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Introduction: Representation in Post-Migrant Societies. Theoretical Considerations and Insights in Arts-Based Approaches

Abstract

This chapter introduces theoretical considerations and approaches related to representations in post-migrant societies. Drawing on an arts-based research project conducted in Kurdish transnational communities, theoretical approaches and concepts of post-migrant society and representation are discussed. A special focus is placed on art and the role of institutions, such as museums or archives, in critically examining strategies of (in)visibility of migrants' histories. Finally, arts-based research will be presented as a methodological approach that is increasingly gaining recognition as a means of investigation and representation. Here, particular attention is given to community participatory, arts-based projects that can enhance the participants' integration, social connectedness, and self-empowerment.

Keywords

Post-migrant society, arts-based research, multimedia documentation, community participatory approach, representations

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Representation of Migration: Documentations, Memorialization and Arts-Based Approaches / Zeitschrift für Migrationsforschung – Journal of Migration Studies (ZMF) 2024 4 (2): 5–26, <https://doi.org/10.48439/303>

Einführung: Repräsentation in postmigrantischen Gesellschaften. Theoretische Überlegungen und Einblicke in kunstbasierte Ansätze

Zusammenfassung

Dieses Kapitel führt in theoretische Überlegungen und Ansätze zu Repräsentation in postmigrantischen Gesellschaften ein. Basierend auf einem kunstbasierten Forschungsprojekt, das in kurdischen transnationalen Gemeinschaften durchgeführt wird, werden theoretische Ansätze und Konzepte zu postmigrantischer Gesellschaft und Repräsentation diskutiert. Ein besonderer Fokus wird dabei auf Kunst und die Rolle von Institutionen wie Museen oder Archiven gelegt, um Strategien der (Un)Sichtbarmachung von Migrant:innen kritisch zu hinterfragen. Als methodische Zugangsweise wird schließlich kunstbasierte Forschung vorgestellt, die als Methode der Untersuchung wie der Repräsentation zunehmend an Bedeutung gewinnt. Besonders berücksichtigt werden dabei partizipative Kunstprojekte, die die Integration, die soziale Verbundenheit und die Selbstermächtigung der Teilnehmer:innen fördern können.

Schlagwörter

Postmigrantische Gesellschaft, kunstbasierte Forschung, Multimedia-Dokumentationen, partizipative Forschungsmethode, Repräsentation

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1 Representations of Migration: An Example of an Arts-Based Approach

This special issue is an outcome of a four-year project titled »ZOZAN—Investigations on Mobility Through Multimedia Documentations, Art Interventions, Arts-Based Research and (Re)Presentations.«¹ ZOZAN takes as its

¹ Zozan [sɔsa:n] is a Kurdish term meaning summer pasture and refers to the traditional way of life of transhumance in mountain regions. The project is funded by the Austrian Science Funds FWF AR 682; the project team consists of Mehmet Emir, Eva Kolm, Maria Six-Hohenbalken (Principal Investigator) and Eva Stockinger, supported by Eszter Ágota Hárs and Marina Stoilova. I would like to express my sincere thanks to David Templin, who made a revision of the article possible by critically reviewing the first draft, providing valuable suggestions and references.

starting point two comprehensive multimedia collections on Kurdish societies created between 1968 and 2015. The Werner Finke Collection and the Mehmet Emir Collection are situated at the intersection of art and social anthropology and provide unique records of everyday Kurdish cultures. They reflect traditional ways of life and their sociopolitical transformations, such as the significant urbanization and emigration rates experienced in recent decades by the Kurdish regions in Turkey. It is estimated that today, around two million Kurds live outside the Middle East, including in Germany, France, the UK, Scandinavian countries, and North America, where they have founded highly diversified diasporic communities.² The ZOZAN project combines various thematic areas, including the documentation of past and present mobilities of Kurds, Kurdish issues in transnational spaces, and the elaboration of ways to (re)present traditional and modern forms of migration(s) in Kurdish societies. In doing so, transnational connections and flows are made visible.

In almost all nation-states where they live, Kurds have faced significant socio-economic and political changes in recent decades. Violence, urbanization, migration, and refuge are key terms for elaborating on the Kurdish history of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Thus, our initial questions for setting up the project were: What should we do with ethnographic collections, multimedia documentation, and the cultural heritage of societies such as the Kurdish, who are characterized by migration and whose members live scattered across transnational spaces? How can we, and how do we want to, present these collections and thus also the history of those who are part of our multicultural society today? How can we address the unequal power relations between those being represented and those doing the representing and incorporate their voices, memories, and testimonies? These considerations led us to reflect on how post-migrant societies should address the histories of immigrants—histories that encompass not only the times of emigration and immigration but also their cultural heritage, stored in museums or (un)sighted archives in the host countries. The focus on Kurdish cultures also highlights the issue of cultural heritage in non-state nations. It is crucial that state institutions like museums, archives, or collections do not have the obligation to document and preserve this cultural heritage. Transnationalization not only leads to disparity and differing temporalities but also transforms concepts of space and place (Glick Schiller 2018). Within the various forms of

² The Institut Kurde de Paris, one of the most important diasporic institutions, estimates the number of Kurds living in the diaspora at over two million (see <https://www.institutkurde.org/en/info/the-kurdish-diaspora-historical-background-current-situation-and-prospects-123252314>. Accessed: 1.11.2024).

migration (voluntary, forced, and refuge), collective identities and memories are constantly (re)constructed. The representation of the self in the present and recent past is closely linked to memory regimes and memory work (e.g., Erl 2011; Crownshaw 2014).

