

SOPHIA FREIDHOFF AND TONKA MALEKOVIĆ<sup>1</sup>

# COMPOSITIONS OF FLOW

## Unpacking the Ambiguities of Migrant Experience and Freedom of Movement

### ABSTRACT

This article presents *Compositions of Flow* (COF), an interdisciplinary investigation of labor migration in Regensburg that combines artistic intervention with qualitative sociological research. The project responds to the simplified portrayal of migration in public discourse, where right-wing and populist narratives often obscure migrants' lived realities behind numbers and stereotypes. By integrating participatory artistic installations with a mixed-methods survey, COF highlights the ambivalence and multidimensionality of migration experiences. The project's title, referencing the human rights concept of "freedom of movement," problematizes the dissonance between its theoretical promise and migrants' realities. In the context of EU labor migration, the positively biased principle of free movement, which applies to EU citizens, tends to overshadow actual migrant experiences. The legal right to pursue economic activity "under the same conditions as nationals" suggests that equality can be achieved with minimal effort, neglecting challenges such as language acquisition,

bureaucracy, housing, and the loss of social networks. The artistic component, realized at symbolically significant urban sites, created a visual and experiential framework for reflecting on movement, transition, and ambivalence. Complementing this, a sociological survey conducted between 2021 and 2023 with 52 participants from Eastern and Central Europe explored migration motives, employment, socioeconomic status, integration challenges, and subjective perceptions of life in Germany. Findings reveal both opportunities and barriers: many participants achieved stability and income gains, yet they also faced downward mobility, long working hours, and experiences of exclusion. The article shows how art-informed research can foreground the ambivalence of migration, challenge simplified narratives of freedom of movement, and foster empathy, critical reflection, and solidarity.

**KEY WORDS:** labour migration, freedom of movement, ambivalence of migrant experience, art-informed research, mixed methods.

---

<sup>1</sup> Sophia Freidhoff holds a Master's degree in Eastern European Studies from the University of Regensburg. Currently she works as a counsellor on labour and employment rights for EU migrants in Erfurt. In her research, she engages with a broad range of topics, including migration, the history of communist regimes in Southeast Europe, memory culture, and has published several articles on those issues.

Tonka Maleković is a visual artist and planner of socio-spatial transformations toward sustainability. Since 2003, she has exhibited and realized projects in public space internationally, receiving numerous awards, residencies, and scholarships. She is co-author of the interdisciplinary traveling project *City at Second Glance* and initiator of the courtyard gallery LiberSPACE in Zagreb.

## INTRODUCTION



Figure 1. Installation with suitcases on the Stone Bridge in Regensburg.

Migration has been one of the defining societal issues of recent years. Yet in public debate, the topic is often simplified, dramatized, or instrumentalized—whether through political rhetoric or media sensationalism. Talk shows, news programmes, and headlines frequently frame migration as a threat, placing alleged risks at the center of attention. This kind of portrayal stands in stark contrast to the scholarly understanding that migration is a natural and historically rooted phenomenon of human mobility. Empirically, international migration levels have remained consistently low for years, undermining the persistent myth of a large-scale influx.<sup>2</sup> In addition, a substantial body of empirical research demonstrates that migration yields considerable socioeconomic benefits for countries of immigration,<sup>3</sup> while

<sup>2</sup> “UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe,” *Flüchtlingszahlen/ Refugee Figures*, accessed November 28, 2025, <https://www.uno-fluechtlingshilfe.de/informieren/fluechtlingszahlen>.

<sup>3</sup> Angelina Hackmann, Konstantin A. Kholodilin, and Teresa Schildmann, “Mehr Migration könnte Potenzialwachstum der deutschen Wirtschaft deutlich erhöhen” / “More Migration Could Significantly Increase Germany’s Potential Economic Growth,” *DIW aktuell* Nr. 101 (DIW Berlin, 2025),

claims of heightened crime<sup>4</sup> or disproportionate public expenditure remain scientifically unsubstantiated.<sup>5</sup> Despite this evidence, right-wing and populist narratives continue to shape public discourse, reinforcing reductive and nationalist ideologies. In the process, the people affected—their motivations and individual life stories—are often pushed out of view, overshadowed by anonymous numbers and statistics that obscure the human dimension.

In the case of labor migration from Eastern EU-member countries in particular, the complex motives that lead to the decision to migrate are often overlooked. Instead, the positively biased principle of “freedom of movement” within the European Union tends to diminish many of the actual experiences of migrants. The legally enshrined right to “pursue an economic activity in any other Member State under the same conditions as nationals”<sup>6</sup> conveys the impression that migration merely entails limited additional effort—and enables equal participation. However, this assumption falls short. It underestimates the wide range of challenges migrants face—such as learning a new language, the recognition of qualifications, finding housing, or coping with the loss of familiar social and cultural networks.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the residency rights of EU citizens during their first five years remain strongly tied to stable employment, while third-country nationals face even more restrictive legal requirements.

At the same time, as noted earlier, public discourse in most European countries primarily focuses on alleged dangers caused by large scale immigration. In recent years, media as well as politicians have frequently referred to a supposed threat to welfare systems posed by labor migrants from Eastern Europe.<sup>8</sup> Such narratives have significantly shaped public perceptions, contributing to a moral distinction between

[https://www.diw.de/de/diw\\_01.c.934290.de/publikationen/diw\\_aktuell/2025\\_0101/mehr\\_migration\\_koennte\\_potenzialwachstum\\_der\\_deutschen\\_wirtschaft\\_deutlich\\_erhoehen.html](https://www.diw.de/de/diw_01.c.934290.de/publikationen/diw_aktuell/2025_0101/mehr_migration_koennte_potenzialwachstum_der_deutschen_wirtschaft_deutlich_erhoehen.html).

<sup>4</sup> Joop Adema and Jean-Victor Alipour, “Steigert Migration die Kriminalität? Ein datenbasierter Blick” / “Does Migration Increase Crime? A Data-Based View,” *ifo Schnelldienst Digital* 6, no. 3 (2025): 1–10.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Werding, *Migration und ihr Beitrag zum Staatshaushalt / Migration and Its Contribution to the Public Budget* (Mediendienst Integration, 2025), [https://mediendienst-integration.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Expertisen/Expertise\\_Werding\\_Kosten\\_Einnahmen\\_Migration\\_Beitrag\\_Staatshaushalt\\_Mediendienst.pdf](https://mediendienst-integration.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Expertisen/Expertise_Werding_Kosten_Einnahmen_Migration_Beitrag_Staatshaushalt_Mediendienst.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> European Commission. “Free Movement and Residence: Information on EU Citizens’ Right to Free Movement, Funding and Support,” accessed August 30, 2025. [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/democracy-eu-citizenship-anti-corruption/free-movement-and-residence\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/democracy-eu-citizenship-anti-corruption/free-movement-and-residence_en).

