current study indicates, migrants are absorbed mainly into the informal economy, such as on construction sites, in the textile industry, in the brick kiln industry, or as a taxi/auto-rickshaw driver in the city. The lockdown forced the migrant population to remain in a vulnerable position as it restricts them from stepping out of their home. The suspension of industrial units, workplaces, and transport caused millions of migrants to deal with the loss of income and an uncertain future. When such employment avenues dwindle, they go back to their rural setting.

We found that upon their return, migrant workers' social and economic conditions worsen in their native villages. As the studies of Jha (2020) and Dreze (2020) indicate, returnee labor migrants faced fears, discrimination, and unequal treatment in their home communities, leading, on occasion, to confrontations and violence, and this phenomenon affects migrants' psychological behaviors. Abuse to migrants with discriminatory labels such as disease carrier, Corona transmitter, social exclusion by the fellow villagers, and the concept of "We versus They" have the power to influence migrants' attitudes and psychological behaviors, for example, by preventing migrants' access to employment and social assimilation. Such abuse also leads to social, psychological isolation, expression of anger, depression, anxiety, constant fear, and loss of appetite, including lifelong hatred, intolerance, alcoholism, and suicidal tendencies among migrants. These negative behaviors in pandemics have been described as co-morbidity where vulnerabilities can exceed the burden of disease.

To mitigate the effect of the lockdown on vulnerable groups, particularly migrants, the Government of India announced different economic packages under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana. The package entails an additional five kilograms of wheat or rice and one kg of preferred pulses every month for the next three months. Moreover, the government also ordered the state governments to use the Building and Construction Workers Welfare Fund to provide relief to Construction Workers through direct benefit transfer (DBT) (DHNS 2020; Government of India 2020). The Reserve Bank of India also reduced the interest rate along with a series of unconventional measures to lend to besieged businesses (Bloomberg Quint 2020). Although the relief provided by the government has brought some relief to the migrants, looking into the huge migrant population, the number of services provided still proves highly inadequate. The socio-economic damages and vulnerabilities caused by COVID-19 will definitely continue for an indefinite period. Thus, it is important for governments of all levels (central, state, and district) to address the deep-rooted inequalities that keep workers in marginalized positions, including their essential social protection.

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POVZETEK

RANLJIVOST NOTRANJIH MIGRANTOV POVRATNIKOV MED PANDEMIJO COVIDA-19 V INDIJI

Arun Kumar ACHARYA, Sanjib PATEL

Popolni *lockdown* zaradi pandemije Covida-19 marca in aprila 2020 in delni *lock-downi* v številnih zveznih državah so v Indiji povzročili eksodus delovnih migrantov. Zaradi zapiranja tovarn in delovnih mest so se milijoni migrantskih delavcev soočili z izgubo dohodka in dela, s pomanjkanjem hrane in z negotovo prihodnostjo. Brez alternativnih možnosti za preživetje so se množično vračali v domače vasi. Obratni tok migracij iz mest na deželo je prispeval k širitvi koronavirusa iz tako imenovanih urbanih *hotspotov* na podeželje. Vrnitev domov je bila za migrante grenko-sladka izkušnja, v njihovih vaseh so jih stigmatizirali kot »prenašalce virusa« in jih diskriminirali, kar je pri njih povzročalo anksioznost in druge oblike družbenoekonomske ranljivosti. Iz tega razloga pričujoči članek analizira vse oblike ranljivosti, ki jih je pandemija Covida-19 povzročila med notranjimi migranti povratniki v Indiji. Študija, junija in julija 2020 izvedena v telefonski anketi z zaprtimi vprašanji, je zajela 227 delovnih migrantov povratnikov iz štirih okrajev zahodne Orise.

Rezultati kažejo, da sta delni in popolni *lockdown* po celi državi zaprla tovarne in delovna mesta. Milijoni migrantov so se zaradi izgube dohodka soočali z negotovo prihodnostjo, kar jih je prisililo k vračanju v njihovo »izvorno« kmečko okolje. Ta množična selitev ljudstva je druga največja v zgodovini države vse od razdelitve Indije, vendar pa so resnične delavske usode precej bolj zapletene in ranljive od navedenih števil. Študija omogoča vpogled v vse oblike družbenoekonomske ranljivosti, ki jo je pandemija Covida-19 povzročila med notranjimi migranti povratniki v Indiji. *Lockdown* je zmanjšal ponudbo in povpraševanje ter skrčil trg dela. V omenjenih sektorjih zaposleni migranti so izgubili delo in se s skromnimi prihranki vrnili domov, kjer so bili deležni tako družbene kot ekonomske diskriminacije, izključenost, ki so je bili deležni s strani sorodstva in sovaščanov, pa je še dodatno vplivala na njihovo duševno zdravje.

THE MUSLIM PRECARIAT OF ASSAM: CONTAGION, MIGRANTS, AND COVID-19

Yasmin SAIKIA¹

COBISS 1.02

ABSTRACT

The Muslim Precariat of Assam: Contagion, Migrants, and COVID-19

This article examines the plight of migrant Muslim garbage pickers during the COVID-19 lockdown in India and their struggles to return home to Assam. Their financial hardships were exacerbated by social, political, and religious prejudices. Belonging to the Bengali-speaking *miya* community, deemed “Bangladeshi,” government authorities neglected them. The lockdown’s hyped-up anti-Muslim propaganda also reduced them to “corona jihadis.” The author reads their struggles as a case study of the Muslim condition in India and argues for civic engagement for redressing the condition of the marginal and vulnerable. The research was conducted through telephone and Zoom calls and in-person interviews.

KEYWORDS: Assam migrants, COVID-19, lockdown, *miyas*, Muslim precariat, India

IZVLEČEK

Muslimanski prekariat v Assamu: Okužbe, migranti in Covid-19

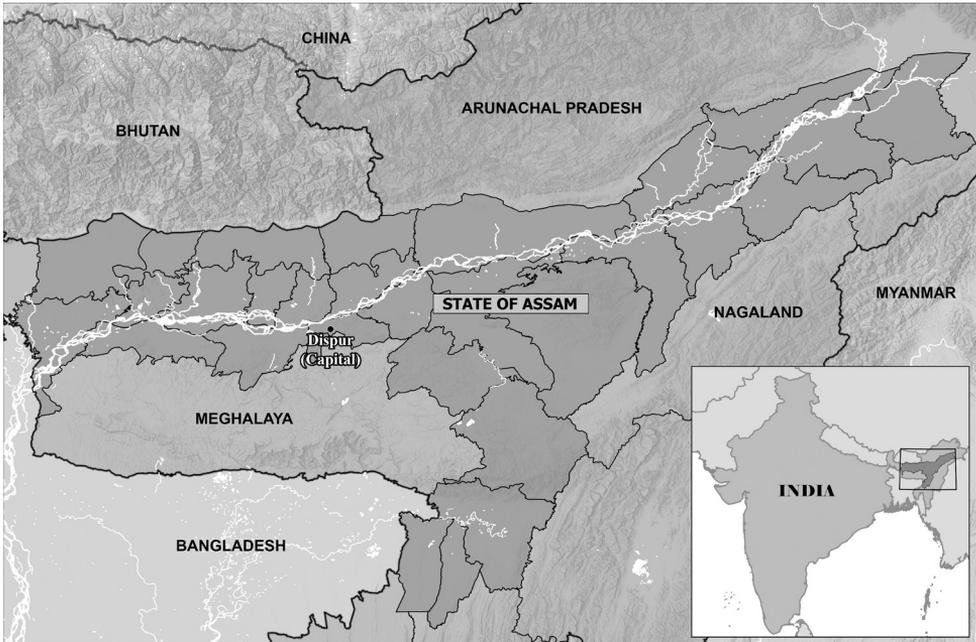
Članek obravnava stiske migrantskih muslimanskih smetarjev med popolnim zaprtjem javnega življenja v Indiji in njihova prizadevanja za vrnitev v rodno pokrajino Assam. Družbeni, politični in verski predsodki so njihove finančne težave še povečali. Zaradi njihove pripadnosti bengalsko govoreči skupnosti *miya*, ki izvira iz Bangladeša, se indijske oblasti zanje niso menile, okrepljena protimuslimanska propaganda jih je v času *lockdowna* obravnavala kot »korona džihadiste«. Avtorica njihov boj za preživetje obravnava v okviru splošnega položaja muslimanov v Indiji, obenem pa se zavzema, da bi civilna družba naredila več za izboljšanje položaja najbolj marginaliziranih in ranljivih skupin. Raziskava je bila izvedena po telefonu, aplikaciji Zoom in z osebimi intervjuji.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: migranti iz Assama, Covid-19, zaprtje, skupnost *miya*, muslimanski prekariat, Indija

¹ PhD in history, Arizona State University; ysaikia@asu.edu, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4321-1188>.

INTRODUCTION

Map 1: Map of Assam State and Northeast India (made by Eric Friesenhahn at the Map and Geospatial Hub, Arizona State University Library).



“Last night [April 4], the police arrested two terrorists hiding in the Kasimpur mosque who had returned from the Jamaat meeting. We live in fear of the Muslims; they have grabbed our land, and now they are spreading the contagious coronavirus. They are corona terrorists.” Taxi driver Rabha continued his rant against the Muslims as we walked along the meandering hillside of Kharguli, in Guwahati, Assam, one of the seven states constituting northeast India. Rabha’s account of the *jamaati* covid-terrorists in our neighborhood reiterates the weaponized story constructed and circulated by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government that rules India based on the religious ideology of Hindutva or Hindu nationalism (Jaffrelot 2007). According to the government, the Muslim organization Tablighi Jamaat, which convened a meeting in Delhi on March 8–10, 2020, spread the virus in India (Ellis-Petersen, Rahman 2020). Thus, the pernicious narrative of COVID-19 as a Muslim contagion instigated the public against Muslims.

On March 25, 2020, prime minister Narendra Modi locked down India for twenty-one days to contain the spread of COVID-19. Multiple lockdowns followed for three months until late June. Lockdowns in India are a form of punishable collective incarceration. In Assam, there were no COVID-19 cases when the first lockdown was announced. Nonetheless, the entire state ceased all activities, and movement outside

one's home was prohibited. Giving substance to the government's fictitious narrative of Muslims as carriers of the coronavirus, the local media published the names of various Muslim "super spreaders," the two men of Rabha's story among them. However, these men were neither Tablighi Jamaat members nor bioterrorists; they were businessmen returning from Bangalore to Manipur (another state in the north-east). Stranded in Guwahati and without funds to pay for a hotel room, they received shelter from a local Muslim organization. However, being Muslims, they became suspected "corona-jihadis" and were arrested on charges of the intent to spread the novel coronavirus.

Like the SARS-CoV-2 virus, Muslims are viewed in Assam as outsiders, infiltrators destroying the culture and identity of the Assamese Hindu community. The community derogatorily referred to as "Bangladeshi" or *miya* are also debased as *gedha* or filthy.¹ This article highlights the struggle for survival of two *miya* communities stranded in northern India – Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh and Gurgaon in Haryana – during the nationwide lockdown. These two groups are among the many migrant *miya* communities employed in the informal sector outside Assam, performing what others consider *gedha* or filthy work. They are among the poorest of the poor, even lower than the Dalit groups in India, landless, illiterate, often unemployed as well as threatened with expulsion from Assam and India because they are deemed Bangladeshi.

The *miyas*' "bare lives" (Agamben 1998) are bodies for political oppression. Viewed as illegal immigrants in Assam, they are threatened with denationalization by the National Register of Citizens (NRC), compiled in August 2019 to detect the "illegals." Although the vast majority have been able to prove their Indian citizenship, *miyas* remain an outcast, pariah community denounced by the government and the mainstream public. Their treatment during the lockdown reveals the inequality of human lives in India, the world's largest "democracy," which is only "partly free," according to the latest Freedom House Report.²

Drawing upon Guy Standing's term "precariat" (2011), I present the *miya* garbage pickers as a "Muslim precariat," though not dangerous and alienated like Standing's precariat in the West. Following Levinas ([1974] 1998), I see each human life as valuable. The Muslim precariat does the dirtiest work in the hope of transforming their seemingly worthless existence into something of value, a testimony to a continuous human struggle for acceptance and the right to live in dignity. They hope for a better life for their children who can belong to the national community. Hard work, resilience, and the capacity to dream highlight the dignity of their work and their humanity.

1 Recently, the community adopted the term *miya* as a resistance against the humiliation and indignity they suffer. I am using the term in the same spirit in this article.

2 For details, see <https://freedomhouse.org/country/india/freedom-world/2021>.

METHODOLOGY

Adopting a methodology incorporating history and ethics, I develop the concept of the valued humanity of miya garbage pickers by exploring their experiences during and after the COVID-19 lockdown. For developing this methodology, I draw upon historians of the Holocaust, such as Hannah Arendt, Giorgio Agamben, and Inga Clendinnen, among others, and the ethical philosophy of reciprocity in Islam, as well as the scholarship of Emmanuel Levinas and Maurice Blanchot.³ Specifically, I explore the experiences of those who migrated back home to Assam and the ones who could not. What motivated the returnees, and how did they organize their long journey back? Why could some of them not leave? What made the experience of the Gurgaon migrant workers different from the ones in Kanpur? Taking a *longue durée* view, I frame the stories of the Gurgaon and Kanpur garbage pickers during the lockdown against the history of their initial movement from Assam in search of jobs and their experiences of returning home during the pandemic.

I approach the study of the garbage pickers' lives as a site for creating value from abandonment. Filth and cleaning are two sides of their lives. Grinding poverty, illiteracy, landlessness, bureaucratic neglect, and political dispossession mark these people in normal and abnormal times. They survive/d in the "zone of non-being" (Fanon 2008), defeating a system that makes them disposable. These lives are bound up with the lives of others, as they clean up spaces that all inhabit, urging us to rethink the experience of COVID-19, lockdown, and migration in anticipation of a better tomorrow.

Due to restrictions on movement during the lockdown, research was conducted through telephone interviews. I conducted three phone interviews with three managers, which totaled nine interviews. Each interview ranged between one to two hours. Additionally, I did several Zoom and telephone calls with facilitators in Gurgaon and Bangalore and met with local facilitators in Guwahati, Assam. Since I was in Guwahati during the COVID-19 outbreak and the initial lockdown, I visited some quarantine facilities to gather a first-hand impression of the arrangements. There, I met with government officials, NGO workers, and journalists who were aiding the returnees. The information gathered from various interlocutors appears in quotes in the text and is cited in the footnotes.

Living in Garbage: The Inhuman Lives of Humans

Miya garbage pickers lead abject lives even in normal times, but during the COVID-19 pandemic, it became unbearable. The pickers live in dump yards, usually under busy

3 The topic of reciprocity in Islam is a well-studied area and has many local and cultural expressions. In Afghanistan it works as *Pakhtunwali*, in Arabic speaking countries *diyafa* or hospitality is sacrosanct, in the Indian subcontinent the culture of *mehman nawazi* is the mark of civility and refinement, and so on. Extensive bibliographies on related concepts are available in Siddiqui (2015) and Parrott (2018).

flyovers, rented by a *sardar* or labor manager. Each family pays rent for a house made of plastic sheets for walls and scrap tin for a roof. They share common toilets that do not have running water, and there is very little privacy among the families. The living compounds also serve as workspaces where the pickers initially sort the garbage, clean, and pack the waste. The packed garbage is sent to recycling companies within the city or outside. According to Anwar Rahman, one of the managers of the Gurgaon garbage compound, some of the packed garbage is sent to Rajasthan and Uttarakhand in North India, besides Delhi.⁴ In Kanpur, Aminul, who manages the compound there, told me that he sells most of the garbage locally.⁵ The Gurgaon compound, managed by Jiaur Rahman and Anwar Rahman, houses more than 500 pickers, and they manage two additional compounds in Gurgaon, totaling about 2,000 pickers under their care.⁶ The Kanpur compound managed by Aminul has 180 garbage pickers. Survival for the managers and the pickers depends on the income generated from the garbage collection. On my inquiring why they cannot do the same work in Assam, they responded that, while a few small groups in Guwahati do this work, there is very little garbage to collect. Anwar explained: "Since Assam does not have a large industrial base, the production of goods and consumption are both low, and it is not profitable to collect garbage for recycling and generating income." The lack of work in Assam, even something as rudimentary as garbage picking, forces the unemployed miyas to migrate out of this state for a livelihood.

Garbage pickers are between the ages of thirteen to fifty years. The life span of the workers is low, but the duration of their work life is very long. Most garbage pickers are illiterate or have minimum education. Anwar and Aminul, however, are somewhat educated; Anwar studied law but quit due to financial problems, and Aminul completed high school. The pickers earn an average monthly income of 10,000 Indian rupees (less than 150 US dollars) in both Gurgaon and Kanpur. "This is a considerable amount of money for people who had no income in Assam and barely managed to eat a square meal every day," stated Jiaur. He elaborated, "Because of work, they can afford food and accommodation, and even save and send money home to their families [...] They are hard-working, productive workers."

Cleaning the mess of others is not an easy job. Instead of appreciation, the Gurgaon pickers are often threatened with eviction, and they face hostility as Muslims. Jiaur has forbidden his workers to wear their native clothes, which sets them apart from the local Gujjar Hindus in Gurgaon. Also, they have consciously decided not to speak Bangla or Assamese (their native languages) outside the compound, only Hindi. Both Jiaur and Aminul communicated with me in fluent Hindi. Anwar, on the other hand, took pride that he could speak fluent Assamese.

4 Phone interview on 23 Jan. 2021. Anwar Rahman also shared several videos of workers' everyday life in the dump yards and their journey to Assam.

5 Phone interview on 15 and 17 Jan. 2021.

6 Phone interviews on 23 Jan. 2021.

Nonetheless, their efforts to mingle and merge with the local people in Gurgaon and Kanpur have proved inconsequential. During the COVID-19 pandemic, none of their neighbors came to their rescue. “We keep their neighborhoods clean, yet our lives have no value to the people whose filth we are taking care of,” Jiaur recalled.

The routine violence extends to the lives of their children, who are forced into labor from an early age because of the lack of schooling. Although the Gurgaon pickers have access to primary education inside the compound, only two children attend middle school outside. One of them is Jiaur’s son. In Kanpur, on the other hand, the landowners have forbidden Aminul from constructing a school inside the compound. Consequently, the garbage pickers’ children in Kanpur are deprived of education. Although they can attend school outside, “they are shunned by the other students, and they are embarrassed,” according to Aminul. The lack of education of these children is one of the main concerns of Jiaur, Anwar, and Aminul because “if they have education, their valueless lives will have value,” Aminul told me.

Another problem is the lack of space for performing religious duties and daily prayers as Muslims, the religion of most garbage pickers, including those from West Bengal and Bihar. “Of the ten thousand garbage pickers, nearly seventy-five percent of them in Gurgaon are Muslim,” according to Jiaur. But they are not allowed to observe daily congregational prayers inside the garbage compounds. In Haryana, the BJP government destroyed several mosques, and no prayer is allowed in open spaces or public parks, which restricts the Muslim religious duty of daily prayers. Community prayer cannot be observed except on Friday, for which Jiaur received permission from his landowner to use the schoolroom inside the compound as a mosque. Even so, the prayers are conducted almost in secrecy.

The boundary of municipal services excludes their compounds, so there are no public amenities. During the lockdown, the workers had to live without income and government support. The lack of food and water and the problem of summer heat were compounded by the uncertainty of the duration of the lockdown, COVID-19, and its impact. This situation caused great anxiety, and the workers were desperate to return to their villages, but their hopeless condition was not initially evident to the authorities. They are the unrepresentable, excluded from the fantasy of “shining” India. This group of forgotten and abandoned miyas is one among the many marginalized Muslim communities in the BJP’s India whose lives are valueless and their deaths ungrievable (Butler 2020).

Visible and Invisible Migrants from Assam

The northeast Indian states of Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Sikkim comprise a large part of India’s migratory workforce because of factors such as militancy, lack of a manufacturing sector, big business and trade, environmental changes, and limited employment in public and private sectors (Xaxa

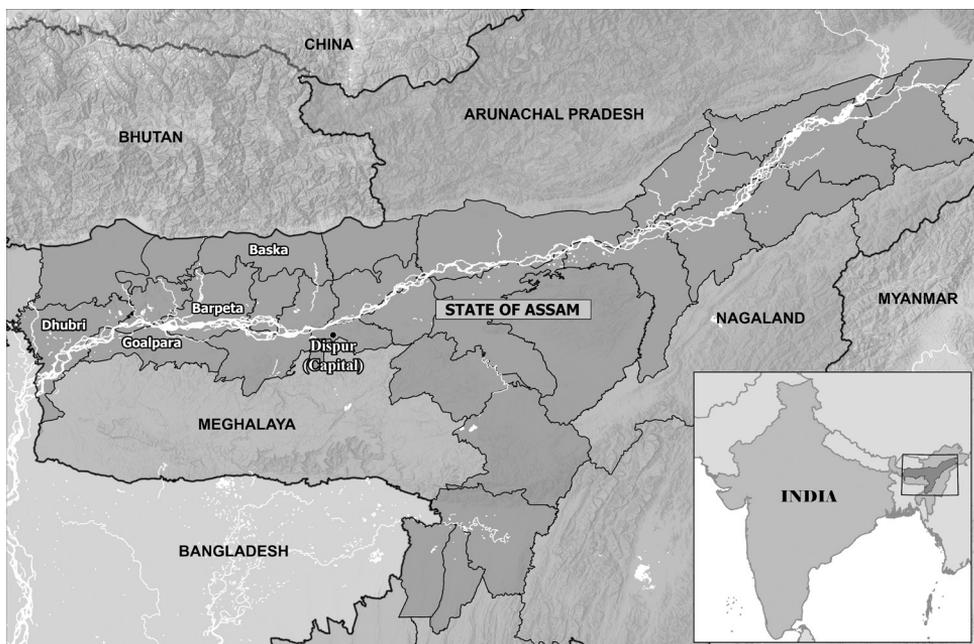
et al. 2019). The “Look East” policy launched by the government failed to produce real results, and employment and the economy are not expanding in the region. The oil, gas, and tea industries in Assam absorb only a small percentage of the available labor force. “In Assam, there is more labor than the opportunity to work,” as Anwar astutely summed up the situation. The Hindu high-caste communities have a relatively higher level of employment in the government sector. In contrast, the share of workers engaged in the unorganized sector is increasing for the religious minorities, particularly Muslims. The unemployment rate in the northeast is much higher than the national average, and studies predict it will increase, particularly among the religious minorities and hill communities (Tripathi 2016; Khongji, Nongkynrih 2018).

There are two kinds of migrations of the people out of northeast India.⁷ One is internal migration within the region for employment in agriculture, housework, and manual labor. The second and more obvious migration is to other parts of India. The longest corridor of migration from Assam is to Kerala in southern India. Large numbers of Muslims from flood-wrecked miya communities who have lost land to erosion and/or did not own agricultural land and are illiterate have migrated to Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu to work in various industries such as plywood manufacture, fishing, and boating and as garbage pickers and workers on coffee and tea plantations. There is no official report of the number of miya workers outside Assam, but Anwar estimated more than 500,000 work in the informal sector. Of these, more than 100,000 are garbage pickers.

The first wave of migration from Assam started in the 1990s due to the rise of militancy after the failure of the Assam Agitation (1979–1985), a local ethno-religious identity movement aimed at driving out non-Assamese and “Bangladeshi outsiders”; and the violent Bodoland movement, a breakaway group from Assam, which targeted the miyas in their area. Throughout the early 2000s, the pace of migration from Assam increased. The presence of “visible migrants” – educated Assamese generally employed as software engineers, IT personnel, lawyers, and journalists; and semi-educated Assamese migrants in the service-sector businesses of food and beverage, hotels and spas, security, salons, beauty, wellness, and nursing – became pronounced during the COVID-19 outbreak. Northeasterners have Mongoloid features, which instigates racial hostility. Pejorative terms such as “chinky” and “jungly” (uncivilized) are commonly used to demean them (McDuie-Ra 2012). During the COVID-19 outbreak, they were targeted with violence as “Chinese” and “Covid carriers” after Donald Trump carelessly declared COVID-19 to be a “Chinese virus” (Hoakip 2020). For Muslims, the added accusation of corona jihadi made them extremely vulnerable, staying inside their houses, locked up for days in fear of reprisal.

7 For further reading on the patterns of migration within and outside northeast India, see Lu-some and Bhagat (2020).

MAP 2: Four districts in western Assam with highest out-migration of miya garbage pickers (made by Eric Friesenhahn at the Map and Geospatial Hub, Arizona State University Library).



The “invisible migrants” – illiterate miyas who have migrated out of Assam due to communal violence, landlessness, and poverty – hail mostly from Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, all economically depressed Muslim majority areas in western Assam; and from the Bodoland Territory of Baksa where miya families were victims of communal violence (Chakrabarti, Longkumer 2020). Hence, leaving Assam for work is a necessity, a path to escape violence. Most of these workers have found employment outside Assam through their local networks of family and friends in Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Karnataka, and Maharashtra and work in the informal sector as rickshaw pullers, daily laborers, garbage pickers, fruit and vegetable vendors, and drivers. Until COVID-19 ravaged their lives, they were unaccounted for as productive labor.

Irrespective of religion and status, workers from Assam stranded outside their homeland faced hostility, extreme uncertainty, and heightened fears and anxiety during the pandemic. The fear of dying far away from home amplified the desire to return home. Many believed they would return to Assam and find work there, but few have. Once again, financial circumstances and unemployment compel them to return to their workplaces in other parts of India.

Whose Lives Count? The Struggle to Reach Home

During the initial lockdown, millions of migrant laborers and their families who were abandoned by their employers in India's cities, desperate, fearful, and penniless, tried to return to their native villages where they hoped their family networks would help them survive. Many died along the way, crushed by trains; some were run over by trucks; others died of sheer exhaustion. According to media reports, the movement of the workers became the biggest migration of human beings since the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. The government addressed this human crisis by interdicting people's movement outside their homes. Police surveilled and punished the offenders.

The garbage pickers from Assam recall that, unlike the other migrants who, after a month of lockdown, defied the restrictions and started walking home, they could not. Assam is over one thousand miles from Gurgaon and Kanpur. The Gurgaon workers, being in proximity to Delhi, were better informed than the more remote Kanpur workers, yet both "did not step outside their compounds ... for over a month," both Aminul and Jiaur recalled. As vulnerable Muslims living in Uttar Pradesh, which is ruled by the hardcore BJP chief minister Yogi Adityanath, the Kanpur garbage pickers had fewer opportunities to return home. The work of garbage picking had come to a grinding halt, so there was no income. Inside the compounds, because the accumulating filth could not be disposed of, people lived next to piling garbage. The sweltering summer heat made their precarious plastic-sheet houses unbearable. But they sat day after day in this horrific condition without anyone taking notice. In desperation, Jiaur and Anwar in Gurgaon decided to act. A video they posted on Facebook drew the attention of several concerned citizens and helped others to reach them. NGOs provided them with weekly food rations and water, and slowly, plans for their migration to Assam started to take shape.

Nationally, more than a month after the first lockdown, facing intense criticism for neglecting displaced workers in the cities, the government launched a new scheme: the Migrant Workers Return Registration. The aim was to count the number of migrant workers stranded outside their home states, arrange their transportation, and ensure fourteen days of quarantine facilities after they reached their hometowns. State governments across the country launched online portals to register the migrant workers who wanted to return home. Buses and *Shramik* (workers) special trains were arranged to transport the migrants. While, on paper, the government's actions appeared planned and organized, the migrants from the northeast encountered a variety of problems, including misinformation, poor communication, lack of coordination, and uncertainty of transportation; those who journeyed back on trains, buses, trucks, and even ambulances suffered immensely. Their journey back home was fraught with problems from the lack of food and water and attacks from other migrants who were walking back home; some contracted the virus from infected travelers and died without medical attention (Haksar 2020). In May, after the first lockdown, there were over 600,000 workers stranded outside Assam.

Based on my discussions with volunteers who facilitated the movement of migrants, one of the biggest challenges for the illiterate miya garbage pickers was the lack of money and information. Most of them did not have a bank account and could not avail the government support of 2,000 Indian rupees (less than 30 US dollars). Advocates Atifur Rahman and Aman Wadud from Assam and Anirban Gongopadhyay, a concerned citizen from Gurgaon, who saw the garbage pickers' video on Facebook,⁸ arranged for food support, water, and transportation home by buses and *Shramik* trains; one group availed a flight from Delhi to Guwahati. They successfully sent home nearly all the migrant workers from the Gurgaon enclave after three months of the initial lockdown. However, the garbage pickers at Kanpur had minimal help, and few could return home, according to Aminul. Only twenty-five of the one hundred eighty people in his compound took the train home; seven went by an ambulance that he arranged. The rest remained stranded in the garbage-filled compound. With the miyas surviving on donations from Muslim organizations and after a month without income, Aminul was able to procure letters from recycling companies willing to buy their garbage and police permission to resume work. He stayed in Kanpur throughout the lockdown to assist his workers. It was also the month of Ramadan, and their psychological anxiety and extreme pecuniary condition were a test of faith and the capacity to endure.

As college teacher Rehana Sultana told me, forty miya workers from Murshidabad in western Bengal were abandoned by their manager during the lockdown.⁹ Having no recourse, they decided to walk home. They survived on a diet of biscuits and water for three days until they arrived at Siliguri on the border of Assam and West Bengal and availed a bus ride to their village. Similarly, another group from Bangalore (in Karnataka), unable to take the *Shramik* train due to incorrect information, decided to walk. This impossible journey was nearly 1,600 miles; so, compelled to hire a bus and assisted by Rehana, they reached Guwahati after four days of surviving on the bare minimum of food. The bus ride cost them over 100,000 Indian rupees (1,300 US dollars), almost all their savings. Why did they endure such pain to return to Assam? "We wanted to return home." A curious uneasiness lurks in this claim – for miyas, Assam is home, yet the Assamese consider miyas as outsiders. This haunting problem will exceed the anxiety of COVID-19 and its aftermath.

The miya migrants working within Assam also faced hardships to return to their home villages. Rehana recalls that getting permission for their movement was mired in obstacles. The government did not arrange for their transportation, so the majority walked home for several days. Along the way, they were harassed by the local authorities and the police because "in their eyes, they are viewed as Bangladeshi," Rehana commented.

8 I conducted phone interviews with Rahman and Gongopadhyay on 30 Dec. 2020 and 17 Jan. 2021.

9 Phone interview conducted on 27 Dec. 2020.

The miya migrants returning from outside Assam, like all other groups of returnees, were quarantined in different facilities, another test of their endurance. On arrival in Assam, almost all of them were initially neglected, with no information, assistance, food, or facilities. They waited for several hours in limbo before they were bused to the quarantine centers in local schools, far from Guwahati, the capital city. In these centers, after rapid testing, thirty to thirty-five men were packed into a single room without adequate toilet facilities. After fourteen days of quarantine, the workers staged a protest for their release. Due to the lack of facilities to house so many returnees, the government finally allowed most of the returnees to quarantine at home.¹⁰

The returnees faced acute financial problems at home since their extended stay without work had depleted their limited savings. Borrowing money at high interest rates is now one of the biggest problems facing these families, according to advocate Atifur Rahman. Without the financial support of the migrants, their extended families are also in a critical state. Their financial problems are aggravated by floods, which have destroyed their precious crops and have displaced many.¹¹ Death, even by suicide, became common, according to advocate Rahman.

The returnees who are not verified in the NRC as citizens are in even worse psychological condition. Musa Mandal is one among many of these helpless people. Musa is a daily wage laborer, an internal migrant; during the lockdown, he had no work, so he returned to his village. During the initial NRC registration process in 2015, being illiterate, he could not complete the forms to prove his citizenship. Although during the lockdown period the courts had ceased to work, once the restrictions were eased, the Foreigners Tribunal (FT), charged with the task of verifying the citizenship of the miyas, immediately resumed its work. Musa Mandal, being unable to produce the citizenship verification papers, committed suicide on October 11, 2020. According to Atifur Rahman, since there was no oversight of the work conducted by the FT during the lockdown, many miyas were randomly removed from the citizens' register. In the meantime, some of the detained miyas were released from detention centers,¹² with no work to help survive during the lockdown. On the other hand, new arrests of miyas continued.

The Border Police can arrest anyone suspected who is deemed an illegal citizen under suspicion of being a "doubtful" voter. The "D voter" category was created in 1998 after the government decided that the Bengali Muslims in Assam are not genuine citizens. The D voters can be detained and expelled from India if they fail

10 Information about the hardships in the quarantine centers were provided by Anwar, Anirban, and Rehana.

11 Mirza Lutfur Rahman has documented the displacement of the families due to floods in several videos. Rahman supported by research in multiple ways for which I am deeply grateful. Chakrabarti and Longkumer (2020) also conducted interviews and produced a video and an article on the flood's effects.

12 See Rahman's video (2020a).

to prove their status as citizens. "Life became a nightmare for the D voters during the lockdown," Atifur explains. Invoking Article 14 of the Indian Constitution, which ensures rights to citizens, corporations, and foreigners, for now, Atifur has managed to provide immediate provisional relief to the migrant workers, such as government-sponsored health care, train tickets for their return to Assam, and small amounts of monetary support. However, he is fully aware and deeply concerned that the miyas flagged by the FT will ultimately be declared foreigners. He believes they will be sent to detention centers and that "they will die there. They are not Bangladeshi, and the government of Bangladesh will not accept them," he mused about the future of the miyas in Assam. "The lives of the unverified miyas have become meaningless in these circumstances, and suicide will be on the rise," Atifur fearfully predicts.

We should all be outraged by this extreme violence against the marginal and vulnerable. In Assam, however, politicians have convinced the public that driving out the illegal miyas will result in a secure homogenous Assamese community and that "true" Assamese will have ownership of the state and its culture. Unfortunately, many support this outcome. Miya is the political issue that overrides human ethics for the Assamese.

CONCLUSION

The precarity of miya lives before, during, and after the multiple lockdowns in India raises questions about our responsibility to those of us who, daily, live the horror of being valueless. I have focused on the lives of the garbage pickers to highlight this issue: we depend on their labor for our comfort and public health, yet we willfully overlook that their lives matter.

The public in India can enjoy urban spaces such as parks, unclogged public drains, and uncluttered roads because of garbage pickers. Yet, the people doing this labor are invisible. The relation of interdependency should be obvious, but the social and political structures that produce the inhuman lives of the precariat numb us. We do not like to see garbage: we want it removed from our view. In the process, we also clean out and erase the people who do the work we demand.

The lack of value for miyas' work and, consequently, public indifference to their inhuman condition raise a fundamental question of who is visible and dignified and who is not. The garbage pickers are proof of the unequal visibility of human lives in economically developing India, pushed by international corporations and Western countries into reckless growth. The capital development moving the nation forward, however, casts large groups of people aside, like garbage.

What does not appear to be a life, however, *is* a human life. To bring it to visibility, as Anirban Gongopadhyay says, "We have to stop living in the cocoon that we do . . . to see people who live near us, but with whom we do not build a relationship." Crossing the threshold of routine indifference, as Anirban did, reaching out to the garbage

pickers, opened the space and created the possibility of “becoming useful to someone else.”

Every act during the lockdown that broke the violence against the invisible reaffirmed the living humanity of the unseen and neglected. These small recognitions of the other during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns limited and resisted persistent exclusion and brought into view their lived human world. Enabling the survival of these human lives is the beginning of building an interdependent relationship, which can be complicated, even unstable, but it is a beginning, no doubt. “In recognizing the need of the other, I was doing myself a favor. I was able to do something, become active despite the orders to be inactive during the lockdown,” Anirban summed up. The dignity of interdependent humans is not political but ethical because contagious humanity survives beyond the deathly grip of the virus. It must.

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POVZETEK

MUSLIMANSKI PREKARIAT V ASSAMU: OKUŽBE, MIGRANTI IN COVID-19 Yasmin SAIKIA

Članek obravnava stiske migrantskih muslimanskih smetarjev med popolnim zaprtjem javnega življenja v Indiji leta 2020. Ti »nevidni ljudje«, ki jih trenutna indijska vlada poniževalno označuje za *gedha miya* ('umazane Bangladešce') in jih obravnava kot nedržavljanke, v indijskih mestih, daleč od domače pokrajine Assam, živijo tako rekoč iz rok v usta, čeprav je njihovo delo nujno za blagostanje celotne države. Njihove težave zaradi dela zunaj domačega Assama, kakor tudi ovire, s katerimi so se morali spopadati med poskusi vračanja v rodne vasi, so se zaradi družbenih, političnih in verskih predsodkov še stopnjevale.

Avtorica je življenje smetarjev iz skupnosti *miya* raziskala pred zaprtjem države, med njim in po njem, njena metodologija pa je temeljila tako na zgodovini kot etiki. Raziskovala je s pomočjo telefonskih intervjujev in klicev po aplikaciji Zoom, podatke o karantenskih zmogljivostih pa so ji posredovali državni uradniki in lokalni novinarji v pokrajini Assam. Po njenem so »ničvredna življenja« muslimanskih smetarjev dragocena že zato, ker imajo ti kot človeška bitja svoje dostojanstvo in si za svoje delo zaslužijo spoštovanje. Prijaznost posameznikov, ki so se med *lockdownom* odzvali njihovim klicem na pomoč in jih obravnavali kot človeška bitja, vzbuja upanje na drugačen odziv ljudi v kriznih časih.

Izkušnje smetarjev med pandemijo odražajo splošno usodo muslimanov v Indiji. Vlada se zanje ne meni in jih obravnava kot manjvredne, pred njimi pa si oči zatiska tudi javnost. Za avtorico je vsakdanji boj assamskih smetarjev za preživetje pravzaprav boj za preživetje muslimanske skupnosti v Indiji, ki je sicer vidna, nikakor pa ni videna. Pravo pot za ublažitev težav indijskih muslimanov avtorica vidi v vzemanju civilne družbe zanje, študijo o smetarjih pa razume kot nekakšen temeljni kamen za začetek poti.

SOCIAL STIGMA AND COVID-19: THE EXPERIENCES OF BANGLADESHI RETURNEES FROM ITALY

Mohammad Riduan PARVEZ¹

COBISS 1.01

ABSTRACT

Social Stigma and COVID-19: The Experiences of Bangladeshi Returnees from Italy
The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has escalated social discrimination against migrants around the world. However, research on the forms of social stigma faced by the returned migrants in their home countries is absent. Based on in-depth interviews with Bangladeshi migrants who returned from Italy during the COVID-19 pandemic, this article explores their experiences of discrimination and social harassment in Bangladesh. Drawing on Link's and Phelan's (2001) conceptual framework of social stigma, this study finds that returned migrants experienced different forms of social harassment and stigmatization, including labeling, stereotyping, social separation, status loss, and discrimination.

KEYWORDS: returned migrants, social stigma, COVID-19, Bangladesh, Italy

IZVLEČEK

Družbena stigma in Covid-19: Izkušnje bangladeških povratnikov iz Italije

Izbruh pandemije Covida-19 je povečal socialno diskriminacijo migrantov po vsem svetu. Premalo pa so raziskane oblike družbene stigme, s katero se soočajo migranti povratniki v svojih domačih deželah. Članek na podlagi poglobljenih intervjujev z bangladeškimi migranti, ki so se med pandemijo vračali iz Italije, analizira njihove izkušnje z diskriminacijo in družbenim nadlegovanjem v Bangladešu. Študija, ki izhaja iz Linkovega in Phelanovega (2001) konceptualnega okvira socialne stigme, ugotavlja, da se migranti povratniki soočajo z različnimi oblikami družbene nadlegovanja in stigmatizacije, vključno z etiketiranjem, s stereotipizacijo, z družbenim ločevanjem, izgubo statusa in diskriminacijo.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: migranti povratniki, družbena stigma, Covid-19, Bangladeš, Italija

¹ MSS in international relations, lecturer; Department of International Relations, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Chittagong, Chittagong-4331, Bangladesh; riduan.ir@cu.ac.bd, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9456-1308>.

INTRODUCTION

Social stigma is a behavior that socially dishonors a person by classifying them as an “undesirable other” by the community (Bhattacharya et al. 2020: 382). There has been a historical connection of stigma with infectious disease. The COVID-19 pandemic threatens those millions of migrant people who returned to their country of origin or are currently staying in the destination countries. Bangladeshi returned migrants are also facing these kinds of challenges because of the corona crisis. Between February and March 2020, more than 200,000 migrant people, mainly from Italy, returned to Bangladesh because of the closure of business and industry and the rapid increase of the coronavirus in the destination countries (USAID 2020).

Since the 1970s, Bangladesh has become a renowned exporter of human resources to several foreign countries. About 13 million Bangladeshis are currently working abroad (Karim, Islam 2020; MoEWOE 2019). The countries of the Middle East and Southeast Asia are major destinations for Bangladeshi migrants. Gradually, such migration also expanded to the Southern European countries, mainly Italy, Greece, Spain, and Portugal, since the late 1980s (Anthias, Lazaridis 2000; King et al. 2000; King 2001; Bonifazi et al. 2008). Of these Southern European countries, Italy has been considered to be one of the main popular destinations for Bangladeshi migrants. The number of Bangladeshi migrants currently in Italy is 120,000 (Della Puppa, King 2018). It is also noteworthy that, in addition to regular immigrants, Italy also hosts a large number of irregular immigrants from both European and non-European countries (King 2001). In 2009, the reported Bangladeshi irregular migrants were 74,000 (Rahman, Kabir 2012).

It is important to note that Italy was the first European country in the world to be heavily affected by COVID-19. In particular, on March 8, 2020, in response to the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country, the concerned administration imposed a national restriction of movements on its population (Aragona et al. 2020). The migrant (mainly Bangladeshi migrant) people experienced more severe negative impacts than the general population in Italy due to restrictive measures. When the crisis arose, the protecting and returning of vulnerable Bangladeshi migrants from Italy became more crucial than ever before. That is why a large number of Bangladeshi migrants returned from Italy on March 7, 2020. After that, returning migrants and their family members who returned home from Italy were believed to be the primary transmitters of coronavirus to Bangladesh. In this circumstance, it is essential to understand the COVID-19 related social stigma against returned migrants. This research explores the social challenges of COVID-19 for the Bangladeshi returned migrants from Italy.

This article aims to investigate the returned migrants’ experiences of social stigma during the COVID-19 pandemic. The main research question is thus: how did returned migrants in Bangladesh experience social stigma during the COVID-19 pandemic?

SOCIAL STIGMA AT THE TIME OF THE PANDEMIC IN BANGLADESH

Coronavirus suspected and infected people faced social exclusion worldwide, which induced the rise of social stigma among several communities (Ramaci et al. 2020). The same things happened in the communities of Bangladesh as well.

Since the first transmission of the coronavirus, an airline strike was initiated worldwide, including in Bangladesh, to restrict the entry of infected people from other countries. But the delayed decision from the concerned authorities made the situation worse in Bangladesh and many other countries (Mahmud, Islam 2020).

In early March 2020, 142 returned migrants from Italy were permitted to go to their residences and were instructed to follow the rules of self-isolation. An unavoidable 14-day quarantine was not secured under governmental supervision (Hasan 2020). This incident has been considered the primary cause of the entry of the coronavirus pandemic and its associated social stigma in Bangladesh. Since then, the number of COVID-19 patients has increased at an alarming rate.

This stigma culture is manifested not only through hatred and discrimination but also through heated protests against the returned migrants. The same things happened in Diabari nature park of Dhaka city's Uttara Model Town when a plan to set up a quarantine center there was canceled after facing protests from the local people (Kamal 2020). It is also noteworthy that the *Daily Star* reported that the locals protested the government's decision to bury the dead bodies of COVID-19 patients at Khilgaon-Taltola graveyard in Dhaka city (Nasreen, Caesar 2020).

These returned migrants and the doctors working for COVID-19 patients also received threats from residents in several places in Bangladesh to leave the house willingly; otherwise, they would do it by force (Kamal 2020). This kind of stigma broke all kinds of social relations and produced unmeasurable frustration among the returned migrants.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Social stigma refers to identifying a negative characteristic in an individual or group of individuals and behaving toward them as not worthy of respect or inferior to others regarding social status (Gilmore, Somerville 1994: 1341). Link and Phelan (2001) have discussed social stigma through a conceptual framework. I have used this model to explain the findings of this research. Based on this model and this study, it can be said that stigma is a process during which five correlated elements converge. These five components include:

- "Labeling" – a person is identified by specific status or characteristics and then labeled differently than the rest of the society members.
- "Stereotyping" – linking labeled persons to different characteristics or attributes that form negative stereotypes.

- “Separation” – labeled individuals are forcefully separated from the mainstream population. Once the separation is achieved, the labeled individuals can be attributed with all the negative characteristics to devalue them.
- “Status loss” – labeled persons experience underestimation that results in unequal treatments. This unequal treatment results in the loss of previous social status and discrimination.
- “Discrimination” – the systematic exclusion of labeled individuals from every aspect of social life.

After careful explanations of this conceptual framework, it seems more relevant in developing countries like Bangladesh. This model is more interpretative and will help to explain the experiences of returned migrants during the pandemic upon their arrival in their communities of origin.

COVID-19 AND SOCIAL STIGMA: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

COVID-19 and its impact on migrants is a discussed topic in today’s migration literature. Despite the growing body of literature on the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on migrant workers, the research on COVID-19 and the stigmatization of returned migrants seems the least explored area in today’s migration literature.

In the following section of the study, I will conduct an extensive review of the existing migration literature related to this research study.

Bhattacharya et al. (2020) have conducted intensive work to explore the untold side of COVID-19 and its consequences in India. Their study identified that the outbreaks of the COVID-19 pandemic had created social discrimination against suspected coronavirus carriers. Moreover, these findings show that migrants also experience oppression from the members of their society out of fear of contracting COVID-19.

The same kind of intensive research work has been done to assess the impact of social stigma on the community in Bangladesh (Mahmud, Islam 2020). This research revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic facilitated the rise of social stigma among the people in the Bangladesh community.

These studies mentioned above, however, mainly highlighted the negative impact of social stigma on community people of India and Bangladesh. Returned migrants and their post-return experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic were not the primary subject matter of these studies.

On the other hand, extensive research work has been conducted by Kindzeka (2020) in Cameroon to find out the impacts of COVID-19 on the community people. This study revealed that COVID-19 helps to spread anti-foreigner and anti-diaspora sentiment among the community people of Cameroon. York (2020) also points to similar results, highlighting that the novel coronavirus outbreak increased stigmatization and discrimination in most African countries. The same kind of result is also

found in Europe. Intensive research has been done by Bauomy (2020) to understand the impact of COVID-19 on migrant populations. Bauomy's research revealed that the Corona pandemic triggered extensive harassment and discrimination toward Chinese and Asian origin migrants in Europe and worldwide.

Although the three studies mentioned above discuss the Corona pandemic and its negative impacts among migrant people worldwide, these studies have been conducted only for the overall assessment of COVID-19 and its impact on the migrant people. Neither returned migrants (mainly in developing countries) and the rising social stigma associated with the coronavirus pandemic, nor the post-return experiences of returned migrants mainly from Italy were the primary subject matter of these studies. I try to fill this research gap in the existing literature by exploring the post-return experiences of Bangladeshi migrants who returned from Italy due to COVID-19.

Though there are several studies (Karim, Talukder 2020; Mannan, Farhana 2020) recognizing COVID-19 and its impact on migrant workers in Bangladesh, no studies were conducted analyzing social stigma associated with COVID-19 and its impact on the returned migrants from Italy. As Italy was the first country in the world after China to be heavily affected by COVID-19, many Bangladeshi migrants returned from Italy during the pandemic and faced discrimination. So, it is crucial to determine the social challenges faced by the Bangladeshi returned migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study will facilitate understanding the actual scenario of returned migrants in the source countries. It will also examine and re-evaluate the existing support programs of concerned authorities toward the returned migrants.

METHODOLOGY

I conducted this empirical study primarily based on qualitative research methods (in-depth interviews) among twenty returned migrants from Italy due to COVID-19. To explore the post-return experiences of returnees, I used qualitative research methods. As little research has been conducted on this topic, qualitative research is best suited to understand this concept (Creswell 2003). I conducted the fieldwork in the Comilla district of the Chittagong division of Bangladesh in October 2020. This district was selected purposively because, in the literature, it is found that this district is the most significant regular migrant producing region from Bangladesh to Italy (Rahman, Kabir 2012: 259). For the in-depth interviews, samples were chosen through the snowball sampling method considering the availability of the respondents and their information. For the convenience of the respondents, interviews were conducted at the migrants' homes or places of their choosing. All of the interviews were conducted in the Bengali language, taking approximately one and a half hours each. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim.