These fundamental ideas served as the starting point for the development of the ZOZAN project, in which questions of cultural heritage, social transformation, and the memories of people with migratory experiences and related issues of representation have been and are still being investigated. The ongoing project is thus situated at the intersection of postmigration studies, visual anthropology, and research on cultural heritage and representation. One approach of the project has been to organize artistic interventions based on the two multimedia collections of Kurdish everyday culture housed in various Kurdish and European institutions. In this way, highly fluid processes of identity, mobility, and memory construction can be captured, allowing for discussions on topics such as past ways of life, cultural heritage, and current challenges of globalization. The aim of these interventions has been to develop forms of representation that integrate the multimedia collections and address the long-term effects of migration, cultural heritage, identities, and memory.

This special issue is the outcome of the conference »Laboratory of Arts-Based Research: Re-Appropriating and Re-Presenting Documentaries and (Mediated) Memories«, which was held at the Austrian Academy of Sciences in April 2022. Kurdish emigration and the establishment of diasporas are often regarded as paradigmatic examples of the emergence of transnational communities. We have seen them as a starting point to discuss scientific approaches and challenges of transnational communities in general. The contributors presented theoretical and methodological approaches to understanding the mobility of people and ideas, the dynamics of representation, and the complexities of memory processes. We discussed the role artwork and visual media production can play in issues of representation, (multiple) belonging, and memory work. This special issue includes contributions from a variety of disciplines and with different thematic areas, all of which explore questions of representation regarding migration-specific issues, the experience of migration or flight and its institutional representation. All contributions build on various transdisciplinary approaches, bringing together literary studies, art history, sociology, critical art studies, social anthropology, and art.

This introductory chapter will discuss some research situated at the nexus of migration studies and works on representation, with a specific focus on arts-based research. The chapter begins by presenting basic theoretical or conceptual approaches to post-migrant societies, followed by a discussion of

various studies of cultural representations of migration, such as archives, museums, art, or literature (2.). Subsequently, epistemological concepts and the methodology of arts-based research are presented (3.). Finally, I will discuss the individual contributions to this special issue (4.). The four articles and two discussion contributions address representational challenges in post-migrant societies and focus on epistemological and methodological issues. All contributions (except for the chapter by Katharina Fürhölzer) are related to the ZOZAN project, which explores new approaches to dealing with archival documentation in transnational settings through participatory arts-based methods to develop forms of representation.

2 Post-Migrant Society and Questions of Representation

The epistemological framework for the contributions of this special issue is based on approaches to post-migrant societies as outlined by scholars such as Regina Römhild (2017) and Wiebke Sievers (2024). As part of an increasingly important field of critical migration research, these studies no longer focus on ethnicizing approaches that compartmentalize migratory communities and majority societies, such as »methodological ethnicity« (Römhild 2017, p. 70, referring to Glick Schiller) or a »methodological nationalism« (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Instead, the focus is on societal change through migration (Sievers 2024, p. 21) or, in Römhild's words, »to observe society from the perspective of migration, in the sense of examining it from the margins it has itself created« (Römhild 2017, p. 69). As a response to the negative and derogatory use and ascription of the term »migrant«, Petersen and Schramm (2017) outline that »post-migrant«³ refers to critically scrutinizing the production and representation of narratives and forms of representation of migrants and migration. It not only refers to »a state of ›afterwards‹« in a temporal sense but also describes »the re-narration and re-interpretation of the phenomenon ›migration‹ and its consequences« (Petersen and Schramm 2017, p. 6). It is, therefore, an approach that scrutinizes the social dynamics, discursive levels, and negotiations within a society shaped by various processes of migration.

³ The term was originally developed as part of a theatre project of Shermin Langhoff at Ballhaus Berlin (Stewart 2017). »Post-migrant society« refers to a social system that is shaped by the experience of migration. Political, cultural, and social changes in society are linked to demographic changes resulting from immigration. Here, the developments following immigration are particularly considered, and migration is viewed as a process that significantly contributes to the shaping of society. Relevant here is the political recognition of being an immigration society, along with the social, cultural, structural, and emotional processes of negotiations for equal rights and participation, among others (Foroutan 2019).

Constantly focusing on specific diasporic or transnational communities can create a trap that fosters a form of »migrantology«⁴ and reinforces the categorization of people into mobile and non-mobile groups. To transcend this epistemological divide, our focus should be on social and cultural change within society as a whole, on new dynamics that challenge supposedly homogenous national identities (Sievers 2024, p. 13), and on overcoming narrow assumptions about who is a migrant. To grasp the social complexity in the era of globalization and explore forms, modes, and mechanisms of diversification, Steven Vertovec developed the concept of superdiversity. The term highlights the intersections of social, religious, and linguistic diversities with age, gender, and legal status in recent decades (Vertovec 2022).

