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Editorial

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The new issue of Migration Letters reflects again on the complexities of a post-Covid 19 world, characterized by the overlapping of old and new migratory experiences, divided along old and new configurations of racial, ethnic and religious stratification.

Migration has never stopped, even though since January 2020, **thousands of people have been restricted in their movement and over 170 countries suddenly put in place some sort of mobility restrictions.** The health crisis rapidly escalated to become a social and economic crisis. **In March 2020**, the United Nations claimed that the pandemic had also become a mobility crisis, having drastically changed patterns of and acceptance towards migration, services offered by airlines, attitudes towards foreigners, as well as regimes for border and migration management (UNOCHA, 2020).

Covid-19 crisis has undoubtedly had disproportionately significant bearing on migrants, refugees, Internally Displaced People, due to the loss of income, restricted movement, reduced access to markets and the global economic crisis (ILO, 2020).

Over recent months, Covid-19 *restrictions have been eased* and the borders are slowly reopening. As this Migration Letters issue is under publication, the US is lifting travel restrictions for vaccinated foreign travelers, ending historic bans that had barred much of the rest of the world from entering the United States - for as long as 21 months.

The reopening is leaving many of us disoriented, as we are left with the striking realization that the economic and humanitarian costs of the pandemic have not been shared equally. There are many questions emerging out of the pandemic, that refer to the long-term effects on global migration.

One of such key question is linked to labor migration. The restricted movement of people has altered labor migration and in turn implied a reorientation of jobs previously filled by migrants, while others have remained exclusive 'migrants' jobs'. Many of the essential workers during the pandemic have been migrants, playing an important role for the continued functioning of basic services – notably health services, social care, and food supply chains (Anderson et al. 2021). Low skilled migrants had to go to work with the fear of catching and spreading the disease, which in turn has increased xenophobia and racism in many countries hit hard by the pandemic (Addo, 2020). The restriction with movement has impacted on global economic outputs, showing how migrant workers affect systemic resilience - a role which should be considered when assessing migrant workers' conditions and related public policies.

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The restriction of movements has had a direct impact directly on global inequality. As migrants have stopped travelling, remittances have dried up too. The most vulnerable populations have suffered disproportionately from this, and migration-dependent households have been especially vulnerable (Barker et al. 2020). As refugees are unable to get away, they find themselves in enclosed camps without proper sanitation, and at greater risk of catching and spreading the virus. Moreover, as often in times of crisis, with the increase in desperation, migration has gone into the shadow and migrants have been forced to use smugglers (Bird, 2020).

The political response of the US and EU countries has focused on containing the spread of the virus in their own territories. Their response has been largely inadequate in protecting vulnerable migrants and refugees left outside their borders. In the EU case, there is evidence of asylum seekers being denied entry and being detained because of the risks posed by COVID-19, in violation of international refugee law at the EU border (Roksandic et al. 2021). Ignoring the global interconnectivity that led in first instance to the global spread of the virus in such a short time, will only increase further global inequality. Ultimately, this will have repercussions also on how the health crisis might return if the needs of migrants and asylum seekers are not addressed appropriately.

The fear with the political response is also that temporary travel restrictions might become long standing, which will keep borders closed, feeding into right-wing populism and politics of insecurity, ultimately acting as a strategy to legitimize anti-immigration policies.

These questions put migration studies scholars at the forefront of public debate and policy interest, in light of unforeseen global events that seem to have challenged the existing political order and yet, at the same time, reaffirmed the structures of inequalities which we *have long been critiquing*. As we often warned, official data is also masking inequalities. The same data that has been at pivotal in the fight against Covid-19, cannot be used to inform government decision-making alone. Marginalized people are often invisible in official statistics. This means that many governments might be using incomplete population data to decide to fight the pandemic and plan the post-pandemic recovery.

We are proud to introduce the articles in this issue that deal with the vast array of topics and with the nuances and complexities, the post-Covid world needs to acknowledge and engage with. The letter-type format that characterizes Migration Letters allows for a quick dissemination in this *rapidly developing* field.

This issue includes several topics whose relevance in the inclusive recovery we wish for, has already been highlighted. These include the securitization of migration (Stefancik, Némethová and Seresová); the continuing relevance of global remittances (Biyase, Fisher and Pretorius); the structures of exclusion in naturalization process (Catherine Simpson Bueker); the health conditions of refugees (Mendola and Busetta) and the practices of 'othering' during the Covid-19 pandemic (Lumayag and Bala). The articles in this issue also focus on the integration and irregular migration in the South of Europe (Hüseyinoğlu and Utku; Cela and Barbiano di Belgiojoso; Kobelinsky and Furri; Terzakis and Daskalopoulou) as well as in affluent EU countries like Austria (Rauhut). Finally, two important contributions reflect on the gender perspective, a most relevant approach needed to counterbalance the gender bias in much of Covid analysis so far. These articles analyze in particular ethnic minorities' fertility practices

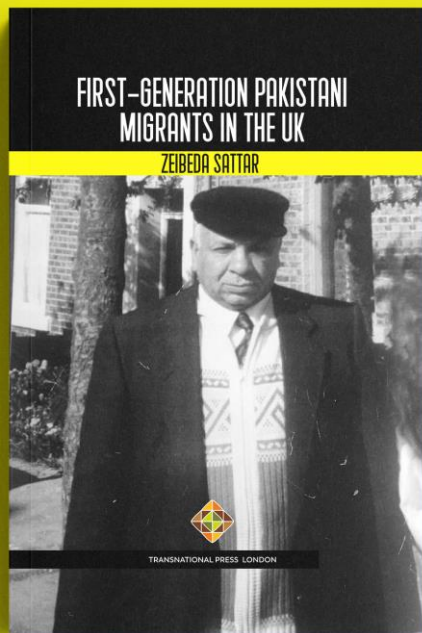


in Southern Europe (Carella, Del Rey Poveda and Zanasi) and gender role perceptions among minorities in England and Wales (Zuccotti).

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