Moreover, I used the thematic analysis method to analyze the collected data. All of the respondents gave their informed consent before engaging in the interview. The research participants were aware of their freedom to withhold any information they did not want to disclose. Standard privacy measures have been taken regarding all the recorded interviews and written information. Pseudonyms have been used to replace their original names while describing the findings of the study.

THE FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research reveals respondents had lived in Italy for an extended time (10–12 years) and returned to their countries of origin during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many migrants decided to return because of their worsening working conditions in the destination country. The respondents of the study were relatively middle-aged, between 35–45 years. Only a small portion of the respondents was above the age of 55 years. Most of them were educated: nine-tenths of them completed their higher secondary education, and nearly one-third of them completed their graduation and post-graduation. Moreover, many respondents were skilled (nearly half of the respondents were restaurant and shop owners; one-fourth of them were professionals). Almost all of the respondents of this study were married. The research also shows that a major portion of the migrants had four to five dependent members.

In the following section, I describe the qualitative findings of this research and analyze the individual experiences of social harassment and discrimination related to the Corona pandemic. In this section, the data found in my study has been compared with global migration literature.

The Many Faces of Challenges During the COVID-19 Pandemic

This study reveals that the respondents faced several kinds of social challenges after their return. Among the challenges, the following are the most stated ones.

Labeling

According to Link and Phelan (2001), the primary step in the process of social harassment and stigmatization is the labeling in which people are recognized and entitled as COVID-19 bearers. From the discussion with the respondents, it has been found that they were labeled as potential COVID-19 virus carriers by the community people and their neighbors.

One participant explained: “Some local residents told me that I was a suspected COVID-19 positive, and I came to Bangladesh to spread the virus. Still, we are treated

differently because most of the people of the society think that we are carrying the COVID-19 virus.”

These findings also show that returned migrants in Bangladesh were labeled and treated by their migratory status. Many migrants said they often felt stigmatized because they were from Italy, a country severely impacted by COVID-19. Some migrants explained that this type of identification was used not only by society members but also by government officials, mainly police. One returned migrant stated:

Government officers treat migrants from COVID-19 infected countries, mainly Italy, differently because of their migratory status. Their ways of behaving vary depending on which background (countries) you are from. If they recognize you are from a Middle Eastern country, they treat you as natural. But, if they know you are from Italy, they will deal with you harshly.

When comparing this with global migration literature, we find similar cases. For example, an empirical study conducted in the Chinese context revealed that migrants are treated differently because of their migratory status (Li et al. 2007). The same kinds of scenarios were also found in India and Cameroon (Jha 2020; Kindzeka 2020). This research reveals that returned migrants from the countries heavily hit by COVID-19 have faced severe social discrimination.

Stereotyping

Social stigmatization occurs when people connect labeled persons to objectionable characteristics or harmful stereotypes (Link, Phelan 2001). Many participants explained that neighbors and influential local people had a role in consolidating negative stereotyping against the returned migrants. Local police marked their residence with red flags. During our interviews, some migrants explained that local people often distrusted them just because of their migratory status. One participant stated:

Once my residence was marked with red flags, local people began to see myself and my family differently. Though I am completely fine, I could not understand why community people were scared of my presence. I explained to them, but they did not believe me because they believed in the stereotype idea that I was COVID-19 positive.

Mainly the media created the common negative stereotyping images of returned migrants during the pandemic. These findings also show that media and social networking sites (Facebook) were the tools of racist sentiment and discriminatory behaviors toward the migrants in Bangladesh, mainly returned migrants from Italy. Notably, using social networking sites, local representatives and politicians vehemently accused returned migrants of spreading COVID-19 in Bangladesh, which also

played a crucial role in raising anti-migrant sentiment among the mass people of Bangladesh. Nicholas, a 42-year-old male migrant said: "When COVID-19 suspected cases continued to rise in Bangladesh, some local politicians and young people were rallying to provoke sentiment against returned migrants. They were also involved in anti-migrant campaigning by using social networking sites."

This finding of this study is also similar to those of Bhattacharya et al. (2020), which revealed that in India, social media was flooded with provocative and communalistic sentiments during the COVID-19 pandemic. Such kinds of incidents were also identified in Italy, France and the United States (Ullah et al. 2020; Villa et al. 2020).

Separation

According to Link and Phelan (2001), "separation" is a process of linking labeled persons into different categories and separating "us" from "them." In this research, almost all of the respondents expressed that they experienced social exclusion and separation from their community members and neighbors by any means. Many returned migrants indicated that their neighbors looked at them with an unkind expression in their eyes. A male migrant explained: "The separation can be realized from the expression of their (community people/neighbors) eyes. Being a returned migrant, wherever we go, people always look at us differently with a negative expression in their eyes. I was very heartbroken by that experience."

Some participants also experienced this kind of different expression among their relatives. Respondents also stated that relatives and family members spoke to them in an unfriendly manner after their return. Besides, a few of the respondents explained that their family denied them after their arrival. Edwards, a 50-year-old male migrant, stated: "When I came to Bangladesh, my family members did not accept me easily. Rather, they felt threatened by my unexpected return. My wife and my younger daughter separated all of my belongings because of their suspicion. So, I was forced to stay in a separate room in my own home like a stranger."

Similar observations were found at the time of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. When the survivors returned to their communities of origin, they faced exclusion and separation from their relatives and community people (Villa et al. 2020).

Almost all returned migrants I interviewed said that as a returned migrants, they were separated by the neighbors and community members. When migrants sought help or services, they realized that the treatment they received from their society and concerned administration was different from the general people. Similar things happened in situations of medical care and local transport like buses.

Status loss

Several returned migrants started losing their social status due to the continuous stereotyping and separation by the local people for fear of COVID-19. Almost all participants of this study reported that the present living condition was often below their expectations and needs. Many respondents said that after their return, they did not find the same respective position within their family and society they once had when they left.

One male respondent stated: "These are the same ones who used to treat me comfortably before the experience of COVID-19. But, when I came to Bangladesh in late February 2020 in the earlier moment of the Covid-19 pandemic, I did not find the same respect in society."

Roberts, a 43-year-old male migrant, also explained: "Before migration, I was a reputed person in my society. I was actively involved in all kinds of social works and programs. But, when I came to Bangladesh during the COVID-19 situation, people of the society did not invite me as they used to before migration."

Similar incidents were also identified in countries like Italy, France, and the United States. This research revealed that some private shops and restaurants excluded all clients who were migrants from China or other Asian countries. Also, people refused to be served by Asian-origin migrants in restaurants (Villa et al. 2020).

Discrimination

This research particularly revealed that almost all study participants said they faced social discrimination after returning from Italy. When the actual number of infections continued to rise, the possibility for social discrimination increased rapidly. Since people use traits (e.g., migrant identity) other than symptoms to determine who might be infected, migrants faced a very vulnerable situation after their return.

One respondent explained: "The sad reality of being a migrant is that you must do the most dangerous work and in exchange for the poorest return from society. Now, everyone believes this is the only reality for every migrant. However, we can still manage our daily food to eat and live. Since survival comes first."

Kindzeka (2020) also revealed a similar result in Bihar, India, stating that returned migrants from the countries heavily affected by COVID-19 faced fears and discrimination in their home communities. Research conducted in Europe and Africa (Bauomy 2020; Jha 2020) also revealed similar findings.

Most of the respondents of this study harshly blamed the government agencies for their inadequate response and discriminatory behavior toward returned migrants. Sometimes, the policeman inappropriately dealt with them and resulted in the perception of discrimination among the participants of this research.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, returned migrants experienced a greater negative impact in home countries due to the COVID-19 pandemic and following lockdown. Social stigma against returned migrants was common in all spheres of society. The most common components of stigma experienced by migrant people were separation, status loss, and discrimination. The complicated factors of social stigma toward migrants during this pandemic were fear of coronavirus infection, antagonistic media reports, and anti-migrant sentiment in social networking sites like Facebook.

Moreover, this study also shows that post-return social challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic increased the vulnerabilities of the returned migrants. The reduction of family care and support for the returned migrants and indirect family pressure were also identified as significant social challenges that returned migrants encountered. The findings of this study also reveal that most of the returnees were worried about their future as they had to go through unbearable social hardship in their home countries.

After returning from Italy, most returned migrants faced significant difficulties living in their community of origin partly because of continuous threats and verbal harassment from their neighbors. Returned migrants from the countries heavily affected by COVID-19 faced severe social harassment and discrimination. They did not receive any mental and moral support from their relatives, neighbors, or even family members. Their relatives and even family members also rejected them. These returned migrants also received threats and ultimatums from the owners of their houses to leave their properties for fear of coronavirus infection. Besides, they also received unfair treatment in various private and public services, even medical care situations. They did not find back their respective positions within their family and society they once left. The respondents expressed that they were depressed about their own living situation after return and might also consider risky options to migrate abroad to avoid further mistreatment.

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POVZETEK

DRUŽBENA STIGMA IN COVID-19: IZKUŠNJE BANGLADEŠKIH POVRATNIKOV IZ ITALIJE Mohammad Riduan PARVEZ

Izbruh pandemije koronavirusa je po vsem svetu povečal socialno diskriminacijo migrantov. Medtem ko je njihova stigmatizacija zaradi Covida-19 v državah gostiteljicah pritegnila precejšnjo pozornost medijev in akademske sfere, se skoraj nihče ni ukvarjal s socialno stigmo, s katero se soočajo migranti povratniki v deželah v razvoju, kot je na primer Bangladeš. Študija analizira izkušnje bangladeških migrantov povratnikov iz Italije med pandemijo in njihove izkušnje z diskriminacijo in družbenim nadlegovanjem. Z uporabo kvalitativne metode članek zajame družbene izzive udeležencev po povratku, tehnika vzorčenja snežne kepe je namenjena migrantom povratnikom. Avtor se je poglobljeno pogovarjal z dvajsetimi bangladeškimi migranti povratniki iz Italije, ki živijo v četrti Comilla v mestu Chittagong, ki je v Bangladešu največje območje izseljevanja.

Študija se opira na konceptualni okvir družbene stigme, ki sta ga razvila Link in Phelan (2001). Njeni zaključki razkrivajo, da so se migranti povratniki po vrnitvi soočali s številnimi družbenimi izzivi, kot so etiketiranje, stereotipizacija, ločevanje, izguba statusa in diskriminacija. Izkazalo se je, da migranti povratniki niso bili deležni skoraj nikakršne moralne ali psihološke podpore s strani svojih družin in družbe. Iz kvalitativnih ugotovitev je razvidno, da migranti povratniki, ki se vračajo zaradi izrednih razmer, poročajo o napačnem razumevanju in sumničanju s strani družinskih članov in sorodnikov. Poročajo tudi o družbenem nadlegovanju in diskriminaciji s strani lokalne skupnosti, kar vse je po povratku pomemben družbeni izziv. Migranti povratniki so bili zaradi splošnega prepričanja, da utegnejo biti prenašalci virusa, diskriminirani na vseh življenjskih področjih. Članek prispeva k boljšemu razumevanju socialnega nadlegovanja in stigmatizacije kot dodatnih težav migrantov povratnikov v deželi, ki jo je pandemija že sicer močno prizadela. Obenem kot zelo pomembno poudarja obravnavo naraščajoče družbene stigme in diskriminacije zaradi Covida-19.

ENTRY DENIED: JAPAN'S BORDER RESTRICTIONS IN THE TIME OF THE COVID-19 EMERGENCY

Nicola COSTALUNGA¹

COBISS 1.01

ABSTRACT

Entry Denied: Japan's Border Restrictions in the Time of the COVID-19 Emergency
With the outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 and the resulting COVID-19 pandemic, Japan adopted controversial policies to contain the virus. Unlike many highly developed countries, it enacted strict policies banning entry through its borders to all non-Japanese citizens regardless of their residency status. The further peculiarity is that these measures equalized low-skill and high-skill foreign workers, affecting them identically. Along with describing how the emergency has been handled in relation to foreign nationals, this article highlights how pre-existing socio-cultural dynamics of differentiation between "insiders" and "outsiders" have evolved in response to the pandemic.

KEYWORDS: Japan, borders, migration policies, COVID-19, denial of entry

IZVLEČEK

Vstop zavrnjen: Japonske mejne omejitve v času izrednih razmer med pandemijo Covida-19

Z izbruhom virusa SARS-CoV-2 in posledično pandemije Covida-19 je Japonska za zajezitev virusa sprejela sporne ukrepe. V nasprotju s številnimi visoko razvitimi državami je vsem ne-japonskim državljanom, ne glede na njihov bivalni status, strogo prepovedala prehajanje meja. Ti ukrepi so enako prizadeli tako visoko- kot nizkokvalificirane tuje delavce. Članek obravnava izvajanje izrednih ukrepov v povezavi s tujci, hkrati pa pojasnjuje razvoj že obstoječe sociokulturne dinamike razlikovanja med »našimi« in »vašimi« ob soočenju s pandemijo.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: Japonska, meje, migracijske politike, Covid-19, zavrnitev vstopa

¹ PhD student in global studies, justice, rights, politics, University of Macerata; Piazza Strambi 1, 62100 Macerata (MC), 36030, Italy; n.costalunga@unimc.it; <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8254-8405>.

INTRODUCTION

The crisis caused by the virus responsible for COVID-19 is not over yet, and the battle to return to a pre-crisis state is likely to be a long one. The virus SARS-CoV-2 has changed the social dynamics that we have all taken for granted. Our current situation seems to be an all-encompassing “revolution” in social, economic, political, and cultural life.

Japan is a prominent case regarding the paradoxes that have emerged from the pandemic: on the one hand, it has always been reluctant to accept non-skilled foreign workers to overcome its structural and labor shortage problems, while on the other, for the first time in its history, it opened up (albeit in a limited way) to low and semi-skilled immigration in 2018 (Hamaguchi 2019: 2–5). However, shortly after this opening, Japan faced the unforeseen consequences that the novel coronavirus brought to its migration policies.¹ The paradox is that, at this historical moment of Japan’s opening to a type of immigration that had hitherto been rejected, COVID-19 revived, broadened, and strengthened closure policies, also affecting those who have lived and worked in Japan for years, i.e., permanent and long-term foreign nationals (Arudou 2020c; 2020d).

This article describes how the pandemic emergency has been handled in Japan in relation to foreign nationals living in the archipelago and how Japan’s response to security and health concerns in this respect has exacerbated pre-existing problematic dynamics and racial issues in its society. My argumentation is based on the results of research conducted on secondary sources varying in length and argumentative depth. As the situation is constantly evolving and because of the shortage of academic material due to the recentness of the topic, online articles, blog posts, and online interviews made up the majority of the consulted literature. First, I sum up the theory of the dynamics related to migration and control policies in general, focusing on differentiated treatment, border control issues, and cultural peculiarities. On these grounds, the second part introduces the events related to the re-entry ban for foreigners into Japan in 2020 and discusses the differentiation tendencies present in today’s Japanese society. The conclusion provides speculations and forecasts about the present and future of the problem of social “othering” in Japan.

This article’s key findings highlight how the dynamics of differentiation already embedded in the Japanese society between those who are part of it (“insiders”/Japanese) and those who are excluded (“outsiders”/foreigners) (Reischauer 1995: 396; Brody 2002: 1–7), have changed and evolved in response to the peculiarity of the COVID-19 emergency. The almost unique feature of this situation is that, although usually high-

1 Japan has been criticized for having one of the most restrictive migration policies among advanced industrial countries (Tsuda, Cornelius 2004: 449), based on control and lacking in policies of social incorporation or active socio-political participation (Shipper 2008: 25). For further discussion, see Tsuda and Cornelius (2004) and Shipper (2008). On issues concerning public policy and racial discrimination, see Arudou (2015).

skilled migrant workers are in a privileged position compared to low-skilled migrant workers in the receiving societies, this binary division between insiders and outsiders has exceptionally equalized, balanced, and almost flattened the difference in Japan between foreign blue-collar workers and foreign managers (and also foreign investors), bringing them together in the social differentiation and exclusionary process within the archipelago.

BORDERS, MIGRATION, MULTICULTURALISM, AND CONTROL

Borders traditionally create a geographical separation of different political entities and legal jurisdictions. Through them, the state controls its territory, the mobility of people, and security. Moreover, they have the function of dividing not only physical territories but people, too (Loftus 2015: 115). Borders act as a separating element between different categories of people, filtering out those who can be admitted and be a part (to varying degrees) of the country and those who must be excluded. Border regimes can act as a dividing element of gender (Gerard, Pickering 2012: 514–533), race, and ethnicity (Weber, Bowling 2008: 355–375), but also of other social categories. How national policies and laws control and exclude specific categories of people are part of border enforcement policies (Bosworth 2008: 199–215). The ability to move across international borders depends on national migration policies, which in turn depend on a specific national policy regime. Migration policy regimes have not been immutable, and their present-day “cumbersomeness” is a very recent construct. Indeed, the transformation from a “free-entry” regime to one of control and regulation was triggered by the development of the concept of “citizenship” and its legal recognition,² which has triggered an increasingly complex and heterogeneous regulatory and normative evolution of national migration policies (Klugman, Pereira 2009).

In this analysis, the context of border policies is the COVID-19 pandemic, which overlaps with the rules and laws of the pre-existing national migration structures. The application of strict directives on entry into and exit from a country at a time of a pandemic crisis, even to the point of total closure of the nation, is undoubtedly driven by social and health security logics. What is surprising about Japan's border restrictions is the process of differentiation between insiders and outsiders, which is not new at all in Japanese society (Arudou 2015).

2 The time of introducing the concept of citizenship varies by country. For example, such historical countries as France and Australia introduced the concept of citizenship in the nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth century, respectively (Klugman, Pereira 2009).

Furthermore, Japan is in the so-called age of *tabunka kyōsei* (multicultural co-living),³ a concept prevailing since the 1990s⁴ in the integration practices of migrants in Japanese society (Kashiwazaki 2013: 31–47). Broadly speaking, *tabunka kyōsei* is a concept of coexistence between Japanese citizens and foreign nationals, in a mutual effort to create a society in which people live and work together, with the respect attributed to living within the same community, regardless of nationality or ethnic background. In this idea also lie concepts of cultural diversity and the general fight against forms of racism (Kashiwazaki 2013: 39–42). However, *tabunka kyōsei* practices have failed to eliminate the fundamental dichotomy in Japanese society between Japanese and foreigners,⁵ maintaining this implicit institutionalized polarization, not least because the Japanese government has refused to make the multicultural question a matter of national debate (Kashiwazaki 2009: 121–146). This apparent paradox and persistent division within a broader policy of “multiculturalism” can also be glimpsed in the adaptive differentiation between insiders and outsiders that re-emerged in response to COVID-19 and related border policies.

NEW IMMIGRATION LAW, OLD PARADOXES

On December 8, 2018, Japan’s Diet passed a historic amendment to the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (ICRRA), establishing for the first time the possibility for low and semi-skilled foreign workers to enter and work in the country (Hamaguchi 2019: 2–5).⁶ Although the amendment is not utterly revolutionary as it allows the entry of foreign workers with strict limits, for the first time, there has been a step back from the constant official Japanese policy rhetoric of “closing” to any form of non-skilled immigration. In fact, the law enabled in April 2019 two new residency statuses, the *tokutei ginō ichi gō* (specified skilled type 1) and the *tokutei ginō ni gō*

3 Literally, “multi-cultural-together-living”, translatable as “multicultural coexistence,” too. It can be considered as the Japanese version of multiculturalism. However, it is quite distinct from *tabunka shugi*, a term associated with multiculturalism in classic immigration countries (e.g., the USA, Canada, and Australia), as they are considered extremely different from the Japanese society (Kashiwazaki 2013: 31–32; 2016: 4–5). For more on *tabunka kyōsei* and its origins, see Kashiwazaki (2013, 2016).

4 The notion has only entered the vocabulary of local and national policy-making institutions since the 2000s (Kashiwazaki 2013: 41).

5 Morris-Suzuki criticized *tabunka kyōsei* describing it as “cosmetic multiculturalism” since it is based on the binary opposition between Japanese and foreigners (Morris-Suzuki 2002).

6 Since the 1980s, the government has introduced several amendments to ICRRA, each time proposing amendments for opening the country to some forms of unskilled labor. The most important ones were the 1989 amendment that resulted in the creation of the “side door” for South American *nikkeijin*, Japanese emigrants and their descendants, especially from Brazil and other South American countries (Brody 2002: 2–4, 53–86; Shipper 2008: 25–26, 37–41), the creation of the Technical Intern Training Program in 1993 that introduced foreign “trainees” and “technical interns,” and the Technical Internship Act of 2016 that changed the overall length of the technical intern program (Hamaguchi 2019: 2–5).

(specified skilled type 2), the former of which allows low and semi-skilled laborers to enter and work in the country.

The significance of this amendment was far-reaching since, until the end of 2018, Japan had always been a country that refused to rely on immigration⁷ despite its structural problems of low birth rate, rapidly aging population, and shrinking working-age population.⁸ Its position was almost unique among OECD countries, at least for the constancy with which it “imposed” itself on this line of thought.

However, COVID-19 has created an unexpected situation wherein not only did Japan's labor market suffer a severe setback (as did all global production systems), but it also caused policy choices pointing against the process of “opening up” to immigration; a process that had only started in late 2018.

At the beginning of the health crisis, the Japanese government closed the archipelago to the entry of any foreigners, even those with permanent resident status, with lives and families in the archipelago.⁹ The re-entry restrictions placed all non-Japanese citizens ineligible for re-entry, making their statuses the same as those of tourists, metaphorically, “guests.”¹⁰

Since April 3, 2020, when a general closure of the country's borders against any form of inbound travel was declared,¹¹ Japan has had a unique policy toward foreigners. All foreign residents who were abroad at the time have generally been banned from re-entering in Japan (even permanent and long-term residents),¹² except for a limited set of extraordinary humanitarian cases (Dooley 2020). Japanese nationals could freely leave and re-enter the archipelago after being subjected to testing and subsequent quarantine (Arudou 2020d). This measure had the further effect of locking foreign nationals inside the country for fear of not being able to return, thus precluding them from going back to their country of origin. The method for determining the limited cases of “humanitarian” nature even remained unclear, relegating the discretion of choice to the immigration officials assigned to each case (Kopp 2020a).

7 There is a discrepancy between the official stance of the Japanese government and the de facto immigration situation in the archipelago. Although there is a de facto immigration regime for semi-skilled and unskilled foreign workers through the various ICRRRA amendments that have created different channels of entry to the country for categories such as South American *nikkeijin* and trainees, as well as marriage migration, officially Japan has not been open to any form of unskilled foreign labor. However, these specific forms of entry have de facto allowed creating so-called “side doors” as a legal solution to its endemic labor shortage problems (Brody 2002: 2–4, 40–43, 59).

8 For more information about Japan's structural problems, see Coulmas (2007), Suzuki (2013), and Dallin (2016).

9 Permanent residence in Japan is called *eijū-ken*.

10 Indeed, Arudou described this as “guestism” (2020c; 2020b).

11 As “a temporary measure aimed at curtailing the spread of viral transmissions in Japan” (Ōsumi 2020).

12 Long-term residence in Japan is called *teijū-sha*.

This process of differentiation has deeper implications. Allowing only indigenous citizens to re-enter Japan unwittingly creates an ethnic association with being immune to the virus “by dint of a passport” (Arudou 2021). Vice versa, by reconstructing the origins of COVID-19 as something “foreign” (Arudou 2020a; Takahashi 2020; Su et al. 2020), non-Japanese citizens are categorized as more contagious than Japanese. Historically, it has already happened that during other epidemics,¹³ foreigners were considered more contagious or dangerous than Japanese, and even that Japanese were considered somehow immune to the virus (Arudou 2020a).¹⁴ Far from being the only country to have imposed travel limitations and border closure, Japan was the only member of the Group of Advanced Countries (G-7) to enforce such strict restrictions (Dooley 2020; Ōsumi 2020), thus becoming an outlier in respect to the other developed countries (Arudou 2020c).

Compared to a general history of the international community’s indifference on matters related to foreigners’ discrimination in Japan, this time, there was an unexpectedly high number of criticisms coming from various national¹⁵ and international authorities. For instance, president of the European Business Council in Japan (EBC) Michael Mroczek strongly criticized the travel restrictions imposed by the Japanese government during the pandemic, pointing out that there was a clear dissonance between the rigidity imposed on foreign nationals and Japanese citizens. This differential treatment could lead to heavy criticism from businesses dealing with transborder trades of goods and services, to the point of risking that they might decide to move their Asian headquarters to countries other than Japan (Mroczek 2020; Penn 2020).

After an initial joint statement on “Re-Entry of Foreign Residents to Japan” on behalf of the international business community (ACCJ 2020a), on July 7, 2020, the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan (ACCJ) issued a second letter of protest to the Japanese immigration authorities (Penn 2020), calling on the Japanese government to provide equal treatment for all citizens, regardless of nationality. Requests included a clear timetable for the reopening of travel and clearer and streamlined policies for re-entry admissions, noting that foreign nationals have contributed to the Japanese economy and society and pose no greater risk than Japanese citizens. Christopher J. LaFleur, Chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan,

13 For example, during other epidemics (SARS outbreak in 2002–2003 and H1N1 swine flu in 2009), hotels and other facilities refused to provide their services to foreigners, above all Chinese nationals, implying that the virus and contagiousness came from “outside” (Arudou 2020a).

14 Politicians and the media in turn instrumentalized COVID-19 by portraying it as a “foreign virus” and labeling it as “Wuhan virus” or “Chinese virus,” thus hindering an accurate perception of the virus’s origins and creating potential biases (Takahashi 2020; Su et al. 2020).

15 Noteworthy are an editorial published in the *Asahi Shimbun* of June 8, 2020, which called the re-entry ban policies “discriminatory” and “unreasonable,” and the petition made by the Japan Association of National Universities requesting Japan’s Ministry of Education to have their researchers and university students readmitted (Arudou 2020c).

stated that “foreign residents of Japan who have made a decision to build a life here and contribute to the Japanese economy should not be subject to a double standard restricting their travel, economic, and familial opportunities based on nationality,” and that “while we applaud and support the Japanese government’s efforts to manage the COVID-19 crisis, a resident’s nationality provides no basis on which to assess risk or assign travel privilege in relation to COVID-19” (ACCJ 2020b; 2020c). On July 22, 2020, during a conference of the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan, Mrozczek and LaFleur reiterated the need for the Japanese government to end the travel ban on non-residents (Mrozczek, LaFleur 2020). On August 19, 2020, the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan, the Australian and New Zealand Chamber of Commerce in Japan, the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan, and the European Business Council issued a new joint statement on Japan blocking the return of foreign residents (Penn 2020). According to them, these bans “can only discourage foreign nationals, and the companies they work for, from investing in Japan” (Okutsu, Regalado 2020; Ōsumi 2020).

Despite the easing of restrictions in August, September,¹⁶ and particularly in October,¹⁷ the biggest challenges for foreign residents were the necessity to deal with a lot of complicated paperwork, as well as to acquire a negative COVID-19 test within seventy-two hours of the departure time (Kopp 2020b). As of November 1, 2020, foreign national residents with a valid re-entry permit no longer needed to provide the “Letter of Confirmation of Submitting Required Documentation for Re-entry into Japan” or the “Receipt for request of re-entry,” but they still needed to provide a test certificate to prove negativity to COVID-19 within seventy-two hours of departure for Japan (Immigration Services Agency of Japan 2020).

Such requests were addressed only to foreign citizens and not to Japanese citizens, preserving the process of binary differentiation between those who are part of the “inside” (*uchi*, the natives) and those who are part of the “outside” (*soto*, the foreigners).¹⁸ A paradox is evident, especially for permanent foreign nationals, who,

16 On September 25, 2020, the government announced that from October 1, 2020, it would have opened its borders to all foreign visitors who had permits to enter and stay in the country, including businesspeople and students, but not tourists (Penn 2020).

17 On October 7, 2020, Japan and South Korea resumed bilateral business travel, with short-term business travelers not required to observe fourteen-day isolation periods if they were tested negative for COVID-19 and submitted their travel itineraries in advance (Penn 2020). However, several steps needed to be taken in all cases, such as obtaining a “Letter of Confirmation of Submitting Necessary Documentation for Re-Entry into Japan” from the embassy and a test certificate proving negativity to COVID-19 within 72 hours of departure for Japan (Arudou 2020d).

18 For further information about the concepts of *uchi* and *soto*, see Doi (1986).

by definition, should have the right to stay permanently in Japan.¹⁹ Through this devaluation of the intrinsic value of their residency status when crossing the country's borders, permanent foreign nationals were obliquely compared to mere tourists (Arudou 2020d). The *uchi-soto* dynamic can also be found in the assessment of the virus's discretionary infectiousness, as outlined above as regards to Japanese's immunity/foreigners' contagiousness.

CONCLUSION

What has been described so far is only part of an evolving story. At the time of writing this article (December 2020), Japan imposed a new ban on the entry of foreign nationals because of a new variant of COVID-19 detected in the country. The intervention of one part of the international (business) community, the protests of international entrepreneurs and foreign residents, have laid the foundations for a new approach to old problems within Japanese society. What does not seem to change, however, are the processes of othering in the treatment of *uchi* and *soto* that have long characterized Japan. This treatment is what Arudou refers to as embedded racism of Japanese society toward the foreigner/diverse/outsider (2015). In this particular time, the difference is that, in response to criticism from the international community, "regular Japanese racism has been replaced by a new, improved racism," where borders can become more elaborated racist barriers (2020d).

These dynamics of adaptation to the peculiarities of the emergency turn out to be just a new form of division, a new perspective on Reischauer's line of differentiation between the dichotomy *uchi* and *soto*, between Japanese and foreigners, whatever legal status they hold.²⁰ From a broader perspective, these issues conflict with the extent to which Japanese reality is trying to emancipate itself from the stereotype of insular exclusivity, its own isolationist historicity, and the concepts of cultural homogeneity and uniqueness (Brody 2002: 1–2). The fragility of *tabunka kyōsei*, albeit indirectly, is further reflected in the exceptional nature of border policies

19 The measures described so far concerned all foreign nationals, with the exception of special permanent residents (*tokubetsu-eijūsha*) and, as described above, those who have special exceptional circumstances (OECD 2020). Special permanent residents are generally Korean and Chinese *zainichi*. The term *zainichi* refers to the group of Japan-born foreigners who have lived in Japan for several generations and have decided not to become naturalized. Specifically, their origins are rooted in those who migrated from colonial territories during the period of Japanese domination of Korea, Taiwan, and part of China (Japanese colonial empire, 1895–1945) and continue to their descendants (Lie 2008: ix–xiv; Shipper 2008: 27).

20 In a recent interview on the topic of migrant workers in the Japanese labor market with the Tōzen Union, its executive chairman, Okunuki Hifumi, and its Chief Financial Officer and founder, Louis Carlet confirmed that in Japanese society a basic assumption is present about the division between what is "inside" (Japanese) and what is "outside" (foreigner). According to them, this clear-cut demarcation is somehow immutable (interview with Tōzen Union, 10 Feb. 2021).

under the stress of the pandemic. The same can be said for foreign workers living in Japan, as well as those who planned to migrate to or to invest economically within the archipelago.

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POVZETEK

VSTOP ZAVRNJEN: JAPONSKE MEJNE OMEJITVE V ČASU IZREDNIH RAZMER MED PANDEMIJO COVIDA-19

Nicola COSTALUNGA

Globalna zdravstvena kriza, ki je izbruhnila leta 2020, je bila resen preizkus za številne nacionalne ekonomske, družbene in zdravstvene sisteme. Pandemija je pometla z gotovostjo človekovega vsakdanjega življenja in močno ogrozila splošni življenjski slog, tržno dinamiko in uveljavljene politike. Čeprav je bila sporna narava antivirusnih ukrepov enaka za vse, je novi koronavirus obstoječo družbeno neenakost še povečal in ustvaril pomembno vrzel med različnimi družbenimi neravnovesji, segmentacijo trga dela in drugimi vrstami neenakosti. Poleg že obstoječih so se pojavile še nove prepreke.

Vse te spremembe so prizadele tudi Japonsko, ki je z uvedenimi ukrepi za zajezitev virusa zaprla državo in po politični presoji tujce obravnavala drugače kot domačine. Posebnost omenjenih političnih odločitev je bila, da so prizadele tudi ljudi z dovoljenjem za stalno (kot tudi za dolgoročno) bivanje, ki imajo zato že po definiciji pravico do stalnega bivanja na Japonskem. Ti politični ukrepi so med redkimi, ki vse tuje državljane obravnavajo enako, ne glede na njihovo strokovno usposobljenost.

Članek osvetljuje ukrepe Japonske v zvezi s tujimi državljani in odziv na varnostno in zdravstveno situacijo, ki je že obstoječe probleme in rasna vprašanja še zaostril. Prvi del članka povzema splošno teorijo dinamike migracijskih in nadzornih politik, nato pa se podrobneje ukvarja z diferenciranimi ukrepi, vprašanji mejnega nadzora in s kulturnimi posebnostmi dežele. V drugem delu opisuje dogodke, povezane s prepovedjo ponovnega vstopa tujih državljanov na Japonsko leta 2020, hkrati pa analizira trende diferenciacije v sodobni japonski družbi. Avtor članek konča z razmišljanji o družbeni diferenciaciji na Japonskem danes in z napovedmi za prihodnost.

COVID-19, RACIAL CAPITALISM, AND UNDOCUMENTED BANGLADESHI AGRICULTURAL WORKERS IN MANOLADA, GREECE

Reena KUKREJA¹

COBISS 1.01

ABSTRACT

COVID-19, Racial Capitalism, and Undocumented Bangladeshi Agricultural Workers in Manolada, Greece

This article uses the example of undocumented Bangladeshi migrants in the strawberry sector of Greece to highlight how racial capitalism heightens the health vulnerabilities of racialized low-class migrant workers and exposes them to a greater risk of COVID-19 transmission. Race-based devaluation of workers intersects with migrant illegality and culturally-specific masculine norms to normalize a discourse of healthcare “undeservingness” for undocumented racialized migrants. Unfree labor is legislated through restrictive migrant labor laws and selective detention and deportation of “illegal” migrants. Structural and systemic discriminations increase health precarities for undocumented agricultural workers.

KEYWORDS: Greece, migrant agricultural workers, COVID-19, racial capitalism, migrant illegality

IZVLEČEK

Covid-19, rasni kapitalizem in neprijavljeni kmetijski delavci iz Bangladeša v Manoladi v Grčiji

Članek na primeru neprijavljenih delavcev iz Bangladeša, ki so v Grčiji zaposleni kot obiralci jagod, prikazuje, kako rasni kapitalizem prispeva k zdravstveni ranljivosti delavcev drugih ras iz nižjih družbenih slojev in jih izpostavlja večjemu tveganju za okužbo s covidom-19. Podcenjevanje delavcev na podlagi rase sovpada z ilegalnim statusom migrantov in s kulturno specifičnimi normami moškosti, ki normalizirajo diskurz zdravstvene »nezaslužnosti« neprijavljenih migrantov. Nesvobodno delo je zakonsko utemeljeno z restriktivno delovno zakonodajo za migrante in s selektivnim zapiranjem oziroma deportacijo »illegalnih« migrantov. K zdravstveni ogroženosti neprijavljenih delavcev v kmetijstvu prispevata predvsem strukturna in sistemska diskriminacija.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: Grčija, migrantski delavci v kmetijstvu, Covid-19, rasni kapitalizem, ilegalni migranti

¹ PhD in cultural studies, assistant professor, Department of Global Development Studies, Queen's University, Kingston, ON K7L 3N, Canada; reena.kukreja@queensu.ca; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8868-2573>.

INTRODUCTION

“Neither the *Greek Sarkar* (Greek state) nor the farmers care about our lives or health. Only our cheap labor matters.” These words spoken by an undocumented Bangladeshi strawberry picker from Manolada in Greece during the first COVID-19 lockdown exposes the stark disposability of low-class, racialized migrant workers under racial capitalism. The region of Manolada in Greece’s western Peloponnese is the hub for over 90 percent of strawberries grown in the country. The use of 10,000 to 12,000 migrant workers, the majority of whom are Bangladeshi, has propelled Greece to become the eighth biggest producer of strawberries in the world.¹

COVID-19 is called the “inequality” disease as it feeds off and intensifies existing societal inequalities of race, class, ethnicity, and gender (Oxfam 2021). In this article, I use the example of undocumented Bangladeshi men employed in the strawberry sector in Greece to illustrate how racial capitalism heightens the health vulnerabilities of racialized low-class migrant workers and exposes them to a greater risk of COVID-19 transmission. Race-based devaluation of workers intertwines with migrant illegality and culturally-specific masculine norms to normalize a discourse of health-care “undeservingness.”

BACKGROUND

In Greece, the COVID-19 lockdown, from March 2020, hit all its agriculture sectors hard as the country could not access seasonal migrant workers from neighboring Albania. Restrictions on movement prevented the travel of already present undocumented migrants from one agricultural region to another. Active lobbying by farmer cooperatives resulted in the Greek state adopting a fast-track procedure to hire “third-country citizens in an irregular situation” who were already present in the country.² It also waived visa requirements and arranged charter flights for seasonal agricultural workers coming from neighboring Albania. In April 2020, the European Commission approved one billion euros in Greek State aid directed at the Greek agricultural sector.³ In June 2020, the Greek Ministry of Rural Development and Food announced further financial assistance of up to seven thousand euros for

1 Workman, Daniel (2020). *Top Strawberries Exporters by Country*, <http://www.worldstopexports.com/top-strawberries-exporters-by-country/> (27 Jul. 2020).

2 OECD (2020). *Managing International Migration Under COVID-19*, <http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/managing-international-migration-under-covid-19-6e914d57/> (17 Jan. 2021).

3 European Commission (2020). *State Aid: Commission Approves €10 Million Greek Scheme to Support Companies in the Floriculture Sector Affected by the Coronavirus Outbreak*, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_809 (1 Aug. 2020).

each farmer and fifty thousand euros for small and medium agricultural enterprises.⁴ In August 2020, recognizing that the pandemic was not easing up, Greece extended temporary residence permits of agricultural workers.⁵ In December 2020, the Greek minister of rural development and food declared the coronavirus-linked financial aid given to Greek farmers as tax-free.⁶ Despite the slew of bailouts obtained by the farmers and agricultural sector from the EU and the Greek state, to date, no state relief measures for “essential” farmworkers, the majority of whom are undocumented, have been forthcoming.

METHODS

For this article, I employ the term Manolada to describe a large area near Patras in the western Peloponnese where strawberry farming occurs. I conducted semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and fieldwork observation with Bangladeshi migrant workers in two closely located villages of Nea Manolada and Lappa in July and December of 2019. The majority of workers interviewed were below thirty years of age, undocumented, and included recent arrivals in addition to those who had been in Greece for six years or more.

Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, interviews were conducted, in July 2020, with a handful of community elders and migrant workers over WhatsApp. Zoom and email were used for interviews and follow-up with migrant rights activists and rights groups in Athens. This article also draws on online sources such as Greek language newspapers, news briefs from the Greek horticultural sector, reporting in international news channels, policy documents, and reports by UN bodies and migrant rights groups.

MIGRANT LABOR IN STRAWBERRY FARMING

Clustered in the Manolada region, Greece’s commercial strawberry farming is seasonally grown from late October to the end-May. Nea Manolada, the hub of strawberry farming, has a majority of its 700 strong population engaged in strawberry cultivation, either as independent producers or as sharecroppers. Currently, over 90

4 City Guide (2020). *Financial Support for Farmers and Agricultural Enterprises*, <http://www.odigostoupolitiki.eu/koronoios-oikonomiki-enischysi-agroton-kai-agrotikon-epicheiriseon/> (1 Aug. 2020).

5 Taxheaven (2020). *Residence permit of mobile land workers extended*, <https://www.taxheaven.gr/news/50154/parateinetai-h-adeia-paramonhs-metaklhtwn-ergatwn-ghs> (in Greek) (5 Jan. 2021).

6 Capital.Gr (2020). *Aid to Farmers for the Effects of the Coronavirus are Now Unsecured and Tax-free*, <https://www.capital.gr/oikonomia/3504485/akatasxetes-kai-aforologites-efexis-oi-enisxuseis-stous-agrotēs-gia-tis-sunepeies-tou-koronoιου> (3 Feb. 2021).

percent of the labor is provided by 10,000–12,000 undocumented Bangladeshi men. The export of over 85 percent of strawberries to markets in Russia, Dubai, Saudi Arabia, and the neighboring Eastern European countries and the revenue this generates for Greece has led to the crop being hailed as “red gold” by a former Greek prime minister, George Papandreaou (Gialis, Herod 2014).

Due to the perishability of the fruit, quickness in harvesting and quality control is critical to profit-making in this agribusiness. Profitability is ensured by the casual hiring of migrant men whose constant employability hinges on their ability to deliver fast-paced quality work. With over three-quarters of the total production cost in cultivation and harvest spent on labor, greater profits are derived from a subordinate labor force. Undocumented migrants, due to their illegality and fear of deportation, are easier to transform into unfree labor and acquiesce to depressed wages and long hours of work. A Bangladeshi plucker stated, “farming of strawberries is only possible due to migrant workers like us. . . . We are willing to bear the hardships as we lack legal status” (July 2019). The pluckers are paid a daily wage of twenty-three to twenty-five euros for an eight-hour workday, a rate that Bangladeshi workers have fought for by conducting strikes and demonstrations (Ibid.).

RACIAL CAPITALISM’S PROFIT MAKING IN GREECE

Bangladeshi strawberry farmworkers embody the violent logic of racial capitalism. Cedric Robinson, in his book *Black Marxism: The Making of a Black Radical Tradition*, argues that capitalism opportunistically preys on pre-existing societal inequalities of racism and molds it “to the political and material exigencies of the moment” to derive economic value (1983: 66). Race, as an ordering of groups of people, is used to differentiate between workers, create labor market segmentation, and justify depressed wages.

However, capitalism “cannot ensure its own continuance, its own necessities, without some other institution outside capital to enforce a common interest on capitalist society” (Barker 1978). The state emerges central in easing accumulation through policies and frameworks on labor regulation, labor (im)mobility, labor surveillance, and the thinning of labor rights (LeBaron, Phillips 2019). In the instance of migrant workforce, state-enforced border securitization measures to deter the legal entry of racialized migrants and ignoring their exploitation creates and perpetuates unfree labor.

The tacit convergence of the interests of capital and the state in the arrangement of unfree labor is evident in Manolada. Bi-lateral agreements with neighboring countries such as Albania and Bulgaria to facilitate the short-term hiring of temporary foreign agricultural workers are not enough to meet all labor demands. The gap is filled by migrants such as those from Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. Unable to

get asylum status or work permits, they often stay on in Greece as “illegals,” a status they define as “without papers.”

The management of citizenship through the regime of border control and potential deportability is part of the global management of the capital-labor relation (de Genova 2016). These “means of coercion ... specialized into the hands of the members of the state” (Barker 1978) allow the surplus migrant population to be concentrated in certain labor-intensive sectors such as agriculture. Deliberately constructed as relatively safe against potential deportability, it facilitates constant funneling of migrants to such sectors. As a worker explained, “it is safer to work here than in Athens. There, we stick out as outsiders. Police don’t harass you if you are working quietly for a farmer” (July 2019). The coupling of racialized bodies embodying “illegality” with potential deportability disenfranchise workers and extracts forced docility. A quote from an “illegal” Bangladeshi plucker illustrates the nexus between the Greek state and racial capitalism: “Through us, the government and the farmers earn a lot. Their interest vests on us. Otherwise, 2,000–3,000 illegal people like us can’t stay in a foreign country. They allow us to stay deliberately for their benefit” (July 2019)

The men’s economic devaluation is a corollary to their dehumanization, one that is normalized by societal discourses of racial othering, xenophobia, and Islamophobia (Petrou, Kandyliis 2016). These assist racial capitalism by creating boundaries between citizen-subjects and racialized migrants. Excluded from being part of a nation’s community, racialized foreign bodies lie outside the gambit of protections against exploitation and abuse (Ngai 2004). Criminalizing them as “illegals” rationalizes the evasion of accountability, either by the farmers or the state, for migrant labor and health rights. An undocumented Bangladeshi man who gave up plucking because of chronic back pain said: “The Greece government hesitates to give papers because the moment one gets the paper, it becomes the government responsibility to ensure we get proper salary and worker benefits such as health care. *This* isn’t to the benefit of the government or the farmer” (December 2019).

Cultural norms of masculinities also assist racial capitalism. Low-class male migrants face a double-bind in their attempts to acquire successful breadwinner masculine status through continuous employment and remittances back home (Kukreja 2020). Mediatized spectacles of detention and deportation opportunistically prey on the men’s masculine humiliation of being sent home (Kukreja 2019). A 27-year-old plucker said, “If I ask for my wage, the farmer threatens to get me arrested. It has happened with some others. Can you imagine the shame that I, as a man, will have to endure if I was deported” (July 2019). Bangladeshi men, emasculated by their illegality, “willingly” accept exploitative work arrangements: “We work with our heads bowed down. We have so much to lose.” In sum, capitalism “co-opts not only workers’ labour power but also their sense of pride and masculinity” (Maynard 1989: 169) for greater accumulation of profit.

HEALTH VULNERABILITIES OF MIGRANT WORKERS

Racial capitalism is also causally linked to migrant health inequities (Pulido 2016). Racial and ethnic minority groups are usually clustered in occupations that are prone to occupational injuries (ibid.). Undocumented migrants have high unmet health needs due to barriers such as minimal to nil health insurance in accessing health care services in a timely and comprehensive manner (Kotsila, Kallis 2019). Societal stigmatization as unhygienic, carriers of disease and as a public health risk blames the poor for their own illness without interrogating the structural and systemic barriers that create unhygienic, unsafe, and unsanitary conditions of work and housing (Xiuhtecutli, Shattuck 2020). This prejudice legitimizes the discourse of “deservingness” that classifies racialized and “illegal” migrants as “undeserving” of health entitlements (Willen 2012). While normalizing their exclusion, through state policies, from medical care, racial animus also makes frontline health providers deny them adequate medical care. It is also linked to lower trust in healthcare professionals and lower rates of healthcare utilization, thus causing reluctance or delay in seeking medical attention (Yaya et al. 2020).

With a reserve surplus of racialized, low-class labor, racial capitalism is assured of continual labor replenishment evident from quotes such as “when the worker becomes too sick, the farmer just cuts him loose,” and “we are like flies, swatted away once we become a nuisance.” In Greece, migrants employed in agriculture suffer double the rate of non-lethal accidents than native workers (Alexe et al. 2003). This high rate is attributable to employment in dangerous and high-risk jobs that do not often comply with Health and Safety regulations, increased pressure for productivity, piece-rate, work-site stress, and exposure to unhealthy and unsafe working conditions (Anastasiou et al. 2015: 228–230). Public hospitals are the only place where undocumented migrants, by paying a nominal fee, can access the public health system. Only in emergencies is health care free for them. Private doctors charge twenty to thirty euros per visit, more than a day’s wage for most workers.

HEALTH PRECARITIES IN MANOLADA

The logic of strawberry farming requires the pluckers to bend over long raised rows of strawberry plants. They do this for a continuous stretch of eight hours with just one fifteen-minute break. A plucker explained: “Whole day we have to bend and work with little rest, sometimes without any rest for seven hours in a day – which ultimately plays havoc on our health. Back pain is the most common complaint followed by kidney problems as we are not allowed to take any break for peeing” (December 2019).

Strawberry farming uses agrochemicals as soil fumigants and pesticides, including the highly toxic methyl bromide (Lopez-Aranda et al. 2016). Lack of protective equipment and almost nil training of fumigators about handling chemicals known as neurotoxins and carcinogens creates risk exposure. According to two Bangladeshi

fumigators, “while spraying the medicine in the strawberry field, no mask or gloves are given to us,” and “after the spray, the men are usually quite nauseous and have headaches” (July 2019).

With reduced time in between spraying chemicals and returning to harvesting, workers inhale chemical fumes continually while pesticide residues stick on to their hands and clothes: “our clothes, face, neck, everything is sticky with chemicals. It goes into our bodies when we eat food during our break.” Workers report a higher rate of respiratory ailments, including asthma, attributed to chemical inhalation and high humidity within the inadequately ventilated plastic greenhouses. The fungibility of labor increases health precarity. A worker stated: “If I say I am ill and cannot come to work, the farmer says, ‘no problem, I will get someone else’” (December 2019).