Post-migrant approaches challenge the privilege of hegemonic majorities in representing a society, while oppressed minorities and forced migrants often have limited opportunities to represent their own interests, experiences, and fates (Bird et al. 2011). In the 1990s, Pakulski introduced the notion of cultural citizenship, analyzing questions of representation related to indigeneity and multiculturalism in modern states, arguing that »citizenship rights are intimately linked to the functions, capacities and legitimacy of the state« (Pakulski 1997, p. 74). Pakulski thus outlines the notion of cultural rights that encompass »the right to symbolic presence and visibility (vs. marginalization); the right to dignifying representation (vs. stigmatization); and the right to propagation of identity and maintenance of lifestyles (vs. assimilation)« (Pakulski 1997, p. 80).

In the last two decades, cultural activities, actors, networks, and artistic practices connected to migrant contexts have gained more attention and visibility. Post-migrant artists and cultural producers are seen »as active agents of city-making processes« (Çağlar 2016, p. 964). In analyzing artistic activities at the intersection of cultural and migration studies, Sievers identifies an »artistic turn« in migration studies (Sievers 2024, p. 8). This shift indicates that research moves beyond a negative discourse (focused on gaps and omissions) to focus on the contributions of migrants to a globalized society, particularly through cultural expressions and creative engagement with social challenges. Sievers argues that the nexus of refugee studies and arts-based research approaches in particular could provide impetus here.

4 Sievers et al. (2022) criticize that migration research has long focused on the migrants' societies of origin, often adopting the viewpoint of the receiving society and reflecting the perspective of the majority. Migrants were predominantly viewed in relation to the country of origin, as evident in the attribution of presumed cultures of origin. This approach, referred to as »migrantology«, struggles to free itself from the pitfalls of exoticization and exclusion, but instead perpetuates them.

Petersen and Schramm (2017, p. 5) point out the pitfalls, noting that in fields such as literature, »guest worker literature« or migration literature was often relegated to the fringes, released by small publishing houses. Since it failed to gain acceptance within the canon of national literature, a reaffirmation of distinction and marginalization could be observed. This has changed over the last two decades, as several publishing houses and writers' initiatives have focused on the literature of immigrants, refugees, and people on the move. Writers, including the second and third generation, have provided many new impulses to the literature of the residence host societies.⁵ Post-migrant approaches thus challenge the demarcation between migrants and locals, as well as between foreigners and the autochthonous population. They view society as a whole as a »society of negotiation« or, referencing Gilroy, as a society of hybrid cultures that fosters cosmopolitan conviviality and ethical agency (Petersen and Schramm 2017, pp. 6 f.).

Arts-based approaches and research methods have gained an additional dimension in recent projects. When researchers conduct studies with individuals who live in economically, legally, or socially marginalized circumstances, some of these projects engage in improving their living conditions. From the outset, various projects promote social inclusion and participation in society. These projects have a strong participatory element and aim to address the unequal power relations between researchers and research participants (see, e.g., O'Neill et al. 2002).

In a meta-analysis evaluating the results of individual scientific studies, Ana Moreira and Antonia Jakobi (2021) show the importance of arts-based interventions for the social inclusion of people who have sought refuge. Artistic activities and art production have transformative potential, as they allow individuals to express and represent themselves, speak about experienced violence, discrimination, and traumatic events, and socialize more easily. Based on the workshops in the ZOZAN project, we agree with this assessment. Success, however, depends on many factors, such as whether the composition of the group enables the creation of a safe space or whether the artists or workshop leaders are experienced in managing group dynamics. Moreira and Jakobi (2021, pp. 106 ff.), who examined community-based art interventions and their transformative aspects—particularly, the creation of

⁵ See e.g., Fatma Aydemir's fictitious family migration biography *Dschinnis* (2022), which was on the shortlist of the German Book Prize. Dinçer Gücyeter's *Unser Deutschlandmärchen* (2022), a novel based on his family biography, was awarded with the Leipzig Book Fair Prize in 2023. In the German-speaking world, the publishing house Unionsverlag has specialized in this genre of literature. For example, it promoted the translation of Kurdish authors in exile, such as Bachtyar Ali, Sherko Beas and Mehmet Uzun, whose works are internationally renowned today.

safe spaces for expression and, subsequently, public spaces for dialogue and exchange—also emphasize the importance of art practices in fostering people’s agency and social inclusion.