<sup>7</sup> Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), “Integration von Migrantinnen in Deutschland: Politiken und Maßnahmen. Studie der deutschen nationalen Kontaktstelle für das Europäische Migrationsnetzwerk (EMN)” / “Integration of Migrants in Germany: Policies and Measures. Study by the German National Contact Point for the European Migration Network (EMN),” accessed August 30, 2025, [https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/EMN/EMNDeutschlandPaper/emn-dp-1-2023-integration-migrantinnen.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=13](https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/EMN/EMNDeutschlandPaper/emn-dp-1-2023-integration-migrantinnen.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=13).

<sup>8</sup> Anne Lisa Carstensen, Lisa-Marie Heimeshoff, and Daniela Riedner, “Der Zwang zur Arbeit: Verwertungslogiken in den umkämpften Regimen der Anwerbe-, Flucht- und EU-Migration” / “The Compulsion to Work: Logics of Exploitation in the Contested Regimes of Recruitment, Refugee, and EU Migration,” *Sozial.Geschichte Online* 23 (2018): 235–70, here 258–69.

“good” and “bad” migrants based on employment status or perceived economic utility. Even though this assumption that migrants represent a threat to social systems lacks any scientific base, the narrative was heavily used by German politicians to argue for a great change in the social welfare system. This instrumentalization of migration as a danger and how it can influence the public perception was object of multiple studies<sup>9</sup> which highlighted the danger imbedded in such processes.

Our project positions itself as a counterpoint to this one-sided perspective. The aim is to make migration visible as an ambivalent and multifaceted phenomenon that can only be adequately understood by including different perspectives. The point is not to romanticize or exoticize migration, but to recognize it as a natural part of human history and the present. Humans have always been on the move: leaving familiar places, settling down, moving on, or returning. Whether migration is judged positively or negatively depends largely on societal narratives that shape the public image.<sup>10</sup> By placing individual stories, subjective perceptions, and personal experiences at the center, we seek to counter common stereotypes and prejudices. Our aim is to develop a new, symbolically charged image of migration—one that enables reflection, empathy, and a deeper sense of human understanding. Central to this endeavor was adopting the perspective of critical qualitative migration research, in which migrants are recognized as experts of their own lifeworlds. They are not to be treated as passive research objects, but rather actively and participatively involved in various phases of the project.<sup>11</sup> To this end, we carried out site-specific, multi-layered, and participatory artistic interventions in the form of two installations in public space, complemented by an accompanying sociological study.

## ARTISTIC CONCEPT AND RESEARCH THESIS

During a one-month stay in an AiR programme in Regensburg in 2019, Tonka Maleković continued her long-standing interest in exploring the city as a phenomenon—its mechanisms of functioning and the invisible structures that shape the everyday lives of its inhabitants. In one of her urban walks she discovered a view down onto the Danube from the historic Stone Bridge—a sudden perspective

<sup>9</sup> Stiftung Mercator, *Medienanalyse Flucht und Migration / Media Analysis: Flight and Migration* (Stiftung Mercator, 2021); Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, *Zuwanderungsdiskurse, Migrantinnen, multikulturelle Gesellschaft und Rechtsextremismus in den Massenmedien / Discourses on Immigration, Female Migrants, Multicultural Society and Right-Wing Extremism in the Mass Media* (Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, n.d.); Netzwerk Fluchtforschung, *Von der Willkommenskultur zurück zur Kontinuität defizitorientierter Migrationsdiskurse / From a Culture of Welcome Back to the Continuity of Deficit-Oriented Migration Discourses*, accessed November 28, 2025, <https://fluchtforschung.net/von-der-willkommenskultur-zurueck-zur-kontinuitaet-defizitorientierter-migrationsdiskurse/>.

<sup>10</sup> Hein de Haas, *How Migration Really Works* (New York: Basic Books, 2023).

<sup>11</sup> Netzwerk MiRA, “Kritische Migrationsforschung? Da kann ja jeder kommen” / “Critical Migration Research? Anyone Can Join,” February 2012, <https://edoc.hu-berlin.de/server/api/core/bitstreams/a773d400-d1ab-44f4-992b27665c38f084/content>.

reflecting ambivalent experience and notions of migration. As the river flows past the massive pillars, it creates the impression of moving forward, even though the viewer remains firmly on solid ground. This interplay of movement and standstill reminded the artist of the inner conflicts migrants often experience when deciding to leave their home country and when facing the challenges of beginning life in new geographies, systems, and languages.

In order to reveal the complexity of migration the intention was to create the multilayered perspective—to juxtapose the image from the bridge with existing statistics on labor migration in the Danube region, with data newly generated through interviews, and personal stories shared by migrants. In 2021, the project proposal was invited for realization and joined by Sophia Freidhoff, who became responsible for the sociological component of the research. After two years of investigation through surveys and interactions with participants, the final project was realized as a site-specific installation connecting two central nodes in public space: the Stone Bridge, a historically symbolic site of movement and transition, and Maximilianstraße, the main traffic artery of the modern city. The pillar of the Stone Bridge was filled with suitcases donated or lent by some of the participants and filmed from the perspective previously described (Figure 1). This footage was combined with statistics and data generated through interviews and personal reflections by migrants, forming a multilayered installation at the cultural centre M26 on Maximilianstraße.

Building on our artistic concept, we also conducted—as mentioned at the outset—a sociological survey with around 52 participants, who had migrated in the last 10 years from the Eastern Danube region to Regensburg.<sup>12</sup> As with the art installation, the research was also intended to focus on labor migrants, in order to make not only their labor but also their life stories visible. Since this was our central concern, we decided to include also non-EU member countries represented in Regensburg in the project. We chose this approach since we wanted to focus on the commonalities of migrants' experiences rather than on differences in legal status. In addition, citizens from the Western Balkan countries have relatively easier access to a work visa in Germany, and Ukrainian refugees also have direct access to the labor market.

Building on this participant framework, our research was guided by the assumption that a more nuanced and realistic understanding of migration emerges when attention shifts from abstract statistics to personal stories. We considered this subjective dimension an accessible entry point to the topic, particularly for those without personal migration experience. By focusing on shared experiences across diverse biographies, we aimed to reveal the human dimension of migration rather than emphasizing legal or structural differences.