The living conditions worsen their health precarity. Greek farmers do not provide housing to their 10,000 odd farmhands, nor do the locals easily rent accommodations. The workers are forced to rent unused farmland and build makeshift shacks colloquially called *Barangas* (slang for the Greek word, *faranga*, or tent) out of salvaged plastic sheets, cardboard, and reeds. These overcrowded *Barangas* lack potable water, electricity, garbage disposal, or sanitation facilities. Improvised outdoor toilets consist of holes dug in the ground while bathing areas are open-air platforms. Combined, these cause adverse health outcomes such as frequent diarrhea, fever, and asthma.

BARRIERS TO HEALTH CARE ACCESS

Logistical barriers in accessing medical attention include long hours of work, lack of transport facilities, and unfamiliarity with the Greek language. Public health facilities are often shut by the time the workers get off work. Lack of transport facility to health centers, located in small towns adjacent to the farms where the men live and work, is compounded by the men’s racialized hypervisibility. Taking public transport is ruled out due to incidents of bus drivers’ refusal to allow them aboard and the racism and vigilantism of native passengers. The workers are forced to rely on a handful of regularised co-ethnics who own cars for transport to the nearest hospital in Varda, three kilometers from Nea Manolada or to Rio, located around forty kilometers away. Unfamiliarity with the Greek language forces dependence on regularised co-ethnics, fluent in Greek, to take time off work and act as translators. Often, it results in the supervisors assessing “whether the illness can be treated with simple remedies or is it serious. Taking time out costs money, and one has to be sure” (December 2019).

These logistical barriers have to be framed within discourses of illegality and racism and concerns about community surveillance and risk of detention. “I wanted to go to a doctor because of the constant headaches, but that became impossible. ... They ask for our papers. If we don’t have a work permit, they don’t check us and send us back,” stated one undocumented worker (July 2019). A 2016 study done in

Crete revealed that barriers for migrant workers in accessing General Practitioners were attributable to the consultation fee, regulation of movement, and increased surveillance of undocumented migrants (Teunissen et al. 2016: 120). The same study reported that some GPs were instructed to report undocumented migrants to the government (Ibid. 121).

As mentioned earlier, discrimination in healthcare settings often deters members of discriminated groups from seeking timely medical attention due to past experience of racist behavioral responses from medical personnel. In Greece, the consequence of racist and xenophobic public health responses toward migrant workers is to view them as undeserving of medical attention and offer a lowered quality of healthcare (Kotsila, Kallis 2019). A regularized status Bangladeshi supervisor, fluent in Greek, who often takes farmworkers to the hospital in Varda, had this to say:

Here, the health care workers such as nurses behave badly with us. By simply seeing us from a distance, they start saying, “Depon, Depon (paracetamol).” They don’t even bother to ask why we are here. They cover their nose with hands as if they are disgusted with our smell. They don’t check if we have a fever or anything. Go away, go away (waves his hand to show the dismissive gesture of nurses).

Racialized discourse of the “other” as animalistic and unhygienic justifies the diminishing of medical concern for ailing migrant workers (Xiuhtecutli, Shattuck 2020). Reluctance to access health care due to past discriminations makes the workers *choose* to become invisible to the health system, thus creating a falsity about their health status. This choice has serious consequences, especially during times of medical “crisis” such as the ongoing pandemic.

COPING WITH COVID-19 IN MANOLADA

“Infectious diseases have little respect for, and are poorly contained by, political borders and governmental mechanisms designed to enforce them” (Willen 2012: 813). COVID-19 has revealed the faultline of racial disparities that underpin capitalist growth. Structural and systemic inequalities faced by racial and ethnic minorities make them at greater risk of contracting and dying from the virus (Xiuhtecutli, Shattuck 2020). According to a study that has modeled COVID-19 infections, farmworkers are more prone than native populations to contract the virus (Purdue 2020).

In Manolada, local civic authorities, in consultation with the Bangladeshi Consulate in Greece, made public announcements and distributed informational leaflets in the Bangla language about COVID-19 restrictions.⁷ These included social

⁷ Manolada Watch (2020). *Report on the Situation at Manolada: March 2020*, Generation 2.0, <https://g2red.org/report-on-the-situation-at-manolada-march-2020/> (23 Jul. 2020).

distancing in strawberry rows, reduced numbers of workers, the use of gloves and a mask at work, limiting workers to their *barangas* after work, and prohibiting their movement in the main plaza of the villages – all guidelines with which the workers were willing to comply. In late March 2020, as work resumed after a gap of ten days, a few farmers dispensed disposable masks and gloves to small groups of workers. The rest had to purchase these from the open market at the then-going rate of one euro fifty cents each.

Despite farming resuming to near-normal levels, the restrictions on distancing resulted in reduced demand for workers. “There was constant tension – tension about contracting the disease, tension about getting some work during the season, tension about rent and food,” said a worker (July 2020). The men feared being replaced by other more desperate migrants, creating friction between them as they jostled for a smaller pool of jobs. A worker stated, “Putting aside our fears and placing faith in Allah, we went to work whenever we were asked to. We did not want to get in the bad books of either the supervisor or the farmer” (July 2020). However, the physical structure of strawberry farming, where the plants are grown in elevated rows eighteen inches apart, made social distancing difficult.

Similarly, government orders restricting the men to their cramped and overcrowded plastic hovels during off-hours, while necessary to prevent the spread of the virus, appeared counterproductive. During the first lockdown, one regularised Bangladeshi supervisor said, “we requested our men go to the farm and return straight to their *baranga* after work. Those who were not hired for the day – they had to stay inside. If any one of us had contracted corona, it would have spread like fire through the *barangas*.” In Manolada, the *barangas* are a festering ground for illnesses due to overcrowding, inadequate ventilation, shared kitchens, lack of drainage facilities, and open-air bathrooms. With no help forthcoming from any other quarter, Bangladeshi workers rallied by creating informal community support mechanisms and restrictions. “We relied on herbal remedies such as *nimbu-ada cha* (lemon-ginger tea) to ward off sore throat and colds. If someone had a fever, we’d check on them and bring painkillers from the pharmacy,” stated one plucker (July 2020).

By late December 2020, a Pakistani migrant worker from Manolada had died from the virus, and two other COVID-19 cases were confirmed from the adjoining region of Vouprasia. Local civic and health authorities embarked on mass COVID-19 testing of over six thousand Bangladeshi and Pakistani migrant men who had arrived in this region for the strawberry season. In another instance from Ierapetra in south Crete, an outbreak among Pakistani and Afghan migrant men engaged in greenhouse vegetable cultivation resulted in the quarantine of one hundred workers.⁸ Here again, the men were cramped in four rental complexes. The dependency of the local agrarian economy on the migrant workforce and the consequence of slowed

8 Efsyn.gr (2020). *Ierapetra: 100 Workers Quarantined Due to COVID-19 case in Pakistani Community*, https://www.efsyn.gr/efkriti/koinonia/272214_ierapetra-se-karantina-100-ergates-logo-kroysmatos-covid-19-stin (12 Jan. 2021).

or stalled agricultural activity due to the spread of the pandemic among the workers was summed up by a member of Ierapetra Farmers Association (EAS): “There will be a huge problem in the area if other cases are found.”⁹

The migrant workers are caught in a Catch-22 situation. In Greece, migrants and refugees are denied regular medical appointments because they lack negative COVID-19 tests.¹⁰ As the testing is unfree for them, getting one is costly, cumbersome, and time-consuming. Fear of deportation also makes them steer clear of COVID-19 tests.¹¹ A 22-year-old Bangladeshi plucker stated: “Without ‘papers,’ we have no healthcare. It is all from our pocket. If any one of us contracts ‘corona,’ all Bangladeshi workers here will be stigmatized and removed from work” (July 2020). There is also concern about increased informal surveillance by the locals. Bangladeshi men might become easy targets of nationalist anger if COVID-19 spreads in the region. Local resentment against migrant workers has begun expressing in other parts of Greece. A member of a local agricultural cooperative in the Kalamata olive oil-producing region stated, “It’s hard to trust undocumented workers. They haven’t been tested for fear of being arrested, but what if you’re infected.”¹²

CONCLUSION

In this article, I have argued that racial capitalism is inherently violent because it employs racial and other societal inequalities as pretexts to devalue workers. The codification of racialized migrant farmworkers as “essential” for local food security deliberately ignores structural and systemic oppression that inflicts continual violence such as denial of labor rights, employment benefits, social services, and free healthcare.

The pandemic has merely exposed structural and systemic precarities, institutionalized by the state through laws that undergird the lives of racialized migrant workers around the world. The Greek state is accountable for its evasion of responsibility toward migrant farmworkers. The revitalization of Greek agriculture is due to its restrictive temporary labor migration policies that transform large numbers of racialized migrants into illegality and labor docility. Ironically, while migrant workers put themselves at risk to ensure food security for host nations, they are stigmatized as public health risks. Racist and ethnocentric prejudice, one that racial capitalism seizes

9 Ibid.

10 Karnaki, Pania (2020). Hosting Migrants in a Crisis: Access to COVID-19 Healthcare Services for Migrants and Refugees in Greece, <https://eurohealthnet-magazine.eu/hosting-migrants-in-a-crisis-access-to-covid-19-health-care-services-for-migrants-and-refugees-in-greece/> (13 Jan. 2021).

11 Ibid.

12 Labor shortage makes Greek olive harvest a traditional family affair again, *Arab News*, December 21, 2020, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1780281/business-economy>.

upon to devalue labor of racial and ethnic minorities, creates a discourse of “underservingness.” This problematic discourse creates further barriers to healthcare access.

What, then, should the obligations of the Greek state be toward the migrant workers? Imini Karydopoulou, a program officer at G2RED who has been an integral part of Manolada Watch, an activist watch group, argues that the “first important step (for the Greek state) is to design and implement a proper legal framework that will give access to a legal residence status that will recognize this community. As long as land workers are not legally recognized, any attempt to protect their rights cannot be effective and complete” (email July 2020). Till that is done, the cost of ensuring will ultimately and always be borne by low-class racialized migrant workers.

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POVZETEK

COVID-19, RASNI KAPITALIZEM IN NEPRIJAVLJENI KMETIJSKI DELAVCI IZ BANGLADEŠA V MANOLADI V GRČIJI

Reena KUKREJA

Članek na primeru neprijavljenih delavcev iz Bangladeša, ki so v Manoladi v Grčiji zaposleni kot obiralci jagod, prikazuje, kako rasni kapitalizem prispeva k zdravstveni ranljivosti delavcev drugih ras iz nižjih družbenih slojev in jih izpostavlja večjemu tveganju za okužbo s koronavirusom. Več kot 90 odstotkov delovne sile v naglo rastoči panogi pridelave jagod v Grčiji predstavlja množica 10.000 do 12.000 neprijavljenih moških iz Bangladeša, ki za dolge delavnike prejemajo mizerno plačilo. Članek prikazuje, kako od države vsiljeni varnostni mejni ukrepi, ki naj bi preprečevali vstop migrantom drugih ras, hkrati pa spodbujali zatiskanje oči pred njihovim izkoriščanjem, povzročajo in ohranjajo razmere za nesvobodno delo na podlagi (ne)mobilnosti migrantov. Ob ljudeh druge rase, ki utelešajo »ilegalnost« in strah pred možnostjo izgona, delavcem odvzemajo pravice in jih disciplinirajo k prisilni pohlevnosti. Rasni kapitalizem je tudi vzročno povezan z zdravstveno nepravilnostjo do migrantov. Rasne in etnične manjšine so ponavadi zgoščene v nižnjih zaposlitvah za priseljence, v katerih so izpostavljeni poklicnim poškodbam. Zdravstveno ogroženost neprijavljenih delavcev v kmetijstvu, ki se soočajo z nevarnimi delovnimi razmerami, nehygieničnimi nastanitvami in diskriminacijo s strani zdravstvenih ustanov, strukturalna in sistemska diskriminacija še povečujeta. Podcenjevanje delavcev na podlagi rasne pripadnosti sovпада z ilegalnim statusom migrantov in s kulturno specifičnimi normami moškosti, ki normalizirajo diskurz zdravstvene »nezasluženosti« neprijavljenih migrantov. Ta diskurz njihovo izključenost iz zdravstvene oskrbe normalizira na temelju državne politike, medtem ko jim ponudniki zdravstvenih storitev to odrekajo že zaradi samega sovraštva na rasni osnovi.

V Grčiji neprijavljeni migranti do zdravstvene oskrbe lahko dostopajo le v javnih bolnišnicah, vendar le pod pogojem plačila nekega nominalnega zneska. Obiranje jagod od obiralcev zahteva delo v sklonjenem položaju; delovnik je dolg, odmori pa kratki. Obiralce pestijo kronične bolečine v hrbtu, težave z ledvicami in visoka stopnja obolevnosti zaradi okužb dihalnih organov. Življenje v plastičnih barakah brez tekoče vode, kanalizacije, odvoza smeti in stranišč še dodatno ogroža njihovo zdravje. Njihov dostop do zdravstvene pomoči preprečujejo predvsem dolg delovnik, slabe možnosti prevoza in neznanje grškega jezika. Delavci se zaradi preteklih diskriminatorskih izkušenj raje odpovedujejo zdravstveni oskrbi; za zdravstvene oblasti namerano ostajajo nevidni in se pretvarjajo, da nimajo težav, kar ima resne posledice predvsem v času zdravstvene krize, kakršna je trenutna pandemija. Medtem ko so revni bangladeški delavci v Grčiji po eni strani nepogrešljivi za oskrbo domačega prebivalstva s hrano, pa brezbrizen odnos do njihovih zdravstvenih potreb med pandemijo Covida-19 po drugi strani spodbuja strukturalno nasilje nad njimi.

ONLINE EDUCATION OF MARGINALIZED CHILDREN IN NORTH MACEDONIA AND ITALY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Marina CENEDESE^I, Ivana SPIROVSKA^{II}

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ABSTRACT

Online Education of Marginalized Children in North Macedonia and Italy During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic abruptly interrupted the traditional education process and imposed the need to switch to online education. Children living in poverty without proper IT infrastructure have been substantially excluded from the educational process amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. During this challenging pandemic, education has been placed in quarantine. This research paper aims to qualitatively investigate the potential social exclusion and further marginalization within remote learning during the pandemic in a very particular local context, focusing on the areas of Bitola (North Macedonia) and Treviso (Italy).

KEYWORDS: migrant children, children living in poverty, marginalization, COVID-19 online education, North Macedonia, Italy

IZVLEČEK

Online izobraževanje marginaliziranih otrok v severni Makedoniji in Italiji med pandemijo Covida-19

Pandemija Covida-19 je grobo posegla v tradicionalni izobraževalni proces in sprožila potrebo po prehodu na *online* izobraževanje. Revni otroci brez ustrezne informacijske tehnološke podpore so bili med to težavno pandemijo v veliki meri izključeni iz izobraževanja, ki je potekalo v karanteni. Raziskava kvalitativno analizira potencialno socialno izključenost in nadaljnjo marginalizacijo ob izobraževanju na daljavo v konkretnem prostoru – na območju Bitole v severni Makedoniji in Trevisa v Italiji.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: otroci migranti, otroci, ki živijo v revščini, marginalizacija, Covid-19 *online* izobraževanje, Severna Makedonija, Italija

I MA in migration and intercultural relations, Erasmus Mundus Joint Degree Master EMMIR; BA in linguistic mediation and intercultural communication, University "Statale" of Milan, Italy; mari.cenedese@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2404-1021>.

II MA in migration and intercultural relations, Erasmus Mundus Joint Degree Master EMMIR; BA in law, Bachelor of Education: teacher of English language and literature, University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in Bitola, North Macedonia; ivanaspirovska95@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8424-2319>.

EDUCATION ON THE MARGINS

About 91% of the world's student population did not go to school in spring 2020. The rapid spread of the virus responsible for COVID-19 and the resulting declaration of the global pandemic imposed the need for online education, leading to the exclusion of marginalized groups of children. UNICEF reported 463 million students worldwide being generally unable to access online education due to lack of technological infrastructure or remote learning policies for online education.¹

Italy was the first country after China to be caught by the unforeseen virus, which rapidly spread across the entire European continent, eventually reaching throughout the world. These circumstances led to forced lockdowns, curfews, remotely working from home, and remote schooling. However, approximately 54% of the students in Italy declared to have had difficulties in reaching the online didactics, while 7% had no access at all.² In North Macedonia, the Ministry of Education confirmed in September 2020 that 40,000 children are not able to follow online classes due to a lack of IT infrastructure.³

This research poses the question *How have teachers, parents, and students responded to the emergency online learning during spring 2020?* Furthermore, *What do they think has been the situation's impact on marginalized children in Bitola and Treviso?*

Bearing in mind the world's situation, this research examines how online education has impacted children, especially those in already marginalized positions, in the regions where we received our compulsory education. This paper examines the potential further marginalization of pupils within remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bitola (North Macedonia) and Treviso (Italy). Although there are enormous differences between the two countries – North Macedonia is a candidate state to become a member of the European Union with a population of approximately two million, and Italy is a European Union member state with a population of about sixty million – as well as different living standards and social composition, the marginalization in education amidst the pandemic is not quite disparate.

MARGINALIZING THE MARGINALIZED?

The key concepts underpinning the research are poverty, marginalization, social exclusion, and online education/remote learning. More precisely, the latter refers throughout the paper to traditional compulsory education merely transferred online.

1 UNICEF (2020) COVID-19: Are Children Able to Continue Learning During School Closures, <https://data.unicef.org/resources/remote-learning-reachability-factsheet/> (26 Jan. 2021).

2 Ipsos for Save The Children Italy: Back to School report 2020, <https://www.savethechildren.it/sites/default/files/files/IPSOS%20per%20Save%20the%20Children%20-%20Back%20to%20School%20report.pdf> (25 Jan. 2021).

3 TV21 (2020), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uw6kcXIHdCo> (22 Mar. 2021).

The abrupt switch to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic denied, indeed, the right to education for poor children who are without proper IT infrastructure and electricity. According to the United Nations (UN), this move to online education or remote learning has been the largest disruption to the education system in history.⁴ Poverty, in both its absolute and relative meanings, could be multidimensional and deprives around one billion children worldwide of basic needs, including nutrition and clean water, as well shelter, health care, and education,⁵ thus, leading to social exclusion. Poverty has an impact on children's education no matter where they live and learn. Placed in the context of North Macedonia, poverty represents a problem that affects many social spheres.

Nearly one-third of the population lives below the national poverty line having more negative effects on children than adults.⁶ One in three children lives in poverty, comprising over 100,000 children in the country, 11% being in the Pelagonia region (Bitola and Prilep).⁷ Nevertheless, poverty does not equally affect all ethnic communities. Among Roma, the poverty rate is three times the national average (Petrovska Mitrevska, Tuna 2017: 29). According to UNICEF North Macedonia, 1 in 300 poor children in the country attends preschool, and 2 out of 3 children attend secondary school.⁸ Whereas in a decade, Italy has tripled the number of children living in poverty,⁹ and these figures are increasing since child poverty is strongly connected to investments in human capital. So, individuals with a low level of education, especially those without a lower secondary school diploma, are disadvantaged and have limited access to the formal labor market, relying on less-safe jobs and yet at greater risk of poverty (ILO 1995; World Bank 2020). Unfortunately, a significant proportion of people living in poverty are migrants. For example, in Italy, they account for 24.4% in contrast to 4.9% for Italians.¹⁰

Furthermore, migrants are a substantial part of the country's population, and thus, their children nowadays compose a significant portion of the Italian student

4 United Nations Policy Brief (2020). Education During COVID-19 and Beyond, https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/08/sg_policy_brief_covid-19_and_education_august_2020.pdf (22 Mar. 2021).

5 UNICEF: Child Poverty, <https://www.unicef.org/social-policy/child-poverty> (13 Mar. 2021).

6 Borgen Project: Four Facts about Poverty in Macedonia, <https://borgenproject.org/poverty-in-macedonia/> (16 Nov. 2020).

7 UNICEF North Macedonia (2018): Ending Poverty Must Start with Children, <https://www.unicef.org/northmacedonia/press-releases/ending-poverty-must-start-children> (16 Nov. 2020).

8 Ibid.

9 Kids in Poverty Have Tripled in Italy, https://www.ansa.it/english/news/general_news/2019/10/21/kids-in-poverty-have-tripled-in-italy_ca478b24-9b6e-4460-ad26-b467dd9c9c9d.html (25 Jan. 2021).

10 Migrants Living in Absolute Poverty in Italy, ISTAT <http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?QueryId=17944&lang=en> (19 Mar. 2021).

population (9.7%).¹¹ Yet, educational inequalities – in terms of unequally distributed opportunities – persist (Azzolini, 2012; Mura et al. 2020: 15) since the low socio-economic resources, experienced above all by migrants, play a significant role in accessing those chances. Thus, there is an urgent call for policy interventions to fight this gap in educational achievements between native Italian and immigrant populations (Azzolini 2012: 177; Barbanti 2016).

The other key concept present in this research is marginalization, as the educational gap represented by inequalities is strongly connected to the population belonging to the lower socio-economic classes and, thus, to some extent, marginalized (Azzolini 2012: 13). Marginality could be defined as “involuntary position and condition of an individual or group at the margins of social, political, economic, ecological and biophysical systems, preventing them from access to resources, assets, services, restraining freedom of choice, preventing the development of capabilities and eventually causing extreme poverty” (Gatzweiler et al. 2011: 3). “Marginalization describes both a process and a condition that prevents individuals or groups from full participation in social, economic, and political life.”¹² The fact that marginalization represents a dynamic social phenomenon has made it quite challenging to define marginalization as a restricted category and should be observed as a “collection of changing relationships” (Howitt 1993: 6), sometimes referred to as social exclusion. Although the role of schools should be to act as drivers of inclusion, since they are the major vehicles capable of overcoming inequalities and promoting diversities (Jalušič, Bajt, Lebowitz 2019: 44), and education should be considered the way out of marginalization, it could, however, as Munn and Lloyd (2005) contend, become an agent of marginalization with unadapted curriculum to individual needs, inflexible structures, and inconsistency between norms and the capacity of students to meet them (Mowat 2015: 460). Amidst the pandemic, the role of teachers remains significant as “every teacher has an impact on the successful inclusion of immigrant children and developing intercultural education” (Vižintin 2018: 93). Nevertheless, the absence of proper conditions for online education has significantly challenged this obligation.

Remoteness, exclusion, and extreme poverty are related, so the poorest are often encountered in rural areas and belong to ethnic minorities and socially excluded groups (Gatzweiler et al. 2011: 2). Social exclusion, as defined by Razer et al. (2013), is a state when individuals or groups “lack effective participation in key activities or benefits of the society in which they live” (Mowat 2015: 457). However, as Mowat

11 According to data provided by the Ministry of Education University and Research (MIUR), the population of students without the Italian citizenship is about 9,7% in Italy, see also: <https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/250189/Notiziario+Stranieri+1718.pdf/78ab53c4-dd30-0c0f-7f40-bf22bbcedfa6?version=1.2&t=1562937526726> (19 Mar. 2021).

12 Defining Marginalised: DFID’s Leave No One Behind Agenda, <https://www.ukaidirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Defining-marginalised.pdf>. More on social exclusion: <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/poverta-ed-esclusione-sociale/Pagine/orientamento.aspx> (25 Jan. 2021).

further contends, marginalization also encompasses a sense of not belonging and not being valued (Ibid 2015: 457). Hence, extreme poverty is rooted in marginality and represents another layer in its complexity introducing the sub-concept “marginalized poor,” referring to those affected by marginalization and poverty.¹³ For this study, the term refers to the economic situation of the families, including their access to technological devices and infrastructure¹⁴ in the context of public schools and education in Italy and North Macedonia.

METHODOLOGY

The research employs a purely qualitative methodology conducting participatory and subject-focused research with an ethnographic approach. Through qualitative research, we aim to represent an open view capable of understanding human concerns. We analyze self-reflections and narratives of educators, students, and parents experiencing these uncertain times of global pandemic. We try to understand their perspectives on challenges that marginalized children, particularly with minority and migrant backgrounds, have been facing during the lockdown. Furthermore, in Bitola’s context,¹⁵ storytelling as a supplementary qualitative methodology has been employed.¹⁶ Narratives and testimonies from lived experiences of parents and students have been collected from the field in the period between July and August 2020.

The role of teachers and other subjects involved in the educational process in creating inclusivity within schools and implementing an education system in which achievements and success are available to all is crucial. Educators are required to accept their responsibilities in promoting participation and reducing underachievement, particularly with marginalized children, due to different reasons affecting their learning outcomes (Rouse 2008).

The research involves our personal experience as members of the researched community and familiarity with the education sector. This reality could represent a personal bias because it is not an easy process to “make the familiar strange” (Holliday 2007). Nevertheless, qualitative research settings are in any case difficult to control, and, following Holliday’s suggestion, “we have to capitalize on those that are available to us” (Ibid. 2007: 22). Finally, as argued by Liamputtong, the focus is on

13 See more at: Zentrum für Entwicklungsforschung. Marginality: Addressing the Root Causes of Extreme Poverty, <https://www.zef.de/fileadmin/webfiles/downloads/projects/margip/downloads/Poster-marginality-tropentag.pdf> (20 Dec. 2020).

14 Ipsos for Save The Children: I giovani ai tempi del Coronavirus, <https://s3.savethechildren.it/public/files/uploads/pubblicazioni/i-giovani-ai-tempi-del-coronavirus.pdf> (25 Jan. 2021).

15 Immense gratitude to Macedonian Red Cross, Local branch Bitola for the support during the research conducted in Bitola area.

16 Further see Clandinin, Huber (2010). Narrative Inquiry, in International Encyclopedia of Education, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/narrative-inquiry> (14 Dec. 2020).

meanings and interpretations, as qualitative research documents the world from the point of view of the people (2010: 11).

Research Design and Ethical Considerations

We did not select our informants with premeditation; they were chosen through a snowball sampling method. They all granted their informed consent, which enabled us to record responses and successively transcribe all the interviews and surveys in their original languages (Italian and Macedonian). Therefore, in the analysis, we will use our translations into English of the significant statements. Concerning another ethical aspect of the study, we have preserved the anonymity of the respondents.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted with open-ended semi-structured interviews, whereas in North Macedonia, we employed structured surveys and storytelling as an additional method. Due to social distancing measures and the inability to conduct interviews solely, structured surveys were sent via email directly to educators. Moreover, we collected testimonies from parents sharing their experiences. These testimonies served to assess the perception, beliefs, and experiences of everyone involved in the educational process. The questions were intended to guide the informants, rather than restricting them to answering what they are just asked. Thus, through dialogues, valuable information beyond the scope of the questionnaires was collected as well. In Italy, we interviewed 11 teachers from different school cycles: primary (4), lower secondary (3), and upper secondary schools (4). In North Macedonia, we gathered data from structured surveys (8), semi-structured interviews (4), and field visits (4). There were 14 participants involved, including primary school teachers (1), secondary school teachers (5), high-school teachers (1), special educators (2), social workers (1), and parents (4).

FIELDWORK TESTIMONIES

Online Education of Marginalized Poor Children in Bitola

When schools were closed and education transferred online, marginalized poor students were confined at home, and their education rights were substantially placed in quarantine. Many of these children belong to low-income families who have been receiving emergency relief during the pandemic. Some do not have

basic living conditions, including electricity, and particularly proper IT infrastructure to access online education:

There was no way they could follow online lectures; they were at home. We do not have the conditions, not even internet or mobile. (Single mother of three children)

In my school, above 50% of the students were without proper technical conditions to follow online classes. [...]. The majority of students without conditions for online education are Roma, whether devices or the internet. (Secondary school teacher)

The fact that certain families and children could not manage to participate in online education might have completely interrupted online education in certain schools and classes: "Online teaching lasted for almost two weeks. Later some people started canceling because they did not have the internet, some did not have proper means, even mobile phones. That is why online classes were eventually canceled" (Father of a second grader).

Some of the schools, teachers and special educators managed to obtain internet and technology donations to supply the students who were not able to afford them:

The school secured donations from NGOs of a certain number of tablets distributed to the students who did not have the technical means to follow online lectures. (Secondary school teacher)

I had a low-income student in my class. Free internet was provided at my request, which unfortunately arrived after the end of the school year. The same student will receive and use it in the new school year. (Teacher/Special Educator and rehabilitator)

Teachers also consider alternatives to address the student's absences in their online classroom. They implemented different teaching methods to make sure no student is excluded. The teaching methodology used by an elementary school teacher involved "sending recorded lessons so the students could watch when he/she was able to." While the internet and technical devices were secured for some children, others' education remained in quarantine. Moreover, in some cases, it was insufficient to provide only a device, mobile phone, or tablet if the home was without an internet connection or access to electricity. Educational programs were available on certain television channels for students who did not have the proper devices to follow online education. Students from families with low income who are without computers or internet at home "were given printed materials, which were sent to their parents and several families were visited in their homes by experts from our educational institution" (Social worker).

As education was brought into the homes, parents absolved a more significant role. Moreover, as an elementary school teacher stated: "unlike classes with a physical

presence, online teaching is much harder as parents must control all of the school-related assignments” thus, parents’ illiteracy and lack of IT knowledge represented a problem. It was particularly difficult for students being dependent on their parents during the process of online education, particularly those who did not have a proper internet connection and devices or whose parents’ lacked IT knowledge and were thus unable to assist with the assignments.

What I discovered about my students and their families are very sad pictures in general. IT literacy, more precisely, parents’ lack of knowledge of computers and the internet. As they were also stating: “We do not know, we cannot log in on the platform, we have already reached the internet limit [...], we do not have money to buy them new phones, the old one does not function well, the camera is broken, and similar things.” (Secondary school teacher)

September 2020 marked the beginning of the new school year. The government’s policy included online education and education with a physical presence in school for first-, second-, and third-grade students, as well as for other children who were unable to follow online classes with previous parental consent. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in spring 2020, an evident effort was made by some educators to find alternatives to online education or provide the necessary conditions for students to follow online classes. However, access to quality education was significantly disabled. Whether the absence of proper technology, weak internet connection and interruptions, or lack of knowledge, the educational process has been significantly challenged. This education crisis might have a significant impact in the future, particularly on the academic performance of marginalized children who were unable to access online education properly. The lesson this pandemic taught the educational system is that there is an imminent need to address poverty for the successful digitalization of education.

Online Education of Marginalized Migrant Children in Treviso

Interviewed teachers were asked to share their stories on how they experienced online teaching during the pandemic, especially regarding their relationship with students from migrant backgrounds and with less knowledge of the Italian language. Particularly about how they reached out to them and through which strategy they included them or not in the classroom.

The answers received were quite similar. All referred to the fact that communicating with foreign¹⁷ students has been a lot more difficult if not interrupted during the online schooling period. These students belong to the category of the most

17 Foreign is here referred only to their citizenship status.

absent to classes and sometimes also to the worst performers in the evaluation. Besides, difficulties due to lack of face-to-face communication with the families of newly arrived and non-native Italian speakers have dramatically arisen, leaving those students falling behind the rest of the class in most cases.

In one of my classes, I had seven students out of eighteen who were unreachable. One was even not in Italy, as we found out later. Eventually, some of those students connected to the class, but it was impossible to communicate, especially with their families. (Lower secondary school teacher)

Almost all my foreign students were absent and never showed up to my video meet-ups. I've never received their homework. So, I did not know how to evaluate them. [...] I am expecting high dropout cases next year. (Upper secondary school teacher)

Even though teachers recognized the many-layered difficulties affecting migrant students, they did not always proactively solve hindrances. Especially in secondary education, where students are expected to possess a certain degree of freedom and responsibility, teachers left them alone in most cases. While, to a great extent, primary school education has been delegated to parental education, in the case of a family with a migratory background, parents do not always sufficiently know the language to teach their kids.

Well, foreign students were surely the most absent in my classes. In the beginning, it was impossible to communicate with them. Then, we tried every possible strategy to reach the parents. I used WhatsApp, even though the principal explicitly told us not to use it for school communications. [...] As soon as it was possible to go out from home, I brought copies of the exercises to their houses. Some of them had no computer at home and used their parents' smartphones only when possible. Others have six siblings, and the youngest were penalized. It was very hard for some children to find a quiet place to connect. (Primary school teacher)

Even though schools offer tablets and internet connection to students without technological devices, according to the teachers' sample, only a small percentage of the potential beneficiary students have profited from it. Nonetheless, according to ISTAT (Italian National Statistics Institution), in Italy, 33.8% of the families have neither a PC nor a tablet; 47.2% have just one, while only 18.6% have two or more.¹⁸

Primary school teachers have highlighted the loss of the solidarity network surrounding the students from migrant backgrounds. The Italian education system does not systematically provide extra classes for foreign students to learn the new

18 ISTAT Report on Families and Technological Devices, https://www.repubblica.it/tecnologia/2020/04/06/news/istat_un_terzo_delle_famiglie_non_ha_pc_o_tablet_in_casa_sud_penalizzato-253279893/ (25 Jan. 2021).

language (Machetti et al. 2018), which is consistently found to represent one of the most relevant hindrances for immigrant children (Azzolini 2012). Also, in spring 2020, for security reasons, none of the extra activities meant to support migrants' integration occurred.

Everything has stopped. I've seen a decline both in the performance and attendance of the class. [...] I oversee one F.A.M.I.¹⁹ project, but if the school has stopped, you can imagine extra projects ...

In Olmi,²⁰ we have many foreign students and the only way to support them properly, but also to help teachers, is to send them to extracurricular class projects where they learn the language and are tutored in doing their homework. As soon as the school closed, this network stopped. It was three times more difficult to teach, students regressed [...] Now (July) that Piccolo Carro²¹ has started again with the extra tutoring, you see how important it is for them to keep regularity in the learning process not only of the language.

If we look at school dropout rates within the migrant student population, they are still significantly high (30.1%) compared to the native population (12%) and affect immigrants' occupational possibilities.²² A recent study (2020) promoted by Ipsos Italy collected a sample of students aged 14–18 years old attending Italian public schools during the first outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and reports 28% of them thinking one of their classmates will drop out of school in 2021.²³ The primary cause is a lack of IT infrastructure and devices, but also the insufficient knowledge of the Italian language is playing a significant role. Language skills deeply affect immigrants' performance in the labor market and reduce their employment rate by about 30% (Pieroni et al. 2019).

19 F.A.M.I. are projects aimed at integration of immigrants promoted by the government with EU funds.

20 A small village in the periphery of Treviso, Italy, with a high incidence of foreign students (e.g., 39% of the children in primary school do not have the Italian citizenship).

21 Piccolo Carro is a not-for-profit association, volunteer based and active in the fields of education and inclusion.

22 Eurydice Report: Integrating Students from Migrant Backgrounds, https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/sites/eurydice/files/integrating_students_from_migrant_backgrounds_into_schools_in_europe_national_policies_and_measures.pdf (25 Jan. 2021).

23 Ipsos for Save The Children, <https://s3.savethechildren.it/public/files/uploads/publicazioni/i-giovani-ai-tempi-del-coronavirus.pdf> (25 Jan. 2021).

CONCLUSION

Technology is rapidly advancing worldwide, yet even some of the most affordable technological means remain inaccessible for children living in poverty. Switching abruptly to online education has revealed how the educational system in both countries has been unprepared to sustain and implement proper public instruction. Online schooling has stressed the marginalization of students who already live in an economically more difficult situation and could not access their right to education mainly due to a lack of technological infrastructures and devices. However, the lack of a structure aimed at including marginalized poor students, particularly migrant children without sufficient knowledge of the language of the lessons, has contributed to this marginalization. Consequently, many students have suddenly interrupted their education processes and gone missing from the class. The reasons behind their absences are, nevertheless, multiple and complex. Dropout rates are likely to increase in the next few months,²⁴ even though the situation's aftermath will be clearer only in a few years.

Moreover, online schooling has been perceived as a pure emergency solution and not as an occasion to improve the digitalization of the education proposals. If only given the proper infrastructure, online schooling has great potential in inclusivity, offering concrete means of reducing children's marginalization. Hence, the lessons drawn from COVID-19 emphasize educational reforms, moreover "building an education system that is more resilient, adaptable to student needs, equitable, and inclusive, with a strong emphasis on the role of technology in teacher's training at scale and ensuring learning continuity between the school and the home"²⁵ should be a priority.

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POVZETEK

ONLINE IZOBRAŽEVANJE MARGINALIZIRANIH OTROK V SEVERNI MAKEDONIJI IN ITALIJI MED PANDEMIJO COVIDA-19

Marina CENEDESE, Ivana SPIROVSKA

Pandemija Covida-19 je grobo posegla v tradicionalni izobraževalni proces in zaradi zaprtja šol sprožila potrebo po prehodu na *online* izobraževanje. Približno 91 odstotkov šolske populacije v svetu spomladi 2020 ni obiskovalo šole. Ta položaj je še posebej prizadel marginalizirane otroke, ki zaradi revščine in pomanjkanja ustrezne informacijske infrastrukture ter podpore v izobraževanju na daljavo niso mogli sodelovati.

Pričujoči članek kvalitativno analizira potencialno socialno izključenost in nadaljnjo marginalizacijo že tako marginaliziranih otrok med izobraževanjem na daljavo, pri čemer se omejuje na dve območji, in sicer Bitole v Severni Makedoniji in Trevisa v Italiji.

Vsi vpleteni v izobraževalni proces, od učiteljev do staršev, so imeli med izobraževalno krizo, ki je prinesla različne poglede na *online* izobraževanje, težko nalogo. Avtorici sta na podlagi njihovih pogledov proučevali položaj v izobraževanju marginaliziranih otrok, še zlasti vpliv revščine na manjšinske otroke v Bitoli in na otroke migrantov v Trevisu. Udeleženci raziskave, ki so bili dejavni v izobraževanju, so v intervjujih razkrivali svoja razmišljanja in analizirali to posebno stanje, še posebej izkušnje otrok brez dostopa do izobraževanja na daljavo. V obeh državah je socialni status teh učencev povezan z revščino. Prav zato so bili med pandemijo in izobraževanjem v karanteni še dodatno marginalizirani.

V severni Makedoniji je bila revščina v vsej svoji razsežnosti ovira za šolanje otrok, ki med pandemijo niso imeli dostopa do ustrezne informacijsko tehnološke opreme. V Italiji so intervjuvani učitelji pripovedovali o nenadni prekinitvi sleherne komunikacije s tujimi učenci, še zlasti s tistimi brez znanja italijanskega jezika. Čeprav so se učitelji zavedali večplastnosti težav, ki so med pandemijo pestile priseljske družine, niso ponudili nobenih rešitev, ki bi učencem šolanje na daljavo olajšale.

Avtorici članek končujeta z ugotovitvijo, da je bil izobraževalni sistem ob nenadnem prehodu na šolanje na daljavo na izvajanje tovrstnega izobraževanja popolnoma nepripravljen. Številni učenci so nenadoma izginili oziroma so morali zaradi pomanjkanja tehnične opreme, znanja in nezmožnosti komuniciranja v učnem jeziku prekiniti izobraževalni proces.

MIGRATION AND LEGAL PRECARIITY IN THE TIME OF PANDEMIC: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ON THE ITALIAN CASE

Paola BONIZZONI^I, Senyo DOTSEY^{II}

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ABSTRACT

Migration and Legal Precarity in the Time of Pandemic: Qualitative Research on the Italian Case

The COVID-19 pandemic has unequally impacted the lives of Italian subjects. The article uses evidence from forty-seven semi-structured interviews with various migrant groups to illuminate how temporalities embedded in Italy's migration governance shape migrants' precarious legal status and access to welfare. The authors show that whereas migrants with secure legal status or citizenship have not engaged significantly with Italian bureaucracies, they have no easy access to welfare as it is contingent on their employment and financial status. Migrants with precarious status have been the worst hit by the pandemic's secondary effects across several fronts. These findings have implications for policy and future research.

KEYWORDS: COVID-19, legal precarity, migration, temporality, welfare services, Italy

IZVLEČEK

Migracije in pravna negotovost med pandemijo: Kvalitativna študija italijanskega primera

Pandemija Covid-19 je neenakopravno posegla v življenja prebivalcev Italije. Članek temelji na podatkih iz 47 polstrukturiranih intervjujev z različnimi skupinami migrantov. Ti kažejo, kako začasne rešitve, vgrajene v italijanski sistem upravljanja migracij, vplivajo tako na negotovi pravni status migrantov kot na njihov dostop do socialnega varstva. Čeprav migranti z urejenim pravnim statusom ali državljanstvom nimajo veliko opravka z italijansko birokracijo, kljub temu nimajo lahkega dostopa do socialne blaginje, ki je odvisna od njihovega delovnega in finančnega statusa. Migrante prekarce so najbolj prizadeli sekundarni učinki pandemije. Ugotovitve avtorjev so pomembne tako za politiko upravljanja migracij kot za prihodnje raziskave.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: Covid-19, pravna negotovost, migracije, začasnost, socialno skrbstvo, Italija

^I Assoc. professor of sociology, Department of Social and Political Sciences, University of Milan, Italy; paola.bonizzoni@unimi.it, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6849-7568>.

^{II} Research fellow, Department of Social and Political Sciences, University of Milan, Italy; senyo.dotsey@unimi.it, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2164-1734>.

INTRODUCTION: MIGRATION, TEMPORALITY, AND LEGAL PRECARIITY¹

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all segments of the population around the world, albeit in varying degrees. In this respect, migrant populations are especially “vulnerable to the direct and indirect impacts of Covid-19” (Guadagno 2020: 4) due to the multiple forms of vulnerability, risk, and precarity that they share with other marginalized social groups. In this article, we investigate the potential impact of the pandemic on migrants’ (il)legal status in the host countries.

In Europe, like elsewhere, the pandemic has led to the closure of international borders, making cross-border mobility difficult. Further, it “has impacted procedures to apply for and obtain residence and work permits, as government offices have reduced their services or closed during this time,”² leading to the closure and/or *virtualization* of administrative offices and government agencies that process applications and issue residence and work permits and naturalizations to foreign nationals. This, combined with the effects of the economic crisis triggered by the pandemic, has jeopardized, as we shall discuss, the issuance or renewal of temporary employment-based residence permits, as well as the acquisition of the material integration requirements attached to family reunification, long-term residence, or naturalization procedures.

Legal status considerably shapes several aspects of a (forced) migrant’s life, from access to the labor market, education, health, and housing, to future full citizenship status aspirations (Da Lomba 2010). While the pandemic has affected citizens and denizens alike, the peculiar legal standing of migrants and, more specifically, the kind of residence permit they do (not) possess might, in critical ways, heavily affect their access to the labor market and social rights and protections, bearing especially critical consequences in a time of crisis (Dotsey 2018; Devillanova et al. 2020). While the possession of a more or less stable and secure legal status does not automatically guarantee full social inclusion (Standing 2011; Dotsey 2018), precariousness experienced in one’s legal status might (be) exacerbate(d) or trigger(ed) (by) precariousness in other spheres and conditions (Banki 2013).

Temporality is a critical dimension in the analysis of both migration governance and a migrant’s experiences, a feature that is, however, sometimes missing in scholarly debates (Cwerner 2001). This study draws attention to how temporalities embedded in migration governance might affect migrants’ experiences in times of the COVID-19 pandemic in Italy, one of the hardest-hit countries in Europe.

Italian immigration policies are well-known for creating a stratified system of multiple legal statuses characterized by blurred and differentiated rights (Bonizzoni 2020). The prolonged legal uncertainty and waiting periods, as well as bureaucratic

1 This article is part of the output of the project “De-bordering activities and citizenship from below of asylum seekers in Italy. Policies, practices, people (ASIT)” (PRIN 2017).

2 See <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/covid-19s-impact-on-migrant-communities-20> (19 Feb. 2021).

complexities involved in obtaining and renewing residence permits, often lead migrants to experience extended forms of legal precarity, resulting in “institutional irregularity” (Ferraris 2008) and *in limbo* status.

In this article, we draw on different migrant groups (including naturalized and settled, temporary economic migrants, asylum-seekers, irregular migrants, refugees, and humanitarian migrants) who have been living in Italy for as many as months to decades. The term *migrants* encompasses all groups unless otherwise specified or stated individually to show comparison, emphasis, and/or distinction. The interviews collected show how differently-precarious legal conditions embedded in the Italian immigration system have interacted with the COVID-19 crisis to produce specific outcomes.

The article proceeds as follows. We provide an overview of temporal migration governance and precarious socio-legal status production in Italy and how this might shape access to welfare services in light of the pandemic. Section 3 provides the research context and methodology, while the main empirical findings and analysis appear in section 4. The final section offers some concluding thoughts.

TEMPORALITIES, THE STATE, AND MIGRATION GOVERNANCE: INSIGHTS FROM ITALY

Migrants are often neither citizens nor permanent residents (Dotsey, Lumley-Sapanski 2021). Except for migrants with full citizenship status who thus somewhat enjoy all *formal* rights and privileges accrued to native citizens, all other migrant groups are *denizens*, with these different groups having access only to some or no rights (Standing 2011).

States employ temporal “devices and rationalities” (Anderson 2010b) to govern immigration flows. Time and temporality are used to define the boundaries of state membership, for instance, through the use of qualification times (Anderson 2010b), in determining how long one must be present to be eligible for citizenship, long-term residency, or family reunification.

Speeding or elongating asylum or status processing times (Cwerner 2004) and/or the duration of residence permits, creating new forms of ongoing and permanently *unresolved* migration statuses (see Simmelink 2011; Baas, Yeoh 2019) are concrete examples of temporal bordering techniques (that complement the more studied spatial ones, such as the use of undefined spatial confinement) in defining, selecting and deterring migrants.

The administrative regulation of a migrant’s status also intersects in complex ways with welfare arrangements, as states may use temporalities to regulate access to certain rights or benefits. For instance, migrants may be asked to demonstrate continuous presence within a receiving location to qualify for public benefits (Anderson 2010b; Gargiulo 2017).

Individuals who are awaiting the processing of their migration claims are often unable to fully participate in activities such as work and school (Hartley et al. 2017), leading to the experience of a condition of liminality. Exposed to temporal, uncertain, and precarious circumstances, including frequent and unpredictable changes in labor and immigration laws, migrants with a precarious legal status often lack the opportunity for long-term integration and social advancement plans in the host society (Anderson 2010a).

Different types of visa and residence permits regulate the entry and stay of foreign nationals in Italy, mainly depending on their mode and reasons of entry and stay (e.g., humanitarian migrants, family reunifications, students, etc.).

As regards economic migrants, the Legislative Decree 286/1998 closely ties migration status to employment status, implying that, on the one hand, economic migrants should already have a contract when entering Italy through an employment visa and that, on the other hand, they can easily lapse into *illegality* as a result of job loss (Dell’Olio 2004). Concerning family reunification, their status is tied to and dependent upon that of the sponsor, who should demonstrate the possession of adequate housing and income, proportional to the number of persons composing the family.

Within the context of forced migrants, Italy distinguishes different forms of national and international protection, each characterized by different rights. For instance, Geneva-status holders, compared to those entitled to subsidiary protection and the newly-introduced *special cases residence permit*, enjoy a longer residence permit, leading to privileged naturalization and naturalization routes.

In the case of temporary residence permits, eligibility must be repeatedly proven, and evaluations are characterized by a certain degree of *administrative discretion and arbitrariness* because immigration directives and amendments lack transparency and consistency and are full of lacunae (Veugelers 1994).

The main paths to legal stabilization in Italy are offered by the European Commission Long-Term Residence Permit (Soggiorno per Soggiornanti di Lungo Periodo – SLP) and by naturalization provisions. The SLP may be acquired by immigrants or non-EU nationals who have been legally residing in Italy for at least five years after meeting specific integration requirements (that is, knowledge of the Italian language, sufficient income, and, in the case of dependent relatives, adequate housing conditions).

As regards naturalization, there are three primary ways of gaining Italian citizenship: through descendants (*jure sanguinis*), marriage to an Italian citizen, and residence (*ius domicilii*). In the latter case, a non-EU citizen may apply if s/he has resided without interruption in Italy for ten years, along with showing a sufficient level of income, proportional to the number of the dependent family members (Dotsey 2018).

Italian immigration laws, anchored by temporary and contingent permit systems, have traditionally contributed to a situation of “institutionalized irregularity” (Calavita 2005) that recent policy reforms have further increased. The so-called

Salvini Decree³ has, in this respect, further increased the condition of precarity and uncertainty deriving from migrants' legal status; the law abolished the humanitarian protection status, replacing it with a *special case permit*, which is awarded only in a limited set of circumstances. That represented a significant blow to asylum-seekers, as most of them have been entitled to a humanitarian status.

It is in this context that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have played out.