In countries of arrival, people forced to migrate face specific policies of representation and dynamics of media coverage. The focus on certain topics that are made visible, while others are hardly discussed or made visible at all, can be seen as political strategies within the respective refugee regimes (Mokre and Six-Hohenbalken 2024). Within the politics of representation, which encompass the ability to control the content and context of images and interpretations, we must recognize that, above all, visual images »provide the most readily accessible representations of other cultures« (Morphy and Banks 1999, p. 25). Political strategies for the visibilization of refuge and asylum are not new; they have a long history. In her analysis of German press coverage on flight and asylum between the late 1950s and early 1990s, Lisa-Katharina Weimar (2021) has shown how images have influenced the perceptions of migration and, in the long run, social negotiation processes surrounding migration. Over the past decade, Heidrun Friese (2017, 2019) has scrutinized how images of refugees and mobilized people are easily manipulated and instrumentalized. The displacement, human suffering, and refuge that are made visible, as well as the images (and, by extension, events and experiences) that are excluded, rendered invisible, and silenced, depend on the political context and intentions. In many cases, visual representations reinforce myths of »floods of immigrants«, often employing right-wing populist vocabulary. Other images are related to victimization in humanitarian discourses. This applies not only to recent migration and refugee movements but also to the visibility and representation of past migration issues, whether in state historiographies or institutions such as museums and archives.⁶ Since the 2000s, scientific discussions on public memories, meta-narratives, and the shaping of cultural and social memories have focused on how migrant groups represent themselves or are (re)presented (for Germany, see, e.g., Dogramaci 2013a, 2013b). As Tina Magazzini has convincingly shown, national history museums today face a »critical turn in curatorial and in scholarship work.« Specifically, they must decolonialize history, overcome a one-sided national approach, and »include the history of minorities and post-colonial perspectives« as well as migration and transnational phenomena (Magazzini 2023, p. 4).

⁶ There are different temporalities in the various host countries and immigration states. While the US and Canada established museums and archives to produce visibility decades ago, the willingness and openness of various European states to rewrite the *national* history or establish migration archives has long been limited (Peressut et al. 2013).

Fiona Siegenthaler and Cathrine Bublatzky have discussed the importance and relevance of archives of migration: both private archives and documentation, as well as overlooked, unedited, and unexamined collections whose value has yet to be determined. Such archives are highly relevant not only to individual and collective subjectivities but also to the visibility of migratory experiences (Siegenthaler and Bublatzky 2021, p. 283). In their edited volume, Siegenthaler, Bublatzky, and other authors examine private collections of migration and objects of memory, such as letters, photographs, and diaries. They analyze how and when such collections transcend the private interest and gain public attention, and how they are integrated (or not) into the hegemonic national institutions and inventories. The social spaces and places, migrant knowledge, and the experiences and emotions underlying these—often increasingly digital—archives are an important field for questions of representation in and of a post-migrant society. Focusing on Berlin, Gülşah Stapel (2023) recently examined the city's memory culture and how the migration society is reflected or not reflected in this public memory culture. In her book, *The Right to Inheritance in the Migration Society* (Das Recht auf Erbe in der Migrationsgesellschaft), she discusses the role of museums and emphasizes the need for diverse places of memory and remembrance to properly acknowledge the city's multicultural past and present.

Around 2010, the term »transcultural memory« entered the discussion within memory studies. Researchers criticize the conceptualization of stable memories based on national or »bounded« cultures, emphasizing instead the fluidity of memory and its connection to various cultures, movements, and (transnational) networks (e.g., Erll 2011; Crownshaw 2014). Exploring the nexus of transcultural memory, archives, and artistic/filmic practices, Dagmar Brunow emphasizes that recent approaches move »away from a single metanarrative [...] that is based on referentiality, realism, and facts that repress heterogeneity, towards a more particularized and multicultural construct of plural pasts« (Brunow 2015, p. 15). Maggie O'Neill et al. discuss herein the issue of space—or, more accurately, the lack of space—for self-representation and dialogue to value the knowledge, expertise, and experiences of migrants. O'Neill and her colleagues further identify political drawbacks in conventional institutional and representational structures, noting that the »lack of a space for self-representation can be filled by racism, misrecognition, and unbelonging« (O'Neill et al. 2019, p. 134).

To counteract this trend, scholars and artists have called for a participatory turn. »In this manner, refugees become represented not only by ›proxy‹—in images, objects or recorded videos that represent their plight—but through their very presence in real time when they are invited to become participants, collaborators and co-producers of art projects« (Milevska 2020, p. 245). By

incorporating elements of direct democracy into an art context, it is possible to avoid stereotyping and facilitate sociopolitical changes (Milevska 2020, p. 246). In addition to an institutional critique, these participatory processes also have an emancipatory character. Suzana Milevska highlights that

»[r]epresentation and participation are inevitably intertwined and only careful extrapolation and conceptualization of art works could think one from another and prevent the proliferation and perpetuation of the already internalized socio-political prejudices that are at work in the media, institutions and policies that regulate immigration and refugees interstate and inter-continental flows.« (Milevska 2020, p. 282)

Integrated into various power structures—such as the authority of resident states and their (un)willingness to (re)present immigration as a topic—migrants must also contend with the power dynamics within their respective diasporic or migrant communities. Diasporic communities, such as the Kurdish diaspora, can be characterized by a high degree of heterogeneity. This diversity arises from varying migration backgrounds, forms of political socialization and activism, as well as differing religious beliefs or levels of education. Questions regarding representation of the ethno-national community in the country of residence are linked to competitive relationships among various diasporic organizations and are, therefore, highly contentious (Stierstorfer and Wilson 2018).