The artistic installations served as a starting point for creating such a level of identification between different people. Art holds the potential to trigger diverse

---

<sup>12</sup> Countries included: Poland, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia, Republic of Moldova, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Romania, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia and North-Macedonia. The geographical focus was determined by the theme of the art institute's artist residency but also by our own personal experiences.

reflections and emotional responses in different audiences. The approach of merging art and research is not new; it has been applied in numerous other research and project initiatives in migration studies that draw on qualitative research approaches and artistic formats to communicate scientific findings to a wider audience. One such project which particularly inspired our approach is *Projekt Migration* by Kölnischer Kunstverein, which included several subprojects involving both artists and researchers.<sup>13</sup> Our methodology is aligned with the so-called concept of *art-informed research*<sup>14</sup> or *performative social research*.<sup>15</sup> However, we do not regard art as subordinate to science; rather, our sociological survey builds on the ambivalence conveyed through the art installations and seeks to reflect it as well. This means that art does not function merely as a visual end product, but instead constitutes the starting point and guiding thread of the research process. Both disciplines are conceived as mutually enriching and operating on equal footing, each extending the boundaries of the other.

## RESEARCH CONTEXT

*Compositions of Flow* (COF) was conceived from the outset as a site-specific project. The city in which it was realized—Regensburg—is considered one of the fastest-growing municipalities in Bavaria, a development strongly linked to its high rate of immigration. By 2017, nearly one in three residents had a migration background, and about one in six held foreign citizenship. Compared to 2008, when fewer than one in ten residents were foreign nationals, this represents an increase of almost 50% within a single decade.<sup>16</sup> A large proportion of those who come to Regensburg—apart from refugees from Syria and Afghanistan—originate from Central and Eastern European countries, particularly Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and the successor states of the former Yugoslavia.<sup>17</sup> Many of these migrants are employed in the local

<sup>13</sup> Similar to COF, the central aim of *Projekt Migration* was to shift prevailing perspectives on migration in German society, highlighting it as a constitutive and multidimensional aspect of social reality. Through a wide range of subprojects—spanning visual art, film, performances, public interventions, and scholarly publications—it highlighted migration as a constitutive element of German postwar society while also challenging dominant narratives that often rendered migrants invisible. Further details about the project can be found on the following website: <https://koelnischerkunstverein.de/archiviert/projekt-migration/>.

<sup>14</sup> J. Gary Knowles and Arda L. Cole, eds., *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research: Perspectives, Methodologies, Examples, and Issues* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> Mary M. Gergen, Kenneth J. Gergen, “Performative Social Science and Psychology,” *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 12, no. 1 (2011).

<sup>16</sup> Stadt Regensburg, Amt für Integration und Migration, “Integrationsmonitoring der Stadt Regensburg: Berichtszeitraum 2012–2017” / “Integration Monitoring of the City of Regensburg: Reporting Period 2012–2017,” 2019, <https://www.regensburg.de/fm/121/integrationsmonitoring-regensburg-2012-2017.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> STV Regensburg, *Ausländerzentralregister: Statistik zum Stichtag 31. 12. 2021 | Central Register of Foreign Nationals: Statistics as of 31 December 2021*.

automobile industry, the construction sector, or the Regensburg port. Despite their significant contribution to the city's life, many of these labor migrants remain invisible in everyday contexts. Their labor force is present, but their personal stories, challenges, and perspectives rarely enter public awareness. This gap motivated us to focus the project particularly on labor migration. By combining artistic and scientific methods, *Compositions of Flow* aims therefore to make the lived realities of labor migrants visible and to contribute to the public debate on migration.

The concentration on countries of origin in the Eastern Danube region was influenced both by the large number of migrants from these areas in Regensburg and by our own personal life stories. Furthermore, this focus was reinforced by the framework set by our partner organization. The project was realized within the “Artist in Residence” program of *documenta e.V.*,<sup>18</sup> which annually invites artists from the Eastern Danube region to develop site-specific art installations in the public space of Regensburg.<sup>19</sup> We also saw this as necessary given the lack of research on the everyday realities of labor migrants who had arrived in Regensburg in recent years. A comparable study<sup>20</sup> has so far only been conducted by the Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies; however, it is limited to “highly qualified” migrants.<sup>21</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

We drew primarily on the methodology of critical qualitative social research, which, unlike other scientific approaches, does not primarily aim to prove or disprove hypotheses but rather to reconstruct social phenomena, such as migration. As Prof. Dr. Aladin El-Mafaalani writes in his essay on the foundations of qualitative research:

In the qualitative approach, central constructions of meaning, patterns of thought, and orientations of action are placed at the center of scientific interest from the perspective of the actors' lived experience. At the same time, it is acknowledged that human practices and perceptions of their lifeworld are pre-structured—and thus, in each individual case, supra-individual phenomena can be reconstructed.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Art association based in Regensburg.

<sup>19</sup> Within this specific context, the artists, too, become temporary migrant workers, confronted with precarious working conditions similar to those of labor migrants.

<sup>20</sup> Ulf Brunnbauer, Barbara Stupka-Pleban, *TalentMagnet: Improved Institutional Capacities and New Multilevel Governance for Talent Attraction and Retention in the Danube Region, 2020–22*, <https://leibniz-ios.de/forschung/drittmittelprojekte/talentmagnet>.

<sup>21</sup> Kathleen Beger, Ulf Brunnbauer, “Brain Gain to Brain Circulation: Towards a More Social Europe,” *Blog des Leibniz-Instituts für Ost- und Südosteuropaforschung (IOS)*, December 22, 2022, <https://ostblog.hypothesen.org/3620>.

<sup>22</sup> Aladin El-Mafaalani, Julian Waleciak, Gerrit Weitzel, *Methodische Grundlagen und Positionen der qualitativen Migrationsforschung / Methodological Foundations and Positions of Qualitative Migration Research*, 2016.

Thus, despite its focus on individual life stories, qualitative research aims to produce results that are not only valid for individuals but also allow the connections between subjective perceptions to be worked out. Furthermore, qualitative methods—by giving respondents the opportunity to answer relatively freely—have the potential to reveal information not necessarily anticipated by the researchers. This was something our project also sought to harness, in combination with the artistic interventions.

To compensate for the limitations of conventional quantitative data collection methods, we decided to use both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Closed-ended questions were complemented by open-ended questions with the aim of identifying any possible discrepancy between the two methods. In addition to the questionnaire, we also incorporated various participatory elements into our research design. These were intended to establish direct contact with participants and to create an emancipatory effect through their active involvement. One of the central opportunities for participation consisted in donating or lending a personal piece of luggage (or a comparable object) for the art installation on the Stone Bridge in Regensburg. In this way, participants could actively contribute to the installation.

Moreover, we offered personal conversation sessions. Here, the participants could—if they wished—speak in more detail about their own stories and experiences while also providing feedback on our survey and project concept. Additionally, the participants were invited to join a moderated discussion round as part of our closing event. Three women took the opportunity to share their personal experiences and impressions of life in Germany, responding to questions from the moderator as well as from the audience. Finally, all participants and other contributors received a photographic print of the art installation on the Stone Bridge. This was intended to encourage personalization, exchange, connection, and further self-reflection.