The pandemic has led to the closure, contingent opening, and/or *virtualization* of the main public administrations (e.g., municipalities, police headquarters, consulates, territorial commissions, etc.) and support services (e.g., associations, churches, trade unions), bearing a potentially relevant impact on those waiting for a decision regarding one's status.

As part of the measures to contain the onslaught of the pandemic, the government enacted a decree March 2020, no. 18 (Decreto *Cura Italia*) converted into law no. 27/2020. Among other things, the government temporarily extended the validity of expiring residence permits through a series of repeated, short-term, status-extension measures. While this has temporarily provided migrants with some sort of mental tranquility, it has also put migrants' legal life *on hold*, expanding a *grey* area of an *in-limbo* status – not expired but not renewed – prolonging uncertainty in a time of worsening economic conditions.

Further, the government had granted a selective *amnesty*, targeted to key economic sectors such as the agricultural sector (e.g., livestock and fisheries) and the home care sectors (e.g., home care providers and domestic work). It is, however, noteworthy that a large part of the research was done before the regularization process started.

As regards welfare support, the government has provided emergency measures to those who found themselves especially hit by the economic effect of the pandemic. However, as we shall see, the legal barriers, informational uncertainty, and economic and bureaucratic requirements for receiving these welfare support packages prevented several migrants from applying.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted during the first phase of the COVID-19 lockdown (from March to June 2020). The analysis draws on forty-seven semi-structured interviews carried out by telephone with different migrant groups documented earlier.

The collection of interviews draws from a collaboration between the University of Milan (UNIMI) and the association TodoCambia. UNIMI researchers trained the volunteers of the association to conduct semi-structured qualitative interviews with the initial aim of understanding the changed life conditions of those migrants who,

³ Here, most of these changes were largely reverted by law no. 173/2020.

during the lockdown, had been excluded from the main activities of the association (Italian school and legal helpdesk support) that had been interrupted or carried out remotely due to the pandemic. An initial sampling of fifteen interviews was carried out with migrants that belonged to the associational network and was then followed by a snowball sampling procedure. We followed the guidelines of ethical principles to ensure our informants' anonymity. Thus, we have anonymized the names of the research participants.

The interview guidelines revolved around the following macro themes: legal history, employment, and future expectations post-COVID-19, self-help, and support networks. Interviews lasted between 30 and 50 minutes and were carried out in both Italian and English. All the interviews were recorded on audio.

The main sample characteristics are as follows. Concerning gender, thirty-three interviews were carried out with females and fourteen with males. The majority of the participants were of working age, between age 28 and 63. Interviewees were from the following countries: Ecuador (6), Colombia (4), Tunisia (1), Egypt (2), Peru (13), Nigeria (1), Mali (1), El Salvador (5), Uruguay (1), Russia (1), Ghana (1), Albania (3), Turkey (1), Ukraine (1), Sri Lanka (1), Romania (3), Cameroon (1), and Brazil (1). Interviewees worked as private tutors or babysitters, in the fashion industry, as interpreters and cultural mediators, as qualified nurse assistants, in the cleaning and hospitality sector, as social workers in the Third Sector, or as care and domestic workers in private homes, while eight interviewees were unemployed.

Concerning the legal status of interviewees, ten were naturalized citizens, seventeen were long-term residence permit holders, fourteen were holders of temporary residence permits, one was undocumented, and five did not want to share their status.

Here, content analysis was used to present the qualitative results. This analysis helped the researchers in grouping, comparing, and examining the findings of the study.

LEGAL (IN)SECURITY IN THE TIME OF PANDEMIC

Suspended (II)legalities

The pandemic had a different impact on naturalized citizens and SLP-holders on the one hand and temporary permit holders and undocumented migrants on the other hand. Naturalized citizens and SLP-holders did not engage significantly with Italian bureaucracies, except for the renewal of personal documents such as passports.

We have all taken Italian citizenship, and at least we do not have to worry about going to the police headquarters. (Flor, Peru, naturalized citizen)

From the point of view of documents, we are okay. My children are Italian citizens, and so is my husband. I have a long-term residence permit, but I have not yet been

able to apply for citizenship. I had to renew my Peruvian passport when the COVID-19 emergency began. The Peruvian consulate in Milan suggested that I do not come to their offices unless it is something urgent [...]. (Ana, Peru, SLP-holder)

While the lack of passports might have had little effect in practice (as international mobility opportunities have been significantly curtailed for all), the uncertainty regarding the time needed to have passports renewed could, in any case, represent a relevant source of anxiety. “I have an unlimited residence card; all I need is a passport. I’m worried that if something happens back home to our loved ones, we won’t be able to visit them” (Drita, Albania, SLP-holder).

As shown by the words of Drita, lack of a passport could represent a relevant obstacle in the case of an emergency or transnational *care crisis* demanding a migrant’s immediate presence at home. This uncertainty also applies to the release of family permit of stay and consequent reunification, as family reunification paths are on hold; cases were reported of people obtaining a family visa but unable to enter Italy because inbound flights were canceled or blocked from entering, resulting in their visa expiration.

Migrants entitled to a short-term permit of stay subject to periodic renewals (such as students, economic migrants, family migrants, or asylum-seekers) had, instead, been the worst off during the crisis.

The pandemic affected or *blocked* many migrants from achieving more stable legal career goals (such as pursuing long-term residency and naturalization).

I have a permanent residence permit. I asked for citizenship three years ago, but I don’t know when I’ll get it, and with this situation, it’ll be even worse, maybe in 5 years, they’ll give it to me. (Erika, Peru, SLP-holder)

I had applied for a long-term permit, but unfortunately, I needed housing eligibility. My permit expired in November [2019]. I applied for a renewal and had my appointment in April, but they sent me two postponement messages until August. I’m now waiting for my housing certificate. (Gisell, El Salvador, expired short-term permit)

This *block* in pursuing more stable legal careers is due to the curtailed activity of public administrations such as immigration offices (in charge of receiving and processing the application), municipalities (in charge of providing relevant documentation, such as residency or housing certificates), or INPS – National Social Insurance Agency – (as regards proof of employment and tax contributions) that are currently generating extended backlogs.

The postponement of legal stabilization procedures can, however, represent a relevant source of risk in the time of the pandemic. Many migrants are worried about their economic prospects and fear that the deepening economic crisis could jeopardize the maintenance of economic and housing proofs over time. In turn, the

postponement of legal stabilization might endanger professional advancement (Anderson 2010a), as well explained by Liz:

I had all the requirements to apply for Italian citizenship [. . .], but I now find myself still having to renew my residency permit. I had my renewal appointment on the day of the total closure. I'm waiting for another appointment. In the hospital where I work, I've a temporary contract like other foreign colleagues. After almost ten years of work, we'd like to have the opportunity to have a stable job in public health care, but we can't because we don't have Italian citizenship. We do have the requirements to be Italian citizens, but the problem is the lengthy procedure. (Liz, Peru, expired short-term permit)

Temporal control is shaped by migration systems that require migrants to wait and put their lives on hold, thus leaving the future uncertain.

After ten years of residence in Italy, I was granted citizenship. But many people are terrified by the situation for their residence permits. For now, everything has stopped, but at the same time, everything continues as it was before. I'm worried that when the emergency will be over, people won't have the possibility to maintain their legal position, and that, because of this bureaucratic machine, a large portion of immigrant workers may become irregular or fall into the hands of the recruiters of (irregular) day laborers. (Jose, Colombia, naturalized citizen)

As well explained by Jose, many migrants are likely to face a precarious legal situation due to the ongoing effects of the pandemic that affects their employment status. The fear is that the pandemic will push migrants into irregularity as a consequence of unemployment, as many of them will be unable to renew their work permits, which is premised on having a regular job.

The temporal extension of the uncertain legal conditions had ambivalent and somewhat paradoxical effects on a specific category of legally-precarious migrants, that is, asylum-seekers with a (self-perceived) limited chance of obtaining protection. Several interviewees reported that *suspended* application processing by the Territorial Commissions has somewhat provided *advantages* to the asylum-seekers pending other options, as illustrated in the following excerpt.

I've applied for political asylum because in my country I had some problems. They gave me a permit of stay for asylum, but it's a temporary one, and now it has been extended because my commission was in February; they extended it to June, and now I think it'll go after September. I don't think they'll give me political asylum. They closed a lot of places; they changed the commission date. [...] Actually, for me, it's a good thing because I thought that if they tell me no, at least it'll extend my time, it'll buy me time to wait for maybe an amnesty, and so I can be okay. (Leo, Peru, asylum-seeker)

The words of Leo show that the condition of uncertainty increased by the pandemic can paradoxically give people hope to act and long for better future outcomes, getting extra time to strategize, to prepare for the eventual asylum application outcome soliciting for legal support, or wait for more favorable opportunities, such as amnesty. Thus, waiting is not just *passive* but can also be an *active* process as people tend to engage in a wide array of activities that are both present-focused and future-focused (Rotter 2016: 82).

Suspended Welfare Access

The temporary *suspension* of legal identities has jeopardized access to key social rights that acquired critical relevance during the pandemic; this includes, for instance, getting access to the medical treatments guaranteed by one's health card (whose length is tied to the residence permit⁴) or to the social rights that require a valid ID card, certifying ones' municipal registration (municipal registration should also be renewed every time one's residence permit expires).

At the moment, I'm without a valid residence permit. I only have the receipt [the postal receipt obtained when the request for a residence permit issuance or renewal is put forward, n.d.a.] but with the receipt, I can't ask for bonuses because, e.g., I know that my municipality issues bonuses to mothers with kids, but you need to have your [...] how is it called? A valid residence permit, but also the ID residence card. (Luisa, Peru, expired family reunification permit)

I know there's some kind of public relief support. I saw that there's a notice, but they want ISEE. But I don't have the ISEE since I don't have a valid ID residence card. (Adu, Ghana, short-term permit)

As the case of Adu clearly shows, the lack of ISEE (Indicatore della situazione economica equivalente, that is, *equivalent economic status indicator*) hampers access to means-tested benefits. As several migrants work in the shadow economy with no contract or official documentation as a consequence of their undocumented or legally-precarious status, the exclusion from *ordinary* employment-based allowances (such as Naspi or Cassa Integrazione – *unemployment benefit*) or those extraordinarily introduced as a response to the COVID-19 emergency (the so-called *ris-tori*) is also an issue of concern.

4 While in Italy undocumented migrants have access to urgent healthcare provisions, they might be asked to pay for non-urgent treatments.

I heard that the state is providing help to those who are self-employed, but those are people with a work contract that are not working [because of the pandemic]. Those working in industries have entered the *cassa integrazione*, then there'll be those people who work in the shadow market. They can't receive any salary; the state is not helping those who are more in need. In my opinion [...] Italians would complain so much, as they don't agree with helping informal workers. (Pablo, Peru, short-term permit)

The suspension (or *virtualization*) of many face-to-face public administration activities during the pandemic has also contributed to an abrupt increase in the relevance of digital services, websites, and platforms (e.g., electronic medical prescriptions, online applications for unemployment benefits or subsidies, etc.) to obtain information and/or to submit applications. According to some interviewees, this has further complicated welfare access.

We had some problems with the health card because, since it's tied to the expired residence permit, and when we went to the doctor for a prescription, there was a conflict with the system, so we couldn't get it. [...] My wife is also trying to apply for the unemployment benefit, but we can't submit the application through the INPS website; the system doesn't accept her application, as her residence permit has expired. (Alejandro, Colombia, family reunification permit holder)

Regardless of one's legal status, knowledge of *how the system works* is also important. Interviewees show a relevant degree of uncertainty regarding the newly introduced COVID-related support packages – that is, which kind of benefits have been introduced, to which categories they are entitled, how to apply, and to whom they should go for information and support. While new forms of support were introduced, as documented in section two, institutional and bureaucratic barriers have increasingly limited migrants' concrete access to these welfare support packages. Here, those with limited knowledge of the language and/or institutional context (let alone digital means of connection and competences) were those who were most seriously affected.

I don't know where to turn to for receiving support. I heard that there could be some help from the state, some bonuses, but I don't know much about it. (Diego, Peru, naturalized citizen)

Yes, I've heard about it, but I don't know if we, as migrants, can apply. The only help I know there is, e.g., Caritas that offers food or our neighborhood church that is active in providing food every fortnight to the neediest families. (Saadia, El Salvador, asylum-seeker)

As shown by the words of Saadia, the institutional barriers to public support are somehow compensated by caritative support provided by non-state actors, including both well-established, religious-affiliated institutions (such as Caritas or churches) and newly-established informal solidarity groups that have increasingly provided relief in many cities, as a response to the growing situation of crisis, somehow de-bureaucratizing public support.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We documented how temporal and precarious legal conditions embedded in the Italian migration system have interacted with the COVID-19 crisis especially affecting migrants with temporary and undocumented status. In particular, the study showed that legal precariousness is deeply rooted in – and constantly reproduced by – the Italian immigration system, treating migrants as a temporary phenomenon and making long-term and secure status especially difficult to achieve and maintain.

For those unable to renew their status, the pandemic has triggered a prolonged suspension of one's legal status, with significant spill-over effects on several aspects of one's personal and familial life.

The *suspended legality* has jeopardized family reunification projects as well as naturalization and access to long-term residency. The curtailed opportunities for cross-border mobility have also represented a major source of anxiety to those migrants that have suddenly found themselves spatially *trapped* and unable to respond to a possible transnational family crisis. While for some asylum seekers, this *suspension* might have provided more time to strategize and/or to wait for a more favorable window of opportunity, for most legally precarious migrants, the possible effects of the recent pandemic meant an indefinitely prolonged risky uncertainty. The fear is that of possibly relapsing into undocumented status due to the worsening economic scenario as it is tied to one's employment status or that of nullifying one's efforts to achieve greater legal stability or to start over from the very beginning.

The pandemic has also made access to healthcare and financial relief more urgent; however, access to state-provided resources might be seriously jeopardized by combining legal precariousness and inaccessibility to bureaucratized rights. On the one hand, several migrants were unable to provide the proof they needed to access means-tested benefits; on the other hand, those working informally could not access employment-based measures.

Having a secure legal status, such as citizenship or a long-term permit, does not automatically lead to access to welfare as it is dependent on one's employment and financial condition. While migrants with temporal and precarious status are the worst-hit, those with secure status have also found it difficult to access welfare, including the financial relief support provided by the national, regional, and local governments.

Accessing rights in the time of pandemic is jeopardized by the lack of reliable information. The messages issued during the pandemic were especially difficult to decode for those who had limited knowledge of the national *bureaucratic* language and the local institutional landscape. The *virtualization* of several services made those less equipped with technological skills somehow excluded, also considering that all major *intermediary* services were offering support only by phone or had their services severely curtailed.

The temporal uncertainty that migrants experience stems from the impossibility of obtaining thorough knowledge of current conditions in the host community and the feeling of a highly unpredictable future (Williams, Baláž 2015). Only time will tell what the real extent of the impact of the crisis triggered by the pandemic will be, particularly in terms of relapse into undocumentedness, prolonged precarity, and lost opportunities of individual and familial integration and advancement.

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POVZETEK

MIGRACIJE IN PRAVNA NEGOTOVOST MED PANDEMIJO: KVALITATIVNA ŠTUDIJA ITALIJANSKEGA PRIMERA Paola BONIZZONI, Senyo DOTSEY

Študija raziskuje, kako pravna negotovost, vgrajena v italijansko priseljsko politiko, med pandemijo Covida-19 vpliva na življenje migrantov. Pravni status namreč močno zaznamuje vse vidike njihovega življenja in pomembno vpliva tudi na njihovo integracijo.

Raziskovalca sta s kvalitativno metodo analizirala empirične podatke, zbrane s sedeminštiridesetimi polstrukturiranimi intervjuji (med marcem in junijem 2020) z različnimi skupinami migrantov – z begunci, s prosilci za azil, z ilegalnimi migranti ter s humanitarnimi, ekonomskimi in naturaliziranimi migranti, ki v Italiji živijo od nekaj mesecev do več desetletij.

Pandemija ni povzročila samo zaprtja mednarodnih meja, ampak tudi virtualizacijo administrativnih služb in vladnih agencij, ki obravnavajo prošnje in izdajajo dovoljenja za bivanje in delo oziroma se ukvarjajo s postopki naturalizacije tujih državljanov. Učinki dolgotrajne negotovosti, liminalnosti in čakanja pomembno vplivajo na udeležbo migrantov v socioekonomskih dejavnostih.

Ugotovitve študije kažejo, da omenjeni procesi negativno vplivajo na življenja migrantov in ogrožajo združevanje družin, naturalizacijo, dostop do dovoljenj za neomejen čas bivanja in socialnega skrbstva ter večje socialne stabilnosti. Vse to otežuje načrtovanje novih migracijskih postopkov oziroma celo njihovo regresijo.

Avtorja ugotavljata, da je pravna negotovost v italijanski priseljski politiki globoko zakoreninjena in migrante obravnavani kot začasni pojav, kar onemogoča pridobitev in vzdrževanje dolgoročnega in varnega pravnega statusa. V Italiji so tudi legalni migranti v nevarnosti, da zdrsnejo v ilegalno – njihov legalni status je namreč povezan z zaposlitvijo, ki pa je zaradi slabšanja gospodarskih razmer vedno bolj ogrožena. Pravna negotovost negativno vpliva tudi na druga področja življenja migrantov.

Pandemija je otežila tako dostop do zdravstvenih storitev kot do paketov denarne pomoči; dostop do sredstev, ki jih zagotavlja država, je odvisen od kombinacije pravne negotovosti in nedostopnosti birokratiziranih pravic. V Italiji je uveljavljanje pravic med pandemijo ogroženo predvsem zaradi pomanjkanja verodostojnih informacij in virtualizacije številnih služb.

Čeprav so najbolj na udaru migranti z začasnim oziroma negotovim pravnim statusom, je dostop do različnih pravic tako na državni, pokrajinski in lokalni ravni otežen tudi migrantom z urejenim pravnim statusom.

Čeprav razsežnosti vpliva pandemije še niso natančno ocenjene, ugotovitve študije kažejo, da so različne skupine migrantov izpostavljene dolgotrajni pravni negotovosti, kar vpliva na druge vidike njihovih življenj, vključno s socioekonomsko vključenostjo.

ITALIAN RECEPTION POLICIES AND PANDEMIC: FROM EXCLUSION TO ABANDONMENT

Davide FILIPPI^I, Luca GILIBERTI^{II}

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ABSTRACT

Italian Reception Policies and Pandemic: From Exclusion to Abandonment

The article analyzes how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the management of reception centers for refugees and asylum seekers in Italy. By analyzing the transformation of Italian reception policies in the last years, the article shows the relationship between these changes and the condition of refugees and asylum seekers in these centers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Overcrowded housing, the absence of institutional guidance on managing the situation, and the interruption of many migrants' migratory projects are the main findings that emerged. The article is based on digital ethnographic techniques, in addition to phone interviews with key speakers of the social contexts monitored online.

KEYWORDS: asylum seekers, refugees, reception system, COVID-19 pandemic, Italy

IZVLEČEK

Italijanske politike sprejemanja in pandemija: Od izključenosti do zapuščenosti

Članek obravnava vpliv pandemije Covida-19 na upravljanje sprejemnih centrov za begunce in prosilce za azil v Italiji. Na podlagi analize sprememb v politiki sprejemanja v zadnjih letih prikazuje, kako so te v omenjenih centrih med pandemijo vplivale na življenjske razmere beguncev in prosilcev za azil. Rezultati analize poudarjajo predvsem prenatrpane nastanitvene zmogljivosti, odsotnost institucionalnih smernic za obvladovanje položaja, pa tudi prekinitev selitvenih načrtov številnih migrantov. Članek temelji na digitalnih etnografskih tehnikah in telefonskih intervjujih s ključnimi govorniki družbenih kontekstov, ki se spremljajo na spletu.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: prosilci za azil, begunci, sistem sprejemanja, pandemija Covida-19, Italija

^I PhD in sociology, research fellow, Disfor, Dipartimento di Scienze della Formazione, Genoa University, Corso Andrea Podestà 2, 16121 Genova; filippidavide09@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4155-470X>.

^{II} PhD in sociology, research fellow, Disfor, Dipartimento di Scienze della Formazione, Genoa University, Corso Andrea Podestà 2, 16121 Genova; lucagiliberti@hotmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8413-1109>.

INTRODUCTION¹

This article aims to provide a snapshot of what happened in Italian reception centers during the confinement imposed due to the emergence and development of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic exists within a social framework which in itself is already complex and constantly evolving. To describe this framework, this article initially focuses on the main changes implemented through the approval of the Legislative Decree 113/2018 (“Salvini Decree”).² In this analysis, the first Salvini Decree is a legislative step that constituted a paradigm shift in Italy’s international protection and reception system. From this perspective, we will analyze dynamics in Italian reception centers within the context of the lockdown, which is when some of the contradictions in the government’s reception policy emerged more visibly (Carwley 2021: 81).

The context of this article is the first wave of the pandemic (end of February–beginning of May 2020), which corresponds to Italy’s first national lockdown. It is worth highlighting that the empirical research was conducted while the authors complied with confinement guidelines; this impacted the adoption of specific research tools and methodologies. More specifically, the empirical material gathered relies on intensive local, national, and international newspaper and document-based research, in addition to digital ethnographic techniques, such as the analysis of the blogs and Facebook pages involved in processes of migrant welfare and protection. We also conducted twenty phone interviews with key informants of the social contexts we monitored online. More specifically, we connected with social workers employed in some reception centers in several Italian cities such as Rome, Genoa, and Padua, and members of associations working for the rights of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, such as “LasciateCIEntrare,” “Melting Pot,” and “ASGI” (*Associazione per gli Studi Giuridici sull’Immigrazione*).

1 This article is a product of the PRIN project entitled “De-bordering activities and bottom-up citizenship of asylum seekers in Italy: Policies, Practices, and People (ASIT)” (Research Unit of the University of Genoa). For purely academic purposes, sections 1 and 2 can be attributed to Luca Giliberti, while sections 3 and 4 can be attributed to Davide Filippi.

2 During his tenure, the former minister of domestic affairs Matteo Salvini – representative of Lega Nord, a Far Right populist party – issued two decrees, which the media informally called the “Salvini Decrees”. While the first decree focused specifically on reforming the reception system, the second amended the provisions pertaining to the landings of migrants at sea. In the interest of clarity, we will exclusively focus on the former, Legislative Decree 113/2018, which includes amendments pertaining to immigration, international protection, and granting and revoking Italian citizenship. This decree was approved by the Council of Ministers on September 24, 2018.

THE LEGISLATIVE DECREE 113/2018 AND THE ITALIAN RECEPTION SYSTEM BEFORE COVID-19

To reflect on the pandemic and how the subsequent confinement guidelines have impacted the Italian reception system, we must look at the changes to the system in recent years. It is important to begin with the impact of the approval of the Salvini Decree in terms of the overall reconfiguration of reception spaces and types, but also in terms of refugees' and asylum seekers' potential access to international protection in Italy (Algotino 2018: 165–199; Campomori 2018: 429–436; Della Puppa, Gargiulo, Sempredon 2020: 183–199).

First and foremost, Legislative Decree 113/2018 lays out a drastic reduction in the number of resources allocated to reception centers. This decision led to a radical cut in the number of services available in former SPRAR projects (Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees) and at CAS reception centers (Extraordinary Reception Center) and aimed at integrating asylum seekers and refugees; these include Italian language lessons, legal consultation, cultural mediation, and professional courses for job seekers (Accorinti, Spinelli 2019: 103–120). Consequently, CASs have inevitably become centers in which the lives of the people welcomed there are put on hold as they wait for the results of their asylum petitions. The allocation of funds set forth by the Salvini Decree puts distributed reception solutions at a disadvantage; it cuts financing for centers that had organized the presence of asylum seekers in individual housing solutions. At the same time, it encourages the presence of more centers with large concentrations of migrants (ActionAid-Open-Polis 2019).

The new tenders for the identification of reception centres, responding to the logic of the evaluation of economic criteria and not of the planning ones, are driving away managing authorities that have acquired skills, leaving the field to heterogeneous economic operators who do not always conceive the context of reception as an area of protection and development of the personal autonomy of asylum applicants. By removing the services provided in the reception centers, the ministerial economic commitment is also reduced. It passes from a national average of the previous call of 35/32 euros as a daily contribution per single guest, including all goods and services provided, to 23/21 euros, with the recognition of only 3.90 euros per day for the rental of facilities and utilities. By removing the pocket money paid to guests of 2.50 euros, a recent study published by Oxfam and InMigrazione (2019) points out that in the invitation to tender of the prefecture of Rome, the decrease in costs for services is about 5 euros per day in a CAS with 50 places and 6.50 euros per day in collective centers with over 300 places. (Accorinti, Spinelli 2019: 112)

Another particularly relevant element worth mentioning concerning the redefinition of the Italian reception system is the transformation of projects previously called

SPRAR into SIPROIMI (Protection System for Internationally Protected People and Unaccompanied Foreign Minors). In the previous model, the CAS centers, managed by the prefectures, were designed to be the first place that received people who arrived in Italy and requested asylum. The SPRARs, managed by local administrations, were a virtuous model centered on distributed reception and integration, even if this never occurred in full: even before the approval of the Salvini Decree analyzed in this article, 80% of the asylum seekers and refugees lived in a CAS center, and only 20% were in the SPRAR programs (Amnesty International 2020). The switch from the acronym SPRAR to the acronym SIPROIMI is significant. It highlights the main change made by the Salvini Decree: only refugees have the right to access these establishments. At the same time, asylum seekers must live exclusively in CAS centers.

This issue introduces us to the second aspect on which Legislative Decree 113/2018 has had a clear impact, and that is access to the different types of humanitarian protection set forth by the Italian legal system. In this sense, the main change this new legislation introduced is the structural re-sizing of access to humanitarian protection, through which most asylum seekers obtain a residence permit. Humanitarian protection was granted not only to people from areas deemed unsafe by international organizations. In fact, from this perspective:

The residence permit for humanitarian reasons was issued by local authorities, the Questura, after consulting the Territorial Commission for the Recognition of International Protection on the existence of “serious grounds” of humanitarian nature, i.e. health reasons, age, famine, human-induced environmental threats or natural disasters, and political instability, episodes of violence or lack of family strings in the country of origin. (Open Migration 2020).

In other words, humanitarian protection does not only consider the country of origin of the person requesting a residence permit but also their personal background, their level of vulnerability and the situation of risk that they leave behind. The inevitable result of this legislative change has been that a significant number of migrants who up until that point were in possession of a valid residence permit – and who were waiting for the opportunity to convert the residence permit they had obtained through humanitarian protection into a work permit – have been expelled from the Italian reception system (Omizzolo 2019; Della Puppa, Gargiulo, Semprebon 2020: 183–199). As stated by Nazzarena Zorzella, lawyer of Bologna and member of ASGI, in an interview with *La Repubblica*:

People who had already left the administrative-judicial network of international protection found they no longer had the right to keep their permit from one day to the next. In some cases, people who had a job managed to obtain the conversion. People who were registered on employment lists, or had been employed on a short-term contract which was maybe renewed on a day-to-day basis by temporary work

companies, found it hard to renew their residence permit. The objective outcome of the legal amendment was that many people who lived in Italy and had had a valid permit for years no longer had a valid permit. The government, knowing that it could not repatriate these hundreds of thousands of people, thought the best option was to let them lose their validity status. (Facchini 2019)

It is therefore important to highlight that, up until the emergence of the pandemic in Italy, the issue of migration was at the forefront of the political and public debate in Italy. The virus, which took hold quickly and has been defined as a new “total social event” (Sayad 2002), is a variable that has inevitably played a part in shaping, defining, and transforming global societies both specifically and collectively (Corliano 2020: 227–246). In this sense, it has radically shifted the focus away from migrant issues and accentuated vulnerability that affects refugees and asylum seekers residing in the Italian reception centers practically invisible.³

THE CONTRADICTIONS OF THE ITALIAN RECEPTION SYSTEM DURING AND BEYOND THE PANDEMIC

As indicated in the previous point, the Italian reception system was under extreme pressure already before the outbreak and development of the pandemic. The so-called Salvini Decree played a crucial role in radicalizing the conditions of vulnerability which, in structural terms, impacted the life experiences of the asylum seekers and refugees taken in by the humanitarian protection system. There are multiple, complex issues pertaining to this topic. In this article, we will primarily concentrate those pertaining to the concentration of people in large centers in relation to the different types of distributed reception solutions available and the protection of public safety and people in different types of establishments. From this perspective, and in the words of the people we connected with, there appears to be a radical difference between the organizational practices in spaces connected to the concept of distributed reception and the medium and large CAS centers. As we previously stated, the Salvini Decree favors larger centers rather than the smaller distributed reception housing solutions. Some of the criticism aimed at the reception system reform emerges clearly in the context of the pandemic. It appears to be validated by the testimonies gathered while conducting this empirical research.

The group of key players we interacted with state that, within the context of the pandemic, people who are still in the reception network are significantly less vulnerable than people who are excluded or who have been excluded. However, even among people who to this day appear to be taken in by the Italian reception system,

3 Meanwhile, when our research was over, the government in Italy changed and the law was partially revised. See Della Puppa, Sanò 2020.

according to workers and representatives of rights advocacy groups and third sector associations we interacted with, there is a substantial difference between those integrated into a system aimed at distributed reception and those living in medium and large CAS centers. To this point, a worker of a Genoa-based cooperative who manages four apartments which each house six refugees and asylum seekers, tells us about a series of procedures adopted in this context.

Look, over the past few weeks, I've realized how important it was for us to have insisted on distributed reception. I've been speaking to my colleagues over the last few days, and we've been asking each other how things are going in the bigger centers. To be honest, we're all a little concerned. We're basically saying to one another, "Thank God they believed us! They tell me it's crazy in other places." (Marco, 35 years, social worker from Genoa)⁴

According to this worker, distributed reception made it possible to start a process of awareness-raising about the COVID-19 risks and preventative practices; thanks to the smaller set-up, residents and workers had developed a relationship of trust. In this case, the cooperative provided the PPE (Individual Protection Equipment), sanitizing products, and brochures in multiple languages outlining the medical and health regulations to follow during the lockdown. Although the cooperatives advised on reducing visits to different houses, the workers and resident migrants organized themselves by creating a specific WhatsApp group for each house. In these groups, they shared updates relating to the health conditions of each resident in each house to monitor and, if necessary, intervene if somebody was experiencing symptoms that, according to protocol, indicated a high probability of contagion. Thanks to these groups, the migrants could also constantly ask the workers questions and advice. What transpired was that, unlike in medium and large CAS centers, in the distributed reception network, it is possible to establish a series of good practices which, on the one hand, ensure the protection of public health, the health of migrants and the workers themselves, and on the other, define more horizontal practices that the service providers (the workers) and the service receivers (the migrants) share and appear to be more reciprocally sustainable.

While the example we have put forward refers specifically to distributed reception, two questions emerge in transversal terms in the words of all the people we reached out to during the research. First of all, all workers state that the pandemic awareness-raising and prevention practices occurred in procedural terms. The reasons provided to explain this dynamic are very much in line with one another. A recurring element in the stories of our interlocutors is the fact that refugees and asylum seekers initially perceived the pandemic to be the umpteenth direct attack

4 The names of the people mentioned and interviewed have been changed to protect their identity.

on them. In a political and social context that over the last few years has represented migrants as some sort of threat or as profiteers and in a climate of growing racism that repeatedly escalates into episodes of violence toward refugees and asylum seekers (Lunaria 2020), the workers and welfare activists tell us that migrants initially perceived the imposition of the confinement as yet another legislative maneuver aimed at limiting their freedom and rights. As one of the social workers told us:

In the first frantic moments of the pandemic, it was difficult to keep the guys at home. They told me they were really fed up with racism and all the laws against them. When I tried to explain that the curfew concerned everyone, they didn't believe me, and they went out anyway, but I couldn't lock them in the house. Then, step by step, with the translated flyers and especially when they began to see that no one was walking on the streets anymore, they understood what was happening. (Giovanni, 27 years old, a social worker from Rome)

Furthermore, many workers and representatives of welfare associations we contacted agreed that the migratory experience that sets migrants apart from all other people has deeply transformed their relationship with diseases and death. This situation probably led to the initial distrust felt by asylum applicants residing in the reception centers regarding the containment measures implemented by the government. The words of a member of one of the associations we interacted with poignantly validate this point:

As you know, these are people who have crossed the desert on foot. Sometimes, they've been captured and made slaves in Libya, even for years. Or maybe they've tried to reach Europe ten times on a vessel in the Mediterranean, with the risk of drowning every single time. When they get here, they then must deal with the violence of racism that permeates our country. As far as they are concerned, death and disease are an engrained reflection of their existence; it's something that has accompanied them throughout their lives, maybe for years, maybe since they were born. (Luisa, 47 years old, *LasciateCIEntrare*)

Regarding the second issue, the stories gathered speak of the fear that migrants have that their migratory project may fall through. This sentiment is expressed from several perspectives: some are in continuity with the structural dynamics which characterize the global migratory process; others are localized and specific to the context of the pandemic. From the first perspective, the feeling of suspended time and unawareness of what the future may hold emerges in the literature as a feature of contemporary migrations (Mezzadra, Nielson 2013; Queirolo Palmas, Rahola 2020). However, when we conducted the research for this article, the uncertainty for the future seemed even more pressing given the regulatory changes that have occurred in rapid succession. One element which an ever-increasing number of people

see, to some extent, as an integral part of the migratory experience is the important role of sending money to their families back home (Bonciani 2018).

As is well-documented (Ambrosini 2008; 2017), one aspect of a successful migratory project is the migrant's ability to send money to the family they have left behind in their country of origin. People taken in by the Italian reception system are given housing and food; they make the money that they send to their families primarily by participating in the informal economy and through illegal work. During the lockdown, due to the closure of all commercial activities and the prohibition to circulate in public spaces (which is where the informal economy and illegal work markets typically thrive), the ability for migrants to accumulate money to send to their countries of origin was made impossible. The impossibility of knowing what the future holds or sending money home questions a migrant's current and future perception of a winning migratory project. This condition, among the other elements shared in this article, has generated tension among the people who are involved in the Italian reception system.

One of the most complex issues that the people interviewed mentioned is that it was physically impossible in medium and large CAS centers to respect the confinement measures (Ullah et al. 2020). In this sense, the absence of specific institutional guidelines that considered the housing conditions in these centers led to a general lack of interest on behalf of the cooperatives and institutions. In medium and large CAS centers, cooperatives impeded their workers from coming into contact with migrants. They invited them to leave the shopping bags or pre-cooked meals at the CAS entrance, thus creating much stricter isolation than was imposed on the rest of the Italian population. In some cases, for example, the one defined by Verona Prefecture, CAS migrants were explicitly prohibited from leaving their housing even in "cases of necessity," which was one of the few cases in which the rest of the population was allowed to ignore the confinement guidelines set by governmental protocols (Melting Pot 2020).

This stricter isolation frequently led to many resident migrants and workers in these centers being put at risk from a medical perspective; what's more, the potential consequences that this abandonment could have led to in terms of spreading the virus even more were ignored. To this point, a member of an association dedicated to migrant reception on a national level gave a statement denouncing an incident that occurred in a medium CAS center of the province of Milan. There was a potential COVID case in the house, and the impossibility of applying isolation protocols due to the number of people living in the housing unit put the health of all the young people who lived there at serious risk. According to Giovanna, this specific situation can be taken as a general example, as it is also occurring in other CAS centers:

The other day, a male asylum seeker from Mali who lives in a medium-sized CAS called me and told me some shocking things, which, from what we have gathered, are happening in many places. Basically, he lives in a small villa with nineteen other

guys. There are four rooms, five of them share each room, and there's only one bathroom. Last week, one of them started to have a high temperature; so, all of them freaked out and started to worry and repeatedly call the co-op. They were simply advised to stay home and try to keep their distance from the guy. In other words, the co-op simply isolated a suspected COVID-19 case with another nineteen people in a small house with one bathroom, paying no attention whatsoever to this potentially sick guy's life or the lives and well-being of everyone else. This guy's condition deteriorated, and a doctor finally saw him: it turns out he did have COVID-19 and was admitted to hospital. And the others? No one stepped in to help them; they were just repeatedly advised to "stay home" ... let's see if anyone else in the group falls ill over the next few days. (Giovanna, 47 years old, Melting Pot)

A second statement, provided by the president of a community of migrants in Padua, also indicates that the guidelines were impossible to implement, especially in medium and large CAS centers. However, the president further pointed out that, after the Salvini Decree, many asylum seekers become "of no fixed abode," and it is not uncommon for them to be hosted in the centers unbeknownst to cooperatives thus increasing the risk of potential new contagions.

Basically, our migrants are very young, and initially, they didn't believe everything they heard regarding the virus. In Bagnoli, more than twenty of them live in a house with only one bathroom. In the beginning, out of decency toward others and basic human rights, they welcomed other migrants who had sadly lost their right to live there. But when a guy from another country got sick, they got scared and angry both at the cooperative and at one another, and they stopped letting people in. We don't know if this guy actually had COVID-19 because he wasn't seen by a doctor. The problem is that these young people do go out a little, so if he had the virus, it's a big problem. (Victor, 33 years old, president of a migrant community in Padua)

These two examples are representative of some of the dynamics which are occurring in most medium and large CAS centers in the country. They should give public institutions food for thought in terms of the current emergency, the types of prevention that need to be applied swiftly, and the need to design and create types of reception that can increase the rights and self-determination of those who use them.

CONCLUSIONS

This article has analyzed the impact of the pandemic on the Italian reception network. The opportunity to gather stories from workers in this field and key players connected to migrant welfare activism has allowed us to understand better the different realities that became visible during Italy's first lockdown.

In this article, we focused on how the effects of the pandemic are inserted in a social and political scenario that was already fraught in itself due to the approval of Legislative Decree 113/2018. The substantial abolition of the residence permit for humanitarian protection together with the dismantling of the distributed reception system – mainly the result of the radical cut to cooperative financing which placed migrants in smaller capacity establishments and small-sized housing units – were the two elements which, already before the COVID-19 outbreak, appeared to be highly problematic for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers.

With the pandemic, this situation got much worse. What has emerged from the statements we gathered is the impossibility of enforcing distancing guidelines in medium and large centers due to overcrowded housing. To this end, our exchange with workers who continue to be involved in distributed reception projects tells us that, within the context of the pandemic, distributed reception appears to be a good choice that reconciles the rights to health of migrants and workers and enables migrants and workers to the necessary confinement guidelines issued over the past few months. Secondly, the stories of our interlocutors paint a picture of the vicious circle caused by the absence of clear institutional guidance on how to manage confinement in the CAS centers and a certain lack of interest on behalf of many cooperatives toward the people already housed in their facilities. Lastly, the indefinite suspension of the migration projects of thousands of people who live in Italy has led to a sense of frustration amongst migrants, whose future is at stake due to the pandemic, and even more poignantly, due to the confinement measures.

Our analysis encourages us to reflect upon two points. The first reflection is that the pandemic, as a new “total social event,” adds another layer of complexity to the Italian reception system, which was already under duress due to the Salvini Decree that introduced changes that did not benefit refugees and asylum seekers. The second reflection is that the pandemic has amplified and brought to the fore those pre-existing dynamics of marginalization and exclusion, which often feature in the stories of migrants who enter the Italian reception system (Goldin, Muggah 2020).

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POVZETEK

ITALIJANSKE POLITIKE SPREJEMANJA IN PANDEMIJA: OD IZKLJUČENOSTI DO ZAPUŠČENOSTI

Davide FILIPPI, Luca GILIBERTI

Članek obravnava vpliv pandemije Covida-19 na upravljanje sprejemnih centrov za begunce in prosilce za azil v Italiji. V uvodu se osredotoča na poglobljene spremembe v italijanskem sistemu sprejemanja, ki so se v zadnjih letih uresničevale predvsem na podlagi Zakonodajnega odloka št. 113/2018. Prvič: odlok močno zmanjšuje obseg finančnih sredstev za sprejemne centre; predvsem zmanjšuje sredstva za individualne nastanitve prosilcev za azil, obenem pa spodbuja ustanavljanje centrov z velikim številom migrantov. Drugič: glavna sprememba, ki jo prinaša nova zakonodaja, je strukturno spremenjen dostop do »humanitarne zaščite«, po prejšnjem je bila večina prosilcev za azil upravičena do dovoljenja za bivanje. Ta zakonodajna sprememba za tisoče migrantov pomeni izgon iz italijanskega sistema sprejemanja. Glede na nastali položaj sta se avtorja osredotočila na družbene in politične učinke pandemije, ki so bili zaradi sprejetja nove zakonodaje že tako ali tako zaostrene. Odločilna sprememba v politiki sprejemanja je bila za begunce in prosilce za azil problematična že pred izbruhom pandemije.

S pandemijo se je položaj še poslabšal. Empirična analiza je pokazala, da je v srednje velikih in večjih centrih zaradi prenatrpanosti nemogoče vzdrževati varnostno razdaljo. Članek pojasnjuje tudi začarani krog, ki je nastal zaradi odsotnosti jasno začrtanih institucionalnih smernic za upravljanje omejevanja gibanja v t. i. sprejemnih centrih v izrednih razmerah, kakor tudi zaradi pomanjkanja podpore oziroma zanimanja za njihove prebivalce s strani številnih zunanjih sodelavcev. Nenehno odlaganje selitvenih načrtov v oddaljeno prihodnost migrante frustrira, njihova življenja so zaradi pandemije in omejitve gibanja resno ogrožena. Empirično gradivo za študijo sta avtorja zbrala s poglobljenim proučevanjem lokalnega, nacionalnega in mednarodnega časopisja ter z digitalnimi etnografskimi tehnikami.

OLD RHETORIC AND NEW DEVICES: QUARANTINE SHIPS AS AN INSTRUMENT OF EXTERNALIZATION

Stefania SPADA¹

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ABSTRACT

Old Rhetoric and New Devices: Quarantine Ships as an Instrument of Externalization

The article aims to illustrate and explore the rhetoric and institutional approach toward migrants – asylum seekers in particular – undertaken by Italy following the COVID-19 crisis. Through the account of the different “narrative phases” and the consequent institutional action undertaken, this article intends to demonstrate how the health crisis has sharpened and even intensified pre-existing attitudes and practices. The actions taken in the last year can be understood as a further step in the process of externalizing the borders. Through the instrumental use of rhetoric and illegitimate practices, a sort of de-territorialization has been implemented through the use of quarantine ships.

KEYWORDS: asylum seekers, COVID-19, quarantine ships, rhetoric, externalization

IZVLEČEK

Stara retorika in nova sredstva: Karantenske ladje kot sredstvo eksternalizacije

Članek ilustrira in analizira verbalni in institucionalni pristop Italije do migrantov, še zlasti prosilcev za azil, med pandemijo covid-19. Z opisi različnih »vsebinskih faz« in posledičnih institucionalnih dejavnosti prikazuje, kako je zdravstvena kriza zaostрила in celo okreplila že obstoječe pristope in prakse. Aktivnosti prejšnjega leta lahko razumemo kot nadaljnji korak v procesu eksternalizacije meja. Država je z instrumentalizacijo verbalnih in nezakonitih praks izvedla nekakšno deteritorializacijo, ki temelji na uporabi karantenskih ladij.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: prosilci za azil, covid-19, karantenske ladje, retorika, eksternalizacija

¹ PhD in law with double disciplinary recognition, BA and specialization in anthropology; research fellow, Department of Legal Sciences CIRSFID (Centro di Ricerca in Storia del Diritto, Filosofia e Sociologia del Diritto e Informatica Giuridica), Via Galliera 3, 40121 Bologna, Italy; s.spada@unibo.it, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1128-868X>.

BETWEEN FACTS AND RHETORIC, OR READY-MADE SCAPEGOATS¹

Phase 0

In late January and early February 2020, official communication about the 2019 novel coronavirus was guided by underestimating what later became a global health emergency. This behavior was a typical example of Salgari syndrome,² a rhetorical device that frames infectious diseases as exotic imports. So, it was the case that the virus had struck China and institutional narratives presented it as a problem exclusively limited to that territory – and to those living within its boundaries (as if a virus ever took notice of a passport). On January 30, 2020, the first official communication on this matter issued by Italian prime minister Conte and health minister Speranza acknowledged the first two cases of coronavirus, a couple of Chinese tourists who were put into confinement as a result. On that occasion, the government reassured that all flights to and from China had been suspended,³ a preventative action that reinforced the notion of a Chinese *affaire*, something purely circumscribed to that region of the world. Such declarations were accompanied by promising words regarding the future so as not to cause unnecessary alarm. Apart from the issues deriving from this type of misinformation which directly impacted the quicker spread of the virus, it is worth remembering how this way of framing had severe and lasting effects on a pragmatic level, too. Some Chinese people – or at least people who “looked” Chinese – became victims of targeted attacks that often ended up in fully-fledged lynching, and a few business locations were vandalized in the process. The imaginary construct of a Chinese “spreader of the plague” – unctor – was entirely shattered on February 21, 2020, when news broke out that the “patient zero” was an Italian citizen from Codogno. And yet, one year on, the concept of a Chinese disease remains part of the popular discourse.

Phase 1

In the weeks that followed, broadcast news solely focused on the seemingly uncontrollable spread of the disease, quickly forgetting what had happened during

1 The reflections presented in this article derive from long-term ethnographic research aimed at understanding how imaginaries, stereotypes, and prejudice lead to exclusionary differential treatment for migrants. The analysis was based on a daily ethnography of institutional narratives, media communication, and how they are perceived by common discourse and circulated through social media. The analysis also included documents and dossiers published in recent months on the specific phenomenon.

2 According to this assumption, the migrant person is said to be a carrier of rare and exotic diseases, especially infectious ones, although the data collected never supported this belief; see Geraci (2006).

3 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tKiwp1u780g> (26 Dec. 2020).

January and February – including the anti-Chinese national psychosis. Both institutional and media narratives concentrated on the rising numbers of deaths and contagion and the collapse of the health services, culminating in the lockdown declaration of March 11, 2020. The continuous migration flows into the country, usually at the forefront of every media outlet, suddenly became invisible to the population. From the Salgari syndrome in anti-Chinese Phase 0, there was a swift ideological move toward the so-called “healthy migrant effect,” according to which all migrants are young, strong, and healthy. This imagery, however, was – and still remains – evidently informed by a legacy of colonial ideology,⁴ one that envisions the foreigner as a superhuman endowed with biological superiority – and for this reason (probably) also naturally immune to the virus. Translated into practice, this belief has meant that a whole section of the population was entirely neglected – starting from the 230 new migrants who had landed on Italian shores in the meantime.

Phase 2

At the beginning of April, the migration issue returned to the political debate. On April 6, 2020, thirty-four migrants arrived in Italy by sea. The following day, an interministerial decree was issued by the minister of the interior Lamorgese together with the minister of infrastructure De Micheli, the minister of foreign affairs and international cooperation Di Maio, and the minister of health Speranza, ordering the immediate closure of the ports.⁵ As a follow-up, a civil protection decree was released on April 12, 2020, designating rescue ships as “hotspots” where quarantine for migrants (those at sea as well as those that had already landed) was to be carried out from now on. The management of the entire operation was entrusted to the Italian Red Cross.⁶ It was only after the resumption of landings (even though the numbers were not such as to justify the actions taken by the government⁷) that the idea of the “spreader of the plague” resurfaced in popular discourse. The notion of the invulnerable migrant immediately took a back seat in favor of the stigmatized imagery of a foreigner carrier of diseases, which is obviously more pervasive because it is ancient.⁸ The health risk

4 The alleged physical superiority and resilience of foreigners was one of the main reasons adopted by slavers to justify the employment of African Americans in the cotton fields.

5 Decree no. 150, 7 April 2020, https://www.immigrazione.biz/upload/decreto_interministeriale_n_150_del_07-04-2020.pdf (26 Dec. 2020).

6 Decree of the Head of the Civil Protection Department no. 1287/2020, <https://www.protezionecivile.gov.it/amministrazione-trasparente/provvedimenti/-/content-view/view/1250434> (26 Dec. 2020).

7 As Stege (2020) points out, the circular of April 7, 2020, was issued to prevent the Alan Kurdi from docking, even though all the people rescued tested negative, <https://www.migrantes.it/wp-content/uploads/sites/50/2020/11/DirittodAsilo2020-23-11.pdf> (26 Dec. 2020).