3 Arts-Based Research, Creative Approaches, and Methodology

In the ZOZAN project, we have adopted a participatory and arts-based approach that not only makes it possible to reappraise and contextualize the two media collections in today's Kurdish transnational space but also allows for participatory forms of representation of the material at hand. In this regard, Patricia Leavy's definition and approach to arts-based research has guided our project. According to Leavy, arts-based research is a »cross-disciplinary ›set of methodological tools«« (2015, p. ix) that employs the principles and forms of the creative arts. This approach is developed to support various research processes (design, data gathering, analysis, and the presentation of results). Leavy (2019) describes arts-based research as a »third way« of conducting research alongside qualitative and quantitative research approaches. This method bridges the divide between art and science, enabling the discovery of new forms of knowledge, emotions, and understanding. Before presenting individual contributions and outcomes of the ZOZAN project, I will discuss some conceptual works, methodological approaches, and empirical studies that, due to their transdisciplinary approach and con-

ceptual intersectionality, serve as essential foundations for our ongoing participatory research project and for this special issue.

Wiebke Sievers' edited volume, *Cultural Change in Post-Migrant Societies* (2024), explores the potential of collaborative artistic approaches for cultural change. Discussing various art forms and cultural encounters, the individual chapters elaborate on theoretical and methodological considerations as well as various artistic expressions, networks, initiatives, and institutions that challenge existing homogenizing approaches and elitist understandings of art. The aim of these projects, positioned at the intersection of arts and academic research, is to challenge the hegemonic relationship between researchers and the people they study. What is significant about the arts-based approach is that research methods and the results of the research are closely interlinked. The results of arts-based research projects often include not only scientific publications but also exhibitions, museum designs, and works of art, among others. Research processes are often oriented toward presenting their (artistic) results to a broader public and reflecting on their processual nature.

Chiara Pussetti convincingly demonstrates how ethnography-based artistic practices and arts-based methods can contribute to critically engaging with the »crisis of representation« (2018, p. 2; see also O'Neill et al. 2002), addressing the discomfort with representational politics that social anthropology has (self)critically examined since the 1990s. Such approaches, which involve creative and experimental forms of cooperation between ethnographers, curators, and artists, enable »sensorial, emotional, person-centered, and postcolonial representations of the field« (Pussetti 2018, p. 2). A critical examination of field research itself is a prerequisite for this, scrutinizing what constitutes a realistic image, documentation, authenticity, and the role fiction has played and continues to play. The *sensory turn* in social anthropology, with its focus on emotions and artistic expressions in ethnographic research, and the *ethnographic turn* in contemporary art, specifically the interest in ethnographic research methods and theoretical concepts, have led to a critical rethinking in social anthropology and fostered new forms of creative collaboration (Pussetti 2018, p. 3). Pussetti highlights collaborative artistic approaches within a postcolonial framework, which enable us to »critically reassess the norms and politics of representation of the colonial period and to rethink epistemologically and ethically the production of a reflexive, sensitive, historical, person-centered, self-conscious, ethical and political postcolonial gaze« (Pussetti 2018, p. 4).

This is an ongoing elaboration of methodological concerns, which remains experimental and requires different methodological adaptations depending on the problem. However, an overarching principle is the

involvement of the participants, not as subjects or informants, but as equal partners in all stages of the research process, from data collection to the presentation of results. A prime example of this can be found in social anthropological research, museum collections, exhibitions, and art projects in Canada.⁷ In many institutions, the principle of participation is already being implemented at almost all levels, ranging from a critical review of museum collections to research topics and curatorial work.

In crossing the boundaries of the respective fields of art and ethnography, scholars have referred to Johannes Fabian's notion of a performative ethnography (Fabian 1990), in which researchers are not only those who document but have the role of catalysts, providers, and producers of events, particularly in their work with people in exile (Degarrod 2018). Summarizing Fabian's concept, which is based on his research on knowledge and theatre in Zaire, performative ethnography emphasizes that the »process is privileged over form, and the ethnographer is a co-performer, rather than inquisitor or sympathetic observer« (Waterman 1994, p. 419). The sociologist O'Neill, who has extensive experience in arts-based research with marginalized groups, sees in this »a renewed methodology for interpretive ethnography as ethno-mimesis via the hybrid inter-relationship between ethnographic narratives and performance art, and other artforms« (O'Neill et al. 2002, p. 74). Referring to the works of Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin, these alternative forms of representation should enable a »sensuous knowing or mimesis« (O'Neill et al. 2002, p. 71, in reference to Taussig 1993). As O'Neill et al. explain, ethno-mimesis is »described as a ›politics of feeling‹ given that the ethno-mimetic research process involves sensuousness and emotion in tension with reason, rationality and objectivity« (2010, p. 47). With this approach, the invisible, the hidden, and the overlooked can be accessed, and multiple realities, standpoints, and meanings can be depicted. O'Neill et al. emphasize the interlocking of research and representation and highlight the importance of alternative forms of representation through literature, art, and poetry as »feeling forms« (2002, p. 74, in reference to Witkin 1995), to make social worlds and the lived experiences of others conceivable. She argues that depicting migrants' lived experiences in artistic ways has the potential to be »transformative, providing recognition, voice, a means of sharing identities through inter-disciplinarity and hybridity« (O'Neill 2010, p. 48). Ethno-