To make our questionnaire accessible to as many potential participants as possible, we primarily chose to distribute it via various migrant Facebook groups. These platforms serve as central digital spaces of networking within migrant communities and allow for targeted outreach. To support accessibility, we also designed a visually engaging poster (Figure 2), which included several QR codes linking to the respective language versions of the questionnaire. This lowered the threshold for participation among people with different linguistic backgrounds.

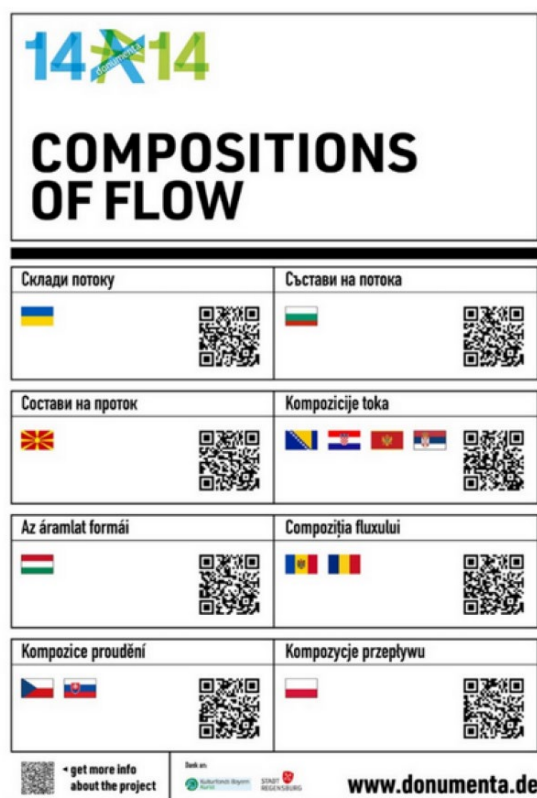


Figure 2. Distribution Poster. Source: Compositions of Flow.

We also relied on offline channels: printed copies of the poster were placed in the immigration office of Regensburg, at the local adult education center (Volkshochschule), and at the city's university to reach people who were less active on social media.

Our questionnaire combined quantitative and qualitative methods. It contained closed-ended and open-ended items to allow participants to present their own experiences and perspectives in a more differentiated and personal way. Depending on the type of information we sought to gather—such as factual data, personal stories, or reflections—we selected open, closed, or mixed question formats. Since we wanted to give participants the opportunity to respond in their native language, the questionnaire was offered in English, German, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, Croatian/Serbian/Bosnian, Hungarian, and Romanian.

The content was organized into six thematic levels. At the beginning, participants were asked to provide basic demographic details such as country of origin, age, nationality, and gender—comparable to the information required for official registration. The next section focused on questions about participants' professional situation: level of education, type of employment, and a comparison of salary levels between their country of origin and Germany. These aspects were particularly relevant in the context of labor migration. Next, we sought to understand the reasons that led participants to leave their home country. To gain deeper insights, participants were also invited to describe their personal motivations in their own words, beyond the predefined answer options.

The next section addressed the specific difficulties migrants encounter—for instance, accessing the labor market, finding housing, dealing with authorities, or learning the language. Participants were also asked to describe the most emotionally challenging situation since their migration, providing space for individual experiences. The next part explored participants’ subjective assessment of their lives after migration. Alongside challenges, it also addressed positive experiences, changes in everyday life, and the degree of perceived self-determination. In the specific context of labor migration, we also asked whether the move was experienced as a free choice. Finally, participants were invited to reflect on their migration decision in hindsight: Do they feel regret or guilt toward their families or country of origin? Do they have a desire to return? To conclude, we deliberately added an open-ended question of a more philosophical nature: What and where is “home” to you?<sup>23</sup>

As our initial aim was to examine labor migration from the Eastern Danube region, we intended from the outset to include participants from Ukraine as well. When the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine broke out during our research period, two distinct groups of Ukrainian migrants emerged: long-term labor migrants and newly arrived war refugees. Although our project did not primarily focus on forced displacement, we did not want to exclude Ukrainian participants. For this reason, we adapted the questionnaire to Ukrainian. When we were later invited to visit a German integration course, whose participants consisted exclusively of war refugees, we likewise chose not to turn them away. Since our questions did not rely on differences in legal migration status, this inclusion was feasible. In the questionnaire, however, we revised or omitted certain items—such as questions concerning the voluntariness of migration—which would have been inappropriate for people who had fled the war.

## EVALUATION AND ANALYSIS

In total, 52 participants took part in our survey. Five of them additionally met with us for individual and group discussions. Three further participants agreed to join our final discussion round, during which they elaborated on their own perceptions. The participants came from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia,

<sup>23</sup> The concept of ‘home’ plays a central role in migration and displacement studies, as the shifting and renegotiation of one’s notion of home—common in migratory contexts—often stands in tension with the strongly nation-state-bound understanding traditionally associated with the term. For this reason, we were also interested in how our participants themselves perceive ‘home’ and whether Germany has, for some of them, become a place that fits into their personal concept of home. For further research, see: S. Kück, *Heimat und Migration: Ein transdisziplinärer Ansatz anhand biographischer Interviews mit geflüchteten Menschen in Deutschland / Home and Migration: A Transdisciplinary Approach Based on Biographical Interviews with Refugees in Germany* (1st ed.; Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2021), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv371c3vn>; Orvar Löfgren and Regina Bendix, “Double Homes, Double Lives?” *Ethnologia Europaea* 37, no. 1 (2007): 7–16, <https://doi.org/10.16995/ee.1009>.

Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, and Ukraine. Among them were 29 women and 13 men. Their ages ranged from 19 to 65, with most falling between 30 and 39 years old. The majority had come to Germany between 2020 and 2023, and only four participants had lived in Germany for more than ten years.

Based on this dataset, the evaluation of the data was carried out in two main steps. First, each question was analyzed separately, and the results were compiled into Excel spreadsheets. Since most participants answered in their native language, responses were initially translated when we did not speak the respective language ourselves, and then jointly evaluated. In the second step, the consolidated datasets of the individual questions were combined and/or compared with each other. The analysis followed the thematic categories already outlined. A comparison was also made between the datasets from open and closed questions. Since a full presentation of our findings would go beyond the scope of this article, we will only focus on four thematic areas that proved most relevant in our results.

