

introduction

Migration. Rarely in history did we talk as much about a topic. We discuss people and families crossing borders or moving from place to place, either to work or to settle down; sometimes temporarily, others for good; at times by choice, others by force or necessity. Media outlets, politicians and people conversing across their kitchen tables – everyone these days seems to talk about migration. This makes it easy to believe that our worlds are shaped, more than ever, by the causes and effects of human migration.

Whether this statement is correct or not matters less than the fact that our worldviews are shaped to a high degree by the many conversations and media reports on the topic. When we hear about something often enough, we start to think about it and our ideas get shaped along those lines.

This is why we, a project called Switch Perspective based in Beirut, started to organise workshops around the topic of migration. We felt a need to discuss, reflectively and critically, how migration is being covered by storytellers and what impact it has on the world. The first workshops were organised in 2016, and brought together practitioners from across the fields of journalism and academia for week-long sessions of exchange and self-reflection. Journalists, writers, NGO

workers, activists and others, many of whom had experiences of being refugees or migrants themselves, came together to discuss how we tell stories about migration. What image of the world are we projecting? How do we invite readers and listeners to think about it? What does bad reporting lead to – and how can we do it better?

Throughout the course of more than four years, the conversation continued. Many experiences were shared, and both personal and professional accounts were told. Participants talked about individual experiences of being refugees or migrants, and about being reporters on a topic to which they were personally connected. They shared strategies they used, and ways in which storytellers can be more aware of biases and inequalities. So much important knowledge was created that somewhere along the road, we realised that it should be documented and shared. This publication is the result of that.