8 For example, see the headline in *Il Giornale* of November 17, 1994, “Leprosy unloads in Sicily,” very similar to the headline in *Liberò* of June 25, 2020, “Importing the virus. 28 infected refugees unloaded in Sicily.”

posed by migrants who landed in our country has always been part of the national ideology, one that condensed military metaphors and stigmatization processes referring to “the contaminating invasion” (Sontag 1989: 38). Quite illustrational in this sense is minister Lamorgese’s explanation of the establishment of quarantine ships.⁹

This decision was taken to guarantee the safety of our local communities, *who were understandably worried* as we are facing a pandemic [...] the quarantine ships are deployed to confine the migrants arriving on our territory for 14 days to *protect the local communities*. A call for tenders was made by civil protection. *There will be costs, of course – maybe more than usual –, but there would have been costs regardless*, even if the migrants had been relocated to a center on land. This, however, ensures more structure and, therefore, a greater sense of security. As I am not a politician, I am merely concerned *with the safety of the country* here.¹⁰ (Emphasis mine)

Phase 3

The institutional narrative of quarantine ships as the most appropriate space for health checks and, consequently, for proper treatment imploded in the autumn with the death of two unaccompanied minors. Seventeen-year-old Abdellah Said died on September 14, 2020, in the local hospital in Catania, and shortly after, seventeen-year-old Abou Diakite passed away in Palermo on October 5.

These two young people did not “die because of COVID-19” but because of the medical complications that ensued after their prolonged imprisonment in Libya and subsequent journey at sea that had been overlooked as a result of the quarantine arrangements. It should be noted that only after these tragic events did the Ministry of the Interior allow minors to be quarantined on land. The narrative of ships as the safest solution – both for communities and for the people confined in them – was contradictory from the substantive view of protecting the right to health.¹¹ In addition to the two cases mentioned above, it must be borne in mind that during this time, there had been self-harming¹² and escape attempts reported on the ships,

9 Brant’s fifteenth-century story of the ship of fools recalls our contemporary account and parallels can be seen in the way the floating vessel becomes a distancing device that exempts the authority from its obligation of caring for the disadvantaged population.

10 <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/ministro-lamorgese-sulle-navi-quarantena-sorveglianza-sanitaria-dei-migranti> (13 Jan. 2021).

11 In December 2020, a dossier was produced on the critical aspects of the quarantine vessels and at the same time a collection of signatures was started for their decommissioning, https://www.meltingpot.org/IMG/pdf/criticita_del_sistema_navi-quarantena_per_personale_migranti_analisi_e_richieste.pdf (15 Jan. 2021).

12 On October 31, 2020, there are reports of people being detained in ships who have swallowed razor blades: <https://tg24.sky.it/palermo/2020/10/31/migranti-sicilia> (25 Jan. 2021).

some leading to unfortunate outcomes,¹³ without forgetting the studies that have established the highest risk of developing an epidemic in such confined spaces.¹⁴

Considering all these aspects, the symbolic function of the detention on ships with a bi-directional message is clear: one directed to citizens concerning the ability to pre-emptively remove people seeking international protection because they are perceived as dangerous according to the logic of the “plague spreader”; the other directed to migrants in the sense of deterring migration itself.

Phase 4

Between the end of 2020 and the beginning of the new year, all the attention shifted to the vaccination plan. At the time of writing (February 2021), the quarantine ships are still active and seemingly implementing the same practices as before. However, emergency measures that derogate from the right to liberty, and even before that, the right to health, should not be unlimited in time. The current phase shows a narrative trend similar to that of Phase 1 combined with that of Phase 3, namely a functional forgetfulness – accompanied by an exacerbation of the anxieties connected to the possible danger brought by the people disembarking.¹⁵ This functional forgetfulness on vaccines, however, deserves careful restitution, as it is fundamental to understanding the institutional logic in terms of prevention and safety, and at the same time the plasticity, the cogency of the gap between deserving and expendable.

On December 2, 2020, health minister Speranza illustrated the guidelines of the vaccination plan to the chambers, declaring that “the purchase of the vaccine is centralized and administered for free to all Italians. [...] The vaccine is a common good, a right that must be ensured for all people: women, men, regardless of their income and the area in which they live or work. No unequal treatment will be admissible in the vaccination campaign.”¹⁶ The minister’s statement appeared to be totally in line with the double principle in Article 32 of the Constitution, which grants protection of the individual (without any discrimination) and the community. In this sense, it is safe to assume that the provisions regarding vaccination will concern all people residing in the national territory, regardless of citizenship or legal status (although

13 Bilal, a twenty-two-year-old Tunisian, died on May 6, 2020, when he jumped from the deck of the *Moby Zazà* to swim to Porto Empedocle.

14 The case of the *Diamond Princess* analyzed by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention is emblematic, https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6912e3.htm?s_cid=mm6912e3_w (10 Feb. 2021).

15 This notion has returned to center stage in recent days in relation to the case of the *Ocean Viking*, which rescued 422 people. In fact, the media immediately highlighted the figure of eight positive cases on board. For information on this situation: <https://www.agi.it/cronaca/news/2021-02-07/migranti-augusta-ocean-viking-11312614/> (15 Feb. 2021).

16 http://www.salute.gov.it/portale/news/p3_2_1_1_1.jsp?lingua=italiano&menu=notizie&p=dalministero&id=5202 (18 Dec. 2020).

the minister spoke only of Italians). A few days after this message, the media started reporting that migrants might also be given access to the vaccine.

This fact in itself should not cause surprise: the inclusion of these people in the vaccination plan should be a given (if anything, what is surprising is the need to point it out). On December 6, 2020, the issue was discussed by the special commissioner for the COVID emergency, Arcuri, during an interview with Lucia Annunziata in a program on the state network. The following excerpt is significant in that special attention should be given to the words used by the journalist to talk about the phenomenon:¹⁷

- Annunziata: "Will foreigners living in Italy, whether Americans, Swedes or immigrants, be vaccinated?"

- Arcuri: "All the people who live in Italy will be vaccinated, of course, there are rule and hierarchies – some have been established already, and others are being reviewed currently as minister Speranza announced yesterday to the Parliament –, but everybody will have access according to the order of priorities that have been agreed upon."

- Annunziata: "So the migrants who are in ... in (um), let's say, somewhat uncertain situations and similar, will be the last ones being vaccinated?"

- Arcuri: "The vaccine will be free and not compulsory; this is important – free but not compulsory. We all understand that the higher the number of people living in Italy who will get vaccinated, the quicker we will achieve the so-called herd immunity, and soon we will find a way out of this dark tunnel we have been trapped in."

- Annunziata: "The thing about immigrants though, I'm sorry to insist, is very important. The immigrants who have ... Many immigrants who live here – they have residence permits; they have families, and they have rights."

- Arcuri: "And are therefore considered to have rights equal to those of Italian citizens?"

- Annunziata: "So, for example, we have a very migrant population – I mean migrants who move across regions ... because reception centers were canceled ... and those who are in the reception centers, will they be offered the vaccine? Considering it is a matter of national security."

- Arcuri "It would be very important *and let me say no more, but it would be very important that all the people who cross our roads, and that they do not do it illegally, can be vaccinated. And, of course, it's important to say that they don't do it illegally.*" (Emphasis mine)

Avallone's¹⁸ concerns can therefore be confirmed: the risk is that the vaccination campaign will differentiate between nationals and non-nationals *ab origine*, leading to grave discrimination concerning the fundamental right to health, especially for

17 The interview can be found at <https://vimeo.com/488038222> (18 Dec. 2020).

18 "Il vaccino non è per tutti" Avallone in Effimera, <http://effimera.org/gli-immigrati-e-il-discorso-del-potere-il-vaccino-non-e-per-tutti-di-gennaio-avallone/> (18 Dec. 2020).

people labeled as “illegal immigrants” – with a considerable risk that people seeking international protection will also be included in this category.

Rocca, president of the International Federation of the Red Cross, pointed out on December 18 that migrants – regardless of their legal status – cannot be left behind in the vaccination campaign.¹⁹ The European Union has also spoken out on this, recommending that there should be no discrimination since the migrant population is already at greater risk of infection due to its limited access to health care.²⁰

QUARANTINE SHIPS: A QUESTIONABLE DEVICE

If we consider Article 18 of the Montego Bay Convention, we learn that the prerogative to suspend the right of inoffensive passage can be implemented if the ship represents a danger, providing for the measure of quarantine. But the inter-ministerial circular of April 2020 is based on the opposite assumption, betraying the principles of international law: danger is in the country, on land, and not on the (more than controlled) ships. We are therefore witnessing an improper twisting of the content of the law, which attempts to conceal a systemic inefficiency.²¹ The argument for closing ports and creating quarantine ships is therefore based on comforting (following the old rhetoric) and confusing narratives: the land is no longer a safe place because of the virus, but shifting the blame – and thus the object of the restrictions – to the danger arriving by ship. By shifting the narrative toward the idea of a migrant as a “disease spreader” and leveraging the insecurities of the population sparked by the declaration of national emergency of January 31, 2020, the institutions fabricated a plausible justification for neglecting their obligations – thus leaving those people who had arrived on the Italian territory to fend for themselves in the middle of a global crisis.

The “closed ports” decree, issued without proof of the health risk posed by migrants rescued in the Mediterranean, represents the government’s discrimination and negligence toward its international obligations. The declared danger of those ships was unfounded. Indeed, the only evidence in our possession shows that the poor conditions of detention and repatriation centers cause the spread

19 https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/mondo/europa/2020/12/17/covid-rocca-vaccino-per-i-migranti-e-prioritario_7bff494c-939e-45a9-b65d-4b92ea103eb4.html (26 Dec. 2020).

20 Please refer to the IFRC report “Least Protected, Most Effected,” <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/document/least-protected-affected-migrants-refugees-facing-extraordinary-risks-covid-19-pandemic/> and the dossier issued by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control at <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/covid-19-guidance-prevention-control-migrant-refugee-centres> (18 Feb. 2021).

21 It can be argued that by proposing quarantine ships as a solution to the problem the institution revealed and admitted its own inability to manage the land centers in respect of preventive health measures, thus allowing the deployment of stricter and harsher strategies.

of the disease.²² Dr. Locatelli, president of the National Health Council and a member of the Scientific Technical Committee set up ad hoc to manage the health crisis, confirmed this point in an interview in the *Corriere della Sera* dated August 17, 2020, in which he stated: “Of the many asylum seekers in Italy, no more than 3–5% tested positive, and some of them became infected in reception centers where it is more difficult to maintain adequate health measures.”

Finally, one might consider Lamorgese’s argument that quarantine ships are an efficient (albeit more expensive) solution to the problem of overcrowding in centers to guarantee the necessary distancing. There is, however, a further reflection that deserves to be made on the issue of distancing, as expressed by the minister in terms of greater security for the (Italian) community. If distancing is one of the ways of limiting contagion, at a symbolic level, it implies a sense of responsibility (and therefore closeness) toward the other. I am distancing myself from you for your sake and indirectly also for mine, thus recalling reciprocity. The strategy of delocalized distancing in the middle of the sea, on the other hand, implies a distance dictated by confinement beyond the shared territorial spatiality – canceling that sense of reciprocity and respect imposed on citizens – which can be summarized as follows: stay away for our sake. In this circumstance, the logic of differential physical distancing is proposed once again, that distancing implemented by the policies of externalization of borders; a creation of distance on a physical and symbolic level. Finally, if the pandemic has made it more difficult to monitor and assist the migrants, either detained or received, it has also made it almost impossible to know what was and still is happening inside the ships or centers. It justified rejecting not only unwanted migrants but also those who tried to keep a vigilant eye on inappropriate behavior. This rejection is similar to what happened with the criminalization of humanitarian ships in the Mediterranean, which were primarily opposed because they were troublesome witnesses.

Quarantine ships are thus a product of the unfortunate combination of the hotspot approach²³ with the health crisis. As such, they risk becoming *extra legem* spaces – peculiar because they are disconnected from the land, completely deterritorialized. They are the perfect “camp-form” (Rahola 2006) since they are outside the territory, at sea. Although at the moment, the ships are in a roadstead close to

22 For critical issues in the current reception system, see ActionAid’s report “Il sistema a un bivio” available at the following link: https://www.actionaid.it/app/uploads/2020/11/centri_ditalia_sistema_a_un_bivio.pdf. For an analysis of detention conditions during COVID see: https://cild.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Dossier_MigrantiCovid.pdf; <https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/research-subject-groups/centre-criminology/centreborder-criminologies/blog/2020/11/no-one-looking-us>; https://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/gue_migreurop.pdf (18 Feb. 2021).

23 The so-called hotspot approach stems from the implementation of the 2015 European Agenda. In this *extra legem* space the performative categorical logic – which is based on nationality – started to function *ex ante*, granting or denying the possibility to formulate the request for international protection.

the mainland and therefore primarily within the territorial boundaries of Italian jurisdiction, all the uncertainties regarding who must fulfill the obligations of protection could create a dangerous *vulnus*.

Uncertainties regarding the responsibility of who should do what (The ship's flag state? The state providing safe port? The European Union as the reference entity for the management of the union's external borders?), a vacuum is created that may cause the freezing of rights. If the logic of the last few years has shown an increase of banned treatments by moving further and further south (Cuttitta 2006), the risk is that quarantine ships will be moved further and further away from the mainland. The quarantine ship apparatus – by enhancing exclusion policies and ensuring impunity through the circumvention of obligations – risks creating an alarming precedent for the conceptualization of “floating hotspots.” This is how the health crisis has created the conditions for a not-so-new idea to finally take shape.²⁴

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND FUTURE SCENARIOS

As we have seen in the previous pages, since the beginning of the health crisis, the treatment of migrants, and in particular of those seeking international protection, has been informed by negative assumptions derived from old stigmatizing rhetoric. But there has also been an acceleration, also in terms of intensity, of the state's ability to avoid its obligations to protect fundamental rights, first and foremost the right to health. Migrants, especially those without a valid residence permit or those who have just arrived in the country, suffer a doubly victimizing effect linked to the pandemic: they risk becoming infected more than others, and at the same time, they become more invisible than before, with a consequent limitation, erosion of their right to health.

It is precisely for these reasons that it is necessary to refer to the COVID pandemic – especially when considering non-citizens – in terms of a syndemic,²⁵ since health conditions cannot be assessed merely by taking into account biomedical factors but must be understood within the broader context in which the person is socialized, both in environmental terms (housing and working conditions) and in legal terms (regularity or absence of residence permit) as well as structural terms (institutional discrimination). The pandemic has therefore provided a valid excuse for continuing to maintain an emergency securitarian approach or, rather, tightening it, thus moving

24 The idea of quarantine ships first came to Salvini in 2015 and then to Alfano in 2016. The solution of “floating hotspots” did not displease Europe at all, which was pleased with the proposal as the new device would make it more difficult for detained migrants to escape.

25 With respect to SARS-CoV-19 it would be more appropriate to talk about the old concept originated in medical anthropology of syndemic, as suggested by *Lancet* editor Richard Horton in an article of September 26, 2020, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)32000-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)32000-6/fulltext) (19 Oct. 2020).

away from the standards dictated by the legal systems (national, European, international), and consequently making it more difficult – if not impossible – to enforce fundamental rights. On the contrary, the measures taken to contain the health crisis appear more like a “pretext to reinforce borders and launch mass detention initiatives for asylum seekers.”²⁶ We are therefore witnessing a real spoliation of the disadvantage of applicants for international protection, where they appear expendable because they are not legitimate bearers of rights (Butler, Athanasiou 2013). If the aim of European policies seems to be to create and increase the distance between “us” and “them,” the health measures adopted to contain the health emergency, as I have tried to demonstrate in my contribution, can provide excellent food for thought for reasoning on the lines of continuity between the before and after COVID-19.

If the measures adopted seem to simply re-propose the historically tested policies of externalization and refoulement, it is equally true that it would be necessary to take note of the further shift made in the direction of de-responsibility through the avoidance of legal obligations. We are, therefore, in the presence of a process of invisibility, both symbolic and physical, which is increasingly clever and capable of circumventing the duties of protection. It remains to be seen how long it will take for Italy – and more generally Europe – to acknowledge its own responsibility in this entire situation.

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26 *The Balkan Route, Migrants without rights in the heart of Europe*, June 2020, p. 41, <https://www.balcanicaucaso.org/Media/Files/Dossier-La-rotta-balcanica.-I-migranti-senza-diritti-nel-cuore-dell-Europa> (18 Feb. 2021).

POVZETEK

STARA RETORIKA IN NOVA SREDSTVA: KARANTENSKE LADJE KOT SREDSTVO EKSTERNALIZACIJE

Stefania SPADA

Članek obravnava verbalni in institucionalni odnos Italije do migrantov, še zlasti prosilcev za mednarodno zaščito, med pandemijo. Na podlagi obnovitve različnih »vsebinskih faz« in posledičnih institucionalnih dejavnosti prikazuje, kako je zdravstvena kriza zaostрила in okrepila uveljavljena razmišljanja in prakse. S postopno etnografsko obnovo sprememb, ki so se odvijale od izbruha zdravstvene krize, dokumentira kontinuitete in prelome s prejšnjim obdobjem. Podatke iz etnografije vsakdanjega življenja, pridobljene z namenom boljšega razumevanja institucionalnega diskurza kakor tudi različnih vsebin, ki prevevajo splošni, vsakdanji diskurz, je avtorica primerjala s splošnejšimi razmišljanji o ukrepih nacionalne politike, usmerjenih v zaježitev migracijskih tokov. Čeprav izvedeni ukrepi izhajajo iz starih stereotipov in neprimernih starih upravljaljskih metod, vsebujejo, kar zadeva njihov vpliv na materialne bivanjske razmere prosilcev za mednarodno zaščito, nekatere nove elemente. Pandemija je tako priročen izgovor za nadaljevanje sekuritarnega pristopa, značilnega za izredne razmere, to pa pomeni odmik od standardov, ki jih narekujejo pravni sistemi (nacionalni, evropski, mednarodni), posledično pa tudi oteženo, če že ne kar onemogočeno uresničevanje temeljnih človekovih pravic.

Ukrepi, ki naj bi pripomogli k zaježitvi zdravstvene krize, se zdijo bolj pretveza za okrepitev meja. Če je namen evropskih politik ustvarjanje oziroma povečevanje razdalj med »nami« in »njimi«, so zdravstveni ukrepi za ublažitev pandemije zelo prikladna tema za razmišljanje o kontinuiteti, ki se vleče od obdobja pred izbruhom pandemije do danes. Dejavnosti preteklega leta je mogoče razumeti kot nadaljnji korak v procesu eksternalizacije meja oziroma kot nekakšno deteritorializacijo, temelječo na uporabi karantenskih ladij, katerih namen je izogibanje državne politike zavezanosti mednarodnim in ustavnim obveznostim. V tem smislu lahko karantenske ladje razumemo kot uresničitev ne tako zelo nove zamisli, ki vodi Italijo še dlje po poti zanikanja temeljnih pravic prosilcev za mednarodno zaščito. Navsezadnje je pomembno tudi dvojno sporočilo simbolne funkcije zadrževanja migrantov na ladjah; prvo je namenjeno državljanom Italije in se nanaša na sposobnost države, da preventivno odstrani prosilce za mednarodno zaščito, ki jih ima v skladu z logiko »prenašalcev bolezni« za nevarne, drugo sporočilo pa je v smislu zatiranja migracij namenjeno migrantom samim.

THE “DOUBLE EMERGENCY” AND THE SECURITIZATION OF THE HUMANITARIAN APPROACH IN THE ITALIAN RECEPTION SYSTEM WITHIN THE PANDEMIC CRISIS

Giuliana SANÒ^I, Omid FIROUZI TABAR^{II}

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ABSTRACT

The “Double Emergency” and the Securitization of the Humanitarian Approach in the Italian Reception System within the Pandemic Crisis

The Coronavirus outbreak has revealed the critical situation that can emerge when isolation and quarantine measures are applied to migrants living in reception and detention centers and overcrowded contexts. The paper focuses on events that affected two Extraordinary Reception Centres (CASs) and a Hotspot, located in Northern and Southern Italy. Although the humanitarian paradigm still represents the most functional form of government, this historical moment’s particularity led the authors to reflect on the continuity and change it brings. They hypothesize that the health crisis has downsized the action of care within humanitarian spaces favoring the strengthening of traditional securitarian solutions.

KEYWORDS: Coronavirus, reception system, migrants, Italy

IZVLEČEK

»Dvojno izredno stanje« in sekuritizacija humanitarnega pristopa k italijanskemu sistemu sprejemanja med pandemijo

Izbruh koronavirusa je razkril kritičen položaj, do katerega lahko privedejo izolacijski in karantenski ukrepi, uporabljeni na migrantih, ki živijo v prenatrpanih sprejemnih centrih in centrih za pridržanje. Članek obravnava dogajanje v dveh izrednih sprejemnih centrih (CASs) in v tako imenovanem *hotspotu*, ki se nahajajo na severu oziroma jugu Italije. Čeprav je humanitarna paradigma še vedno najbolj funkcionalna oblika upravljanja, je posebnost tega zgodovinskega trenutka avtorja spodbudila k razmisleku o kontinuiteti in spremembah, ki jih prinaša. Po njenem mnenju je zdravstvena kriza prispevala h krčenju oskrbe v humanitarnih okoljih na račun krepitve tradicionalnih sekuritarnih rešitev.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: koronavirus, sistem sprejemanja, migranti, Italija

^I Post-doc fellow, University of Messina, Via Lanterna 45, 98164 Messina, Italy; gsano@unime.it, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8971-1540>.

^{II} Phd in sociology of cultural phenomena and normative processes, Via Premuda 18, 35138 Padua, Italy; tabaromid@yahoo.it, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7015-0416>.

INTRODUCTION¹

“This virus does not have any borders and treats all equally; while you stay at home, we have to stay in the camp where there is no guarantee of health safety.”

(Amiri, a 16-year-old from Afghanistan living in Ritsona camp)²

With these words, an Afghan teenager living in the refugee camp of Ritsona, Greece, illustrates with extreme clarity and simplicity the main similarities and differences activated by the SARS-CoV-2 epidemic. If, on the one hand, the virus shows that it does not have borders and does not treat its hosts clinically based on social differences, on the other hand, the measures adopted to prevent and control the contagion do not materialize in the same way for everyone, thus disproving the belief that we can talk about a presumed democratic nature of this virus (Tazzioli 2020; Sani 2020).

A good example is given by those asylum seekers who, in the long and sometimes exhausting wait for the end of the asylum application process, find themselves living in large tents or overcrowded encampments lacking the most basic social and health guarantees or, again, in the widespread network of isolated apartments peripheral to urban contexts (Altin, Sanò 2017).

A year after its beginning, we have seen how the pandemic produces effects and has different impacts on society, inscribing itself along those lines of class, color, and gender that characterize contemporary capitalism. It has placed at the center of attention, in their mutual interaction and juxtaposition, issues such as domestic violence against women; the unprecedented vulnerability of the poorest, most precarious, and economically marginal social groups; the condition of radical social abandonment of migrants and a parallel exacerbation of racism, especially institutional racism.

The Italian reception system, as pointed out by several parties (Guadagno 2020; Camilli 2020; Giammarinaro, Palumbo 2020), is a sector where the impact of the health crisis has manifested itself in particularly problematic terms:

Evidence shows that this vulnerable population has a low risk of transmitting communicable diseases to host populations in general. However, refugees and migrants are potentially at increased risk of contracting diseases, including COVID-19, because they typically live in overcrowded conditions without access to basic sanitation. The ability to access health-care services in humanitarian settings is usually compromised and exacerbated by shortages of medicines and lack of health-care facilities. Conditions in refugee camps are concerning [...] These camps usually provide inadequate

1 The Introduction and Conclusion were written by both authors, Omid Firouzi Tabar wrote the section on Treviso and Giuliana Sanò wrote the section on Messina.

2 <https://www.businessinsider.com/residents-of-refugee-camp-greece-all-tested-covid-19-2020-4?IR=T>.

and overcrowded living arrangements that present a severe health risk to inhabitants and host populations. (Kluge et al. 2020: 1238)

A document by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)³ shows how even some important government agencies have highlighted the critical situations that emerge by applying isolation and quarantine measures to migrants living in reception and detention centers, in overcrowded contexts, marked by forced cohabitation.

In this regard, researchers have identified a relationship between these and the increase in stigma toward the migrant population. The latter can therefore lead to a rise in problems related to mental health, sexual and gender violence, and also to the concealment of health conditions and diseases.⁴

We refer, in particular, to the formation of a common way of thinking that, in this phase of the health crisis, fuels mistrust toward migrants and attributes to them ever new responsibilities such as the spread of the virus and the increase in infections (Mukumbang et al. 2020; Tallarek et al. 2020; Pitzalis 2020; Spada 2020, Tiwari 2020), leveraging an ideological armamentarium and racist and inferiorizing narratives.

In addition to the classic representations and stereotypes used to portray migrants as "dangerous," "criminals," and "terrorists" – and to the more recent ones that see them playing, instead, the role of "cheaters" and "perfect victims" who must earn the "gift" of reception – today there is the risk of making room for the image of the migrant as "plague victim" and "pest," a threat to public health.

This paper focuses on events that, between the summer and autumn of 2020, affected an Extraordinary Reception Centre (Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria – CAS) located in Northern Italy (Treviso) and two facilities (Hotspot and CAS) in Southern Italy (Messina).⁵ Although the geographical contexts examined are different, they present some common features that can indicate some general trends. The two cities observed – Treviso and Messina – share the presence of numerous and varied facilities for the reception of people who apply for international protection and refugees, reflecting the image of a fragmented and uneven supply chain characterized by extraordinary interventions and an emergency organizational dynamic. The multilevel

3 Guidance on infection prevention and control of COVID-19 in migrant and refugee reception and detention centres, 2020: 5.

4 These same terms have been used (Cordova, forthcoming, Lo Cascio, Iocco 2020; D'Ignotti 2020, Kluge et al. 2020) to describe the anomalies that during the first phase of confinement have affected migrant workers in the agricultural sector living in ghettos or informal encampments. Specifically, we refer to the impossibility for these people to comply with the preventive measures adopted by the government (constantly washing their hands, wearing a mask, respecting physical distance) due to the material conditions that exist in these spaces, which are almost always devoid of running water, minimum habitability requirements, and are also overcrowded.

5 The Italian reception model is characterized by a multi-level system: identification centers (Hotspots), first reception centers (Cpsa, Cpa, Cara, Cas, Hub), second reception centers (Sai and other local projects) and repatriation centers (Cpr).

nature of the types of reception and the extreme marginality of public and ordinary solutions have progressively imposed a highly discretionary referral of the beneficiaries, greatly eroding the sphere of their rights. The 2018 “Salvini Decree” intensified these processes while placing them in a tendency of continuity with the past (Firouzi Tabar 2020), with significant social consequences on the lives of migrants.

This law has further produced social effects of inferiorization and racialization by placing itself in a framework of structural orientations activated mainly to achieve forms of subaltern or differential inclusion (Ambrosini et al. 1995; De Genova 2002; Mezzadra 2013, Fabini 2017, Sbraccia 2020). In these forms, “humanitarian” control (Malkki 1996; Agier 2005; Fassin 2012, 2019) often alternates and intertwines with attitudes aimed at exclusion, implemented by return policies and through a considerable use of restrictive and punitive devices of the police, criminal, and prison type.

We intend to inscribe our reflection within an analytical field that contrasts the solidity of paradigms with the fluidity of the movements, contractions, and shifts that can occur in such contexts of power.

Although the humanitarian paradigm, punctually analyzed and described over the years by the authors mentioned above, continues to represent a form of government extremely functional to the production of “docile bodies,” the historical moment’s particularity, characterized as an emergency within the emergency, leads us to reason on the transformations and forms of continuity and change that result. We hypothesize, therefore, that the health crisis has downsized the action of care within humanitarian spaces (Cutitta 2021), favoring, on the contrary, the strengthening of 1) more traditional security solutions, 2) the dynamics of exclusion from the plan of socio-economic supports (bonuses, subsidies, benefits, and refreshments), and 3) the processes of hyper-stigmatization and criminalization of migrants.⁶

Starting from the case studies that we are about to describe, we will try to observe how, in a setting that represents a sort of double emergency for reception, the practices and procedures of “care,” “cure,” and “control” (Agier 2005: 50) were intertwined and alternated in the context of the pandemic, and to verify whether there was a definite shift toward the dimension of control. At the same time, we will see how the people living in the centers responded to this shift and to the transformations imposed by the health emergency.

6 By leveraging the feeling of fear of contagion and the promotion of a media and political communication that attributes to the entry and stay of migrants in the territory a heavy responsibility in the spread of the virus (Devakumar et al. 2020), the health emergency has actually legitimized the introduction of new processes of discrimination and stigmatization. We can consider, for example, the choice of using quarantine ships to prevent the docking of migrants.

TREVISO: A RECEPTION THAT KILLS⁷

A considerable presence of large structures (regional hubs) and a laughable use of ordinary tools (former SPRAR⁸), below the national average, in favor of an overwhelming predominance of extraordinary and emergency solutions, make Veneto a unique case in the national context.

Entirely consistent with the picture of extreme fragmentation described above, the Veneto system looks like a network of small and large CASs, primarily located in the countryside and therefore far from urban contexts or on the outskirts of cities and, at least until 2018, with the image of three large, first-reception camps (Prandina, Cona, Bagnoli) in each of which, for several years, between 600 and 1300 migrants have found "hospitality."

Thus, overcrowding, peripheralization, social-spatial isolation, and, the usual consequence of emergency dynamics, an extreme discretion of the managing bodies in the organization of support and services, characterize the Veneto model overall.

In this territory, as found by some empirical investigations (Pasian, Toffanin 2018; Firouzi Tabar 2019), asylum seekers have been frequently confronted with systematic violations of primary rights such as social and health rights, segregation and compression of individual freedom spaces, and infantilizing processes and paternal treatments of their choices and behaviors, in constant activation of typical humanitarian tools and more traditional repressive and criminalizing actions.

It is within this structural framework that, over the years, the plan of counter-moves and resistance of those who have found themselves in the reception facilities has taken shape, and it is from this scenario that we can try to read the implications of the pandemic and its management.

As the operator of a cooperative in Padua interviewed in April 2020 (therefore in the heart of the first lockdown) reminds us, two key issues immediately emerged, one linked to involuntary cohabitation in the spaces and the other to the absence of strategies, protocols, and intervention plans aimed at preventing and containing contagions:

7 The considerations presented in this study are part of a broader research on the organization of the reception of asylum seekers in Veneto. For this contribution, in-depth interviews were conducted with some managers and operators of medium-sized facilities during the months of April and May 2020, at the dawn of the pandemic crisis. Limitations due to the ongoing "lockdown" at that time made it necessary to proceed through the telematic platform "Zoom". The study of the events surrounding the former Serena Barracks has been supported by several informal conversations, by phone and in person, with some activists who have long been engaged in support of the applicants of the camp, by a documentary analysis sitographic and addressed to the local media, and by a long meeting with one of the four applicants arrested as a result of the protests that will be described below.

8 SPRAR stands for System of Protection for Asylum Seekers. Between 2018 and 2020, the name was changed to SIPROIMI – Protection System for Holders of International Protection and for Unaccompanied Foreign Minors. This acronym has now been replaced by SAI, which stands for Reception and Integration System

Almost nowhere have they adopted standard procedures and this is a problem because we go to work disoriented and do not know how to deal with emergencies and risk situations. The main criticality is the fact that we have in the apartments people who are already living a forceful coexistence with people who they have not chosen, the quarantine exacerbates this situation. From a sanitary point of view, it is still impossible to isolate a person in case of a positive swab. Only a few facilities that have empty apartments can do it.

The coordinator of another cooperative, interviewed during the same period, points out how the pandemic and lockdown have produced tensions regarding isolating in the facilities and the consequent forced cohabitation:

The most critical thing is the impossibility of isolation, there are no single rooms, which in possible COVID cases creates conflicts and suspicions that exacerbate the environment. The discomfort is high because no one has chosen to live with those they live with and these cohabitations are sometimes long and conflicting. Some people can't stand this forced togetherness all day and disobey the rules and hang around. This psychological aspect is very important. If tapping into their resilience and relying at times only on that which was already a problem to keep in balance before, now becomes even more of an issue.

In the summer of 2020, the country was preparing to cancel all restrictions, which later led to new Christmas lockdowns. Concurrently, in Treviso, the accumulated contradictions after many months blew up the precarious balance within one of the largest CASs in Veneto located in the former Serena Barracks, managed by the cooperative Nova Facility SRL. In a few years, the cooperative has completely changed the scope of intervention, becoming – not without criticism – one of the protagonists of the reception in Veneto and increasingly at the national level.⁹

On June 11, 2020, the tensions and the heightened discomfort already present in the camp, which on that date hosted 300 people, exasperated by the management of the pandemic crisis, exploded into anger among the beneficiaries and a harsh and dramatic process of criminalization for some of them.

Following the report of an operator testing positive for COVID, the Prefecture and the ULSS decided to close the camp that day and isolate it by blocking its access,

9 Initially active in the field of energy and construction, Nova Facility SRL has been dealing with reception since 2015 and its declared revenues jumped from 719 thousand euros in 2014 to over 6 and a half million in 2019. Today it also manages the largest CAS in the Veneto region in Oderzo, the former Mattei barracks in Bologna used as a regional HUB, and the Hotspot in Lampedusa. In addition to the many complaints and protests expressed by the beneficiaries against the type of management of the camp, on August 9, 2020, the Prosecutor of Treviso Michele Dalla Costa opened an "information file" that prompted the judges to collect information on the presence of any negligence in the measures to prevent the sudden spread of contagion in the structure.

which triggered two days of widespread and intense protests. After having spent the first lockdown imprisoned for months inside a camp that appeared as a "natural" hotbed toward which the authorities had never activated any health security protocol, the prospect of a new quarantine produced in the migrants both the fear of losing hard-earned jobs outside the camp and the – well-founded – fear of exposure to the uncontrollable contagion. This fear was especially because, since the first outbreak and the management of the first health screening, no particular organizational strategies had been activated to manage contagion risk.

On July 30, 2020, 137 people tested positive, and in less than ten days, the number rose to 257.

New protests followed the decision to quarantine the facility once again. Through the field testimonies of some activists who have long supported the applicants and of a local journalist,¹⁰ who collected the direct voice of the migrants from the camp, we know that the common spaces such as kitchens, canteens, and showers were still used after the emergence of the first positive case by people who were negative, positive, and waiting for a swab, that the beds had not been moved further apart following the many swabs carried out, and that, in general, internal protocols had not been activated to differentiate the daily treatment of the applicants in light of the test results.

The protests, therefore, seem to take shape mainly in reaction to the health trap materialized in the light of the serious lack of protocols and standards of management of the crisis in progress, as well as to follow previous actions of resistance that had long marked the scenario of what is still one of the largest CASs in the Veneto region.¹¹

During the summer of 2020, the media presented the ongoing protests and the response to them very harshly, even more so than it had portrayed similar protests, or even more intense and radical ones, which had taken place over the years. On August 19, 2020, four applicants were arrested and imprisoned in Treviso, accused of devastation and looting and kidnapping for the June protests.

To reinforce this repressive orientation, after two months, by order of the Department of Penitentiary Administration (DAP), they were moved to four different prisons and placed in a state of "special surveillance" (Article 14-bis of the Penitentiary Code). This harsh measure provides for the isolation of particularly dangerous

10 Local journalist Alice Carlon and local solidarity organizations such as Association Caminantes, social center (an Italian squat) "Django" and trade union ADL Cobas.

11 During a protest organized inside the camp in March 2017, a letter was sent to the director of the camp containing an articulate set of claims that give us a good idea of the structural problems that have long marked this structure. Among other things, the letter reported the constant overcrowding, the degradation and dilapidation of housing compared to prison cells, and several violations of social and health rights. The letter was published in its entirety on the Melting Pot website: <https://www.meltingpot.org/Treviso-ex-Caserna-Sere-na-l-richiedenti-asilo-in-protesta.html#.YA7tehbSJPY>.

subjects. They were labeled dangerous¹² for having criticized the failed management of contagions in the former Barracks. It is not difficult to see the punitive intent of this set of criminal and prison measures with which we proceed to criminalize a collective action of claiming rights. A punitive reaction to behaviors dictated in many cases by fear – as reported several times by Abdou, the first of the four to be released from prison, during a long and intense conversation – the fear of losing his job, the fear of becoming infected, the fear provoked by the police who had surrounded the reception center for hours.

On November 7, 2020, one of the four young people affected by this measure, 23-year-old Chaka Ouattaro from Mali, could not stand the violent backlash and decided to take his own life using parts of his clothing as a noose. This is the epilogue of a story of institutional violence and mismanagement of a service such as reception. Still, it is also the story of the government's repressive and securitizing twist of migration in times of COVID-19, a securitarian and criminalizing orientation punctually accompanied by the public media narration that hastened to name the four boys as "violent," "troublemakers," and "criminals."

FROM BARBED WIRE TO SANITARY CONFINEMENT: THE CASE OF MESSINA AND THE ESCAPE OF MIGRANTS FROM IDENTIFICATION AND RECEPTION FACILITIES¹³

The case related to the structuring of the reception system in the city of Messina is interesting because it allows us to materially describe the extent to which the health emergency has constituted a coefficient of continuity and change in the lives of people living in the reception system. In particular, we will examine the lines of continuity and the transformations that have affected an Extraordinary Reception Centre (CAS) and a Hotspot there.

The reception center has been active in the city since 2014 and is intended for the reception of asylum seekers. The Hotspot, on the other hand, was opened in 2017 and responds to the need, dictated by the 2015 European Agenda, to identify people who have just arrived on the territory and to differentiate them according to

12 The details regarding the criminal framework in which the four applicants were placed, the process of imprisonment, and the decision to apply the measures of special surveillance have been analyzed in a contribution to be published in Antigone's report (Firouzi Tabar, Maculan 2020). This contribution highlighted, for example, the crucial limitation that these migrants encounter in taking advantage of the alternative measures to prison, as they have enormous problems in indicating a suitable domicile for the application of these measures.

13 With regard to the case study conducted in Messina, we must note that the data and material reported in the text were collected by Giuliana Sanò in the period between March and August 2020. The impossibility of carrying out ethnographic research with traditional field instruments due to the pandemic meant that the research focused mainly on the news spread by social media and the main media and information channels. This analysis was complemented by telephone interviews with reception workers and migrants present in the area.

their country of origin, following the legislation that defines those who come from countries considered "safe" as ineligible for the procedure for requesting protection.

However, the main difference between the two centers is that while the reception center is an open place, the Hotspot is a closed place. People cannot leave the latter until the identification and status differentiation procedures are completed.

The two facilities are located in large, abandoned barracks in the middle of a working-class neighborhood with a long history of housing and social-economic problems.¹⁴ The media attention surrounding this area of the city began immediately after the opening of the Hotspot, following a protest that the inhabitants of the neighborhood had improvised to prevent the transfer to the facility of a group of people who had just arrived at the port of Messina.

Before that day, the coexistence between the CAS and the working-class neighborhood had not caused much concern. What prompted the neighborhood inhabitants to change their attitude? According to the media, it was the escape of some people that worried the local population. Taking advantage of the proximity of the containers to people's homes, dozens of people confined to the Hotspot had climbed onto the roofs of the houses in the days before the protest in an attempt to escape. If – from a media point of view – it was necessary to focus on the fear of the inhabitants, frightened by the possibility that those escapes on the roofs could one day turn into episodes of theft, what escaped the attention of the local media were the real reasons for those escapes and how the Hotspot's detention nature determined them.¹⁵

While the presence of migrants in the neighborhood had not previously caused fear among the locals, it goes without saying that the perception of insecurity – which had grown little by little among the inhabitants – was due, first of all, to the structural conditions of the center, surrounded by high walls and barbed wire, and, above all, to the feeling of fear that those two objects generally project toward the outside world. In other words, it was not the fact that the migrants were free to move around the neighborhood that determined the feeling of fear among the locals, but rather the fact that they were locked up in a detention center and made escape attempts to free themselves. What we can derive from this circumstance is, therefore, the value of the material conditions of a place – in this case, surrounded by fences and barbed wire – in activating a perception of general insecurity. Indeed, the need to lock these people up in a detention center went hand in hand with the belief that, ultimately, they were "criminals."

This reasoning on the projection of the feeling of fear, determined by the physical and material characteristics of a structure, is linked to what we have already tried to clarify at the beginning of this contribution, regarding the role played by

14 For an in-depth study of the dynamics of interaction between the Hotspot and the inhabitants of the working-class neighbourhood, see the work of Sanò (2018).

15 <https://messina.gazzettadelsud.it/foto/archivio/2017/10/19/migranti-alla-gasparro-protesta-dei-residenti-b41bcece-9eea-40e4-ae3a-a0f549f45d0e/>.

the confinement measures – barriers and fences – in the stigmatization processes directed at the migrant population locked up in the reception centers during the health emergency.

What happened at the beginning of the pandemic in the two facilities may better clarify the meaning of this statement since the feeling of fear provoked by the health crisis eventually led to the agitation of the entire local population and the temporary closure of the two facilities.¹⁶

During the first months of the outbreak, the local political debate focused on the same reasons that had prompted the media to consider the locals' concerns in 2017. Once again, the population's fears were aroused by the escapes enacted by people locked up in reception centers. However, if in the first circumstance, in 2017, the escapes were mainly attributable to the Hotspot migrants' attempt to evade the logic of the European Asylum Agenda, in this case, the escapes also involved migrants housed in the reception center. With the outbreak of the epidemic and the need to implement reliable and safe confinement measures, the managers of the two facilities changed the destination of the two centers, swapping the location of the "guests." As the Hotspot structure offered more possibilities of escape, during the summer of 2020, all persons awaiting identification were transferred to the extraordinary reception center, which was considered safer thanks to a surveillance system with barriers and turnstiles. The managers thus transformed the function of the extraordinary reception center to respond to the need for confinement and control to contain the virus so that, against the regulations, this space became a fully-fledged closed center.¹⁷ However, the lack of differentiated spaces to divide those who had just arrived from those who had already completed the quarantine period led to the beginning of sporadic escapes from the center. In the absence of this differentiation, all the people present in the reception center were indiscriminately denied not only the right to leave the structure but, above all, the right to safeguard their own safety and health security.

This case, in particular, helps us to prove our initial hypothesis, in which we argued that, with the onset of the pandemic event, the humanitarian regime drastically reduced the actions of care toward the people in the reception system, favoring the use of strategies aimed exclusively at the control and limitation of personal freedom. Convinced that it was no longer a safe place, many people in the center responded by fleeing and abandoning it.

However, whereas in 2017, the escapes from the Hotspot had merely attracted the attention of the media and residents, who were frightened by the detention nature of the center from which the "migrants/criminals" were escaping, in the case

16 This article in *Il Giornale* reports the news of the escapes from the Hotspot and the tough stance taken by the mayor: <https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/cronache/de-luca-chiude-lhot-spot-messina-e-abusivo-ministero-ha-5-1877946.html>.

17 This article refers to the dismantling of the Hotspot and the transfer of people to the CAS. <https://normanno.com/cronaca/nuova-fuga-da-bisconte-de-luca-basta-migranti-a-messina/>.

of 2020, the escapes took on the contours of a problem related to public order and health security, which were put at risk by the new representation of the "migrants/plague spreaders."

Having become a public order problem, the escapes that occurred during the sanitary confinement were used by the local authority as a pretext to act on issues from which it had hitherto been excluded since the location and operation of prefectural reception facilities is a matter beyond the competence of the municipal administration. In this context, what happened in the weeks following the escapes from the reception center seems paradoxical. While, on the one hand, the Italian Ministry of the Interior declared illegitimate the order issued by the president of the Region of Sicily, according to which every reception center in Sicily would have to be closed to limit the possibility of arrivals and, therefore, of contagion; on the other hand, the local prefecture allowed the mayor, in his capacity as the person primarily responsible for the health and safety of the city, to decide to empty and temporarily close the two reception centers. In short, the health emergency legitimized a series of anomalies, both at the organizational and decision-making level, which, as in the case just reported, had extremely adverse effects and repercussions on the general conditions of the material existence of the people in the reception centers.

CONCLUSION

In this contribution, we have tried to read the consequences that the COVID-19 pandemic has generated in the lives of migrants living in the reception system, presenting the two case studies within a general plan of reconfiguration of migration governance devices.

In doing so, we examined the connection between the current health emergency and the structurally emergent nature of migration policies. We have also seen how, in the context of that sort of hybridization between care and control (Fassin 2012; Agier 2005) that characterizes the humanitarian paradigm, some reception management practices, fueled by a reinforced feeling of fear of the foreigner, in many cases socially constructed as an "infectior," have been animated by security and repressive measures toward the migrant population living in facilities, especially in large ones.

In particular, the critical reflection on the measures of confinement and quarantine adopted within first reception centers allowed us to establish lines of continuity and to trace the directions taken by the changes introduced by the health emergency. From this point of view, the case studies reported in the text confirm, on the one hand, the presence of continuity in the processes of *marginalization*, *invisibilization*, and *inferiorization* of the subjects living in reception facilities. On the other hand, they document the dramatic change that has taken place within these places with the onset of the pandemic. In this scenario, the epidemic took the conditions of existence of migrants in reception to extremes, legitimizing the limitation of personal freedoms to

the extreme, the use of violence, and indiscriminate forms of control and repression. Although this legitimacy is based on the humanitarian regime's emergency nature, which foresees the constant oscillation between the dimension of care and that of control, the tendency to privilege the plan of control over that of care has taken on a certain relevance in our eyes. The abandonment of any program of care and support and the criminal/prison response of the institutions to the claims of the applicants in Treviso and the transformation of the reception center in Messina into an actual detention cage give, in our opinion, some alarming signs in this direction.

Since this shift took place in the context of a health crisis, in which public health protection should be the only priority, it becomes more necessary than ever to document what happened in the reception centers during these months. To show how migrants are not only excluded from social-health care and support but also how they end up embodying the image of constant danger in all circumstances. The escapes from the reception center in Messina and the protests in the CAS in Treviso confirm that, even when faced with harsher living conditions, the subjects do not give up on reactions and counter-conducts. By opposing the processes of *inferiorization* and *de-subjectification*, they constantly give rise to tactics of resistance, sometimes through individual choices, strategies, and behavior, sometimes through collective claims that have been repeatedly reported in many contexts (Agier 2005; Campesi 2014; Manocchi 2014; Fontanari 2017; De Genova, Garelli & Tazzioli 2018, Firouzi Tabar 2019).

If it is true that within the emergency regime – and more than ever now in a context of global health crisis – the lives of applicants are exposed to discrimination and dynamics of social segregation and institutional violence and if, as Katerina Rozakou reminds us: “hospitality, seen in the form of a gift, includes the stranger in the social world of the host, though it is a temporary and conditional inclusion in which the host holds the monopoly of agency” (2012: 565), it seems to us that the reactions of subjects to this framework of governance, whether individual or collective, need to be framed in a way that goes beyond the rigid and distorting categories of “non-persons” and “bare life” (Robins 2009).

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POVZETEK

»DVOJNO IZREDNO STANJE« IN SEKURITIZACIJA HUMANITARNEGA PRISTOPA K ITALIJANSKEMU SISTEMU SPREJEMANJA MED PANDEMIJO Giuliana SANÒ, Omid FIROUZI TABAR

Leto dni po izbruhu se posledice in vplivi pandemije v družbi kažejo na različne načine. Izbruh koronavirusa je v ospredje postavil družinsko nasilje nad ženskami, izjemno ranljivost najrevnejših, najslabotnejših in ekonomsko marginaliziranih družbenih skupin, radikalno družbeno zapuščenost migrantov in hkratni rasizem. Na kritični položaj migrantov, ki zaradi izolacije in karantene prisilno sobivajo v prenatrpanih sprejemnih centrih in centrih za pridržanje, so opozorile številne nevladne organizacije.

Članek se osredotoča na dogodke, ki so med poletjem in jesenjo 2020 zaznamovali dva izredna sprejemna centra (CASs) in t. i. *hotspot* v severni oziroma južni Italiji. Čeprav humanitarna paradigma kot oblika vladanja izjemno dobro funkcionira v proizvodnji »pokornih teles«, je posebnost tega zgodovinskega trenutka, ki ga označuje izredno stanje znotraj izrednega stanja, oba avtorja napeljala k refleksiji o transformacijah, kontinuiteti ter spremembah, ki jih prinaša. Po njuni hipotezi je zdravstvena kriza skrčila obseg oskrbe na humanitarnih območjih (Cutitta 2021) in v nasprotju z obdobjem pred krizo (1.) okrepila bolj tradicionalne sekuritarne rešitve, hkrati pa (2.) okrepila dinamiko izključevanja iz načrtovanja socioekonomske podpore; prav tako so se (3.) okrepili tudi procesi hiperstigmatizacije in kriminalizacije migrantov. Na dveh območjih zbrani etnografski podatki so pokazali na prepletanje in spreminjanje praks in postopkov »pomoči«, »oskrbe« in »nadzora« med pandemijo, hkrati pa so omogočili preverjanje, ali je prišlo do povečanja nadzora. Kritična refleksija zapiranja in karantenskih ukrepov, uveljavljenih v prvih sprejemnih centrih, je avtorjema omogočila ugotavljati kontinuitete in slediti spremembam, ki so jih povzročile izredne zdravstvene razmere.