## EMPLOYMENT SITUATION AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Our questionnaire asked about participants' occupations in both countries, their income levels, their current employment situation, and any jobs they had already undertaken in Germany. The aim was to shed light on how (un)successfully migrants had been able to integrate into the German labor market. According to the responses, ten participants had not been employed in their country of origin—among them several students. Eleven of our participants were still enrolled in education or training in Germany, in case of three people also supplemented by part-time employment. Work in care or domestic settings was mentioned, though only by two people. Overall, the range of professions was very diverse, with concentrations in technical and manual trades (nine people), healthcare and social work (eight people), as well as administration and office work (eight people). Self-employment, by contrast, was rarely reported.

A positive aspect was that 17 participants were in full-time employment, and their income had significantly improved compared to their situation in the country of origin. Remarkably, only one person reported currently relying on social assistance, especially given the relatively high proportion of refugees from Ukraine in our sample. At the same time, it became clear that many participants took on additional employment alongside their full-time jobs. Two respondents even reported working regularly more than 48 hours per week.

A critical point emerges when comparing their educational background and current income: despite the high number of 40 participants holding higher education degrees, more than 19 people earned less than €1,200 net per month. Only 13 people said that they are earning more than €2,000 net per month. This reflects a well-documented phenomenon in migration research often referred to as the “migration pay gap.” For example, in 2017, non-German citizens earned on average about 17.6%

less than German employees.<sup>24</sup> Studies like that of Minor<sup>25</sup> further demonstrated that these income disparities cannot—contrary to common assumptions—be explained solely by insufficient qualifications or limited language skills but instead point to structural disadvantages that migrants face in the German labor market, including restricted opportunities for upward mobility.<sup>26</sup> Our findings therefore mirror the general situation in Germany: migrants frequently encounter obstacles when entering the labor market and are often employed below their qualification level—due to discrimination, language barriers, and difficulties in having foreign qualifications recognized.<sup>27</sup>

## MOTIVES FOR MIGRATION

Asking for the motives of our participants was an important question, since labor migration is often explained in overly simplistic, monocausal terms—usually reduced to financial hardship. To address this, we asked about motives using both open and closed formats, in order to see how their responses compared and complemented. In the open format, participants were able to elaborate on their choice of “Other,” add further categories, or freely describe their reasons for migrating to Germany. In addition to the expected answers such as “studies,” “training,” “language,” or “curiosity,” participants also pointed to structural problems in their countries of origin, such as “family separation,” “nepotism,” or “corruption.” Some respondents used the free-text field to narrate their migration biographies at greater length. A few illustrative examples include:

- *At first, I was an au pair, then I met my husband and got married.*
- *When the war started, I lost my job. In summer 2022, I retrained as a website tester. In the fall I began job hunting, but due to shelling of infrastructure and*

<sup>24</sup> Women face a double form of structural disadvantage, as they are affected both by the gender pay gap and by the migrant pay gap, see: Laura Spitaleri, “Der Migrant-Gender-Pay-Gap, Sind die Gehälter niedrig, trifft es alle” / “The Migrant Gender Pay Gap: When Wages Are Low, Everyone Is Affected,” *Minor. Projektkontor für Bildung und Forschung*, July 2022, <https://minor-kontor.de/migrant-gender-pay-gap/>.

<sup>25</sup> Minor-Kontor, *Der Migrant-Gender-Pay-Gap*.

<sup>26</sup> It should be noted, however, that wage disparities tend to decrease with longer duration of stay. Since our study predominantly included newly arrived migrants, we were not able to examine this effect in greater depth, for further details see: Stiftung Zentrum für Türkeistudien und Integrationsforschung, *Arbeitsmarktintegration von Geflüchteten und Migrantinnen / Labour Market Integration of Refugees and Migrants* (2024), [https://www.dokumente.integrationsmonitoring.nrw.de/Stiftung\\_Zentrum\\_T%C3%BCrkeistudien\\_Integrationsforschung\\_2024\\_Arbeitsmarktintegration\\_von\\_Gefuechteten\\_und\\_Migrant\\_innen.pdf](https://www.dokumente.integrationsmonitoring.nrw.de/Stiftung_Zentrum_T%C3%BCrkeistudien_Integrationsforschung_2024_Arbeitsmarktintegration_von_Gefuechteten_und_Migrant_innen.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> Maria Metzging and Adriana R. Cardozo Silva, “Bildungsabschlüsse von Migrantinnen und Migranten. Sozialbericht 2024” / “Educational Attainments of Migrants. Social Report 2024,” *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, Nov 6, 2024, <https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/zahlen-und-fakten/sozialbericht-2024/553282/bildungsabschluesse-von-migrantinnen-und-migranten/>.

---

*frequent power outages, it became increasingly impossible.*

- *It made no sense to stay in my hometown and work for €200 a month. Even though I have my own house there—you can't live off the walls. I work and live here and can afford many things.*
- *My mother wanted to live and work in Germany.*
- *I came with a scholarship. I hadn't intended to stay, but I liked it here and decided to do my full degree. One step led to another, and I eventually found a job in the city where I studied.*

One particularly revealing answer came from a participant who had chosen “war” as the main reason. While public perception often equates flight from war zones with immediate threats of violence or death, this response showed that existential factors such as job loss, lack of prospects, or the collapse of basic infrastructure can also be decisive. This highlights the complexity of displacement motives, even within the context of armed conflict. In relation to our target group, it was also striking that “financial reasons/poverty” was named only in a few cases. Although this factor is classically associated with labor migration, only three respondents selected it. This suggests that while economic motives do play a role, they are rarely perceived as the sole or primary trigger.

The free-text responses further illustrate that migration is often not the result of a single, clear-cut decision but rather a process. Motives are varied and may evolve over time. Several participants initially came with temporary intentions—for example, as au pairs, for study, or for family reasons—yet later decided to remain in Germany more permanently. This pattern challenges the common notion of migration as a straightforward, goal-oriented act—a notion prevalent in public discourse, even though migration research has long questioned such simplified understandings.<sup>28</sup>

To gain a more nuanced picture, we also asked whether participants felt treated with dignity in their country of origin. Only six people clearly indicated that they had not felt well treated. The majority—including those from Ukraine—expressed themselves neutrally or reported no negative experiences. Some illustrative statements include:

- *Taking part in feminist and LGBT demonstrations carried risks. But personally, I hardly experienced any injustices.*

---

<sup>28</sup> See for example: Christian Pfeffer-Hoffmann (ed.), *EU-Zuwanderung nach Deutschland: Analysen zur Diversität von EU-Zugewanderten in Deutschland / EU Immigration to Germany: Analyses on the Diversity of EU Immigrants in Germany* (Berlin: Mensch & Buch Verlag, 2019) or Birgit Glorius, Izabela Grabowska-Lusińska, and Aimee Kuvik (eds.), *Mobility in Transition: Migration Patterns After EU Enlargement* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013).