7 For the cooperation with Indigenous communities in museums in Canada, see Dickson (2021). At the academic level, the University of British Columbia has established a First Nations and Indigenous Studies program (<https://fnis.arts.ubc.ca/>. Accessed 15.7.2024), and the University of Saskatchewan has created a repository based on a cooperative initiative to collect the legacy of First Nations (<https://digital.scaa.sk.ca/ourlegacy/>. Accessed 15.7.2024).

mimetic approaches can, therefore, create new spaces, while also capturing ambiguity and complexity (O'Neill 2010, p. 47). For this, they

»require that we experiment from multiple centers or points of view, multiple forms of narration and narrative structures including visual re-presentations and performance texts. Renewed methodologies and ›transgressions‹ take social research outside of binary thinking, between the spaces of the linear narratives of his-(s)tory, and purposefully challenge identity thinking/identitarian thinking.« (O'Neill et al. 2002, p. 75)

Several authors highlight participatory research approaches as an important tool not only to establish safe spaces for disadvantaged people to express experiences and emotions (e.g., Degarrod 2016, 2018) but also to combat stereotypical images during the different stages of research, including data collection and analysis. Academics must ensure that research settings provide a »safe space« for interlocutors. In this context, issues such as the unevenness of research settings, hierarchies and power relations between researchers and participants and the challenge of maintaining a distance have been comprehensively discussed. »Safe space« here refers to overcoming hierarchical relationships and creating settings where the interlocutors are treated as partners, invited to express themselves freely. Collaborative methods enable a »symmetrical reciprocity« (O'Neill et al. 2019, p. 132, in reference to Fals-Borda 1999) that helps overcome the uneven power relations inherent in conventional research processes. Instead, they adopt an »active mode of experimental agency« (Meskimmon 2017, p. 25). Furthermore, participatory research encourages individuals and communities to actively engage in fostering social justice and driving change (O'Neill et al. 2002, p. 85 f.).

One example of this approach in the field of migration research is Photovoice, a popular method for making the lives of refugees and migrants, who act as co-researchers, more visible (Augustová 2021). It works as »a participatory method that has participants use photography and stories about their photos to identify and represent issues of importance to them, which enables researchers to have a greater understanding of the issue under study« (Nykiforuk et al. 2011, p. 104). It is the cooperation partners who depict and document, for example, their homemaking processes away from home (MacQuarie 2021, p. 310). This method scrutinizes what is considered immigrant or foreign in making assumptions and ascriptions behind existing concepts visible (Nikielska-Sekula and Desille 2021). It also shows how people in their daily lives (Janhonen-Abuquah 2010), through their complex belongings, (multiple) places of attachment, and transnational practices, »create new places of belonging that allow them to engage the receiving society on their own terms« (Ehrkamp 2005, p. 346). Furthermore, such audiovisual methods enable an understanding of notions of multilocality and allow

researchers to retrace the feelings, sentiments, and imaginations of other people's worlds (Underberg-Goode 2016).

In her projects with exiled persons, Lydia Nakashima Degarrod utilizes approaches that place empathy and dialogue at the center. Degarrod (2016, p. 322) explains that »processes of collaborative art making and empathetic development had in common the involvement of emotional, imaginative and cognitive stages—which led to a dialogical understanding of exile.« In her projects, individual participants contributed to the creation and design of artworks that reflect their experiences of exile and imagined life worlds. The results were presented as multimedia installations. Viewers of these works of art are enabled to

»obtain a form of enactive or performative knowledge that allows them to experience embodied memories [...]. As a listener to the exiles' narratives of exile, I responded with my own embodied knowledge of the experience of suffering similarly to the response of viewers of art based on trauma [...].« (Degarrod 2016, p. 329)

Through these artistic participatory procedures, forms of representation, such as exhibitions for a broader public, are produced, as well as data for further analysis and research.

As outlined by Moreira and Jakobi (2021), several arts-based research projects not only follow an interdisciplinary approach but also have an application orientation. Community participatory arts-based projects are often linked, for example, to social work. As Jordana Salma, Bitá Mirashemi, and Megan Kennedy argue (2023, p. 12), the importance and strength of the methodological approach and research design lie in the transparency and quality of findings, the enhancement of social connectedness, and the self-empowerment of the participants. The challenges lie in the resources and requirements of arts-based methods, which can be costly and time-consuming, as well as in cultural and language barriers and the limits of meaningful engagement (Salma et al. 2023, pp. 15, 18).

