

LERC Delivers Special Workshop on Fieldwork Skills with Dr. Kamel Dorai

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In cooperation with the Lebanese Development Network (LDN), the Lebanese Emigration Research Center (LERC) at Notre Dame University organized a workshop entitled *Conducting Biographical and Expert Interviews* on January 19, 2010 at NDU. The object of the workshop was to introduce the participants to primary skills in administering field work questionnaires and conducting interviews and biographies; and to deliver essential knowledge of ethics in fieldwork.



Dr. Dorai giving his presentation during the workshop at NDU (Jan 2010)

The workshop was given by Dr. Kamel Dorai, Researcher at the CNRS - Paris (the French National Center for Scientific Research). He is currently based at the French Institute for the Near East in Damascus (IFPO) and visiting researcher at MIGRINTER, University of Poitiers (France). His work focuses mainly on asylum seekers and refugees in the Middle East, new migrations and geopolitical reorganization in the Middle East, and migration and transnational practices within the Palestinian Diaspora. Dr. Dorai is currently conducting research on the Iraqis in Syria as well as on the urbanization process of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. He has been conducting fieldwork in Lebanon, Syria, Sweden and Jordan on different refugee groups since 1996, collecting biographies, migration trajectories, and urban mobility. The comparative study between refugees residing in and out of camps as well as the analysis of their migratory experience and

spatial practices provide an account of the refugees' socio-spatial dynamics in exile and of relations between the camp and their urban environment.

With over than forty participants who attended from universities, NGOs, embassies, and government institutions as well as professors, researchers and staff from NDU and LERC, LERC Director Ms. Guita Hourani opened the session by welcoming the participants and introducing the main sessions of the workshop.



Participants at the workshop (Jan 2010)

During the first session, Dr. Dorai introduced the participants to a contextual and theoretical overview on questionnaires and interviews. He explained that qualitative research differs from quantitative research in their analytical objectives. The type of questions they pose should allow the researcher to obtain information and statistics.

Drawing on his experience in the migration and transnational practices within the Palestinian diaspora, the Iraqis in Syria, and the urbanization process of Palestinians' refugee camps in Lebanon, he stressed the issue of trust that is absolutely vital in qualitative research.

While conducting either field or expert interviews the researcher must always be prepared for the unexpected or to be asked questions on his political, religious or social affiliations.

In addition, Dr. Dorai highlighted the importance of conducting consented interviews either orally or in writing.

During the second session, the trainer went deeper into the different types of methodology that could be used by the researchers. For instance, purposive sampling allows the researcher to choose the people to be interviewed, but group sampling may target a selection of different groups of interviewees with specific criteria. As for snowball sampling, this gives the researcher the opportunity to reach a wider range of people by asking the people being interviewed to recommend other people.

Dr. Dorai then explained the way of organizing focus group discussion with experts in the field that could provide invaluable input because of the significant level of interaction that could be raised during this kind of discussions.

The third session of the workshop focused on Dr. Dorai's field experience in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. He mentioned some indications to avoid risks while dealing with sensitive issues such as illegal migrants.

Dr. Dorai then explained to participants the difference between in-depth interviews and biographies, and concluded his presentation by giving important tips on interview techniques and ethics.

The workshop ended with a Q&A session during which participants interacted with the trainer and asked for some clarifications on the dress code and communications techniques in preparation for the interview.

Finally, Dr. Kamel Dorai and Ms. Guita Hourani distributed certificates to all participants, who expressed their interest in having similar workshops in the future.



Ms. Hourani and Dr. Dorai distributing certificates to participants at the end of the workshop (Jan 2010).



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