- 
- *I was never involved in bad situations, so I never had problems in my home country, but of course some institutions need reform.*
  - *In my home country I would not have tolerated being treated without dignity, but here in Germany I grew tired of that attitude.*
  - *Absolutely not. Poor treatment in job interviews because I am a political and lack connections [...], a medical mistake that cost my baby's life [...].*
  - *My family was mocked in my home country because my parents were divorced, but that wasn't a reason for me to leave for Germany.*
  - *I haven't had such experiences of being treated without dignity. I come from an EU member state [...]. I heard about communism, but I didn't really experience it myself.*
  - *In our home country we are not treated very well, since the government does not contribute—our taxes are not paid for Romania.*

Again, a differentiated picture emerges. The first two quotes, for instance, cannot be neatly categorized as either “with dignity” or “without dignity.” Although problems were acknowledged, the individuals did not describe themselves as explicitly degraded. At the same time, the responses provide valuable insights into structural and personal experiences that shaped migration decisions. The final two statements are particularly telling. Both were made by Romanian participants, yet they reflect very different perspectives. While one situates problems in the past—during communism—the other points to present-day political issues. Although these are individual cases, which could raise questions about the representativeness of qualitative research, they in fact underscore once again that migration experiences are strongly shaped by subjective perception. Whether such perceptions are based on objective conditions is less decisive in this context. The more relevant point is whether migration motives can be clearly categorized at all—or whether it is more appropriate to acknowledge their complexity and ambivalence, even within a research framework.

## CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES

We examined the difficulties and obstacles migrants face in Germany. Once again, we applied a two-step approach: first, a quantitative item presented as a closed-ended question with predefined response options; and second, the same question in an open format, enabling participants to articulate additional dimensions or nuances that the predefined categories may not have captured. In addition, we sought to capture the

emotional dimension of these challenges. To this end, we asked participants about the situations they experienced as most emotionally difficult. Finally, we included a specific question on experiences with German bureaucracy in order to document institutional barriers more systematically.

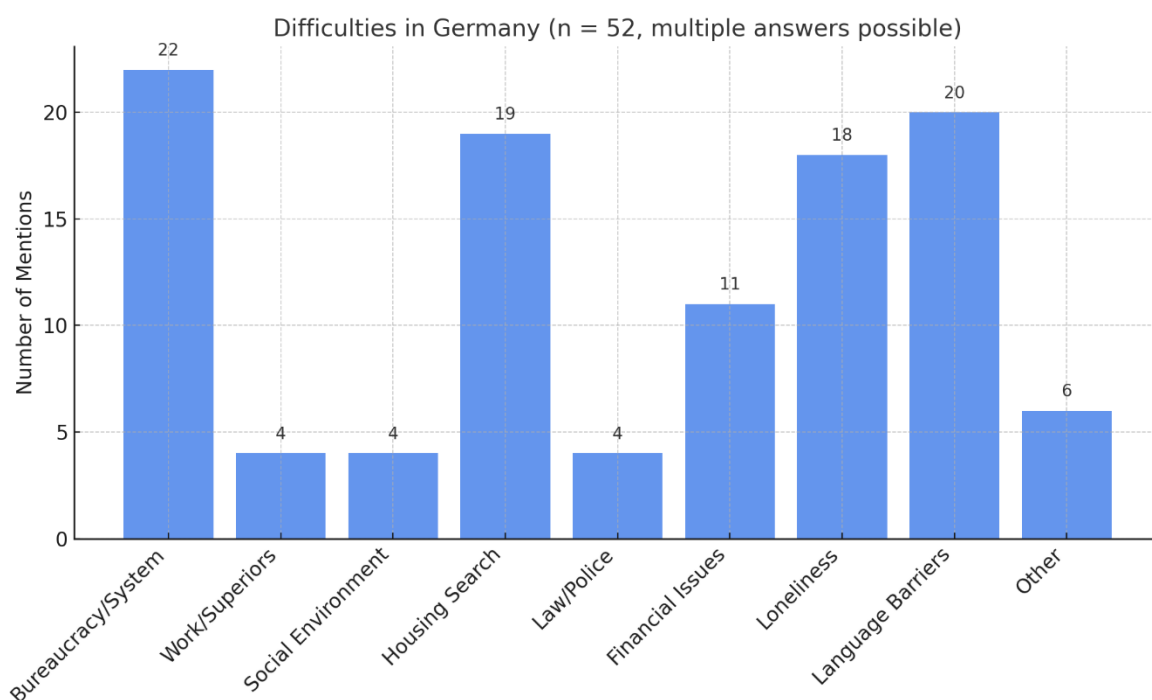


Figure 3: Difficulties in Germany (closed-ended question).

Source: Author's own illustration based on survey data.

The responses revealed that the most frequently mentioned problems were bureaucracy, housing, language barriers, and loneliness. This finding corresponds with nationwide studies conducted in Germany.<sup>29</sup> The open-text answers, however, offered deeper insights into participants' subjective experiences:

- *I sometimes felt lonely—though rarely. There is always something to do, I never had time to be bored! In general, I had colleagues, friends, acquaintances with whom I could talk or who helped me in moments of balance.*
- *I miss my social life.*

<sup>29</sup> Marcel Fratzscher, "Deutschland ist nicht das Paradies" / "Germany Is Not Paradise," *Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung (DIW)*, April 8, 2024, [https://www.diw.de/de/diw\\_01.c.898910.de/nachrichten/deutschland\\_ist\\_nicht\\_das\\_paradies.html](https://www.diw.de/de/diw_01.c.898910.de/nachrichten/deutschland_ist_nicht_das_paradies.html).

These statements illustrate how loneliness can manifest—both as a latent feeling and as the loss of familiar social structures. Other responses highlighted the extent to which language barriers affect daily life—practically, socially, and psychologically:

- *Social disadvantage due to the language barrier. A new social role as a woman and mother, with support only from my husband. Very problematic relationships with his relatives. Depression, with no time or energy left to treat it.*
- *The problems are related to the language barrier. For this reason, solving what seems like a simple question can turn into a whole search. It is difficult in everyday life to find someone who tells you how to solve a problem (where to buy something, which office to contact, or how to get a doctor's appointment). In such moments you feel helpless—and that is psychologically stressful.*

Other problematic experiences were also mentioned—for example, exploitation within migrant communities:

- *Problems with Romanians. Everyone wants to profit from you. In 2013 I paid €1000 to Romanians for job placement.*

Particularly striking, however, were the many references to discrimination by German institutions and individuals:

