

M. Mustafa İyi & Bahar Cebe, *Türkiye-Hollanda İşgücü Anlaşmasının 60. Yılında Üçüncü Kuşakla Konuşmalar (Conversations with the Third Generation on the 60th Anniversary of the Turkey-Netherlands Recruitment Agreement)*, 2024, 370 pp.

Reviewer: Buket Ökten Sipahioğlu

2024 was the year of the sixtieth anniversary of labor migration from Türkiye to the Netherlands. After WWII, Western European countries were searching for a labor force to economically construct their countries and for industrial development. The first recruitment agreement was signed with Germany in 1961, which was followed by the Netherlands, Austria, and Belgium in 1964. Like in the previous example of Germany, the first arrived migrants were supposed to return to Türkiye after a few years' time. However, most of the first-arrived migrants did not return to their homeland, and with the following generations, they became a diasporic community that is an important part of the social and economic life. Unlike the first generation, the second and the following generations studied at university and had important professions. The sixtieth year of the labor migration highlights important points for both the members of the Turkish diaspora in the Netherlands and Türkiye, which started to give more importance to its citizens abroad, especially in recent years. The Turkish diaspora in Europe, most of which lives in Germany, exceeds 6 million, and around half a million of these people live in the Netherlands. Regarding the population of the Netherlands, it is obvious that this country is one of the most important countries for the Turkish diaspora.

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The book, which is edited by M. Mustafa İyi and Bahar Cebe, is an interview-based book that consists of 60 interviews. In this sense, the book differs from general types of edited book, since the narratives of the third generation are transferred by the editors from their own interviews. Till now, there have been conducted several projects, book chapters, and articles by migration and diaspora scholars about the Turkish labor migration to Europe, exemplifying either Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium, or France. However, neither of the previous studies handled the ideas of solely young people, which in many senses differ from the first generation. In this book, on the other hand, the interviewees are all young Turkish third-generation Turks. The editors of the book, M. Mustafa İyi and Bahar Cebe, highlight the importance of this issue in the introduction of the book.

The ‘young interviewees’ of the book are 60 people between the ages of 18 and 35. The editors explain the narrative research method and the reason why they used this method throughout the study in a very logical sense. The answers of the interviewees were thus transferred by the book, not in a classical question-and-answer method but instead by a special narrative method that wakes the interviewee’s memory and shapes it in a way that even she/he does not think about before. In this sense, the book is unique in its handling, kneading, and conveying of the responses of the interviewees’ ideas. One of the limitations of the study, the language barrier, is successfully overcome by the editors by going on the answers while transcribing them. The editors directed several questions to the interviewees, most of which can derive new subsequent questions and expand the answers. This methodology is one of the most important things that make the study different from the previous ones.

There are four main points to highlight the strengths of the book. First, it adopts a rich oral history approach. Secondly, it gives space to authentic youth voices. Besides, timely commemoration bridges past (labor migration) and present (youth identity, mobility). The book’s greatest strength lies in its commitment to amplifying third-generation voices, situating them in a long intergenerational arc while making their stories accessible to a broad readership. However, this very accessibility sometimes comes at the expense of analytical depth. The selection of voices, while compelling, may not fully reflect the diversity of the third generation, and the commemorative tone risks overshadowing ongoing structural inequalities. The narratives of the interviewees reflect some of the overlooked aspects, like the reality that the latest generation of Turkish people in the Netherlands do not feel the same way as their descendants; most of them adopted the Netherlands as their home country (p. 70). Besides, the third generation has Turkish culture and identity as a legacy to be cherished (p. 102). One other important thing to mention

about the book is drawing attention to the fact that the third generation now has consciousness that Türkiye is expecting them to act like a Turkish consulate in the Netherlands instead of returning to Türkiye for living. Lastly, the subjects of the questions and thereby the narratives of the interviewees are well chosen by the editors in the thematic sense. The questions are not limited to the usual kind of family, identity, language, and cultural/social habits, but instead the interviewees were asked about their migration history, discrimination, social cohesion, and political participation in terms of both host and home countries. The final theme is also extremely important, which is about their future—not only about returning the decision to Turkey but also including where they want to be buried after they die, which is sometimes overlooked in the similar studies. The readers can find a broad range of themes in the book, which enriches the book.

The book also has some weaknesses, some of which originate from its limitations that lie within itself. The main weakness of the book is its approach. While the conversational approach is rich, it may lack a strong theoretical or comparative framework. The book presents experiences but offers less in terms of analytical synthesis. Readers seeking connections to broader debates in migration studies, transnationalism, or diaspora theory may find the analysis underdeveloped. One other thing is about the lack of interpretation by the editors. Although the book promises the reader to offer narratives of 60 young migrants from the third generation, the reader still expects to see the comments and analysis of the editors in response to the narratives of the interviewees. Apart from the introduction part, there could be a conclusion that summarizes and analyzes the responses. One other weakness of the book is its style. Since the book adopts a narrative style with open-ended questions that raise subsequent questions and make the interviewee expand on the questions, this makes it harder for the reader to follow the questions or know which questions may direct the interviewee and enrich his/her narrative.

Lastly, this book puts the Netherlands case in the context of the bigger story of Turkish migration to Western Europe in the wider European migration literature. The themes, while centered on the Netherlands, also resonate with Turkish communities in Germany, Belgium, and France. This invites comparative analysis and can serve as a basis for cross-national research on third-generation migrants.

The book is recommended for those who want to have a broad understanding about the difference in the migration approach between the first- and the third-generation Turkish diaspora in the Netherlands. Because of its unique content and style, the book deserves more attention from the diaspora scholars worldwide and makes a good contribution to the literature about the Turkish diaspora in Europe.