From our ongoing research project ZOZAN, we not only largely agree with the individual statements presented in the literature but also add further methodological and practice-oriented insights. While the theoretical approaches were thoroughly discussed with artists and scientists during the initial conference at the start of our project, the multimedia material collections of Kurdish everyday culture served as the foundation for arts-based workshops conducted collaboratively with artists and participants. The ZOZAN team developed core topics, including social transformations through mobility and their effects on generational and gender relations, material culture, and the environment. During the workshops organized with Kurdish communities in Turkey, Austria, Germany, France, and the Auton-

omous Region of Kurdistan in Iraq, the artists focused on selected topics. At the beginning of each workshop, a curated selection of materials from the two multimedia collections of Kurdish everyday culture was presented.⁸ Following this, during a group discussion, participants shared their knowledge, such as that of traditional agriculture and husbandry, and their experiences of these (past) ways of life. This initial step took the form of a qualitative approach; however, the team soon realized that the participants reacted to the materials with intense emotions, which posed a significant challenge. Here, the artists not only addressed the participants' knowledge but also their emotional connectedness, personal memories and experiences, and the significance of the respective multimedia collection for these memories. The participants also referred to their own history of migration or flight, as well as that of their families. These could also have been explored using qualitative methods, such as interviews. Our approach went beyond such traditional forms of qualitative social research by encouraging participants to introduce materials from their family archives associated with the topics under discussion, present the memories artistically, and discuss very sensitive areas (e.g., violence against women). This approach aimed to foster the participants' agency as representatives. The team closely accompanied and thoroughly documented the process of discussing personal experiences and negotiating topics. The participants also introduced topics that were relevant to them, which the team had not considered at the outset.

The prospect of not only having their opinions sought and documented but also actively participating in practices of representation (in the form of exhibitions) introduced the workshop attendees to a new way of being engaged and participating. This approach offered opportunities for them to represent their own culture as well as their individual connection to the Kurdish culture(s). The topics proposed by the artists and developed collectively are discussed in greater detail in the discussion contributions (Tuğrul and Six-Hohenbalken in this volume). The absence of major thematic restrictions was significant for the research, as it allowed individual areas of work to develop naturally during the group process. In this context, the arts-based participatory method, when following an open-ended approach, offers an intriguing way to explore topics and cross-references that might otherwise be overlooked in a conventional research process.

⁸ The collections include more than 25,000 slides as well as hours of film and audio recordings, necessitating a preselection.

4 Contributions in this Special Issue

The four chapters of this special issue address various representational forms of migration topics, focusing on the role of private documentation and collections, as well as institutional archives (Faime Alpagu and Vida Bakondy) on one hand and artistic works that describe the experiences of flight, migration, and exile on the other (Katharina Fürhölzer and Georg Traska).⁹ The latter two chapters focus on existing forms of artworks and artistic expression (visual art and literature), analyzing them through different theoretical and methodological approaches within a shared social and cultural studies tradition. In addition to these chapters, two discussion contributions present workshop results that used arts-based research to develop forms of representation in post-migrant society (Rojda Tuğrul and Maria Six-Hohenbalken). These workshops are the result of collaboration between scientists, artists, and active participants. All chapters share a common effort to overcome the »crisis of representation«, develop forms of acknowledgment and visibility, scrutinize the role of institutions (museums, archives) in post-migrant societies, and highlight the contributions of arts or arts-based research, following empathic, humanitarian, and sensory approaches.

To scrutinize existing structures and strategies for a more inclusive society, the chapters provide insight into art practices that address political oppression as well as traumatic pasts and memories (Fürhölzer and Traska), marginalization and stereotyping in the residence society (Bakondy), and the invisibility of transmigrant life worlds and the role of institutions in this context (Alpagu and Bakondy). Finally, we provide insights into the workshop settings of arts-based research and the conceptual ideas behind them (Tuğrul and Six-Hohenbalken). The chapters also include a number of cross-references, such as expressing the unspeakable after traumatic experiences, coping with alienation, dispossession, and exile, presenting previously unconsidered archive materials, and dealing with fragmented knowledge and memory.

Katharina Fürholzer's chapter provides a close reading of an anthology created by Arab and African poets who have experienced displacement and refuge. This form of poetry is not only a literary genre but a form of testimony, Fürholzer stresses. She applies the concept of *témoignage* (i.e., bearing witness) and conducts a precise analysis of the poetry. Fürhölzer argues that

⁹ Except for Fürholzer's contribution, these chapters are the outcome of the start-up conference of ZOZAN »Laboratory of Arts-Based Research: Re-Appropriating and Re-Presenting Documentaries and (Mediated) Memories« which took place from 4–6 April, 2022 at the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna.

writing and publishing the experiences of refugees is a form of witnessing and, as a strategy of representation, also contributes to humanitarian work.

Vida Bakondy's chapter explores the documentation of migrants' precarious living conditions and marginalization through photographs. She works with the archive of the Yugoslav photojournalist Jovan Ritopečki (1923–1989), who documented the horrendous housing situation of Yugoslav workers in Vienna from the 1960s to the 1980s. Her analysis examines the methods Ritopečki used to document marginalization, depict migration experiences, contextualize this visual documentation, and facilitate its transnational transmission through Yugoslav newspapers.