Študije posameznih primerov po eni strani potrjujejo kontinuiteto procesov marginalizacije, to je, osebe, ki živijo v sprejemnih centrih, narediti neopazne, po drugi strani pa dokumentirajo dramatične spremembe. Opustitev oskrbnih in podpornih ukrepov ter kaznovanje oziroma zapiranje migrantov v Trevisu kot odziv na njihove prošnje ter preobrazba sprejemnega centra v Messini v dejansko kletko, so alarmantni signali. Poleg raziskovanja procesov preoblikovanja upravljanja migracij in represivnih ukrepov, uperjenih proti migrantom v obeh sprejemnih centrih, sta študiji primerov avtorjema omogočila, da sta dokumentirala odziv ljudi v centrih na vse večji nadzor in spremembe. Pobegi iz sprejemnega centra v Messini in protesti v Trevisu dokazujejo, da se njihovi stanovalci kljub zaostrenim življenjskim razmeram ne odrekajo upor.

R A Z P R A V E I N Č L A N K I

E S S A Y S A N D A R T I C L E S

INTRA-EU MOBILITY: THE EMPLOYMENT AND WELFARE EXPERIENCE OF TEMPORARY EU WORKERS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Sonila DANAJ^I, Erka ÇARO^{II}

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ABSTRACT

Intra-EU Mobility: The Employment and Welfare Experience of Temporary EU Workers in the United Kingdom

This article explores the mobility pathways of temporary EU workers and the implications that transnational temporary mobility has on their labor market outcomes and access to social rights and benefits. The experiences of temporary EU migrants working in the UK show that despite the narrative of the borderlessness of the common European labor market, access to host countries' labor market and welfare is shaped by their employment status and welfare eligibility criteria that produce worker precariousness. Temporary EU workers' experiences are characterized by employment insecurity and unequal access to labor and social rights, effects which might increase since the UK has left the EU.

KEYWORDS: European Union, temporary migrant workers, labor rights, social rights, United Kingdom

IZVLEČEK

Mobilnost znotraj EU: Zaposlitvene in socialnozdravstvene izkušnje začasnih delavcev iz EU v Veliki Britaniji

Članek obravnava mobilnost začasnih delavcev iz EU in vpliv transnacionalnečasne mobilnosti na njihov uspeh na trgu dela ter dostop do socialnih pravic in ugodnosti. Izkušnje začasnih migrantov iz EU na delu v Združenem kraljestvu kažejo, da je zanje dostop do trga dela in socialnega skrbstva v državi gostiteljici kljub deklarativni brezmejnosti evropskega trga dela odvisen od njihovega zaposlitvenega statusa in upravičenosti do socialne pomoči, kar vse vodi v delavsko prekarnost. V zvezi z dostopom do delavskih in socialnih pravic so izkušnje začasnih delavcev iz EU zaznamovane z zaposlitveno negotovostjo in neenakopravnostjo, ki se bosta zaradi izstopa Velike Britanije iz Evropske unije le še povečevali.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: Evropska unija, začasni migrantski delavci, delavske pravice, socialne pravice, Združeno kraljestvo

^I PhD candidate in sociology, University of Jyväskylä; researcher, European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, Berggasse 17, A-1090, Vienna; danaj@euro.centre.org; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0582-7125>.

^{II} PhD in population studies, University of Groningen; lecturer, Department of Geography, University of Tirana, Rruga e Elbasanit, Tirana; erkacaro@gmail.com; <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9183-9642>.

INTRODUCTION¹

The enlargement of the European Union (EU) has expanded the forms of intra-EU mobility (Ryan et al. 2009). Yet, the removal of borders has not led to the removal of all barriers to EU countries' national markets and welfare systems. Although EU citizens do not have to fulfill visa and work permit requirements like third-country nationals (Anderson 2010), they can still be quite precarious. Some companies and labor market intermediaries, like temporary work agencies, take advantage of the gaps in transnational, national and sectoral labor market regulations to differentiate between temporary EU workers and local workers or other categories of more permanent migrants (Alberti, Danaj 2017; Andrijasevic, Sacchetto 2016; Berntsen, Lillie 2015).

This article seeks to understand how the mobility pathways of temporary EU workers are shaped by their mobility motives and the way they access the host country's labor market by cross-fertilizing the industrial relations with migration and social welfare literature. It discusses the role and implications transnational regulations at the macro level that result in cross-border temporary mobility have on the labor market outcomes and access to social rights and benefits of EU workers as experienced at the micro-level. Our study is based on fifty-five in-depth interviews with temporary EU workers, social partners and managers in the United Kingdom (UK). We identify two main temporary migrant pathways: posted work and temporary agency work. We argue that despite the narrative of the borderlessness of the common European labor market, access to host countries' labor market and welfare is shaped by their employment status and national welfare eligibility criteria that manifest in different forms in the lived experiences of EU temporary migrant workers. The experiences of temporary EU workers are characterized by employment insecurity and unequal access to labor and social rights. Effects that might increase now that the UK has left the EU and the migration policy applicable to these workers could become as restrictive as that of other third-country nationals (Lindstrom 2019).

TEMPORARY EU WORKERS IN THE EUROPEAN SINGLE MARKET

EU citizens can freely navigate the European single market; however, their labor mobility is shaped by several EU and national regulations that aim to facilitate labor supply across the EU while protecting national standards. Hence, during the EU enlargement rounds of 2004 and 2007, some Member States placed restrictions on the freedom of movement of new members for a transitional period between two to five years (Fihel et al. 2015). Consequently, the range of moves within the European

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Union expanded to multiple forms of mobility and temporary migration (Ryan et al. 2009). During the transition period, Central and Eastern European workers needed a work contract and permit to work in other EU countries. After the transition period, countries like Austria, Belgium or the UK continued to apply additional criteria to the right to reside by requiring EU workers to provide evidence of economic independence, criteria that have constrained many EU workers to accept unfavorable terms and conditions of employment and left them in a state of perpetual precarity (Alberti 2016; Dwyer et al. 2019; Shutes 2016).

Various EU directives regulate intra-EU mobility and labor market demands for temporary labor, such as the Posting of Workers Directive (PWD) (96/71/EC) and the Temporary Agency Work Directive (TAWD) (2008/104/EC). The PWD, which falls under the freedom to provide services, allows EU employers to bid for tenders in other Member States and “post,” i.e., send their workers to execute the job. Once these posted workers finish delivering the service for which their company is subcontracted, they should return to their country. Posted workers, therefore, could be classified as temporary labor migrants or mobile workers who return home once their assignment is completed. Similarly, the TAWD regulates the employment relation of workers with a contract of employment with a temporary-work agency temporarily assigned to user companies. The lines dividing these categories of workers are often blurred, as their contractual arrangements shift continuously between being posted to being hired by a temporary work agency and at times also posted by a temporary work agency (Alberti, Danaj 2017). While their contractual arrangements might be shifting and overlapping, the differentiating feature is how they move to the host country, i.e., their labor mobility pathways. In this article, those sent to the UK to provide a service temporarily by a company or an employment agency are referred to as posted workers and those who moved to the UK on their own and eventually found employment through UK-based temporary employment agencies as agency workers.

In the migration literature, EU citizens’ migration type is explained through the available macro structures and opportunities and through their individual motivations (Coletto, Fullin 2019). Their mobility pathways influence their labor market behavior, with some migrant workers finding ways to reconcile employment opportunities at home and abroad to sustain repeat migration (Fihel, Grabowska Lusinska 2014), while others frequently move within the host country labor market aiming for upward mobility (Alberti 2014). The mobility pathway influences the level of protection that migrants receive. Both the PWD and the TAWD stipulate the right to minimum protection and equal terms and conditions for posted/agency workers. Nonetheless, inequalities among temporary EU mobile workers and direct employees exist; some employers use the gaps in the labor market regulatory frameworks to exploit lower-wage workers from lower-income countries (Andrijasevic, Sacchetto 2016; Berntsen, Lillie 2015; Cremers 2011). As a result of these “regime shopping” practices (Houwerzijl 2014), found particularly in so-called low-skill, low-paid industries

with subcontracting chains and a transnational workforce, such as construction, food processing and services, multiple violations of the labor rights of EU migrant workers have been identified (Andrijasevic, Sacchetto 2016; Cremers 2011).

Not only do employers exploit the flexibility of posted and agency migrant workers, but workers themselves use these migration pathways for their own motives (Lee 2009; Massey, Malone 2002). As McCollum and Findlay put it, “flexible labour markets create a structural demand for migrant labour and a ready supply of migrant labour allows flexible labour markets to flourish” (2015: 439). However, Lillie (2016), in the case of posted workers, and Andrijasevic and Sacchetto (2016), in the case of temporary agency workers, argue that the cross-border mobility of EU workers undermines any effective way for them to be free-market agents able to negotiate their position with the employers.

The pathways they undertake influence EU workers’ access to social rights as precarious temporary EU workers have limited or no access to the host country welfare system (Alberti 2016; Heindlmaier, Blauburger 2017; Marques et al. 2021). EU migrants are often unaware of their social rights and would rather seek solutions privately or in their home country than try to access the host country’s welfare system (Ehata, Seeleib Kaiser 2017; Godin 2020). Temporariness, spatial segregation, and the lack of a sense of belonging experienced by temporary migrant workers disrupts their integration process in the host country (Çaro et al. 2015). Social benefits are conditioned by the period a migrant worker has paid social contributions to the host country’s welfare system. Only with time do migrants become more familiar with host country rules and entitlements (Pemberton, Scullion 2013).

METHODOLOGY

This article analyzes the working and welfare experiences of two types of EU workers in the UK: posted and agency workers. We adopted a qualitative approach based on in-depth interviews (Wengraf 2001). Our analysis is based on fifty-five interviews: fifteen posted and fifteen agency workers, fifteen workplace representatives, four trade union officials and senior organizers, five managers, and one employer organization representative conducted during 2014–2015. Informants were recruited through a combination of several contacts or “gatekeepers” in the host country, such as trade unions and other mediators (Refslund 2019), with the snowball technique. We interviewed Spanish, Polish, Romanian, Irish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Czech, Bulgarian, and Slovakian workers employed in the construction, food processing/packaging, and retail industries in Northern England. The posted workers worked in construction: most had spent less than half a year in the UK. Six of them had been posted more than once to the UK, and during their last posting, four of them had also been employed by an agency. The agency workers had lived in the UK for between one to ten years. Some of them had worked in various industries and workplaces

employed through several employment agencies, whereas others were employed by in-house agencies to work in the same workplace, e.g., the food processing factory. Most posted and agency workers had previously worked in other EU countries, predominantly Germany, the Netherlands, France, and Italy.

The interviews consisted of semi-structured questions on the informants' socio-economic background and open-ended questions about the migrant workers' recruitment and employment experiences as well as their access to social protection. This article considers mobile EU workers as both migrants and workers (Alberti et al. 2013) by considering their statuses as temporary migrants and precarious workers. The analytical approach is that of methodological transnationalism (Amelina, Faist 2012), which focuses on the dynamics of cross-border labor mobility to understand the level of access to labor and social rights of temporary EU workers.

POSTING AND AGENCY WORK IN THE UK

The UK transposed the PWD simply by removing jurisdiction clauses and including posted workers in its labor legislation. Since then, it has been among the main receiving countries for posted workers attracting around 50,000 posted workers yearly (De Wispelaere, Pacolet 2018), mainly from Eastern and Southern Europe. The use of posted workers corresponds to a growing demand for labor and specific skills, particularly in the construction sector, which has seen an increase in the number of large-scale construction projects as a result of changes in the UK's emissions legislation (which has led to the closure of several old power plants and the commission of new ones) as well as an aging workforce. Thus, posted workers during our fieldwork were found in large construction sites, where the subcontracting chain reached up to twenty-seven companies, both foreign and domestic, all operating simultaneously. Posted workers were usually found at the end of the subcontracting chain hired by the companies that were executing parts of the project. Most of them were employed by engineering construction companies in jobs like welders or fork lifters, and a few in civil engineering construction, specializing in the operation of heavy machinery. As a result of the National Agreement for Engineering Construction Industry (NAECI 2013–2015), posted workers in these construction sites constituted twenty percent of the total workforce on-site or 100–120 posted workers in workplaces of 500–600 workers.

Agency work, on the other hand, focuses on the temporary service provision and the supply of a flexible labor force. Its regulation has been negotiated at both the national level and at the EU level. The UK passed the TAWD only after a bilateral agreement between trade unions and employer associations was reached on a period of twelve weeks of flexibility before granting agency workers equal treatment, which was also included in the 2008 EU Directive and their national Agency Work Regulation of 2010. A myriad of contractual arrangements is used by temporary

work agencies that aim to circumvent regulations creating different statuses and categories for agency workers and making estimates on their numbers in the British labor market complicated (Forde and Slater 2014). Estimates based on the definition of agency workers as someone who provides services in a workplace but is contracted by an intermediate agency indicate growing numbers in the last five years up to 950,000 in 2018 (Clarke, Cominetti 2019), more than half in the construction sector, followed by wholesale and retail, business and hospitality (Judge 2018). Although it is not clear how many of these agency workers are migrants, their share is considered to vary between 70 to 100 percent depending on the region (Association of Labour Providers 2016).

The temporary agency workers interviewed worked in different low-skill, low-wage industries, mainly food processing, packaging and retail, but they had previous temporary work experience in construction, agriculture, cleaning, and other services. Two types of temporary work agencies recruited them. The first kind were in-house agencies, which were exclusively working for one company with offices located in the workplace and which recruited temporary workers on behalf of the employer for a period of three months to one year or more before some of these workers were offered direct employment. The second type were temporary work agencies that recruited workers for various user companies.

TEMPORARY EU WORKERS' PATHWAYS

EU citizens can move freely between the Member States and seek employment opportunities within the common European market, including the UK. Despite this freedom of mobility, their migration pathways are shaped by their migration motives, the way they access the host country's labor market, and the sectors in which they are employed. This research focused on temporary EU workers to the UK employed in so-called low-skill, low-wage industries, and we identified two main pathways, namely posted work and temporary agency work.

Our findings indicate that not all EU workers intend to migrate. Posted work as a pathway is chosen because mobility is temporary and provides the opportunity to maintain continuous employment with home-based employers. Sectors like construction are project-based and the construction workers interviewed were commonly employed under open-ended discontinuous contracts. To be paid continuously, workers under such contracts routinely accept assignments across their own country or abroad. As posted workers, they could come to another EU country for a defined period on assignment and return to their home country once the job is finished. This arrangement made temporary mobility acceptable because it allowed workers to return home periodically during the posting assignment and altogether once that assignment was completed. Workers with families back home cherished such opportunities, as they did not want to leave in the first place but

were constrained by lack of employment at home: “It is simply that you have to work and if your country does not give you work, you have to move to wherever. It is not fun to work outside your country, nor to work far from your home, but it is what you get” (Hernández, Spanish posted worker, mechanic).

A few EU workers used posted work as a strategy to enter and navigate the host country labor market. They did not need to search for employment or arrange travel and lodge in a foreign country; the employer provided the work and made the necessary travel and accommodation arrangements. Most workers interviewed moved as a team from one construction site to another, making it easier to relocate, especially for non-English speakers. Four Spanish posted workers told us about their plans to undergo the local skill certification process, apply and be hired by a British company, which they eventually did. Once they became familiar with the local labor market and established contacts and/or a network, they were, thus, able to navigate the British labor market, quit the posting job, and find direct and more long-term employment with a UK-based employer.

EU workers that chose the pathway of temporary agency work, on the other hand, all intended to migrate. They had moved to the UK, either in search of better employment opportunities or to join their families. Upon arrival, they sought ways to access the British labor market and contacted temporary work agencies through friends or the internet. Few agency workers intended employment abroad to be temporary, just to earn some money and return home to their families. One hyper-mobile agency worker told us about his temporary labor mobility from Poland to multiple EU countries such as France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, UK, doing diverse jobs in different sectors. Despite their skills, interviewed temporary agency workers were all employed in so-called low-skill, low-wage industries, such as food processing/packaging and retail industries and had also worked in construction, agriculture, cleaning, and other services.

Most agency workers, like the Spanish posted workers mentioned above, used temporary work agencies as a stepping stone to enter the British labor market until they found long-term employment. For example, Jānis, a Latvian worker who had come to the UK eight years earlier, had found his first job via a temporary work agency serving food in a hospital, then he found an hourly paid job via an in-house agency in a food factory, and after working there for two years was offered a full-time permanent job.

TEMPORARY EU WORKERS’ LABOR RIGHTS

Posted workers and temporary agency workers are highly vulnerable to exploitation. The combination of temporariness with cross-border mobility and low-skill, low-wage employment situates them into the most precarious segment of the host country’s labor market, where labor rights are not always protected.

In the case of posted work, foreign subcontractors operating in the UK or elsewhere in the EU have used the competitive advantage of employing workers from lower-income countries to provide services at lower costs by paying posted workers less than local workers (Berntsen, Lillie 2015; Cremers 2011). Several workers reported being paid less than local workers in the first site, even though both sites were operating under CBA pay rates and workplace trade union representatives actively worked to enforce equal terms and conditions across the subcontracting chain. Workers posted in the same site also reported other irregularities such as double books: "This [Spanish] company wanted to work here in the UK because Spain is going through bad times [...] They told me to open a British and a Spanish bank account [...] One for taxed money and the other for black money. [...] So, we would receive part of the salary in black" (Cervantes, Spanish posted worker, welder).

The same company eventually did not pay their workers for fifty days. Posted workers struggled to have their rights enforced until they sought the support of the unions in the workplace. Their company was eventually fired from the project, and the workers were re-hired by another subcontractor, who paid them properly. A Slovenian worker working for another subcontractor in the same site was not so "lucky." He also reported his employer to the trade unions in the workplace for underpaying him and his colleagues. He soon after left the workplace, officially resigning. There was a strong suspicion that the worker was pressured to quit.

Fear of employer retaliation was mentioned by participants and confirmed by trade unions, who told us that posted workers were often faced either implicitly or explicitly with the pressure to comply with poorer terms and working conditions under the threat of losing their jobs, suggesting they are quite vulnerable in their dependence to their posting employers. These companies are the main, if not the only employer back home, which makes workers' dependency higher. As Cervantes explained: "[...] They [workers] are afraid of being fired because in Spain there are no jobs. [...] So, they are afraid of losing their jobs." Even when some workers overcome the fear of job loss by reporting the companies and asking for trade union support to achieve equal pay, the outcome is not always in their favor as the experience of the Slovenian posted worker mentioned earlier illustrates, which might also explain why some posted workers decide not to claim their labor rights. In other words, their temporary employment abroad and their continuous employment relation with the posting employer both abroad and at home increases their vulnerability and leaves them in a situation of perpetual precarity.

Even in the case of temporary agency workers, there are high levels of precarity. Despite their wish to move from temporary to standard employment, the shift, when it happens, is possible after long periods of time. Some were still employed as temporary agency workers, and all those who had eventually received one-year or permanent contracts did not shift to the more standard contractual arrangements right after the legally required twelve weeks of working for the same user company, but at least a few months if not one or two years later. The workers who had already

received permanent contracts did not comment on the delay. A manager we interviewed in a food factory said that they rely on temporary agency work when there is a need but also strategically to cover extensively or exclusively certain roles (cf. Judge 2018). Longer-term employment was offered to a few after extended periods of temporary work and after they demonstrated their “skills and commitment”:

Some people are on the agency for longer because it takes longer for them to catch up or be able to do the same job as other people. But everyone gets the opportunity to show, and the majority of the time, they do get up to that standard because everyone wants a permanent job. [...] Obviously, the people that have been here the longest would like to be rewarded with a permanent job. But sometimes, they just need to show that little bit of effort that is needed. (British food factory manager)

Both temporary agency workers and user companies use recruitment via temporary agencies as a steppingstone to direct employment; however, user companies also use the flexibility provided by temporary agency work to meet their needs without necessarily delivering on the promise of direct employment, which puts temporary agency workers in an insecure position.

There is an important difference between in-house agencies and the ones that provide temporary services to multiple user companies. Workers recruited by in-house agencies were more likely to be eventually hired directly by the user company than the others. In the first case, the relation between the workers and the agency was more exclusive, terms and conditions were commonly respected. They also assisted with workers’ transition to direct employment. In the second case, workers’ relation with the temporary agencies was quite weak. Sometimes they had registered with more than one agency and accepted temporary employment with whoever would offer work first.

The second category of temporary agency workers also had more issues with underpayment or delays in receiving their wages. One worker explained how he had not been paid for three weeks and was obliged to request the Citizens Advice Bureau’s assistance:

I just did not get my salary for two weeks, and it is the third week today ... All the time, they tell me, “we did not receive e-mail.” [...] I spoke with the general manager [of the company] today, she showed me all the e-mails sent to the [temporary work] agency. After tomorrow till 8 o’clock, if I do not get money, I am going to Citizens Advice Bureau. I cannot pay rent – three weeks I am working for free. (Wojciech, Polish agency worker)

Another worker shared a more extreme experience with an agency that did not provide any contracts, paid minimum rates, deducted all expenses like travel, equipment, and work gear, informed him only one hour prior he had to go somewhere for

work, and provided no support or directions, and if he was late, retracted the offer and did not pay him (Tomasz, Polish agency worker).

While issues with payments are perhaps the main labor right infringement for both posted and agency workers, they are also exposed to poorer working conditions and intensive long work schedules combined with the uncertainty of job duration (cf. Alberti, Danaj 2017; Vah Jevšnik, Rogelja 2018). Both posted and agency workers interviewed often did not know where they would be sent until the very last moment (for agency workers, sometimes early in the morning of the same day) or for how long they would be on each assignment. Long working days were also quite common. One posted worker told us he had been working sixty-eight hours and seven days a week (Czaykowski, Polish posted worker), several agency workers reported working twelve hours per day at times, and one worker reported having worked up to sixteen hours per day, “sometimes one [working] day is ten hours, sometimes sixteen hours, it is hard to say. Sometimes it is five days a week, sometimes seven” (Wojciech, Polish agency worker).

Posted and temporary agency workers in low-skill and low-wage industries who choose these temporary mobility pathways are exposed to high risks of exploitation. The experiences of the EU mobile workers are, thus, characterized by the dependence on the posting companies or the temporary work agencies for access to the host country’s labor market, insecurity about the duration of their employment, and unequal terms and conditions.

TEMPORARY EU WORKERS’ WELFARE ACCESS AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

The two pathways of posted work and temporary agency work diverge on the access to the host country’s welfare system: EU posted workers are bound to the social protection system of the sending country, where they can exercise their social rights, whereas temporary agency workers should have access to the host country’s welfare regime and exercise their social rights there.

Even though posted workers work in another country during the posting assignment, they continue to be covered by the social protection system and legislation of the EU country in which they habitually work (Regulation (EC) No 883/2004). During the posting assignment, workers’ social contributions should continue to be paid in the home country; hence potential claims are also to be made in that country. Portable document A1 forms (PDs A1) evidence workers’ affiliation to the social security system of the sending country. However, different EU Member States have different rules of issuing PDs A1 and sometimes it is enough for companies to submit within the fiscal year. Posted workers are not always aware of their right to this document, and sometimes they might accept the employer’s claim that they continue to be covered by the social protection system at home without any guarantee contributions are actually paid. The industrial relations literature has already provided evidence of

regulatory evasion or fraud, e.g., through letterbox companies or using the same PD A1 for various workers or multiple times (Berntsen, Lillie 2015).

Most posted workers find out whether their employers have paid social security contributions and the extent of their social protection only when they want to claim a benefit. The workers interviewed during the fieldwork were employed mainly by the same employer for several years. Therefore, they tend to know whether their employers were abiding by their social protection obligations. As one said:

Yes, everything is paid. I insist on that because you go home and there is no work, and you go to unemployment, you are f*** if it is not right. [...] The company I work for they are very good, it is all done, and it has to be done. [...] Your terms of employment tell you your basic rights and your holiday entitlements, sick pay, time off and all the usual stuff that goes into employment. And you sign the bottom of that, and it is like a contract. (Joyce, Irish posted worker 360 slew teleporter driver)

Workers were also aware of the limitations of their social protection while posted. When asked about paid holidays, all responded that they would go on holiday when the posting job was finished. Yet, for those on discontinuous contracts, that meant to go on unemployment benefits and unpaid holidays. During our fieldwork, we did not have any cases of injuries. The literature, however, informs of cases of unpaid social security contributions and health insurance, which have been discovered under grave circumstances, such as accidents at work, when workers had to personally cover medical expenses or were not entitled to disability benefit. (See Danaj, Zólyomi 2018; Vah Jevšnik, Rogelja 2018.)

Different from posted workers, agency workers' social security contributions were paid into the British welfare system. Yet, their access to welfare entitlements depended on the kind of temporary work agency they were recruited from and the period of their employment. Those working for an in-house temporary work agency did not have problems with payments of social contributions. The long-standing relationship between the company and the agency facilitated their access and protection of social rights. The above-mentioned Latvian worker who had shifted from temporary agency work to permanent employment, for example, said there was no difference to his social contributions between the period he was on an hourly paid contract and the permanent one.

However, EU migrant workers are not always aware of their social rights (Ehata, Seeleib-Kaiser 2017). This lack of awareness was the case for all agency workers interviewed. When asked about whether social security contributions were paid for them, two workers said that they did not know and, at the same time, dismissed the question as irrelevant. As one of them put it, "I do not know if I have got one [health insurance], I don't really care. I am healthy, I am alright, for now" (Ugne, Lithuanian food factory agency worker). The inattentiveness to social and health care contributions can be explained by the lack of knowledge of their entitlements combined

with a lack of belongingness caused by their temporariness and hyper-mobility across borders and workplaces, which incline these workers to concentrate their efforts in making it in the host country labor market, rather than invest in institutional support in case they might not.

The less work temporary agency workers could do, the more limited their access to welfare was. Three temporary agency workers interviewed told us that there were times when they did not work enough hours to make a living and struggled to survive. Two had even been homeless for intermittent periods. They had not applied for or obtained any form of unemployment benefit and relied on friends, were homeless or returned home during that time. One of them eventually found a permanent job, which he lost due to lengthy health problems. Because of his full-time job, he was able to receive the job seeker's allowance and full housing benefits. Upon recovery, he became an agency worker again and applied for a change of address closer to work. However, the city council denied his request and revoked the housing benefit, which forced him to ask for support from the Citizens Advice Bureau (Wojciech, Polish agency worker). Wojciech's story demonstrates how vulnerable and insecure temporary EU workers can be, a circumstance that can only be exacerbated by the increasing conditionality criteria that restrict access to EU jobseekers from the new British Universal Credit system in the wake of Brexit (Dwyer et al. 2019).

Posted workers and temporary agency workers differ in their access to welfare. The former continues to be covered by the sending country legislation, while the second by the host country. Their experiences indicate that they are not always aware of their social rights and rely on the posting employers or temporary work agencies to abide by their social security obligations, whether in the home or host country. Longer periods of employment were perceived in both cases as a form of reliability on the employers' commitment to their obligations; however, the most transient and precarious workers were also most likely to be excluded from welfare support.

CONCLUSION

This article recounts the mobility pathways of temporary EU workers, namely, posted and temporary agency workers. It shows how individual motivations, temporariness, hyper-mobility and recruitment via labor market intermediaries in low-skill, low-wage industries affect migrants' labor market outcomes and access to social rights and benefits in the UK. For most posted workers, migration is not the aim, employment is, whereas, for the temporary agency workers, long-term or permanent stay in the host country is the objective. Our findings contribute to the literature that focuses on mobile workers' barriers and differential treatment (Alberti, Danaj 2017; Andrijasevic, Sacchetto 2016; Lillie 2016; Marques et al. 2021) by exposing temporary EU mobile workers' vulnerabilities in terms of their labor and social rights.

Despite temporary EU migrant workers' willingness to accept flexible contractual arrangements (McCollum, Findlay 2015) and make the most of posting and temporary agency work as mobility pathways, our findings indicate this is a constrained choice dictated by the need to generate income, maintain ties with the home country, and access the host country labor market. Their temporary migration undermines any effective way to freely negotiate their position with the employers (Andrijasevic, Sacchetto 2016; Lillie 2016) and makes workers vulnerable to exploitation.

Their mobility pathways also condition access to welfare. Posted workers are covered by the sending country's legislation, whereas agency workers' access to the host country's welfare system depends on the duration of their employment. The more transient their employment and the less time they spent in the host country, the less access they have to social benefits. Temporary employment translates into a lack of attention to their social welfare status and limited knowledge and awareness about their labor and social rights (cf. Ehata, Seeleib Kaiser 2017).

This study was conducted when the UK was a full EU Member State. The experiences of temporary EU migrants working in low-skill, low-wage industries in the UK indicate that temporary mobility pathways such as posting and temporary agency work produce and sustain inequalities that strongly challenge the equal rights presupposition of EU citizenship (Berntsen, Lillie 2015; Marques et al. 2021). The UK's decision to leave the EU will further restrict worker mobility from EU countries under conditions similar to the point-based criteria applied to third-country nationals. Bilateral or framework agreements, perhaps in particular sectors, might lead to other forms of temporary mobility, such as seasonal work, circular migration, or a quotas system. These pathways might also lead to various forms of differentiation and discrimination, like those experienced by third-country nationals across the EU, which are considered a serious threat to labor standards for all workers in the country (Lindstrom 2019; Portes 2016).

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POVZETEK

MOBILNOST ZNOTRAJ EU: ZAPOSLOTVENE IN SOCIALNOZDRAVSTVENE IZKUŠNJE ZAČASNIH DELAVCEV IZ EU V VELIKI BRITANiji

Sonila DANAJ, Erka ÇARO

Članek obravnava mobilnost začasnih delavcev iz EU in vpliv transnacionalne začasne mobilnosti na njihov uspeh na trgu dela ter dostop do socialnih pravic in ugodnosti. Z analizo petinpetdesetih poglobljenih intervjujev z delavci iz EU na začasnem delu, s socialnimi partnerji in z vodilnimi kadri v Združenem kraljestvu sta avtorici izluščili dva glavna načina zaposlovanja migrantov – napoteno delo in začasno agencijsko delo. Čeprav naj bi bil skupni evropski trg dela načelno brez meja, je dostop do trga dela in socialnih pravic v državah gostiteljicah odvisen predvsem od zaposlitvenega statusa in kriterijev nacionalnega socialnega skrbstva, kar se odraža v različnih življenjskih izkušnjah delavcev.

Ugotovitve raziskave kažejo, da gre pri njihovi pripravljenosti na začasno delo in želji po čim večjem izkoristku napotenega oziroma začasnega agencijskega dela kot dveh poti mobilnosti, pravzaprav za omejeno izbiro. Narekujejo jo potreba po zaslužku, ohranjanju vezi z domovino, kakor tudi potreba po vstopu na trg dela v državi gostiteljici. V teh okoliščinah so delavci bolj dovzetni za izkoriščanje, njihova mobilnost pa je odvisna od njihovega dostopa do socialnega skrbstva. Napotene delavce varuje zakonodaja države pošiljateljice, za agencijske delavce pa je dostop do socialnih ugodnosti države gostiteljice odvisen predvsem od trajanja njihove zaposlitve. Njihov začasni zaposlitveni status se odraža v pomanjkanju pozornosti, ki jo namenjajo svojemu statusu v sistemu socialne oskrbe, kakor tudi v njihovem pomanjkljivem poznavanju svojih delavskih in socialnih pravic. Odločitev Združenega kraljestva, da izstopi iz EU, bo pod pogoji, podobnim točkovnim merilom, ki se uporabljajo za državljane tretjih držav, dodatno omejila mobilnost delavcev iz držav EU, kar lahko privede do različnih oblik razlikovanja in diskriminacije.

ZAČETKI DOPOLNILNEGA POUKA SLOVENSKEGA JEZIKA IN KULTURE V NEMČIJI V 20. STOLETJU

Marijanca Ajša VIŽINTIN¹

COBISS 1.02

IZVLEČEK

Začetki dopolnilnega pouka slovenskega jezika in kulture v Nemčiji v 20. stoletju

Članek se ukvarja z organiziranim dopolnilnim poukom slovenskega jezika in kulture, ki se je med slovenskimi izseljenci in izseljenkami v Nemčiji začel pred skoraj sto leti. Prvi tečajji so bili organizirani že v obdobju med prvo in drugo svetovno vojno, ponovno pa vzpostavljeni po podpisu bilateralne pogodbe med Nemčijo in Jugoslavijo (1968). Avtorica poudarja, da so poleg ugodnih političnih, družbenih in ekonomskih razmer v izvorni in ciljni državi za ohranjanje maternega jezika in ustanavljanje društev nujni posameznice in posamezniki, ki premagujejo birokratske ovire ter omogočajo organizacijo in izvajanje dopolnilnega pouka.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: Slovenke, Slovenci v Nemčiji, dopolnilni pouk slovenščine, ekonomski migranti

ABSTRACT

The Beginnings of Mother Tongue Lessons of Slovenian Language and Culture in Germany in the Twentieth Century

This paper focuses on mother tongue lessons of Slovenian language and culture in Germany, which began almost one hundred years ago. They were first organized between World War I and World War II and later re-established after the signing of the bilateral agreement between Germany and Yugoslavia (1968). While favorable political, social, and economic circumstances in the country of origin and in the country of destination are important, the paper emphasizes that individuals are crucial. Individuals overcome bureaucratic obstacles and enable the beginning and implementation of mother tongue lessons of Slovenian language and culture for Slovenian emigrants.

KEYWORDS: Slovenians in Germany, Slovenian mother tongue and culture lessons, economic migrants

¹ Dr. znanosti na področju poučevanja; znanstvena sodelavka, ZRC SAZU, Inštitut za slovensko izseljenstvo in migracije, Novi trg 2, SI-1000 Ljubljana; marijanca-ajsa.vizintin@zrc-sazu.si; pridr. prof., Univerza v Novi Gorici; <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5463-8796>.

UVOD¹

Finančna, materialna in organizacijska podpora dopolnilnega pouka slovenskega jezika in kulture v 21. stoletju ni edinstven pojav samostojne Republike Slovenije. Skoraj stoletni neprekinjeni proces je prekinila druga svetovna vojna, po njej pa negotovi čas, zaznamovan s prisilnimi migracijami in z vzpostavljanjem novih državnih meja. Prve tečaje slovenščine so na severu Nemčije, na katero se osredotoča pričujoči prispevek, organizirali že v času med prvo in drugo svetovno vojno, sprva v samoorganizaciji nemškega duhovnika Božidarja Tensunderna, pozneje s podporo Kraljevine Jugoslavije (Tensundern 1973; Werner 1985; Drnovšek 2012). Pouk je bil ponovno vzpostavljen v času federativne ljudske Republike, pozneje Socialistične federativne republike Jugoslavije (v nadaljevanju: Jugoslavije) v drugi polovici 20. stoletja. Nemčija in Jugoslavija sta leta 1968 podpisali sporazum o zaposlovanju in varstvu delavcev in delavk. Ti so v Nemčijo odhajali kot zdomci, zdomke (delavci, delavke na začasnem delu v tujini), a se je začasnost za večino prevesila v večdesetletno izseljenstvo ali trajno izselitev (Štumberger 2005; Brunnbauer 2009; Toš 2014; Vižintin 2016; Wörsdörfer 2017).

Na izseljevanje in povezovanje ter organizirano delovanje – tako v izvorni kot ciljni državi – vplivajo številni politični, ekonomski in družbeni vidiki (Lukšič Hacin 2018). Večji (ekonomski) selitveni tokovi, organizirani in spodbujani z bilateralnimi sporazumi, so v tujini vplivali tudi na večje število (novo)ustanovljenih društev, organizirani dopolnilni pouk slovenščine in ustanavljanje slovenskih katoliških misij. Podpora izvorne države in uradna naklonjenost države priselitve nista dovolj. Potrebujemo iznajdljive in vztrajne slovenske izseljenke, izseljence, ki so pripravljene del svojega zasebnega življenja posvetiti ohranjanju slovenskega jezika in kulture. Kot primer navajam Slovensko kulturno-športno društvo Drava Augsburg (v nadaljevanju društvo Drava Augsburg). S podobno mislečimi sta ga leta 1979, ko so se njune bivanjske razmere v Nemčiji izboljšale, ustanovila Jana in Franc Kolman.² Z ustanovitvijo društva se je začel izvajati tudi dopolnilni pouk slovenskega jezika in kulture. Oboje leta 2021 v Augsburgu še vedno deluje.

1 Prispevek je nastal v okviru raziskovalnega programa »Narodna in kulturna identiteta slovenskega izseljenstva v kontekstu raziskovanja migracij« (P5-0070) in temeljnega raziskovalnega projekta »Socialna, gospodarska in kulturna zgodovina slovenskega izseljenstva« (1945–91) (J5-8246), ki sta ga financirala Javna agencija za raziskovalno dejavnost RS in Ministrstvo za izobraževanje, znanost in šport RS.

2 Življenjska zgodba Jane in Franca Kolman je bila posneta v okviru projekta »Socialna, gospodarska in kulturna zgodovina slovenskega izseljenstva (1945–91)«; celotno življenjsko zgodbo glej v: Milharčič Hladnik, Vižintin (2020: 308–340).

SLOVENSKO IZSELJEVANJE IN ORGANIZIRANOST V NEMŠKIH DEŽELAH NA ZAČETKU 20. STOLETJA

Izseljevanje iz slovenskih dežel proti nemškim je bilo organizirano že v Avstro-Ogrski (Kalc, Milharčič Hladnik, Žitnik Serafin 2020), izseljevali so se predvsem revnejši prebivalci, prebivalke Štajerske in Kranjske. Odhajajoče iz Trbovelj, Hrastnika, Zagorja so vodili nemški agenti; odhajali so v dveh valovih (1880–1888 in 1903–1906) in se v Nemčiji strnjeno naseljevali (Drnovšek 2012: 139–184).

Prvi priseljenci so prišli že v osemdesetih letih preteklega stoletja in najstarejši slovenski rudar, ki ga zasledimo v obdelanem gradivu, se je zaposlil kot kopač v kraljevem rudniku pri Wanne-Eickel leta 1878. [...] Često so izseljenci odšli v Nemčijo s trdnim namenom, da se po določenem času s prihranjenim denarjem vrnejo v domovino in si doma kupijo kmetijo. Nekateri so porabili prihranjeni denar za pot v ZDA, kamor so sledili sorodnikom in znancem, večinoma pa so ostali v Nemčiji in le malo jih je uresničilo svoj prvotni namen. (Werner 1985: 72)

Sezonski delavke in delavci, ki so organizirano odhajali iz Prekmurja, so se zaposlovali v kmetijstvu. Okoli 25.000 izseljenih Slovenk, Slovencev v Porurju je leta 1899 prvi uradno obiskal Janez Evangelist Krek. Prvo slovensko pevsko društvo z imenom Ilirija je bilo leta 1898 ustanovljeno v kraju Essen-Borbeck. Društva so bila liberalno in narodnjaško usmerjena, političnih ambicij (v nasprotju s poljskimi) niso imela. Na prehodu v 20. stoletje so sledile ustanovitve katoliških društev sv. Barbare; pred prvo svetovno vojno je bilo avstrijskih in slovenskih društev 42 (Werner 1985: 120).

Prva tečaja slovenskega jezika je nemški duhovnik Božidar Tensundern, ki se je naučil slovensko, leta 1926 organiziral v Gladbecku, in sicer »popoldne ob 16. uri dvakrat na teden« kar v svojem stanovanju, leta 1927 pa v Meerbecku (Tensundern 1973: 38). Otroke je učil peti slovenske pesmi, organiziral je izlete v domovino in javne dogodke v slovenskem jeziku: dogodka v Gladbecku se je leta 1928 udeležilo do 500 ljudi, med njimi največ Slovencev. O tem so pisali tako nemški kot slovenski časniki v domovini (Tensundern 1973: 40; Drnovšek 2012: 156). Slovenska šola za vestfalske Slovence, ki so bili skoraj »vsi rudarji« (Tensundern 1973: 9; Werner 1985: 81; Drnovšek 2012: 146), je bila tako priljubljena, da so otroci, ker ni bilo dovolj stolov, sedeli kar na tleh. Včasih so manjkali pri drugih obveznostih, kar je pri nekaterih povzročalo skrb, a Božidar Tensundern je z nemškega ministrstva za prosveto dobil uradni odgovor in zahvalo za svoje delovanje. Podpore pri organizaciji slovenske šole je nemško ministrstvo za prosveto izrazilo na podlagi njihovih izkušenj z organizacijo šol za nemške izseljence v Braziliji:³

3 Med letoma 1800 in 1950 se je v Brazilijo priselilo okoli pet milijonov ljudi, med njimi dva milijona iz Portugalske, 1,5 milijona iz Italije, 600.000 iz Španije, 300.000 iz Nemčije in 190.000 z Japonske (Knauf 2010: 147).

Martin Jazbec iz Bauer-Scholvena je prosil svojega učitelja, naj mu oprostí dve zamujeni uri, da se bo mogel udeležiti pouka v slovenski šoli v Gladbecku. Učitelj se je začudil in celo ustrašil in kar ni mogel verjeti, da bi bila slovenska šola sredi Nemčije! Kako je to mogoče? Takoj je vprašal ministrstvo prosvete v Berlinu, kako je s slovensko šolo v Gladbecku. Prosvetni minister pa je meni odgovoril: »Hvaležni smo vam, da skrbite za slovenske otroke in jih učite materinega jezika. Nemci imamo v Braziliji nemške šole za nemške otroke.« (Tensundern 1973: 38–39)

Božidar Tensundern ni edini prepoznaval, da otroci slovenskih staršev »naglo pozabljajo materinščino,« nekateri pa slovenščino »samo še lomijo« (Drnovšek 2012: 148, 155). Dejavnosti za ohranjanje jezika, povezovanje in društveno delovanje je spodbujala tudi Kraljevina Jugoslavija. Društva je upravljal Jugoslovanski izseljeniški odbor, delila pa so se na dve struji: Zveza jugoslovanskih katoliških društev je leta 1938 štela 34 društev, Zveza jugoslovanskih delavskih in podpornih društev pa 52 društev, od tega 16 ženskih; tretja možnost so bila društva, naklonjena avstrijskemu duhu.

K odprtju slovenskih izseljenjskih knjižnic v Porurju je najbolj pripomogel izseljenjski komisar Đuro Berislav Deželić: leta 1931 so bile glavne knjižnice v krajih Essen-Stoppenberg, Gladbeck, Moers-Meerbeck in Düsseldorf. Deželić je »v Beogradu predlagal, da bi se organizirali stalni enoletni tečaji« za otroke in odrasle (Drnovšek 2012: 155). In res so leta 1931 pod okriljem Kraljevine Jugoslavije v Nemčiji organizirali osem tečajev slovenščine: v Gladbecku dva, v krajih Homberg-Hochheide, Marl, Moers-Meerbeck, Osterfeld, Recklinghausen-Suderwich in Gerthe po enega. Tečaje je obiskovalo 173 otrok. Tečaje so vodili člani Jugoslovanskega katoliškega društva Franjo Pokovec, Valentin Kovač, Mihajlo Zupanc, Franjo Čebin, Ivan Lindič, Rudolf Povše, Franjo Čater in Jakob Šteh, iz Jugoslovanskega delavskega in podpornega društva pa Ivan Mažgon, Avgust Korošec, Franjo Mlakarn in Josip Kučnik (Deželić v Drnovšek 2012: 158). V Porurju je bilo mogoče kupiti tri slovenske časopise: *Naš zvon*, ki je predstavljal katoliško in liberalno smer, *Rafael*, ki je bil čisto cerkveno usmerjeni časopis, ter *Domovino*, ki je bila podobna nemškemu časopisu *Der Landbote* (Werner 1985: 128).

Od maja 1938 do konca druge svetovne vojne je nacistična oblast tečaje slovenščine prepovedala, prekinjeno je bilo tudi društveno delovanje. Po drugi svetovni vojni so se Slovenke, Slovenci razselili v druge evropske države, v Severno Ameriko, nekateri so se vrnili v domovino, le malo jih je ostalo (Tensundern 1973: 11; Werner 1985: 113).⁴ Društveno življenje je »prenehalo – vse je postalo tiho in mirno – nastala je huda borba za vsakdanji kruh, stanovanje, delo«. Po vojni »so prihajali v

4 Podobno so se razselili tudi drugi, npr. Poljakinje, Poljaki že v dvajsetih letih 20. stol. Tretjina se je vrnila na Poljsko, tretjina se je izselila v Francijo, Belgijo ali v ZDA (Werner 1985: 10, 11). Nemčija, iz katere je zaradi krize leta 1923 odšlo tudi 115.000 Nemk in Nemcev, je ostala država izseljevanja in priseljevanja. Nizozemska, ki je bila med prvo svetovno vojno nevtralna, je bila cilj deset tisočim izseljenim iz Nemčije, mlada dekleta so se zaposlovala kot služkinje; množično pa so se priseljevali iz Poljske, Rusije (Drnovšek 2012: 142).

Nemčijo Slovenci na »črno«, pozneje pa so prihajali legalno kot delavci (Gastarbeiter) rudarji, trgovci, natakarji, bolničarke, otroške negovalke, rokodelci, uradniki, inženirji, zdravniki,« je zapisal Božidar Tensundern (1973: 165–167).

SLOVENSKE IZSELJENKE, IZSELJENCI V DRUGI POLOVICI 20. STOLETJA IN SKRIB DOMOVINE ZANJE

Migracije iz slovenskega prostora so po drugi svetovni vojni sprva zaznamovali begunke in begunci, pregnane in razseljene osebe. Poleg oseb slovenskega so bile med njimi tudi osebe nemškega in italijanskega izvora, hkrati pa so se v Slovenijo postopno vračali deportirani in izgnani (Lukšič Hacin 2018: 62). Kompleksnost migracijskih procesov ponazarja

primer povojnih beguncev v avstrijskih taboriščih, ki so pozneje odšli v Avstralijo, [in] pokaže, kako je posameznik Slovenijo zapustil iz t. i. političnih razlogov, v Avstralijo pa je prišel iz ekonomskih razlogov, ter obratno, ko so številni t. i. prebežniki iz druge polovice petdesetih let 20. stoletja odhajali z namenom zaposlovanja, a so bili zaradi nelegalnega prehoda meje kar nekaj časa razumljeni kot del politične emigracije. (Lukšič Hacin 2018: 67)

Nezakonito izseljevanje pred letom 1963, ko je Jugoslavija uradno odprla meje, se je legaliziralo z meddržavnimi sporazumi in povečevalo do leta 1973. Sporazume o zaposlovanju in varstvu delavk, delavcev je Nemčija z Italijo podpisala leta 1955, s Španijo in z Grčijo leta 1960, s Turčijo leta 1961, z Marokom leta 1963, s Portugalsko in Tunizijo leta 1965 (Leggewie 2010: 242). Jugoslavija je med letoma 1950 in 1979 podpisala 17 dvostranskih sporazumov o socialni varnosti. Na njihovi podlagi je bilo zaposlovanje v drugih državah ne le legalno, ampak tudi organizirano: s Francijo, z Luksemburgom, Belgijo, Nizozemsko, s Češkoslovaško, z Madžarsko, Bolgarijo, Veliko Britanijo, s Poljsko, z Italijo, s Švico, z Avstrijo, s Švedsko, z ZR Nemčijo, Nemško demokratično republiko, Norveško, Dansko (Svetek 1985: 21–31). Z Nemčijo je bil sporazum podpisan leta 1968, veljati pa je začel leta 1969. Preden so migracije postale večinsko ekonomske in zakonite, so bile zaznamovane s prebežništvom; to izpričujejo tudi osebne življenjske zgodbe prebežnic, prebežnikov (Japelj Carone 2016; Milharčič Hladnik 2020):

Čeprav je treba migracije vedno razumeti v širšem socialnem, kulturnem in političnem kontekstu, pa lahko o kompleksnosti vzrokov in motivov ter o načinih odhajanja mladih največ izvemo iz osebnih pričevanja akterjev povojnih migracij na Slovenskem. Mladih ne smemo videti (zgolj) kot žrtve povojnih okoliščin, pač pa kot aktivne akterje in avtonomne odločevalce. Razlogi [...] so bili zunanji, a hkrati osebni in intimni; odločitve hipne ali preišljene; odhodi pa dolgo načrtovani ali zgolj korak v neznanu. (Milharčič Hladnik 2020: 163)

Ekonomske migracije proti Nemčiji, ki so se v drugi polovici 20. stoletja preselile na njen jug, so bile najprej poimenovane zdomstvo, šele pozneje izseljenstvo. Močan tok zaposlovanja v tujini se je »namesto v nameravano nekajletno preselitev pogosto prevesil v večletno ali tudi trajno« (Zupančič 2001: 293). Leta 1951 je bila v Jugoslaviji ustanovljena Slovenska izseljenska matica, ki je do leta 2011 sodelovala pri organizaciji več kot tisoč gostovanj slovenskih kulturnih skupin v Sloveniji in po vsem svetu (Rogelj 2011). Leta 1953 je prvič izšel letni zbornik *Slovenski izseljenski koledar*,⁵ leta 1954 so začeli izdajati mesečnik *Rodna gruda*. Za informiranje slovenskih zdomk, zdomcev so v Sloveniji izhajali posebni časopisi, nemške in belgijske radijske postaje pa so zanje oddajale poseben program. Skrb za slovenske izseljenke, izseljence in zdomke, zdomce je prevzela Socialistična zveza delovnega ljudstva (SZDL), v kateri je deloval Koordinacijski odbor za vprašanja naših delavcev na začasnem delu tujini. Leta 1975 je v Nemčiji delovalo pet društev (Olaj, Rupnik 1975), leta 1984 pa 28 društev z eno koordinacijo (Šabjan 1984).⁶ Za društva oz. klube so skrbele tudi organizacije SZDL iz posameznih slovenskih občin, društvo Triglav Stuttgart npr. »je uspešno sodelovalo od leta 1976 do leta 1990 z občino Kranj, nato pa z občino Maribor« (*SKUD Triglav Stuttgart ...* 2000: 18).