- *Problems enrolling our child in school. The principal made no secret of the fact that she did not want foreigners. Also, there is no space in childcare for our child. In kindergarten, he was bullied by other children.*
- *I was never registered at the employment office for even a single day. I have been working since the very first day of my arrival. I paid for my own further education [...]. Even though I speak good German, the office always finds new reasons not to allow me further training. Truly dreadful.*
- *The fight against prejudice—always and with every German. I manage somehow, but it costs me a lot of lost time and nerves. The biggest problem is that my children are treated badly. Poor integration and a lot of fear about how this will affect their development and future.*
- *During my studies, I often felt like an outsider among students who all already had life plans. I was mostly just trying to survive, usually exhausted and overwhelmed. After graduation, the staff member at the employment office was very arrogant and asked if I had married a German man. When she saw my university degree, I was suddenly 'the good foreigner.'*

- *Despite language skills, training, and work experience at a German company, I still have problems finding housing and cannot get a well-paid job.*

While the quantitative data point mainly to structural barriers such as bureaucracy or language, the open answers reveal another, deeper dimension. Many participants reported discriminatory experiences and a lack of real acceptance in society. The resulting loneliness and frustration, therefore, cannot be attributed solely to structural obstacles; they also stem from experiences of social exclusion in everyday life. The findings suggest that both institutional frameworks and the behavior of the majority population significantly impact migrants' integration and well-being<sup>30</sup>—a result clearly underscored by our study.

### PERCEPTIONS OF LIFE IN GERMANY

Once again, we used a mixed-method by offering a closed-ended question as well as several open-ended ones. In addition, we asked whether participants felt treated with dignity in Germany—intended as a counterpart to the same question about their situation in their country of origin. We also inquired about any positive experiences they had made in Germany.

---

<sup>30</sup> Under “well-being” we refer to subjective well-being, understood as general life satisfaction, see: Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung (BiB), *BiB Monitor Wohlbefinden 2025: Wie zufrieden sind Ein- und Ausgewanderte? / BiB Monitor Well-being 2025: How Satisfied Are Immigrants and Emigrants?*(Wiesbaden: BiB, 2025).

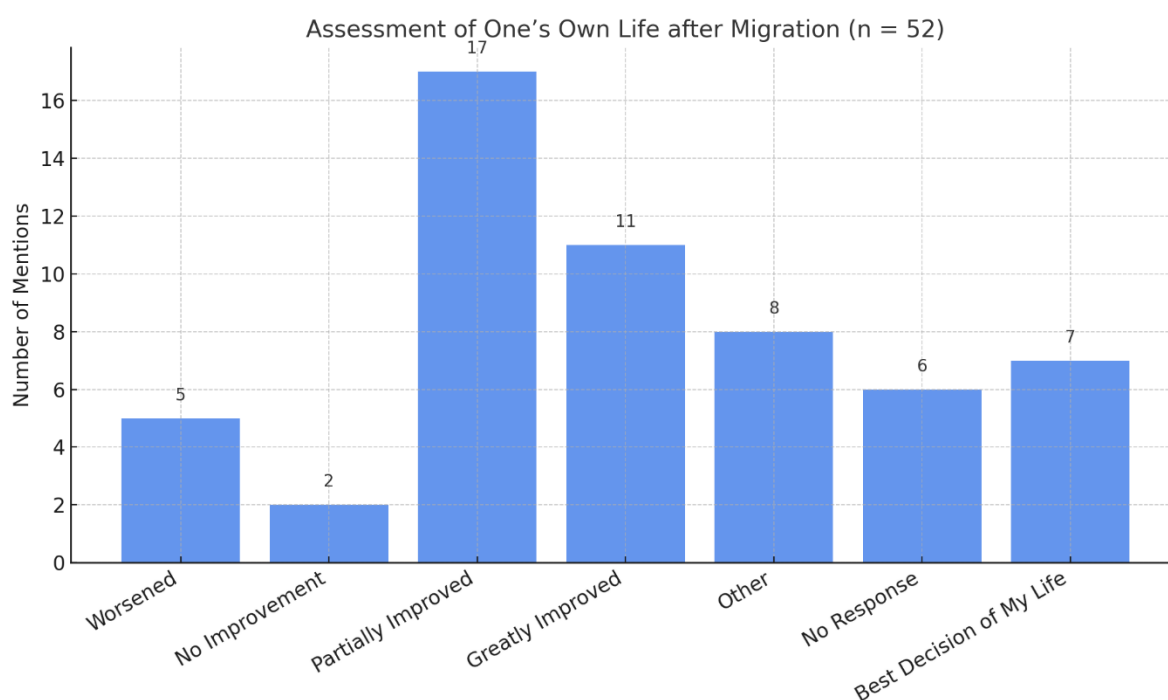


Figure 4. Assessment of One's Own Life after Migration (closed-ended question).

Source: Author's own illustration based on survey data.

The evaluation of the closed question reveals an overall positive picture. Only five people stated that their lives had worsened due to migration. For this response option, participants could also add a short comment. Some of these additions, as well as selected quotes from the subsequent open-ended question “*How has your life changed due to migration?*”, are presented below:

Additions to the option “Other”:

- *I already had everything I needed before I came to Germany for my studies. Here I grew up more—I matured.*
- *It was a great decision, we all learned a lot, but I never imagined how hard it is to live a life that practically tears you apart.*
- *In my homeland I was a child and didn't take care of myself. I've spent half my life here, and as an adult I cannot compare the two.*
- *I'm glad I took the right step, because my children don't see war and don't have to run anywhere.*
- *Hard to say—I don't like to label things as better or worse. It's different, not comparable.*

Excerpts from the open-ended responses to “How has your life changed?”:

- *I earn more, but I also spend more. I started working and completed my studies, but I probably would have done that in my home country as well.*
- *I have a family now: a husband, children, and I speak another language—German.*
- *It is hard to tell if things became better or worse. Financially better compared to my home country. But in Germany I'm ashamed of my salary. I am safe, but alone, without my family.*
- *Here I believed once again that even the common person can live with dignity.*
- *Bad... I am depressed, I hate myself.*
- *Greater security, a better organized system, more material things I can afford, more opportunities in every respect, also regarding advancement, and a stronger position if I were to return to the Balkans.*
- *Financial improvement, but emotional deterioration.*
- *I wasn't really lacking money back home either, but I'm happy because my children—regardless of their education—will have a good start and a good future here.*
- *Very poor education, a corrupt society, I'm afraid to walk the streets alone because of the crazy people in the city, constant ridicule because of my accent, etc., in Germany.*
- *I now understand much more about what is happening in my home country, since I have experienced something different and can look back with distance, without being caught in that toxic everyday life. But I still have to fight for survival every day—just on a different level. As a woman, I was never responsible for the existence of a family before. In my hometown I had a very stable and valuable social life, and here I feel isolated. I worry that if we stay longer, the children will become fully integrated and we will lose the option to return. For my profession it is also problematic: at home you are already part of the field, but abroad you are a nobody again. That's why many of my friends—artists, actors, academics—don't leave. One doesn't easily give up a position only to start all over.*