Georg Traska focuses on the work of the Kurdish-Austrian artist Faek Rasul. He traces Rasul's biographical background as a political refugee who escaped imprisonment and execution in Iraq and sought refuge in Austria in 1987. After presenting Rasul's journey to becoming a painter and curator, Traska analyzes his artwork and broader engagement. Memories of atrocities, the suffering and assassination of his comrades, retracing the victims' fates, and establishing a remembrance for his lost friends and homeland have always been at the center of Rasul's artwork. Based on extensive encounters with the artist, Traska highlights forms of active remembering and involuntary, intrusive memories present in Rasul's artworks.

Faime Alpagu's contribution begins with an analysis of the homogenizing view of migrants in their countries of residence in Central Europe. Alpagu applies biographical methods and combines them with extensive research in private and institutional archives to highlight various forms of marginalization and loss. Her article is based on the archival legacy of one person, stored in DOMiD (Dokumentationszentrum und Museum über die Migration in Deutschland / Documentation Centre and Museum on Migration in Germany) and includes the family's audio letters. These audio letters provide remarkable insights into the emotional impact of separation on parents and children. Building on this, Alpagu critically examines the concept of »suitcase children«, which refers to successive family migration and the delayed reunion of children with their parents during migration.

In the discussion section, contributions about two arts-based workshops—one by Rojda Tuğrul on her own workshop and another by Maria Six-Hohenbalken on a workshop with the artist Lisl Ponger—offer insights into the challenges of implementing transdisciplinary approaches within a post-migrant context. The artistic interventions and the community participatory approach allowed participants to share their experiences of refuge, displacement, and migration. They allow them to reflect on cultural heritage, discuss forms of representation, and actively engage in creating artworks.

Tuğrul assumed multiple roles in the ZOZAN project as an artist, workshop facilitator, and conference speaker. She writes from an »insider« position, having left her country of origin, experienced displacement, and worked to connect in a new country, a new academic setting, and a new lifestyle. In her discussion paper, she addresses themes of loss and dispossession. Tuğrul applied methods to make feelings of individual loss and dispossession visible and representable, while Ponger followed an associative research method to contextualize the multimedia collections. Ponger positions herself as an artist with a highly critical perspective on Austrian cultural institutions and uneven forms of representation of the »other.« In this regard, she draws on a series of her own and participatory art projects. Based on these backgrounds, both artists have developed a critical perspective on cultural heritage and institutions, as well as documenting and collecting their own and foreign cultures, views which are expressed in their contributions.

Tuğrul provides insights into the conceptualization and realization of an artistic intervention primarily aimed at people who have experienced dispossession. Her main interest was to follow a sensory approach, for which she developed two artistic concepts, titled *On Touching* and *Re-Animating*. The first concept aims to initiate and enhance one's connection with unfamiliar things and seeks to develop a connection with difference, otherness, and indeterminacy. The second concept explores the tensions between the known and the unknown, absence and presence, and the living and the dead in a multi-sensorial way. Tuğrul's approach addresses the question of cultural encounters and how to navigate a previously foreign environment after losing or being forced to leave much behind in one's society of origin. Through simple exercises, Tuğrul showed how deeply these adaptive achievements influence each person's self-image and the emotional challenges one has to face in order to make new connections.

Ponger's workshop took a different approach. It began with a discussion of the current socio-political challenges faced by the Kurds in their countries of origin. Participants addressed topics such as resource utilization, environmental destruction, war, and loss in Kurdish society. They also shared individual memories and identity references from the diaspora. These discussions, which focused on life and memory in the Kurdish transnational community, ultimately inspired the creation of artworks in the form of stamps that encompassed several of these topics.

The various ZOZAN arts-based workshops brought together extensive knowledge of past ways of life destroyed by war, violence, and socio-economic change, while also examining critical perspectives on environmental issues and the current violence in Kurdish countries of origin. The workshop participants discussed similarities and differences in migration

experiences, as well as social relations, cultural expressions, and developments in the Kurdish diasporic communities. The workshops also showed how the participants incorporated their individual histories and pasts into the artworks, reflected on what they had left behind in their current living situations, addressed the personal and social challenges they face, and explored the spaces they have created for themselves within their host society. It was important to all participants to integrate these different aspects of life and to represent them through artistic expression.

Both migration studies and socio-anthropological research must address the inequality and power imbalances between researchers and participants, which participatory arts-based approaches aim to counteract. In both quantitative and qualitative studies, the research design is often fixed from the outset, leaving little room to address new topics that emerge in the course of the research process. Open-ended participatory arts-based research can address various temporal and spatial dimensions of migration experiences that are difficult to capture within a preplanned procedure, which is often guided by concerns such as achieving a representative cross-section or ensuring general validity. The arts-based access methods make it possible to highlight several challenges faced by people who have had to migrate or seek refuge (such as fractured memories, references to multiple pasts, or situational and multiple identity constructions). Inherent in these methods is the understanding that absolute control over the process is impossible, requiring engagement with the dynamics of the situation. Ultimately, these approaches primarily engage with emotionality and incorporate various sensory levels. This approach aids in understanding and retracing the individual challenges of navigating life in a new society.

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