Slovenska društva v Zahodni Evropi so se med seboj povezovala in srečevala. O podpori iz Jugoslavije in izjemnem programu priča opis srečanja leta 1978 (Pogačnik idr. 1978: 38): na 6. srečanju slovenskih društev Zahodne Evrope 10. junija 1978 v Frankfurtu so bogat program začela športna tekmovanja (kegljanje, šah, namizni tenis). Sledil je kviz »Spoznavajmo svet in domovino«, ob katerem so nastopili ansambel Mojmirja Sepeta, Majda Potokar, Miha Baloh in Janez Hočevnar – Rifle. Po prevzemu listine o sodelovanju in kulturnem programu slovenskih društev iz Zahodne Evrope je na zabavi s plesom igral Plesni orkester RTV Ljubljana, peli so: Majda Sepe, Marjana Deržaj, Braco Koren, Janko Ropret, dirigiral je Jože Privšek. Program je spremljala razstava slovenskih knjig, umetniških del, ročnih del, prodajali so spominke, poskrbljeno je bilo za otroško varstvo in zdravniško službo.

Za slovenske izseljenke, izseljence je pred drugo svetovno vojno in po njej skrbelo tudi slovenska Katoliška cerkev. Leta 1960 je bila v Stuttgartu ustanovljena prva povojna slovenska župnija v Nemčiji, prvega binškošnega srečanja v Derendingenu pri Tübingenu se je 14. maja 1967 udeležilo 400–500 ljudi (Vižintin 2016). Slovenski

5 *Slovenski izseljenski koledar* je prvič izšel novembra 1953 (za leto 1954) kot naslednik *Ameriškega družinskega koledarja*, ki je v Združenih državah Amerike izhajal med letoma 1915 in 1950.

6 Koordinacijski odbor slovenskih društev Stuttgart, Triglav Stuttgart, Triglav Reutlingen, Triglav Nagold (Reutlingen), Kajuh Uhingen (Gammelshausen), Slovenija Ulm-Donau, Planina Ludwigsburg, Mura Besigheim in Heilbronn-Böckingen, Planinka Ravensburg, Zlatorog Schwäbisch Gmünd in Ruppertscofen, France Prešeren Mannheim, Triglav München, Lastovka Ingolstadt, Drava Augsburg, Slovensko kulturno društvo Erlagen, Simon Jenko Nürnberg, Sava Frankfurt, Bled Essen, Celje Grevenbroich, France Prešeren Burscheid, Maribor Hilden, Ljubljana Essen, Slovenski zvon Krefeld, Ljubljana Leverkusen, Slovenija Gütersloh, Rudar Dortmund, Slovenska beseda Hückelhoven, Slovenija Berlin (Šabjan 1984: 6–8).

župniji v Münchnu in Stuttgartu sta svoj pouk slovenščine, vrtec in dejavnosti (Bečan 2004; Štrubelj 2012: 24–25) organizirali še preden so se začela s podporo Jugoslavije ustanavljati društva in so bili v Nemčijo napoteni prvi učitelji, učiteljice t. i. slovenske šole. Maja 1973 so v Nemčiji slovenski duhovniki delovali v dvanajstih krajih (Tensundern 1973: 167–169). Duhovnike je povezovala Zveza slovenskih izseljenskih duhovnikov, vernike in vernice pa revija *Naša luč*. Najpomembnejša naloga duhovnikov in redovnic je bila skrb za evangelizacijo in podeljevanje zakramentov, ustanavljali pa so tudi jezikovne tečaje, slovenske knjižnice, revije, reševali socialne probleme in organizirali družabne prireditve.

Ko je leta 1973 Nemčijo zajela gospodarska kriza, je z odlokom prepovedala zaposlovanje tujih delavk, delavcev.⁷ Migracije so v obdobju 1974–1979 stagnirale, število priseljenih pa se ni zmanjšalo; nasprotno, s prenehanjem kroženja so se v Nemčijo priselile družine. V Baden-Württembergu so bili leta 1977 jugoslovanski delavci, delavke in njihove družine skupaj s turškimi najštevilčnejša priseljenjska skupina (Slavec 1982: 61).

Slovenska šola: Od podpore iz domovine do angažiranosti posameznic, posameznikov

Po letu 1970, ko so se v Nemčiji (in drugod) množično ustanavljala slovenska društva,⁸ se je pospešeno organiziral tudi dopolnilni pouk slovenščine. Leta 1971 je bil v Stuttgartu napoten učitelj Franc Sedmak, štiri leta pozneje so v Baden-Württembergu poučevale štiri učiteljice: Dragica Nunčič, Milica Pukl, Marija Kurent in Marija Stermecki; v Berlinu je poučevala Milena Skrt, v Münchnu Martina Vizjak, v Frankfurtu Romana Dolanc (Olaj, Rupnik 1975: 54–56). Jugoslavija »je skrbela glede njihovega bivanja v tujini, zlasti glede tega, da so bili čim bolj vezani na domovino. Skrbeli sta jih predvsem asimilacija in odtujitev, zato so podpirali izobraževanje zdomcev, predvsem njihovih otrok v maternem jeziku« (Čepič 2010: 410), slovenska dopolnilna šola je postala prostor srečevanj ter priložnost za nova poznanstva in stike. Leta 1978, ko je v Nemčiji delovalo 16 društev in je dopolnilni pouk slovenščine izvajalo 14 učiteljic,

7 Prelomnica je poudarjena tudi v Nemškem muzeju izseljevanja, ki obravnava zadnjih 300 let nemškega izseljevanja in priseljevanja. V prvem delu razstave so predstavljene življenjske zgodbe, izbrane med 7,2 milijona ljudi, ki so med letoma 1830 in 1974 zapustili pristanišče Bremerhaven. Leta 1973 so naslovnice časopisov oznanjale, da je Nemčija zaprla meje gostujočim delavkam, delavcem. Nemčija je znana kot dežela priseljevanja, a se iz nje tudi izseljujejo: v 21. stoletju se iz nje vsako leto izseli okoli 100.000 Nemk, Nemcev. Zaposlujejo se v Švici, Skandinaviji, Avstriji, ZDA in Avstraliji (Eick 2017: 6, [96–97]).

8 Slovenska društva, ki so se osamosvajala izpod okrilja jugoslovanskih društev, so se ob srečanjih predstavila v priložnostnih publikacijah, 8. srečanja v Frankfurtu (1978) se je npr. udeležilo 16 društev iz Nemčije, pet iz Francije, po tri iz Belgije in Nizozemske, po dve iz Švice in Avstrije, 11 iz Švedske (Pogačnik idr. 1978).

učiteljev,⁹ je v deželi Baden-Württemberg pouk obiskovalo 517 otrok (Pogačnik idr. 1978: 42–47; Slavec 1982: 83).

Kljub organizacijski in finančni podpori Jugoslavije društvenega delovanja in dopolnilnega pouka slovenščine ne bi bilo brez osebnega angažmaja staršev, ki so ob (napornem) vsakdanjiku svoje otroke vozili v slovensko šolo, nekateri tudi več deset kilometrov daleč. Dopolnilni pouk je bil organiziran v različnih jezikih jugoslovanskih narodov, da pa se je bilo treba za njegovo organizacijo v slovenščini ponekod bolj potruditi, ponazarja primer Jane in Franca Kolmana, ki sta se iz Sevnice preselila v Augsburg. Franc Kolman se je leta 1970 odločil za pot v Nemčijo, čeprav je imel službo v Sevnici:

Kolega je slišal za Nemčijo in potem sva se odločila, da greva skupaj. To je šlo vse prek Zavoda za zaposlovanje Novo mesto. Najprej smo šli v Novo mesto na izobraževanje, pravzaprav na priprave, šest mesecev smo imeli plačano stanovanje, šolanje in hrano. Po šestih mesecih smo bili kvalificirani delavci. Eni so se šolali za strugarje, drugi za ključavničarje, varilce. V Nemčijo bi morali oditi že februarja ali marca, vendar se je zavleklo do junija, 16. 6. 1970 pa smo dobili dokumente. (Franc Kolman)

Izkušnja ekonomske migracije Franca Kolmana priča o načrtovanih in spodbujanih ekonomskih migracijah med Nemčijo in Jugoslavijo, organiziranih in vodenih preko Zavodov za zaposlovanje. Raziskava o Slovencih v Nemčiji, v kateri je leta 1974 sodelovalo tisoč izseljenih, je pokazala, da so Slovenke, Slovenci odhajali v Nemčijo predvsem z željo po izboljšanju življenjskega položaja, zaradi nizkega zaslužka in slabih stanovanjskih razmer doma, prisotni pa sta bili tudi želji po spoznavanju sveta in novih izkušnjah (Toš idr. 2014: 13). To je veljalo tudi za Franca Kolmana in njegovo ženo Jano; s hčerko se mu je v Nemčiji pridružila leta 1971. Začetki v Nemčiji so bili skromni, bivanjske razmere neustrezne:¹⁰

Stranišče je bilo na hodniku, za več strank, kopalnice ni bilo. Vodo smo si greli na štedilniku, bil je kotliček in tam smo si greli vodo za vse, kadar smo potrebovali. Tuširali in kopali smo se v majhni banji. Ingrid je spala v otroškem vozičku, ki mi ga je mama Karolina kupila v Celju. V spalnici je bila postelja, a v njej je bilo pozimi grozno: stene niso bile izolirane, po stenah je tekla voda. Streha je bila v redu, vendar ni bilo prave izolacije, v spalnici je bilo vlažno. Jaz sem bila zelo razočarana, doma smo imeli novo hišo. (Jana Kolman)

9 V Nemčiji je dopolnilni pouk slovenskega jezika in kulture leta 1978 izvajalo 14 učiteljic, učiteljev, v Avstriji trije, v Švici štirje, v Belgiji in Angliji po eden, na Švedskem 15 (Pogačnik idr. 1978: 44–47).

10 Podobno je bilo pri Slovenkah, Slovencih v Mannheimu (Slavec 1982: 69–70) in v Avstriji (Artl, Lorber 2015: 60–66).

Leta 1977, ko so se bivanjske in ekonomske razmere Jane in Franca Kolmana izboljšale, rodila pa sta se jima že dva od treh otrok, se je okrepila želja po slovenski šoli. Najprej je bilo treba premagati birokratske ovire in ustanoviti društvo. Društvo Drava Augsburg je bilo ustanovljeno 4. maja 1979, priprave na ustanovitev pa so se začele že dve leti prej v Münchnu:

Hodila sva v administrativno šolo. Velikokrat sva se srečala tudi z učiteljico dopolnilnega pouka v Münchnu, z gospo Martino Vizjak. V Münchnu so že imeli šolo in ona je predlagala, da zberemo naslove staršev, organiziramo sestanek staršev in da se dogovorimo za slovensko šolo v Augsburgu. To nalogo sva prevzela midva. Prosila sva tudi gospoda Jožka Bucika, slovenskega župnika, ki je že imel naslove družin; on nama je posredoval veliko informacij. Vzporedno so nam svetovali s konzulata v Münchnu, da ustanovimo društvo, slovensko društvo. (Jana Kolman)

Podrobnejše zaplete pred ustanovitvijo društva je dodatno opisal Franc Kolman. V enem izmed jugoslovanskih društev je srečal gospoda Iliča, jugoslovanskega konzula za šolstvo, ki je obljubil ustanovitev slovenske šole.

V Augsburgu je že bila organizirana celodnevna srbohrvaška šola in dopolnilna šola srbohrvaščine.¹¹ Tekla so leta, hči je bila v tretjem razredu, slovenske šole pa še ni bilo. Ko sem spet šel enkrat službeno na konzulat v München, niso ničesar vedeli, ker so se ljudje med tem časom zamenjali. Poslali so me naprej do drugega, ki je bil odgovoren za izobraževanje. Predlagal je, da zberemo naslove, da imamo nekaj v rokah. Pa sva res, vsem, ki sva jih poznala, sva z ženo Jano razdelila liste, da so se podpisali. Vsi so se podpisali, tudi Hrvati in Bošnjaki, tako da smo imeli več kot 100 podpisov. Potem so nam na sestanku dejali, da naj ustanovimo društvo. Mi takrat o društvu še nismo razmišljali. Pozneje smo ugotovili, zakaj društvo: naša naloga je bila, da smo hodili na občine in urade ter nagovarjali ljudi, da bi nam čim prej izdali dovoljenje za šolo. V Augsburgu je bilo veliko šol in augsburški Urad za šolstvo. Zapleteno je bilo, težava so bili prvi uradniki, ki so spraševali, kaj bomo s šolo, saj že imamo jugoslovansko šolo. Uradnike je bilo treba prepričati, da ima Slovenija svoj jezik, da slovenski jezik ni zastopan na jugoslovanski šoli. (Franc Kolman)

Jana Kolman, članica upravnega odbora društva Drava Augsburg in desna roka številnih predsednic in predsednikov med 40-letnim delovanjem društva, se zelo dobro

11 Šole v maternih jezikih delavk in delavcev so bile del nemške politike do priseljenih, saj so »spodbujale pripravljenost na vrnitev/začasno družbeno integracijo/pripravljenost na odhod«; še precej bolj je bilo to očitno v odnosu do Turkinj in Turkov, najmočnejše manjšine, ki je izšla iz delovnih migracij (Bade 2005: 373–374). Nemčija, ki je bila v drugi polovici 20. stoletja izrazito priseljenka država, čeprav je to znikala (Castles, Miller 2009: 263), je pričakovala, da se bodo nemški priseljenke, priseljenci vrnili v izvirne dežele.

spominja tako začetka pouka, ki ga je delno financiralo mesto Augsburg, delno pa Jugoslavija, kot prvih učiteljic.

Dopolnilni pouk je na začetku obiskovalo ogromno otrok, več kot 80, imeli smo seznam s 112 otroki. Prva učiteljica je bila gospa Olga Krčmar iz Ingolstadta. Potem jo je zamenjala učiteljica Majda Bešlagič iz Kranja. Šla je od družine do družine in iskala stike. Ona je bila učiteljica dva mandata, vlado v Sloveniji smo prosili, če ji lahko podaljšajo še en mandat, ampak niso. Pozneje smo dobili gospo Nevenko Nemeč, ki ni bila tu dolgo, mislim, da je bila eno leto, mogoče dve leti. V Augsburgu so nam dovolili dopolnilni pouk v šolah. Pouk je potekal ob sobotah, nekaj časa je potekal med tednom, ob četrtek, ampak ne dolgo. Največkrat je bil dopolnilni pouk ob sobotah, od 9. do 12. ure. Pripeljali smo jih starši, nekateri so vozili 20 ali celo 30 km daleč, da so pripeljali otroke v šolo. Bili so srečni, da je obstajala slovenska šola. Otroci so obvezno nastopali na vsaki prireditvi, ob dedku Mrazu, na prireditvah ob dnevu republike, za 1. maj, 8. marec. (Jana Kolman)

Leta 1984 je društvo Drava Augsburg z Občino Piran podpisalo listino o sodelovanju. Leta 2014, ob 35-letnici društva, so obiskali kraje po Sloveniji, iz katerih prihajajo člani društva. Z avtobusom so se odpeljali tudi v Piran, kjer jih je pozdravil takratni župan Peter Bossman in z njimi zaplesal na Tartinijevem trgu. Leta 2019, ko je društvo Drava Augsburg praznovalo 40-letnico delovanja v Nemčiji, je dopolnilni pouk slovenščine poučeval Velimir Brunski. Na slavnostni prireditvi je nastopil s svojimi učenkami, učenci, program pa so povezali s 33. Folklorijado v Nemčiji delujočih slovenskih folklornih skupin (z gosti).¹²

Niso niti vsi starši pošiljali svojih otrok k dopolnilnemu pouku slovenščine niti niso vsi doma govorili slovensko (prim. Slavec 1982; Štumberger 2006). Vztrajanje nekaterih staršev, da otroci obiskujejo sobotno oz. slovensko šolo (ali v organizaciji katoliške misije ali v okviru dopolnilnega pouka z napotenimi učiteljicami, učitelji iz Jugoslavije, pozneje iz Slovenije), je obrodilo sadove:

Če se danes oziram nazaj, čutim veliko hvaležnost. Moji starši so se preselili v tujino. Z leti so se integrirali v nemško družbo, si ustvarili družino in nas skrbno vzgajali. Največja dota, ki sem jo od njih prejela, je moj materin [!] jezik. Vem, kako je težavno in naporno, da svojim otrokom v tujini posreduješ ne samo jezika, ampak tudi ljubezen do domovine in njene kulture. (Melita Bolčina v Bečan 2004: 35)

12 Prireditve so se udeležili tudi minister Peter Jožef Česnik, Primož Iličič (Urad RS za Slovence v zamejstvu in po svetu), veleposlanik Franci But (Berlin), generalna konzulka Dragica Urtelj (München), avtorica članka, predstavnik mesta Augsburg; tokrat je bil to Jurij Heizer, namestnik župana mesta Augsburg, sam priseljen iz Rusije kot potomec nemških izseljenk, izseljencev.

POVEZOVANJE V 21. STOLETJU

Po osamosvojitvi leta 1991 je Republika Slovenija nasledila veliko meddržavnih jugoslovanskih sporazumov, nadaljevala je tudi organizacijo in financiranje dopolnilnega pouka slovenskega jezika in kulture za slovenske izseljenke in izseljence v Evropi. Slovenska društva, katoliške misije, svetovalne delavke, učiteljice in učitelji dopolnilnega pouka slovenščine so se v Nemčiji povezovali in skupaj organizirali prireditve in s tem presegali lokalno delovanje in politično opredeljenost. Nekajkrat letno so se in se še vedno srečujejo na društvenih sestankih, na sestankih južne ali severne koordinacije, na folklornih in pevskih seminarjih, na folklorijadi in posvetih (Vižintin 2016; 2017).

Leta 2019 so se v Augsburgu srečali na 33. Folklorijadi, v Langenargnu ob Bodenskem jezeru pa na 24. Posvetu slovenskih društev, katoliških misij, učiteljev, socialnih delavcev in članov folklornih skupin v Nemčiji. V južno koordinacijo slovenskih društev v Nemčiji je bilo leta 2019, ko jo je vodila Valerija Perša, povezanih 19 društev,¹³ v severno koordinacijo, ki jo je vodil Jože Pahič, pa osem društev, od tega so tri zaprla svoja vrata.¹⁴ Skupaj je bilo leta 2019 še vedno registriranih in delujočih 24 društev (19 v južni in pet v severni koordinaciji). Društveno delovanje v 21. stoletju finančno podpira Urad Republike Slovenije za Slovence v zamejstvu in po svetu, slovenske izseljenke in izseljenci pa se od leta 2011 v Sloveniji srečujejo na prireditvi Dobrodošli doma. Leta 2017 so napoteni katoliški duhovniki delovali v desetih slovenskih katoliških misijah v krajih Augsburg, Berlin, Essen, Frankfurt, Ingolstadt, Köln, Mannheim, München, Stuttgart in Ulm (Vižintin 2017).

V šolskem letu 2019/20 je bil dopolnilni pouk slovenskega jezika in kulture organiziran v 19 evropskih državah, obiskovalo ga je okoli 1900 udeleženk in udeležencev, od tega več kot 1000 otrok. Slovenščino je poučevalo 36 učiteljic

13 Planinka Ravensburg (sedež Baidnt), Slovenija Ulm, Slovenski muzikantje Sindelfingen, Kajuh Uhingen-Ebersbach (Dürna), Štorklja Schorndorf, Triglav Reutlingen (Pliezhausen), Triglav Stuttgart, Triglav Sindelfingen, Mura Bönningheim, Slovenija Stuttgart, Planinka Radolfzell (Radolfzell am Bodensee), Lipa Tuttlingen (Dunningen), Lipa München, Lastovka Ingolstadt, Drava Augsburg (Neusäß), Sava Frankfurt (Frankfurt am Main), Geris e. V., Nürnberg, Internationaler Club Sloweniens (ICS), Bavarsko-slovensko društvo (*Koordinacija slovenskih društev v južni Nemčiji* 2020).

14 Jože Pahič (2020) je navedel, da so še vedno dejavna društva Maribor Hilden, Slovenski zvon Krefeld (sedež Willich), Slovenski cvet Kerken, Duplex/Slo. 1990 e. V. Dormagen-Gohr; društvo Bled Essen »trenutno ni aktivno, ni pa objavljeno«, zato ga štejemo med delujoča društva. Društva France Prešeren Burscheid (1977–2013), Slovenska beseda Erkelenz (1981–2009) in Lipa Neuss (1977–2006) »so zaprta, ne delujejo več«; z upokojitvijo župnika Alojzija Rajka se je zaprla katoliška misija v Essnu (1958–2019).

in učiteljev,¹⁵ od tega 14 napoteni in 22 nenapoteni.¹⁶ Dopolnilni pouk je v šolskem letu 2019/20 v Nemčiji poučevalo šest učiteljic in učiteljev: Velimir Brunski (München, Kirchheim (Teck), Weingarten, Memmingen, Ingolstadt, Augsburg, Ulm), Mira Delavec Touhami (Wittnau bei Freiburg, Schwenningen (Schwarzwald), Worms, Karlsruhe, Duttenberg bei Heilbron, Pfullingen, Reutlingen, Mannheim), Vinko Kralj (Sindelfingen, Pforzheim, Stuttgart, Schömburg, Schorndorf), Magdalena Novak (Berlin), Natalija Robnik (Frankfurt), Martina Tomšič Kramberger (Hilden, Dusseldorf, Essen, Gütersloh) (*Dopolnilni pouk 2019/20*).

Na začetku 21. stoletja Nemčija poleg Avstrije ostaja država,¹⁷ v kateri se najraje zaposlujejo slovenske izseljenke in izseljenci, kar bo v naslednjih letih verjetno pozitivno vplivalo na zanimanje za dopolnilni pouk slovenščine in spremenilo določene dejavnosti slovenskih društev v Nemčiji. Vodenje društev in njihovo delovanje postopoma prevzema generacija otrok, rojenih v Nemčiji, ali nove slovenske priseljenke in priseljenci (Vižintin 2016; 2017). To se je zgodilo tudi v društvu Sava Frankfurt, v katerem je leta 2012 vodenje društva prevzel Igor Križnar, ki se je iz Slovenije v Nemčijo priselil leta 2009. Ena najpomembnejših društvenih dejavnosti je dopolnilni pouk slovenščine, ki v Frankfurtu poteka že od leta 1974.

SKLEP

Brez migracij ljudi s slovenskim maternim jezikom iz slovenskega etničnega prostora v druge države ne bi bilo dopolnilnega pouka slovenščine. Ne bi ga bilo niti brez podpore izvornih dežel, tako Kraljevine Jugoslavije in Jugoslavije kot Republike Slovenije, ki so v tujino pošiljali učiteljice, učitelje in duhovnike. Predvsem pa tečajev slovenščine, slovenskih šol, dopolnilnega pouka slovenskega jezika in kulture – poimenovanja so se v zadnjih sto letih spreminjala – ne bi bilo brez (samo)organiziranja posameznik in posameznikov, ki so, da v tujini rojeni otroci ne bi pozabili slovenskega jezika in kulture, to potrebo prepoznali.

Na slovensko izseljevanje in povezovanje, organizirano delovanje v društvih in dopolnilni pouk slovenščine v drugih državah vplivajo številni politični, ekonomski in družbeni vidiki, ki soustvarjajo migracijske tokove. Ker so za nemške izseljenke in

15 Avstrija (2 učitelja), Belgija (1), Bosna in Hercegovina (3), Češka republika (1), Črna gora (1), Finska (1), Francija (2), Hrvaška (6), Lihtenštajn (1), Luksemburg (1), Makedonija (2), Nemčija (6), Nizozemska (1), Rusija (1), Srbija (6), Švedska (1), Švica (3), Velika Britanija (1 učiteljica), Ukrajina (0) (*Dopolnilni pouk 2019/20*).

16 Napotene učiteljice, učitelji so poslani v tujino s strani Zavoda Republike Slovenije za šolstvo in Ministrstva za izobraževanje, znanost in šport (načeloma) za štiri leta, zaposleni so za poln delovni čas (22 ur). Nenapoteni živijo v eni od evropskih držav, dopolnilni pouk izvajajo nekaj ur na teden, tudi oni so financirani iz Slovenije.

17 Npr. leta 2018 je bilo vseh izseljenih 13.527, od tega 6.595 s slovenskim državljanstvom, med njimi se jih je 45 % izselilo v Avstrijo ali Nemčijo (prim. Gostič 2019; Vižintin, Lukšič Hacin, Gostič 2020).

izseljence v Brazilijo tam organizirali nemške šole, je leta 1926 Nemčija podprla idejo duhovnika Božidarja Tensunderna za organizacijo slovenske šole v Nemčiji. V drugi polovici 20. stoletja, leta 1968, je bil prelomen sporazum med Nemčijo in Jugoslavijo, ki je ponovno legaliziral in spodbudil selitvene tokove v Nemčijo iz različnih republik nekdanje skupne države Jugoslavije, tudi iz Slovenije. V Nemčiji so bila ustanovljena številna jugoslovanska in pozneje slovenska (srbska, hrvaška idr.) društva, organizirana je bila slovenska šola, v Nemčijo so bili napoteni slovenski duhovniki. Samostojna Republika Slovenija nadaljuje skrb za ohranjanje slovenske kulture in slovenskega jezika med slovenskimi izseljenkami in izseljenci: v šolskem letu 2019/20 je dopolnilni pouk slovenskega jezika in kulture v 19 evropskih državah poučevalo skupaj 36 učiteljic in učiteljev, od tega šest v Nemčiji.

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SUMMARY

THE BEGINNINGS OF MOTHER TONGUE LESSONS OF SLOVENIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN GERMANY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Marijanca Ajša VIŽINTIN

The paper introduces the beginnings of mother tongue lessons of Slovenian language and culture in Germany as one of the consequences of Slovenian migration processes to Germany. The first courses of Slovenian language were organized in 1926 by the German priest Božidar Tensundern for the children of mineworkers who came to work in north Germany from the end of the nineteenth century. A few years later, with the support of the government of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, eight Slovenian courses were organized in seven German cities, too. These courses were interrupted by World War II and revived after the signing of the bilateral agreement between Germany and Yugoslavia in 1968. The agreement influenced a renewed emigration from Slovenia to Germany, the founding of Slovenian cultural associations, and the organization of Slovenian schools in 1970 and afterward. However, official support from the country of origin is not enough if no individuals are willing to dedicate their private lives to preserving their mother tongue, as the life stories of Jana and Franc Kolman show. They migrated in 1970 and 1971 and established the Slovenian sport-cultural association Drava Augsburg in 1979 to start mother tongue lessons of Slovenian language and culture in Augsburg. Mother tongue lessons of Slovenian language and culture among Slovenian emigrants are still supported today. In 2019/20, the Republic of Slovenia financed thirty-six teachers, six of them in Germany, who taught Slovenian language and culture to Slovenian emigrants and their descendants in nineteen European countries.

DUŠEVNO ZDRAVJE IN MIGRACIJE: UPORABNOST PROGRAMA PRVA POMOČ NA PODROČJU DUŠEVNEGA ZDRAVJA

Duška KNEŽEVIĆ HOČEVAR^I, Sanja CUKUT KRILIĆ^{II}

COBISS 1.02

IZVLEČEK

Duševno zdravje in migracije: Uporabnost programa Prva pomoč na področju duševnega zdravja

Članek presoja uveljavljanje programa opismenjevanja o duševnem zdravju – Prva pomoč na področju duševnega zdravja – in njegove vpeljave med etnične manjšine in migrante. Osredotoča se na preoblikovanje programa v smeri kulturno občutljivih vsebin in metod izvajanja. Na podlagi evalvacije njihovih uporabnikov povzema predloge za nadaljnje izboljšave in prilagajanje njihovim »kulturnim potrebam«. Glede na rezultate omenjenih evalvacij članek opozarja na nujnost premika od upoštevanja »zgolj« kulturnih razsežnosti duševnega zdravja k obravnavi strukturnih ranljivosti, ki vplivajo na živete izkušnje migrantov, kar vključuje tudi kritično presojo samega koncepta opismenjevanja.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: migracije, duševno zdravje, opismenjevanje o duševnem zdravju, program Prva pomoč na področju duševnega zdravja, kulturna razsežnost

ABSTRACT

Mental Health and Migration: The Applicability of the Mental Health First Aid Program

This article reviews the establishment of a mental health literacy program – Mental Health First Aid – and its introduction among ethnic minorities and migrants. The text focuses on the program adaptations toward culturally more sensitive content and approaches. Based on the evaluation of the program by its users, the article summarizes their suggestions for further adaptations to their “cultural needs.” In line with the evaluations, the article discusses the shift from considering “only” the cultural dimensions of mental health toward reflecting structural vulnerabilities that affect lived experiences of migrants, including the contestable use of the literacy concept itself.

KEYWORDS: migration, mental health, mental health literacy, Mental Health First Aid, cultural dimension

^I Dr. zgodovinske antropologije; višja znanstvena sodelavka, Družbenomedicinski inštitut ZRC SAZU, Novi trg 2, SI-1000 Ljubljana; duska@zrc-sazu.si, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3472-6005>.

^{II} Dr. socioloških znanosti; znanstvena sodelavka, Družbenomedicinski inštitut ZRC SAZU, Novi trg 2, SI-1000 Ljubljana; sanja.cukut@zrc-sazu, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4498-3809>.

UVOD

V letih 2015 in 2016 sva avtorici članka sodelovali pri projektu Prepoznavna in obravnava žrtev nasilja v družini v okviru zdravstvene dejavnosti. Med najinimi nalogami je bila priprava delavnice, v kateri bi se presojale raznolike okoliščine, ki povzročajo, da osebe z izkušnjo nasilja v družini, zlasti iz t. i. ranljivih skupin (med njimi tudi migrantke in migranti), ne poiščejo pomoči. Med delavnico se je izkazalo, da bi bilo namesto o ranljivih skupinah primerneje razpravljati o prepletu različnih oblik ranljivosti oseb z izkušnjo nasilja, in to z intersekcijskim pristopom (Lipovec Čebtron 2019). V esencialistične opise migrantk kot nosilk domnevnega seznama kulturnih značilnosti migrantske skupine ljudi ni zdrsnila le razprava o vinjeti, ki je opisovala izkušnjo nasilja v družini migrantke. Udeleženke in udeleženci delavnic so kot pomembne okoliščine poudarili tudi družbenoekonomsko ozadje, dostopnost do zdravstvenih storitev ter prepričanja in domneve o družbeni nesprejemljivosti nasilja v družinah migrantk kot okoliščin, ki bistveno vplivajo na to, da osebe z izkušnjo nasilja v družinah ne poiščejo pomoči.

Na podoben izziv obravnave »kulturne razsežnosti«, tokrat oseb z izkušnjo težav v duševnem zdravju, sva avtorici prispevka naleteli v psihoedukacijskem programu Z večjo pismenostjo o duševnem zdravju do obvladovanja motenj razpoloženja (OMRA).¹ Kljub izhodiščem programa, ki se opirajo na uveljavljeni koncept opismenjevanja o duševnem zdravju v skladu z diagnostičnimi merili mainstreamovske zahodne psihiatrije,² avtorici članka ob sprotnih kvalitativnih evalvacijah uporabnosti programa obenem analizirava mednarodno znanstveno literaturo, ki kritično presoja uporabnost programov Prve pomoči na področju duševnega zdravja. Tega ne počneva le z namenom bolj obveščene in kritičnega presojanja uporabnosti samega programa, ki je okrnjena slovenska različica programa Prve pomoči na področju duševnega zdravja. To počneva, ker večdisciplinarna ekipa programa³ kljub konceptualnim razhajanjem o obravnavi duševnega zdravja oz. izkušenj duševnih motenj (prim. Lipovec Čebtron 2019) namerava vsebino programa razširiti na potrebe »opismenjevanja« o duševnem zdravju ljudi iz različnih ranljivih skupin, tudi migrantk in migrantov. Poseben izziv bo prav oblikovanje kulturno občutljivega programa, ki ne podlega statični in esencialistični predstavi o kulturi njenih udeleženk in udeležencev.

Glede na vedno večjo družbeno relevantnost in naraščajočo raznolikost migracij tako na nacionalni kot na globalni ravni ne preseneča, da tudi med strokovnjaki in

1 Program krepitve duševnega zdravja OMRA je med letoma 2017 in 2019 sofinanciralo Ministrstvo za zdravje RS. Isto ministrstvo sofinancira tudi njegovo nadaljevanje, tokrat z naslovom Opismenjevanje o motnjah razpoloženja in osebnostnih motnjah (2020–2022).

2 V Sloveniji se za kodiranje duševnih motenj trenutno uporablja posodobljena avstralska modifikacija desete revizije Mednarodne klasifikacije bolezni in sorodnih zdravstvenih problemov za statistične namene, MKB-10-AM, verzija 6.

3 V ekipi OMRA sodelujemo raziskovalke in raziskovalci iz psihiatrije, psihologije, socialnega dela, sociologije, politologije, filozofije in antropologije.

strokovnjakinjami, ki se ukvarjajo z migracijami in duševnim zdravjem, naraščajo prizadevanja za oblikovanje omenjenim skupinam prilagojenih oblik pomoči in obravnave (Cukut Krilić 2019; WHO 2017). Zlasti v bolj družboslovno in humanistično usmerjenih raziskavah dejavniki tveganja za težave v duševnem zdravju niso le individualni (osebnostni), temveč izhajajo tudi iz t. i. skupne kulture oz. kulturnega ozadja; zaradi njih naj bi migranti in migrantke duševne stiske doživljali na podoben način. Tako v sodobnih družbah izseljevanja kot priseljevanja so vedno bolj v ospredju družbenopolitične in ekonomske razmere. Pomembno jih oblikujejo neenakosti v družbeni moči posameznih skupin prebivalstva, kar uokvirja njihovo doživljanje in spoprijemanje s težavami v duševnem zdravju (Arsenijević idr. 2018). Raziskovalci in raziskovalke poudarjajo, da migranti in migrantke zaradi diskriminacije v družbah preselitve, ki se na primer kaže v neenaki obravnavi v zdravstvu, lahko tudi značilno manj pogosto uporabljajo storitve na področju duševnega zdravja kot pa »lokalno prebivalstvo« (Lindert idr. 2008). V nedavnem pregledu raziskav, ki so v »splošni populaciji« analizirale ovire za neiskanje pomoči ob težavah v duševnem zdravju, so raziskovalci in raziskovalke kot ključna dejavnika poudarili prav pomanjkanje znanja o težavah v duševnem zdravju in stigma kot spremljajočo okoliščino (Gulliver idr. 2010).

Zaradi raznolikih dejavnikov ranljivosti, ki vključujejo obdobje pred, med in po migraciji, so migranti in migrantke gotovo skupina, katere znanje o duševnem zdravju in iskanje pomoči zahtevata posebno pozornost. Zastavlja se vprašanje, čigavo znanje o duševnem zdravju, ki naj bi omogočilo pravočasno iskanje strokovne pomoči migrantk in migrantov s težavami v duševnem zdravju, je v ospredju prizadevanj za njegovo izboljšanje.

S tega stališča prvi del besedila povzema kratek oris okoliščin uveljavljanja programa Prve pomoči na področju duševnega zdravja v Avstraliji. V nadaljevanju se osredotoča na njegovo vpeljavo v skupnostih, ki jih oblikovalci in oblikovalke politik in raziskovalci in raziskovalke označujejo za »kulturno drugačne« od večinskega prebivalstva posameznih nacionalnih držav; npr. staroselsko in priseljsko prebivalstvo. Besedilo se opira na evalvacijske raziskave kulturno občutljivih programov Prve pomoči na področju duševnega zdravja, ki so med drugim opozorile na nujnost nadaljnjega prilagajanja izobraževalnih vsebin in metod t. i. kulturnim razsežnostim razumevanja duševnega zdravja omenjenih skupin prebivalstva. Tovrstna prizadevanja so prikazana tako s primeri prilagojenih programov Prve pomoči na področju duševnega zdravja za etnične manjšine oz. t. i. staroselsko prebivalstvo kot njihovega prilagajanja za migrante in migrantke v različnih državah. Skladno z evalvacijskimi raziskavami besedilo ne presoja le vprašanja vpeljave kulturne razsežnosti duševnega zdravja v tovrstne programe, temveč tudi obravnave zgodovinskih in sodobnih strukturnih ranljivosti, ki pomembno sooblikujejo živete izkušnje ljudi s težavami v duševnem zdravju.

OPISMENJEVANJE O DUŠEVNEM ZDRAVJU

Programi »opismenjevanja« o duševnem zdravju izvorno izhajajo iz Avstralije. Svetovno najbolj prepoznan in razširjen program, ki se izvaja na ravni skupnosti, je Prva pomoč na področju duševnega zdravja (angl. Mental Health First Aid – MHFA). Utemeljen je v konceptu opismenjevanja po zgledu 'zdravstvenega opismenjevanja' (angl. *health literacy*), ki je že vsaj pol stoletja uveljavljen koncept v medicinskem akademskem diskurzu (Nutbeam 2000).

Na prehodu v novo tisočletje je Anthony F. Jorm s soavtorji koncept opismenjevanja na področju duševnega zdravja opredelil kot tista »[...] znanja in prepričanja o duševnih motnjah, ki prispevajo k njihovemu prepoznavanju, obvladovanju ali preprečevanju [...]« (Jorm idr. 1997: 182).

Opismenjevanje oz. izobraževanje o duševnem zdravju se opira na predstave in kategorije težav v duševnem zdravju t. i. zahodnega medicinskega modela. Njegov cilj je izboljšati tako sposobnost ljudi za prepoznavanje posamičnih težav v duševnem zdravju kot njihovo znanje o vzrokih in dejavnikih tveganja za tovrstne težave in razpoložljivi pomoči. Izvajalke in izvajalci opismenjevanja o duševnih motnjah v skladu s klasifikacijo oz. z diagnostičnimi merili Ameriškega psihiatričnega društva APA kot orodje uporabljajo vinjete za opis osebe z določeno motnjo razpoloženja (npr. depresijo ali anksiozno motnjo). Merila so zabeležena v Diagnostičnem in statističnem priročniku duševnih motenj DSM-IV⁴ oz. mednarodni klasifikaciji bolezni in sorodnih zdravstvenih problemov za statistične namene, avstralski modifikaciji (ICD-10-AM) (Lam idr. 2010). Vse naštetu naj bi zmanjšalo tudi družbeno razdaljo do ljudi s težavami v duševnem zdravju oz. znižalo njihovo stigmatizacijo. Obenem se zagovorniki te oblike psihoedukacijskega programa sklicujejo na odmevne ugotovitve raziskav, ki potrjujejo, da je v družbah z višjo ravno pismenosti o duševnem zdravju opaziti boljše duševno zdravje ljudi, ki pogosteje pravočasno poiščejo strokovno pomoč in se v večjem obsegu lotevajo preventivnih strategij (Hadlaczky idr. 2014; Jorm 2012).

Leta 2001 sta v Avstraliji prav Jorm in Betty Kitchener oblikovala prvo izobraževanje MHFA. Betty Kitchener, takrat prostovoljka z živeto izkušnjo težav v duševnem zdravju, je postala izvajalka tovrstnih izobraževanj oz. strokovnjakinja po izkušnji. Podoben medicinski model prve pomoči za poškodbe in urgentne situacije sta prilagodila problematiki duševnega zdravja s ciljem, da se človeku, ki oboleva ali je v duševni stiski, pomoč zagotovi še preden poišče primerno strokovno pomoč ali razreši svojo krizo. To izobraževanje ljudi v določeni skupnosti uči, kako prepoznati skupino simptomov t. i. splošnih duševnih motenj (npr. depresije in anksioznosti) in kriznih situacij (npr. samomorilnega razmišljanja in vedenja, akutnih stresnih odzivov, napadov panike in akutnih psihotičnih vedenj), kako zagotoviti začetno pomoč in človeka usmeriti v primerno obravnavo in druge oblike razpoložljive pomoči (Kitchener, Jorm 2002).

4 Najnovejša različica DSM-V je v uporabi od leta 2013.

Program MHFA se je iz Avstralije zelo hitro razširil po svetu; po zadnjih podatkih ga je vsebinsko prilagodilo še 24 držav, od tega 11 evropskih (MHFA international).⁵ Poleg standardnega izobraževanja, namenjenega odraslim s težavami v duševnem zdravju, so ga tako v Avstraliji kot po svetu prilagodili različnim starostnim in poklicnim družbenim skupinam – med drugim tudi pripadnicam in pripadnikom različnih etničnih skupnosti. Pokazalo se je, da splošni pristop, ki ga ponazarja metafora »ena velikost ustreza vsem«, ni primeren in da je treba upoštevati tako kulturno raznolikost prebivalcev Avstralije kot tudi njenih etničnih skupin.

KULTURNO OBČUTLJIVI MHFA ZA ETNIČNE MANJŠINE V AVSTRALIJI

Avtorji MHFA so najprej preuredili program za avstralske Aborigine in prebivalce otokov Torres Strait, ki predstavljajo 2,4 odstotka nacionalnega prebivalstva oz. okoli pol milijona ljudi. Nacionalne zdravstvene evidence so namreč sporočale, da imajo v primerjavi z večinskim prebivalstvom prav te skupine visoke stopnje telesnih obolenj, nižjo pričakovano življenjsko dobo in visoke stopnje težav v duševnem zdravju. Številni med njimi živijo v neugodnih življenjskih okoljih in nastanitvah ter razpolagajo z nizkimi prihodki. Avtorje MHFA je k preoblikovanju standardnega MHFA programa za splošno odraslo prebivalstvo spodbudil zlasti podatek, da večina staroselskih skupnosti ni bila deležna nikakršnega izobraževanja o obvladovanju težav v duševnem zdravju ali kriznih situacij (Kanowski idr. 2009).

Med letoma 2004 in 2006 je posvetovanje s skupinami avstralskih Aboriginov in prebivalcev otokov Torres Strait o standardnem MHFA pokazalo, da je treba določene vsebine in metode preoblikovati glede na njihove »kulturne potrebe«. Leta 2007 so pred izvedbo prvega izobraževanja med drugim prilagodili gradivo in vanj vključili vsebine, ki so potrdile njihovo psihološko odpornost na več stoletij izvajanja rasizma, razlastitev in nasilja ter na doživljanje travm in izgub, ki so jih utrpeli od prihoda kolonizatorjev v 17. stoletju (npr. nasilno preselitev njihovih skupnosti v misijone in rezervate, sistemsko zanikanje njihovih jezikov in kultur, zatiranje političnih in drugih človekovih pravic, izgubo otrok zaradi prisilnega odvzema itd.). V vsa izobraževalna gradiva in priročnike so vključili svoje umetniške stvaritve in z njimi ilustrirali pomembna sporočila o lastnih konceptih duševnega zdravja in dobrega počutja. Tako Aborigini kot prebivalci otokov Torres Strait so se v primerjavi z

5 Prilagojene MHFA s svojim nacionalnim zdravstvenim sistemom izvajajo v Avstraliji, Angliji, Bangladešu, na Bermudskem otočju, Danskem, Finskem, v Hongkongu, Indiji, na Japonskem, v Kambodži, Kanadi, na Malti, Nizozemskem, Novi Zelandiji, v Pakistanu, Republiki Irski, na Severnem Irskem, v Savdski Arabiji, Singapurju, na Škotskem, Švedskem, v Švici, Združenih arabskih emiratih, ZDA in Wellsu. Jorm idr. (2019) ocenjujejo celo, da se je do srede leta 2018 programa MHFA udeležilo več kot 700.000 prebivalcev Avstralije in 2,7 milijona ljudi po svetu; osveženi spletni podatki (januar 2021) sporočajo, da se je izobraževanju udeležilo preko štiri milijone ljudi po svetu (MHFA international).

»zahodnimi« pojmovanji in kategorizacijami duševnega zdravja s tovrstnimi sporočili laže identificirali in se bolj udeleževali tovrstnih izobraževanj (Kanowski idr. 2009).

Leta 2007 je evalvacija prvega izobraževanja kulturno občutljivega MHFA za predavatelje, ki so bili večinoma iz skupnosti Aboriginov in prebivalci otokov Torres Strait, pokazala, da so nujne še dodatne izboljšave. Poleg praktičnih popravkov – npr. več odmorov med izobraževanji zaradi velike količine posredovanih informacij, ki jih udeleženske in udeleženci niso utegnili sproti predelati – so izvajalke in izvajalci izobraževanj predlagali več prilagoditev za manj izobražene udeleženske in udeležence, ki se bolje učijo z izvajanjem vaj kot branjem. Obenem so opozorili na heterogenost Aboriginov in prebivalcev otokov Torres Strait in se zavzeli za stalno prilagajanje kulturno občutljivega programa MHFA kulturnim posebnostim tako določenih skupin kot tudi lokalnim skupnostim, v katerih se program izvaja (Kanowski idr. 2009).

Domnevno nizka pismenost o duševnem zdravju in kulturno neobčutljive prakse izvajalk in izvajalcev splošnih nacionalnih zdravstvenih storitev naj bi bile razlog, da etnične manjšine v Avstraliji niso iskale strokovne pomoči. Zato so se oblikovalci in oblikovalke kulturno občutljivih MHFA zavzeli za uresničevanje standardov t. i. kulturne kompetence tako v izobraževanju kot socialnozdravstvenih storitvah. Kulturi prilagojena zdravstveno varstvo oz. kulturno kompetentna skrb sta s perspektive kulturnih kompetenc med najpomembnejšimi dejavniki zmanjševanja neenakosti v zdravju in pri doseganju ugodnejših izidov zdravljenja (Fortier, Bishop v Shaw idr. 2008). Izboljševanje kulturnih kompetenc v zdravstvu bi npr. pomenilo, da so storitve zdravstvenega varstva dostopnejše, primernejše in učinkovitejše tudi za osebe iz različnih kulturnih in etničnih skupin in da so zdravstveni delavci vedno bolj usposobljeni za njihovo obravnavo (Kirmayer 2012; Lipovec Čebren, Huber 2020). Toda kulturna občutljivost je v tem primeru razumljena kot prilagoditev zagotavljanja storitev in skrbi domnevnim »kulturnim posebnostim« določenih etničnih skupin, a se pri tem spregleda vprašanje, ali so tovrstne skupine dejansko »kulturno homogene« (Ingleby 2005; Kirmayer 2012). Oblikovalci in oblikovalke različnih programov usposabljanj, ki upoštevajo kulturne razlike, namreč pogosto ne prevprašajo teoretskih predpostavk koncepta kulture. To pomeni, da določeno kulturo obravnavajo kot homogeno in skoraj nespremenljivo entiteto, ljudi pa kot njene pasivne nosilce. Nadalje kulturo pogosto enačijo s konceptoma etničnosti in rase, pri čemer spregledajo raznovrstne socioekonomske neenakosti, ki jih izkušajo domnevno »kulturno različne« skupine prebivalstva (Lipovec Čebren, Huber 2020).

Oblikovalci in oblikovalke kulturno občutljivih MHFA programov so obenem potrdili, da kulturno občutljiva razlaga duševnega zdravja ni nujno komplementarna z bio-psiho-socialnim modelom zahodne medicine, uporabljenim v standardnih MHFA. To jih je spodbudilo, da so s strokovnjaki in strokovnjakinjami na področju duševnega zdravja iz skupnosti Aboriginov in prebivalcev otokov Torres Strait s pomočjo Delfi metode oblikovali konsenz za kulturno občutljiva navodila za izobraževanja MHFA; ta naj bi se v obeh skupnostih izvajala po celotni državi. Navodila poudarjajo zlasti pomen razumevanja simptomov v lokalnem kulturnem kontekstu, pri čemer

je treba upoštevati pestrost potreb posameznikov in posameznic, in to ne glede na njihovo kulturno identiteto in pomembno vlogo družine in skupnosti pri krepitevi pozitivnih odnosov med člani in članicami kot varovalnih dejavnikov ljudi s težavami v duševnem zdravju (Hart idr. 2009; 2010).

EVALVACIJA KULTURNO OBČUTLJIVIH MHFA PO SVETU

Evalvacije programov MHFA, ki so jih po svetu izvajali za t. i. staroselsko prebivalstvo ter migrantke in migrante, so prav tako potrdile nujnost upoštevanja kulturne razsežnosti duševnega zdravja. V Kanadi so Monique Auger idr. (2019) evalvirali že od leta 2012 kulturno prilagojena MHFA izobraževanja, ki so jih izpeljali v šestih skupnostih s prebivalstvom t. i. prvotnih ljudstev,⁶ da bi na njeni podlagi zanje dorekli oz. izboljšali kulturno občutljivo različico MHFA.

V primerjavi z avstralsko si je kanadska inačica prizadevala uveljaviti koncept 'kulturne varnosti' (angl. *cultural safety*),⁷ v katerem so upoštevali posledice zgodovinske medgeneracijske travme staroselskega prebivalstva. Te se med drugim izražajo tudi v njihovem doživljanju nesorazmerno več težav v primerjavi z večinskim prebivalstvom, in to tako v družbenem življenju kot duševnem zdravju. Koncept kulturne varnosti, ki naj bi dopolnjeval koncept kulturne kompetence, še bolj poudarja kritični premislek o moči in privilegijih kulture samih izvajalk in izvajalcev socialnozdravstvenih praks prevladujočega zahodnega medicinskega modela oz. dinamiko moči med uporabnicami in uporabniki zdravstvenih storitev in njihovimi izvajalkami in izvajalci (Isaacson v Auger idr. 2019).

Evalvacija uresničevanja kulturne varnosti v že kulturno prilagojenem MHFA za kanadsko staroselsko prebivalstvo je pokazala na nujnost izboljšav. Čeprav so kot dobrodošle in uporabne omenjali izobraževalne vsebine, ki vključujejo kontekstualizacijo travme v obdobju kolonizacije staroselskega prebivalstva, so poudarili, da je poleg zgodovinskih treba upoštevati tudi tiste sedanje okoliščine njihovih življenj, ki jih doživljajo kot travmatične. Nekateri so za uresničevanje koncepta kulturne varnosti predlagali dodatno prilagoditev izobraževalnih vsebin posebnostim lastne lokalne skupnosti, sklicujoč se tako na heterogenost staroselske zgodovine kot na sedanje vzroke strukturne ranljivosti. Poudarili so tudi, da je t. i. dvoočesni pristop,

6 V Kanadi je prebivalstvo t. i. 'prvotnih ljudstev' (angl. *first nations*) uradni izraz za skupino ljudi, ki jih poleg Inuitov in Métisev (potomcev Evropejcev in staroselcev) uvrščajo med 'staroselsko prebivalstvo' (angl. *Indigenous Peoples*). Inuiti živijo pretežno na severnih, arktičnih območjih Kanade, Métise na ruralnem območju nižinskih step Ontario, prvotna ljudstva pa naseljujejo celotno območje Kanade južno od arktičnega roba in živijo pretežno v rezervatih (First Nations Studies Program).

7 Koncept kulturne varnosti je oblikovala maorska medicinska sestra Irihapeti Ramsden z Nove Zelandije, s ciljem, da bi si izvajalke in izvajalci zdravstvenih storitev prizadevali prepoznati, spoštovati in vzdrževati enkratne kulturne identitete maorskega prebivalstva in varno uresničevati njihove potrebe, pričakovanja in pravice (Ramsden 1993; Browne idr. 2005).

ki naj bi zagotavljal tako staroselske kot uradne, tj. zahodne zdravstvene razlage duševnega zdravja, v MHFA še vedno v korist slednjih. Kot stigmatizirajoče so omenili tudi navedbe facilitatorjev o nizki ravni znanja staroselskega prebivalstva o duševnem zdravju. Taki poudarki naj bi nevtralizirali koncepta celovitosti in ravnovesja med obema stališčema oz. ohranjali hierarhijo med njima v korist zahodnega bio-medicinskega znanja. Med nujnimi izboljšavami so predlagali še močnejše sodelovanje s svojimi lokalnimi skupnostmi, natančnejšo opredelitev, kaj duševno zdravje in dobro počutje pomenita njim, in boljšo razlago, kako lahko tako tradicionalni kot zahodni viri podpore prispevajo k celovitemu zdravju in dobremu počutju t. i. staroselskega prebivalstva (Auger idr. 2019).

MHFA ZA MIGRANTKE IN MIGRANTE

Podobne dileme »opismenjevanja« o duševnem zdravju so se pokazale tudi v različicah MHFA za migrantke in migrante. Tudi ta družbena skupina je bila na podlagi zdravstvene evidence o nizki stopnji uporabe storitev na področju duševnega zdravja in nizki stopnji »pismenosti« prepoznana kot skupina, ki potrebuje izobraževanje. Kljub temu so evalvacije kulturno prilagojenih MHFA programov za migrantke in migrante načele vprašanje enotnosti t. i. »kulturnih prepričanj«. Povedni primer so raziskave o pismenosti o duševnem zdravju med kitajsko skupnostjo v različnih priseljenjskih državah po svetu. Raziskava Daniela Wonga idr. (2012) med skupnostjo Kitajcev v Avstraliji in v Hong Kongu je pokazala njihovo nizko raven pismenosti v primerjavi z »večinskim prebivalstvom«. To so avtorji študije prepoznali npr. v njihovem slabšem prepoznavanju depresije in shizofrenije ter v slabšem znanju o medicinskih oblikah zdravljenja duševnih motenj (na primer o zdravljenih in hospitalizacijah) (Wong idr. 2012).

Evalvacija uporabnosti MHFA za avstralsko, tako kantonsko kot mandarinsko govorečo kitajsko skupnost v Melbournu, je pokazala tudi nizko stopnjo sprejemanja iskanja strokovne pomoči oz. strokovne obravnave v primeru shizofrenije (Lam idr. 2010). Na eni strani naj bi še vedno šlo za močno izraženo stigmo, ki jo ima shizofrenija v kitajski skupnosti.⁸ Ne le, da izraz razumejo skrajno negativno in da psihotičnim stanjem shizofrenije pogosto pripisujejo znake norosti; domnevno naj bi shizofrenijo kot izkušnjo psihotičnega obolenja pogosto zanikali oz. naj bi zanjo, skladno z njihovo družbeno resničnostjo in moralnimi svetovi, uporabljali sprejemljivejše oznake.⁹ Na drugi strani je evalvacija pokazala, da na njene izide lahko vplivajo same izobraževalne metode. Večji del izobraževanja, ki je potekalo v kantonsčini, je bil simultano

8 Neenakosti in izključevanj migrantov in migrantk ne zaznavamo le v njihovih izvornih državah in državah preselitve, temveč so vir tovrstnih izključevanj lahko tudi same transnacionalne skupnosti (Bofulin 2020).

9 Več o antropoloških razlagah stigme v duševnem zdravju med kitajsko govorečimi priseljenci v priseljenci v ZDA glej Knežević Hočevar 2020.

prevajan v mandarinščino. Čeprav naj bi udeleženke in udeleženci MHFA razumeli obe pisni različici jezikov, se njuna izgovarjava precej razlikuje, kar naj bi domnevno vplivalo tudi na razumevanje posredovanih vsebin mandarinsko govorečih udeleženk in udeležencev izobraževanj (Lam idr. 2010).

Nehomogenost »kitajske kulture« je potrdila tudi raziskava Cha-Hsuan Liuja idr. (2015), ki je presojala podpovprečno uporabo storitev na področju duševnega zdravja med etničnimi Kitajci na Nizozemskem. Avtorji raziskave ugotavljajo, da so na Nizozemskem v ozadju te neuporabe v manjši meri ovire, ki jih raziskave v številnih zahodnih državah pripisujejo kulturnim prepričanjem te skupnosti (npr. dvomu v zahodne metode medicinske obravnave, prednostno iskanje pomoči pri kitajskih tradicionalnih zdravilcih, enačenje izkušnje duševnega obolenja z norostjo, sramoti duševnega obolenja za družino itd.). Liu idr. (2015) so v kvalitativni raziskavi, v kateri je sodelovalo 25 udeleženk in udeležencev kitajske etnične skupnosti,¹⁰ potrdili, da je neuspešno zagotavljanje primernih zdravstvenih storitev za to skupino prebivalstva lahko večji vzrok neiskanja pomoči kot pa zgolj sklicevanje na njihova domnevno enotna kulturna prepričanja. Med razlogi za neiskanje strokovne pomoči poudarjajo praktične ovire, kot je dostop do zdravstvenega sistema na Nizozemskem, npr. nezadostno znanje nizozemskega jezika za opis težav v duševnem zdravju, pomanjkljivo znanje o delovanju zdravstvenega sistema, nezavedanje o potrebi po strokovni pomoči, strah pred diagnostiko, ki bi jih zaznamovala kot duševno bolne, negativna stališča do zdravstvene obravnave, tj. doživljanje diskriminacije in stigmatizacije kulturno neusposobljenega zdravstvenega osebja itd. Obenem pa med ovire spada tudi izkušnja obravnave, tj. dvom v pravilnost zahodne diagnostike in obravnave, strah pred stranskimi učinki zdravil, nevtrajanje v obravnavi zaradi lastnih dolgih delovnih urnikov itd. (Liu idr. 2015).

Kulturne okoliščine, ki pomembno določajo pismenost o duševnem zdravju, so na primeru skupnosti migrantk in migrantov iz držav Vzhodne Azije (Kitajske, Hong Konga, Japonske, Koreje in Tajvana) v različnih zahodnih državah proučevali tudi Sumin Na idr. (2016); pregledali so že opravljene študije. Tudi omenjene skupine migrantov in migrantk praviloma v manjši meri kot »večinsko« prebivalstvo uporabljajo storitve služb na področju duševnega zdravja, pomoč tovrstnih služb poiščejo prepozno in zgolj v primeru hujših težav, čeprav naj bi imeli podobne prevalence težav v duševnem zdravju kot domače prebivalstvo. V raziskavi so se osredotočili na naslednje elemente koncepta pismenosti o duševnem zdravju: prepoznavna simptomov duševnih motenj, prepričanja o vzrokih in dejavnikih tveganja zanje, poznavanje oblik pomoči in samopomoči v primeru blažjih težav.

Pregled je pokazal, da je ta skupina migrantov in migrantk težave v duševnem zdravju praviloma manj pogosto opisovala z uveljavljenimi psihiatričnimi diagnozami in s terminologijo medicinske stroke države njihove priselitve, da je njihovo

10 Sicer številčno majhen vzorec je vključeval skupine, heterogene po starosti, spolu, izobrazbi in poklicu – tj. prvo in drugo generacijo migrantk in migrantov, ki so na Nizozemsko prišli bodisi iz različnih regij Kitajske bodisi iz nekdanjih nizozemskih kolonij.

znanje o vzrokih težav v duševnem zdravju različno, da bolj negativno sprejemajo službe, ki se ukvarjajo z duševnim zdravjem, in da se v večji meri kot »večinsko« prebivalstvo zanaša na različne oblike samopomoči. Hkrati so opozorili, da znanje o težavah v duševnem zdravju ni nujno neposredno povezano z dejanskimi načini iskanja pomoči. Ker se izrazi stisk in trpljenja vedno oblikujejo v kulturnem kontekstu, zgolj podajanje »pravilne« psihiatrične diagnoze za nekatere skupine migrantov in migrantk nima posebnega smisla, svoje težave razumejo na drugačen način in se raje odločajo za alternativne načine zdravljenja in/ali zdravlilstva. Vključevanje tovrstnih razumevanj duševnega zdravja v modele oblikovanja skrbi je bil za avtorje ključni element spodbujanja iskanja pomoči tudi med to skupino prebivalstva. Tako kot že prejšnje študije pa so poudarili tudi strukturne okoliščine, ki včasih odločilno vplivajo, da ljudje pomoči ne poiščejo: nepridobljeni pravni status, slabo znanje jezika »večinskega prebivalstva«, različne oblike diskriminacije in omejen dostop do kulturno primernih oblik pomoči.

Podobno kot v primeru prilagajanja MHFA staroselskim skupnostim so evalvacije kulturno prilagojenih MHFA za migrantske skupnosti potrdile potrebo po bolj dostopnih in zanesljivih informacijah o delovanju strokovnih sistemov pomoči, večji vključitvi njihovega osebja v zdravstveni sistem kot tudi po izboljšanju prevajalskih storitev oz. uvedbe instituta interpreta. Ta bi tam, kjer ga še ni, izboljšal komunikacijo med izvajalci in izvajalkami ter uporabnicami in uporabniki storitev. Skupno vsem omenjenim evalvacijam je, da je prav zaradi uporabljene zahodne psihiatrične terminologije, ki se opira na tehniko vinjet za prepoznavo prototipskih bolnikov, ali pa izjav o stališčih za identifikacijo prepričanj (Furnham, Hamid 2014) nujen bolj kulturno specifičen pristop MHFA. Pokazala se ni le potreba po vključitvi »imigrantskih vsebin« v izobraževalni program (kot npr. vključevanje njihovih zgodb in izkušenj tako pred emigracijo, med njo in po njej, razprav o kulturno kompetentnem strokovnem osebju, več nasvetov glede obvladovanja kriznih situacij itd.), ampak tudi potreba po sodelovanju in vključevanju zaposlenih v zdravstvenih organizacijah in številnih drugih organizacijah socialnih storitev v skupnem prizadevanju za zagotavljanje pomoči migrantkam in migrantom na vseh ravneh socialnozdravstvene oskrbe (Lee, Tokmic 2019).

ZAKLJUČEK

Čeprav so evalvacije programov Prve pomoči na področju duševnega zdravja potrdile, da tovrstno izobraževanje izboljša znanje njegovih uporabnic in uporabnikov o opredeljevanju težav v duševnem zdravju, jih motivira za iskanje razpoložljivih oblik strokovne pomoči in znižuje družbeno razdaljo do ljudi s težavami v duševnem zdravju, so obenem odprle številna vprašanja in pasti glede razumevanja kulture tako uporabnic in uporabnikov kot tudi izvajalk in izvajalcev izobraževanj.

Že kmalu po njihovi vpeljavi se je pokazalo, da ni mogoče oblikovati univerzalnih izobraževalnih vsebin o duševnem zdravju, ki bi jih lahko neproblematično uporabljali za različne »kulturne skupine« prebivalstva. Iz tega razloga so se strokovnjaki in strokovnjakinje lotili preoblikovanja programov Prve pomoči na področju duševnega zdravja za različne poklicne in starostne skupine ljudi, med drugim tudi za staroselske in priseljske skupnosti. Pri njih so izobraževalne vsebine in metode skušali prilagoditi njihovemu razumevanju duševnega zdravja in dobrega počutja. Ti niso bili nujno usklajeni s prevladujočim »zahodnim medicinskim modelom« obravnave duševnih obolenj. Prav ta ugotovitev je potrdila, da pri tovrstnih izobraževanjih ni treba upoštevati le kulture uporabnic in uporabnikov, temveč tudi njihovih izvajalk in izvajalcev oz. same biomedicinske obravnave duševnega zdravja, ki se ni osvobodila določene kulture (angl. *culture-free*).

Evalvacije raziskav že izpeljanih t. i. kulturno občutljivih programov Prve pomoči na področju duševnega zdravja so potrdile, da se tudi kultura v tako preoblikovanih programih pogosto neproblematično enači s t. i. kulturnimi prepričanji (npr. kitajska prepričanja) sicer družbeno heterogenih skupin udeležencev in udeleženk, še zlasti, ko se jo razume kot sinonim etničnosti ali govornega jezika. Evalvacije uporabnic in uporabnikov izobraževanj so sporočale potrebo po nadaljnjem prilagajanju programov posebnim lokalnim skupnostim in heterogenim skupinam staroselskega ali priseljskega prebivalstva.

Da kultura ni vselej odločilna, da posamezniki in posameznice ne poiščejo strokovne pomoči, so potrdile raziskave, ki so opozorile na njihove strukturne ranljivosti oz. pomanjkljivosti obstoječih socialnozdravstvenih sistemov priseljskih držav glede zagotavljanja dostopnosti svojih storitev za omenjene skupine ljudi. Nekateri raziskovalci in raziskovalke se zato zavzemajo za vpeljavo koncepta strukturnih (in ne zgolj kulturnih) kompetenc, kjer je v ospredju vprašanje, kako »kultura« in »struktura« sooblikujeta izkušnje številnih oblik stigmatizacij in neenakosti. Vsaka interakcija strokovnjakov in strokovnjakinj na področju (duševnega) zdravja je bolj kot odraz domnevnih »kulturnih posebnosti uporabnikov in uporabnic« izraz njihovih strukturnih ranljivosti (Metzl, Hansen 2014).

Zagovorniki in zagovornice prizadevanj za kulturno preoblikovanje programov Prve pomoči na področju duševnega zdravja za staroselsko in priseljsko prebivalstvo se vedno bolj zavedajo, da kultura ni le okoliščina udeleženk in udeležencev programov, ampak tudi njenih oblikovalk in oblikovalcev ter izvajalk in izvajalcev. S tega stališča sta problematična sama izraza »pismenost« in »opismenjevanje«, ki implicirata in prednostno podpirata posebno vrsto znanja, ki se posreduje kot univerzalno znanje in v odnosu do katerega se ugotavlja tudi večjo oz. nižjo pismenost določenih skupin prebivalstva. Izraza tudi ne preverjata moči zagovornic in zagovornikov določene »kulture« znanja (npr. o duševnem zdravju), ki je v komunikaciji z uporabnicami in uporabniki praviloma hierarhično posredovana. Še vedno ostaja aktualen poziv Arthurja Kleinmana in Petra Bensona, naj zdravstveno osebje v enakovredni komunikaciji s pacienti uporabi »mini-etnografijo« (Kleinman, Benson

2006: 1674), s katero svoje strokovno znanje postavi ob bok pacientu, ne pa višje od pacienta ali nad njegove razlage in mnenja.

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SUMMARY

MENTAL HEALTH AND MIGRATION: THE APPLICABILITY OF THE MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID PROGRAM

Duška KNEŽEVIĆ HOČEVAR, Sanja CUKUT KRILIĆ

This article discusses the establishment of the mental health literacy program Mental Health First Aid, initially designed in Australia and later transformed for the needs of ethnic minorities and immigrants. In shaping the program, its authors referred to health evidence about the poor mental health of certain social groups on the one hand, and the results of studies that confirmed that not seeking professional help and poor mental health literacy were the main reasons for their poor mental health and well-being. Since the Mental Health First Aid program is grounded in particular Western medical knowledge, the research question reads: What kind of knowledge is preferred to improve the literacy of people with mental health difficulties, including immigrants?

In this line, the article first shortly summarizes the circumstances of the Mental Health First Aid program's establishment in Australia, which was designed to improve participants' knowledge of mental health, certain common disorders (e.g., depression, anxiety, substance abuse, self-harm, suicidal behaviors), and available treatment options. Further, the article focuses on the Mental Health First Aid program's introduction in Aboriginal and immigrant communities. It soon became apparent that the general "one size fits all" approach was not appropriate. Therefore, the program was redesigned in terms of cultural relevancy, competence, and safety. Moreover, evaluation studies of such culturally sensitive programs implied that further adaptations of educational content and approaches were necessary to meet the particular cultural needs of these groups. These endeavors are illustrated by examples of the culturally adapted Mental Health First Aid for Aboriginal people and immigrants in various countries. Besides considering the importance of the cultural dimension of mental health in such programs, the article discusses historical and contemporary vulnerabilities that significantly affect the lived experiences of "culturally different" people with mental health difficulties. In this view, a culture is not only an observable circumstance of the program users but the program providers as well. Finally, such program adaptations question the concept of literacy itself, considering the practice of equal knowledge of the mental health of both the users and providers instead.

K N J I Ž N E O C E N Ě

B O O K R E V I E W S

Annemarie Steidl, *On Many Routes: Internal, European, and Transatlantic Migration in the Late Habsburg Empire*

West Lafayette, Indiana, Purdue University Press, 2021, 344 pp.

Simplistic notions of understanding human mobility have long burdened migration studies. Often, such notions relied on categorizations imported from state apparatuses. As a result, migration scholars have treated human movements in a binary and exclusive fashion, dividing between seasonal and permanent, legal and illegal, and most notably between internal and international migration. Building on recent scholarship that has challenged these shortcomings, in her most recent book, Annemarie Steidl draws on the area of the Habsburg Empire to demonstrate the complex and multifaceted character of migrations. Steidl, a distinguished migration scholar and professor at the Department of Social and Economic History at the University of Vienna, has chiefly applied quantitative analysis to explain migration history in her numerous publications.

Similarly, *On Many Routes* relies on quantitative methods. It examines Habsburg population censuses to display the complexity of movements within the Habsburg Empire as well as the relocations to European and transoceanic destinations. Steidl convincingly argues that migration patterns were much more entangled and interdependent than migration scholarship has traditionally believed. Therefore, transatlantic, European, and intra-Habsburg migrations were, in reality, not separate phenomena but, rather, interconnected movements. While transatlantic migrations have long been at the center of attention of migration scholars, they represent only a portion of the diverse mobilities that Central Europeans pursued in the nineteenth century. Steidl argues that it was much more common for a subject of the Habsburg Empire to move shorter distances than to take part in European or transoceanic migrations. The perception of mobility has been distorted, however, mainly due to the naturalization of the nation-state perspective. In line with current scholarship, therefore, Steidl proposes to reframe migrations within regional frameworks. She argues that migrations in the late nineteenth century were regionally rather than state dependent. Regions, such as Voralberg extending to Baden and Württemberg to the north, St. Gallen to the west and Trentino and part of Veneto to the south, represented socio-economic frameworks catering to humans' needs and expectations. In addition, rather than perceiving migrations as definite departures and arrivals, Steidl proposes to examine movements going back-and-forth, therefore not having a definite end in the point of destination.

Movements going back-and-forth are a thread linking diverse mobilities presented in the book. While Steidl devotes the first chapter to the study of migrations within Imperial Austria and the Kingdom of Hungary, she approaches inter-European mobilities in the second. In the third, she moves on to explore transatlantic migrations. In the fourth, she juxtaposes and compares all types of movements to find new modes of understanding human mobility. In presenting "internal" migrations,

Steidl sheds light on various forms of mobilities that were present in the area of the Habsburg Empire since the early modern period. As evident from the ambition of her book, Steidl attempts to bridge the gap separating the knowledge of preindustrial artisan migration with the one focusing on nineteenth-century mass migration. She finds that the people of Imperial Austria were constantly crisscrossing the territory. However, the available data prevented her from analyzing movements occurring within the same administrative units and between villages and small towns (31). The state controlled the movements by the right of domicile, *Heimatrecht*; registered by the local community and acquired by birth, marriage, or residence in the community for ten (later four) years. The instrument of *Heimatrecht*, therefore, facilitated the research of migrations on longer distances.

These movements were often caused by striking economic imbalances within Imperial Austria. By 1900, Austria was one of the most economically inhomogeneous states on the European continent (12). Migrations to industrializing and mining centers, such as those in Lower Austria, northern Bohemia and northern Styria, were widespread. Most migrants came from the surrounding districts and closer crownlands. In contrast, this type of internal migration was far less typical in the Austrian east and south, in the provinces of Galicia, Bukovina, Dalmatia, Croatia, Slavonia, and Carniola, where migrants chose different destinations, most often to other European states (34). Movements to industrializing centers were not permanent but instead formed part of a pattern of moving back-and-forth. Therefore, Steidl challenges the assumption that the population growth of urban centers was owed to rural exodus. Instead, she examines urbanization in the light of complementarity between towns and the countryside. Most moves to urban agglomerations, she argues, were temporary. Work in towns formed part of the rural-urban life cycle rather than the beginning of a permanent settlement. Likewise, Steidl believes the growth of the urban population did not owe as much to immigration from the countryside as it did to endogenous population growth and migrations from other cities (48). Examining population growth in Habsburg cities, she claims that only Vienna attracted migrants from the entire empire, while the other cities, even Trieste, predominantly pulled migrants from the surrounding provinces.

Movements from the Habsburg Empire to other European states still await to be properly researched. Thorough inquiry is, however, difficult since Austrian authorities were not much concerned with movements crossing national borders. Hungarian offices, on the other hand, were more diligent in collecting data regarding their citizens. In addition, insufficient data provided by the censuses prevented Steidl from capturing a more detailed image of migratory movements. As censuses were recorded on December 31, they did not entail seasonal migrants, which were very numerous. Only the German Reich, the largest employer of the Austro-Hungarian workforce, attracted around two million Polish Galician seasonal workers each year. As migrations began to unfold in the 1870s, the Reich did not perceive the immigrants as a threat to its stability but considered them a driving force of its economy.

Yet, from the 1880s on, when migration increased, the “Polish question” began to concern the German public. As a result, the Reich expelled Polish-speaking Austrian and Russian citizens. However, from 1890, it allowed them to travel seasonally to support the Reich’s agriculture. The seasonal pattern transformed with the outbreak of the war. At that time, the German Reich closed its borders and obliged Polish-speaking Galicians to work for the armaments industry (84). While Polish migrations to Germany are well known in migration history, Steidl demonstrates that they were not a straightforward response to the Reich’s economic development.

Initially, Polish-speaking Galicians moved to Silesia, the territory of Poznan and Saxony and dispersed only gradually across Prussia (76, 77). Likewise, Bohemians commuted to nearby Saxony to work in the garment industry and construction. Notwithstanding the economic success of Bohemian lands – Bohemia represented the industrial center of the Habsburg Empire – the out-migration from the territory outnumbered the immigration (74). Conversely, the industrializing Alpine region of Voralberg experienced population growth, owing largely to immigration. Its booming textile industry primarily attracted Italian-speaking female migrants from the nearby district of Trento, Italian-speaking Swiss districts and the Kingdom of Italy. The number of Italian laborers was so high that the local Socialist party in Bregenz held political meetings in Italian. Furthermore, Bregenz was also a hub for Italian transmigrants who traveled further to German and Swiss regions. The local railway station had a special waiting room, also known as *Italiener-Halle* (99).

By the end of the nineteenth century, the burgeoning American economy pulled millions of immigrants, triggering flows that captured the European imagination. Mass migrations came to be associated with transatlantic travel. However, as Steidl demonstrates, transatlantic migrations were not a novelty but rather an extension of the established European routes. Furthermore, transatlantic migrations did not dramatically diminish European movements. Emigration from the Habsburg Empire to the USA acquired massive proportions after the economic downturn of 1890. At that time, centers of transatlantic migrations were transferred to the European south and east, specifically to the Kingdom of Italy, the Russian Empire and Austria-Hungary. While in the mid-nineteenth century, mostly Habsburg Germans and Czechs were involved in transatlantic travel, half a century later, masses of South Slavs and Galicians began to take part in transoceanic migration. Steidl points out that whereas the period of mass migration received scholarly attention, the role of preceding movements and pioneers has been largely overlooked. Corroborating her findings by explaining migrations from Voralberg and Bohemian lands, she claims that the Habsburg pioneers derived either from areas with established migration networks or from industrial centers. Voralberg’s laborers and artisans had been on the move from the seventeenth century on, seeking employment in neighboring Grand Duchy of Baden, Duchy of Württemberg, Swiss St. Gallen, and up to Luxembourg and the Netherlands. The first transatlantic migrants from Voralberg comprised skilled artisans, masons, quarrymen, and carpenters who left their homes during the economic

boom period (126). The Bohemian lands, Steidl argues, were from very early on linked to neighboring German lands of Saxony, Prussia, and Bavaria. The networks they established on German soil would later be extended to transatlantic connections. The major outflow of Bohemians toward the USA took place after the revolution of 1848. Unlike the other Slavs who followed from 1880, Bohemians traveled with their families and settled in the American countryside. As the center of migrations moved to Galicia and the triangle between Trieste, Zagreb, and Split, migrants preferred to find a job in the expanding American industry. Notwithstanding the distances, these migrants were more likely to travel back-and-forth than the rural ones. Therefore, Steidl argues that temporary moves across the ocean continued the tradition of seasonal migrations and formed part of similar household strategies (152).

Steidl especially highlights the issue of return migration, which migration scholars have often neglected. Even though it is difficult to find out how many migrants indeed returned, she claims that most of the emigrants traveling overseas between 1900 and 1914 did not consider settling permanently in the USA. Migration decisions were mostly embedded in social relations and were not dependent on state-sponsored activities. As a result, state-directed repatriation campaigns were often in vain. Such was the case of the campaign led by the Kingdom of Hungary, a state that devised migration policies to create a nationally homogenous nation-state (154). However, even when relatives expected their family members to return, repatriation was not an easy and straightforward move "home". The migrants' native neighborhoods often looked at potential "newcomers" with suspicion. Not only the skills and experiences but also their habits and attitudes were frequently considered to be harmful to social stability. Inspired by local priests as well as by authorities who were skeptical of innovative production methods, local communities were often unwelcoming to returnees. Not surprisingly, in Galicia, returnees from the Reich were often despicably called *chuligani pruscy*, while the slightly less offensive label *amerykanie* was attached to those who repatriated from the USA (160).

By building on the argument that transatlantic migrations formed but a part of a complex network of interrelated migrations, in the last chapter, Steidl works on developing a more persuasive display of human mobility. Migration scholarship has long been beset by "binaries," among which the division between internal and international migrations has been the most persistent. Yet, the difference between internal and international is, as Steidl points out, far from clear. She demonstrates the artificiality of division with the example of Polish Galicians who traveled to nearby German Katowice to work in mines. At the same time, Slovenian- and Italian-speaking construction workers walked hundreds of kilometers without passing the state border to work in Vienna. As Steidl argues concerning the internal-international divide, the main issue concerning migration scholarship should be whether migrants recognized cultural differences between moving to a town just across the state border or to another place within the same state (164).

Furthermore, as migration patterns were incredibly entangled and interrelated, she considers it myopic to focus solely on certain types of migrations. Consequently, studies that have focused on a single part of the whole story have often resulted in biased explanations (215). Moreover, contrary to simplistic interpretations which explained migrations as responses to structural necessities, Steidl demonstrates that Central Europeans were not constrained in their migration behavior. As she shows in the case of Galicia, migrants were not pushed toward specific destinations but could instead choose between different opportunities. Neither did migrants always follow their kin. While some of them chose places familiar to their relatives, others went to areas not settled by their acquaintances. Therefore, many, but certainly not all, emigrants practiced chain migration (209).

Steidl does not propose new theoretical concepts to explain human mobility. Instead, she opts for a nuanced and complex reading of migration processes, acknowledging the interrelated and entangled character of movements. In doing so, she demonstrates the continuity of previous movements in mass migrations of the late nineteenth century. The fact that she managed to integrate knowledge separating previous forms of migrations from the movements which have traditionally attracted migration scholars undoubtedly merits historians' attention. Her innovative approach owes largely to recent migration scholarship, which has challenged simplistic categorizations that divided the field and produced partial images of human mobility. Therefore, questioning traditional scholarly assumptions, Steidl persuasively demonstrates that migrations are among the most complex human phenomena. Yet, even though she is undoubtedly correct in displaying how categorizations imported from state bureaucracies distort the image of migrations, the usage of some form of categories seems to be inevitable for scholarly work. Nevertheless, her approach provides an invaluable contribution to migration studies and will remain an important work to consider when addressing mobility, particularly but not only in the Central European area.

Miha Zobec

Jernej Mlekuž, *ABCČ migracij* Založba ZRC SAZU, Ljubljana, 2021

Abcč migracij, besedilo z veliko izredno močnimi točkami, želi biti slovar in nekakšen poljudni »uvodnik« za nepodučenega bralca. Pri tem opravi sijajno delo. Gesla so koncizna in neduhamorna. Je dostopno v najboljšem smislu – ko rečenica postane prezapletena, avtor vedro in glasno naznani svoje nezadovoljstvo; tudi njemu se (kot verjetno tudi bralcu) nemarno zafeceljajo možgani, ko zasliši besedno zvezo »pozitiven migracijski saldo« ali »diskurzivni post-prizmatični zasuk«. Obenem pa je skrajno previden, da ne bi iz »poljudnosti« nenamerno odtaval v temnosivo goščo trivialnega. Svojo pozicijo sprti obelodani. Vsako geslo ima celovit smisel, obenem pa avtor z zavidljivo lahkotnostjo preskakuje med sodobnostjo, zgodovino in prihodnostjo; med gesli in med pomenskimi sklopi. In tako bralčeva glava hvaležno sledi Indijancem, ki – pred 20.000 leti – iz Azije čez Beringov preliv sopihajo v svojo novo domovino. Sledi Kolumbu, ki v »novi svet« prinese sebe, svojo posadko, bakterije in silovite družbene spremembe. Sledi krompirju, ki prinaša izobilje; manku krompirja, ki prinaša pogubo in množično izseljevanje iz Irske. Bralec si živo (ampak res živo) predstavlja svoje bradate, hudo neurejene prednike, ki med 6. in 7. stoletjem iz Zakarpatja capljajo na zahod. Možgane mu lahkotno odnese v čase, ko se Avstrijci cmarijo v mineštri »številnih ljudstev s srbečimi petami«, in v poznejše čase, ko fevdalna gospoda iz nemških dežel v različne dele dežele svoje podložnike razpošilja »kot svinjske pršute«.

Bralec si prav tako lahko z (turobnim) užitkom predstavlja prihodnost, ko bodo migracije iz Pandorine skrinjice spustile roj (še nepoznanih) zločesti. Edina točka, kjer avtorju zmanjka, je sedanost – vse skupaj izpade kot nekakšen neposrečen evfemizem. Vojno, preganjanje in leteče bombe avtor imenuje kar »norije morije«. Begunstvo se zelo lahkotno izmenjuje z »ilegalnimi migranti«, nesrečneži, ki prihajajo v roke »varuhov reda«. Avtor uporabi manever »predstavimo-vse-perspektive« – na eni strani imamo ljudi, ki na prvo mesto postavljajo državno varnost, na drugi strani ljudi, ki goreče zagovarjajo pravice migrantov; razprava je prevročna, da bi jo lahko odprli in razrešili v enem »abcčedniku«.

Verjetno je na tej točki preudarno, da kot avtorica pričujočega besedila omenim svoj položaj – recenzijo pišem med terenskim raziskovalnim delom v Bihaću. Na območju »akutnih migracij« in vseh »zelo-sedanjih zločesti«, ki se vijejo iz skrinjice, imenovane EU, so vsakršni evfemizmi odveč. Državna varnost v tem primeru pomeni trdnjavo Evropo, ki z neskončno (finančno, kadrovsko, fizično, tehnološko) silo preprečuje ljudem nadaljnjo pot. Pravice migrantov v tem omejenem kontekstu pomenijo – bolj ali manj le to – da lahko v reki Uni operejo obleke, pojedjo kakšen (naprosjačen) sendvič in upajo na noč brez rasističnega napada.

Seveda ne vem, kaj bi bilo bolje od – toge – nevtralnosti. Vsekakor ne bi bilo smotno, da bi avtor zavzel pravičniško držo. V razmerju do realnosti svoje delo v bistvu opravi zgledno – predstavi reči, ki so. Verjetno je realnost sama tista, ki prej kliče po aktivističnem pamfletu kot po slovarju.

Pomembna kvaliteta besedila je, da avtor – sproti – obelodani svoj položaj. Na nekaterih točkah se prišteje med srborite družboslovce, ki zahtevajo (zahtevamo?), da bi morala biti pravica do gibanja/migracij absolutna; in ki z nezastrtimi nazori naznanjajo (naznanjamo?), da so »ilegalne migracije« v najboljšem primeru politični/družbeni, v najslabšem pa nacionalistični konstrukt. Po drugi strani pa se avtor, kot se hitro prišteje med srboriteže, od njih tudi odšteje – ali pa se jih kar odkriža. Tako se na primer sprašuje, »kaj bi [...] pravzaprav rešili«, če bi namesto termina ilegalne migracije uporabili izraze, kot so »neregularne, nedovoljene, neevidentirane in še kakšne« migracije. Avtorju se dozdeva, da bi s tem zgolj vnesli dodatno zmedo v – že tako razburkano – področje. Neevidentirani migranti so včasih tisti, ki jih niso popisali, včasih pa so migranti brez dokumentov. Nedovoljeni migranti so ilegalni migranti za ljubitelje slovenskega jezika. In tako naprej. Avtor se seveda ne moti; spregleduje pa, da je s pojmom »ilegalnih migracij« in »ilegalnih migrantov« zagat prav toliko, če ne še več. Nekdo je namreč lahko ilegalni migrant in trenutek pozneje to etiketo vehementno odvrže; ko po ilegalnem prečkanju meje zaprosi za mednarodno zaščito. Mejo med njegovo ilegalnostjo (status ilegalnega migranta) in legalnostjo (status prosilca za azil) označuje zgolj kratka, v pravem trenutku izrečena poved: »Potrebujem azil!« Če ta zamrmrani stavek zasliši pristojno uho, prejšnjo ilegalnost nemudoma odplakne dobrodušni paket pravic. Če ta stavek pristojno uho presliši, se človek z računom za nedovoljen prestop meje ponovno znajde na Hrvaškem (ali kjerkoli drugje, od-koder se je pač namenil na svoj migracijski podvig). Legalnost in ilegalnost (migracije in migranta samega) se tako pri ljudeh »na poti« včasih menjavata hitreje, kot si povprečni človečnjak zamenja nogavice. Etiketa (status, nalepka, družboslovni predalček – koncept) je seveda uporabna le toliko, kolikor je solidna in trajna. Ilegalnost je v tem smislu uporabna predvsem za izvajanje (državnih) politik, manj pa za razumevanje migracij samih.

Podobno se avtor opredeli do splošnega »družbenega vretja«, ki ga v glavah in srcih ljudi povzročajo migracije. Bralcu mimogrede zaupa, da se mu zdi pomembno predvsem to, »da se o migracijah razpravlja« – in to čim manj razvneto, miroljubno in z merico potrpežljivosti. Zazdi se mu, da ni nujno »fašist in ksenofob«, kdor se ne strinja s priseljevanjem v svojo državo. In še manj nujno, da je »tepec in domišljavi neodgovornež«, kdor misli, da je dolžnost njegove države, da sprejme ljudi z željo po boljšem življenju, ki so zanj pripravljeni garati. Ne opredeli pa, kako drugače – kot za ksenofoba – bi oklical človeka, ki brezpogojno nasprotuje, da bi tuje noge stopale po njegovi domovini. Prav tako se ne opredeli, kako sprejemajoči bi lahko bili do migrantov, ki niso »pripravljeni garati«, ampak so recimo bolni, invalidni, utrujeni ali pa lenuhi in ljubitelji brezdolja.

Na drugi točki besedila (glej Prisilne migracije) pa avtor glasno in jasno pove, da pojmi, kategorije in etikete več povedo o ljudeh, ki jih uporabljajo, kot pa o ljudeh, »na katere se nanašajo«. V tem je verjetno srž – tako lepote kot pomanjkljivosti – knjige. Migracije so vse to, kar avtor pravi. O njih pa se opredeljuje(mo) predvsem tisti, ki smo dovolj statični ali/in pa dovolj blizu družbene moči. Oziroma se opredelju-

jemo dovolj glasno in dovolj dolgo, da naši konstrukti (ali pa kar diskurzi) prevladajo. Statičnost obenem pomeni institucionalno umeščenost, družbena moč pomeni slišnost. Tako lahko o migracijah mnogo bolje pripoveduje nekdo, kogar priimka se drži pravo znanstveno okrasje, kot nekdo, ki je »profesionalni migrant« (na primer rojen med nedokončano migracijo). To se kar jasno pokaže v intervjujih in odstavkih, ki jih avtor izbira, da oriše svoja gesla – vsakršna migrantska »izpoved« je dvojno uokvirjena; z avtorjem, ki je pripoved prvotno zbral in z avtorjem Abcčednika, ki jo je uporabil za ponazoritev gesla.

Kaj je migrant, je odvisno predvsem od konteksta – ne le od konteksta družbe »gostiteljice«, ki razpozna njegovo (ne)kulturo, odreja zaželeno mero integracije/asimilacije, ga vrednoti glede na njegovo »uporabnost«. Odvisno je tudi od diskurzivnega konteksta, ki določa, kaj tale »migrant« sploh je – begunec, delavec, *expat*, diplomat, turist, študent, začasen, stalen, naš, tuj ... Pred tednom dni sem v Bihaću intervjuvala Palestinca. Med intervjujem mi je rekel: »V Siriji sem bil rojen kot begunec, tukaj sem pa samo brezdomec.« Njegove besede bodo v nadaljnjem znanstvenem delu sigurno zasukane; navsezadnje se izkaže, da so migracije še najtesneje povezane z (globaliziranimi?) družbenimi položaji – vsak se lahko izreka o svojem položaju, le da imajo nekateri moč/možnost/resurse, da njihova perspektiva postane realnost. Abcčednik je vsekakor priporočljivo branje: 1) postavi solidne koordinate, da se človek znajde v zgodovini in pojmovni gošči migracij, in 2) besedilo je obenem inteligentno, informativno, zgoščeno in duhovito, kar je (neugodno) redka kombinacija.

Lucija Klun

NAVODILA AVTORJEM ZA PRIPRAVO PRISPEVKOV ZA »DVE DOMOVINI / TWO HOMELANDS«

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V besedilih se izogibajte podčrtovanju besed, okrepljenemu in poševnemu tisku; s poševnim tiskom označite le navedene naslove knjig in časopisov. V slovenskih prispevkih uporabljajte naslednje okrajšave in narekovaje: prav tam, idr., ur., »abc«; v angleških: *ibid.*, et al., ed./eds., "migration". Izpust znotraj citata označite z oglatim oklepajem [...].

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 - a) Knjiga:
Anderson, Benedict (2003). *Zamišljene skupnosti: O izvoru in širjenju nacionalizma*. Ljubljana: Studia Humanitatis.
 - b) Članek v zborniku:
Milharčič Hladnik, Mirjam (2009). Naša varuška. *Krila migracij: Po meri življenjskih zgodb* (ur. Mirjam Milharčič Hladnik, Jernej Mlekuž). Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU, 15–20.
 - c) Članek v reviji:
Vah Jevšnik, Mojca, Lukšič Hacin, Marina (2001). Theorising Immigrant/Ethnic Entrepreneurship in the Context of Welfare States. *Migracijske i etničke teme* 27/2, 249–261.
 - d) Spletna stran:
 - Becker, Howard (2003). *New Directions in the Sociology of Art*, <http://www.howardsbecker.com/articles/newdirections.html> (14. 6. 2021).
 - *Interaction: Some Ideas*, <http://www.howardsbecker.com/articles/interaction.html> (14. 6. 2021).

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The length of the entire article can be up to 45,000 characters with spaces and should contain the following elements in the order given:

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- Name and surname of the author (after the surname a footnote should be inserted stating the author's: 1. education and title (e.g., PhD, MA in history, research fellow, etc.); 2. full postal address (e.g. Institute for Slovenian Emigration Studies, Novi Trg 2, SI-1000 Ljubljana); 3. e-mail address; ORCID iD;
- Type of contribution (original, review or short scientific article; professional article);
- Abstract (title of the article and abstract, up to 700 characters with spaces);
- Keywords (up to 5 words);
- Article (the style of the entire text should be "Normal"; font: Times New Roman 12; paragraphs should not be separated by an empty line, empty lines should be used before and after every title and space intended for a chart or figure; bullets and numbering of lines and paragraphs should be done manually; titles should be marked manually, Heading 1 with bold capital letters, Heading 2 with bold lower-case letters; (sub)sections of articles (Heading 1 and Heading 2) should not be numbered);
- References;
- Summary (povzetek) in Slovenian, up to 3,000 characters with spaces.

Avoid underlining and using bold in all texts. Italics should be used when emphasizing a word or a phrase. Italics should also be used when citing titles of books and newspapers. In articles in English, use American English spelling and the following abbreviations: *Ibid.*, *et al.*, *ed./eds.* When using inverted commas/quotation marks, use double quotation marks; single quotation marks should be used only when embedding quotations or concepts within quotations. Omitted parts of quotations should be indicated by square brackets with ellipsis [...].

Reports and reviews should contain the following elements in the order given:

- Reports from conferences and other events, discussions: title of the event, date of the event, name and surname of the author, 5,000 to 15,000 characters with spaces;

- Book reviews: name and surname of the author or editor of the book, *title of the book*, name of publisher, place of publication, date of publication, number of pages, 5,000 to 15,000 characters with spaces, with the name and surname of the reviewer at the end.

3. Quotations in articles

- Long quotations (four lines or more) should be typed as an indented paragraph (using the “tab” key), without quotation marks, the first line of the paragraph after the quotation should not be indented; quotations shorter than four lines should be included in the main text and separated with quotation marks, in normal font (not italic).
- When citing an author in brackets use the following form: (Anderson 2003: 91–99); when citing several authors separate their names with a semicolon and cite them according to the year of publication in ascending order (Milharčič Hladnik 2009: 15; Vah Jevšnik, Lukšič Hacin 2011: 251–253).
- A list of references should be placed at the end of the text and arranged in alphabetical order according to the author’s surname. The list of references should include only cited sources and literature. Multiple references by one author should be arranged according to the year of publication. Multiple references by one author published in the same year should be separated with lower-case letters (e.g., Ford 1999a; 1999b). Sources and literature should contain DOI (<https://doi.org/...>). All major elements of English book and article titles should be capitalized (except conjunctions and prepositions shorter than five letters).
 - a) Books:

Anderson, Benedict (1995). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London, New York: Verso.
 - b) Articles in a series:

Milharčič Hladnik, Mirjam (2009). Naša varuška. *Krila migracij: Po meri življenjskih zgodb* (eds. Mirjam Milharčič Hladnik, Jernej Mlekuž). Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU, 15–20.
 - c) Articles in journals:

Vah Jevšnik, Mojca, Lukšič Hacin, Marina (2001). Theorising Immigrant/Ethnic Entrepreneurship in the Context of Welfare States. *Migracijske i etničke teme* 27/2, 249–261.
 - d) Internet sources:
 - Becker, Howard (2003). *New Directions in the Sociology of Art*, <http://www.howardsbecker.com/articles/newdirections.html> (14. 6. 2021).
 - *Interaction: Some Ideas*, <http://www.howardsbecker.com/articles/interaction.html> (14. 6. 2021).

4. Graphics and illustrations

- Photographs, illustrations, maps, etc. – with the exception of charts produced in Microsoft Word, which have to be adjusted to page size 16.5 x 23.5 cm (6.5" x 9.25") – should not be included in the Word document. All illustrative material needs to be numbered and submitted separately in separate folder with the author’s name and surname. Please submit visual material in jpg. form.
- Locations of figures in the text should be marked as follows: Figure 1: Lisa Cook in New York in 1905 (Photo: Janez Novak, source: Archives of Slovenia, 1415, 313/14) or Chart 1: Population of Ljubljana after the 2002 Census (source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, Statistics, p. 14).
- Permission to publish must be obtained for uncopyrighted graphic and illustrative material.

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