- *Basically, since I came from a familiar and family-centered environment to study in a new education system, I lived in a student dormitory, had to take care of my own nutrition, time management, and daily worries alongside my studies.*

The additional responses—both in the open text fields and under “Other”—provide a more nuanced insight into participants’ lived realities. Once again, they make clear that rigid categorizations cannot adequately capture subjective perceptions. While the closed question suggests an overall positive tendency, the open comments reveal that the experience of migration is far more complex. Many statements reflect ambivalent experiences, where material improvements are paired with emotional uncertainty or social isolation. Particularly striking is the observation that some participants indicated improvement in the closed question but expressed negative feelings in their open responses. These discrepancies illustrate that assessments such as “better” or “worse” cannot always be drawn in absolute terms. Migration is experienced instead as a complex and often contradictory process, with perceptions differing depending on context, life stage, and individual frame of reference.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Taken together, the results of our survey highlight the multidimensional nature of migration experiences. The findings on employment and socioeconomic status reveal both opportunities and challenges: while many participants were able to improve their income and secure stable employment, this often came at the cost of downward mobility relative to their qualifications, multiple jobs, or long working hours. The so-called *migration pay gap* remains a persistent reality, demonstrating structural barriers in accessing equal opportunities in the German labor market.

The analysis of migration motives underlines that migration decisions are rarely monocausal. While economic factors played a role, they were seldom mentioned as the sole or primary driver. Instead, participants pointed to a broad spectrum of motives, including educational aspirations, family ties, personal development, and structural issues in their countries of origin such as corruption or lack of opportunities. Importantly, many accounts showed migration as a process, rather than a single, clear-cut decision, thereby challenging simplified narratives of rational, one-time choices.

The responses regarding challenges and obstacles further demonstrate how structural and social barriers intertwine. Bureaucracy, housing, and language difficulties were most commonly reported as obstacles in Germany, but the open answers revealed deeper experiences of loneliness, discrimination, and exclusion. These findings suggest that integration difficulties cannot be explained by structural conditions alone; social attitudes and everyday interactions within the majority of society are equally influential in shaping migrants’ well-being.

In the Introduction, we stated that our central aim was to approach migration

as a highly complex and ambivalent phenomenon of human movement. Our findings strongly confirm this assumption: migration is multifaceted, and understanding it requires attention to both structural patterns and individual experiences. The analysis of participants' responses revealed that migration is experienced in ways that resist simple categorization. While quantitative data offered an overview of trends and structural aspects, qualitative responses—particularly to open questions—provided insights into personal motives, perceptions, and ambiguities. The theme of ambivalence, which the artists sought to convey in their installation, was echoed in participants' statements, reflecting contradictory emotions and complex experiences. This illustrates the value of integrating multiple perspectives: art and qualitative research together create space for nuance, complexity, and ambivalence, rather than forcing clear-cut classifications. These insights also resonate with debates in critical migration studies, which have long questioned the limits of traditional social science methods and explored ways to expand them.<sup>31</sup> Our experience with artistic elements suggests that art, too, has the potential to challenge or bypass such methodological boundaries, offering alternative ways to access subjective realities without the compulsion to categorize.

We also observed that sharing personal stories fosters empathy and mutual understanding, both within migrant communities and beyond. The exchange of subjective experiences generates spaces of connection, recognition, and reflection, contributing to the development of solidaristic social structures. These findings underscore the significance of considering migration not only as a structural phenomenon but also as a deeply human experience, highlighting the potential of artistic and qualitative approaches to enrich migration research and public discourse. ▣

---

<sup>31</sup> See for example: N. Geurts, T. Davids, and N. Spierings, "Two Peas in a Pod? How to Mix Methods in Ethnic and Migration Studies," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 51, no. 12 (2025): 3041–3059, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2025.2487740>.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adema, Joop, and Jean-Victor Alipour. “Steigert Migration die Kriminalität? Ein datenbasierter Blick“ / “Does Migration Increase Crime? A Data-Based View.” *ifo Schnelldienst Digital* 6, no. 3 (2025): 1–10.
- Ausländerzentralregister. *Statistik zum Stichtag 31. 12. 2021.* / Central Register of Foreign Nationals. *Statistics as of 31 December 2021.* STV Regensburg.
- Beger, Kathleen, and Ulf Brunnbauer. “Brain Gain to Brain Circulation: Towards a More Social Europe.” *Blog des Leibniz-Instituts für Ost- und Südosteuropaforschung* (IOS), December 22, 2022. <https://ostblog.hypotheses.org/3620>.
- Brunnbauer, Ulf, and Barbara Stupka-Pleban. *TalentMagnet: Improved Institutional Capacities and New Multilevel Governance for Talent Attraction and Retention in the Danube Region.* 2020–2022.
- Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung (BiB). *BiB Monitor Wohlbefinden 2025: Wie zufrieden sind Ein- und Ausgewanderte? / BiB Monitor Well-being 2025: How Satisfied Are Immigrants and Emigrants?* Wiesbaden: BiB, 2025. <https://www.bib.bund.de/Publikation/2025/pdf/BiB-Monitor-Wohlbefinden-2025-Wie-zufrieden-sind-Ein-und-Ausgewanderte-Deutschland-im-Fokus.pdf>.
- Carstensen, Anne Lisa, Lisa-Marie Heimeshoff, Riedner. “Der Zwang zur Arbeit: Verwertungslogiken in den umkämpften Regimen der Anwerbe-, Flucht- und EU-Migration.” *Sozial.Geschichte Online* 23 (2018): 235–70.
- de Haas, Hein. *How Migration Really Works: A Factful Guide to the Most Divisive Issue in Politics.* New York: Basic Books, 2023.
- El-Mafaalani, Aladin. *Integration as a Reciprocal Process.* IQ Network, 2018. [https://www.netzwerkiq.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/Downloads/IQ\\_Publikationen/IQ\\_konkret/2018\\_01\\_IQ\\_konkret.pdf](https://www.netzwerkiq.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/Downloads/IQ_Publikationen/IQ_konkret/2018_01_IQ_konkret.pdf).
- El-Mafaalani, Aladin, Julian Waleciak, Gerrit Weitzel. *Methodische Grundlagen und Positionen der qualitativen Migrationsforschung.* 2016. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/301257422\\_Methodische\\_Grundlagen\\_und\\_Positionen\\_der\\_qualitativen\\_Migrationsforschung](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/301257422_Methodische_Grundlagen_und_Positionen_der_qualitativen_Migrationsforschung).
- European Commission. *Free Movement and Residence: Information on EU Citizens’ Right to Free Movement, Funding and Support.*
- Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF). “Integration von Migrantinnen in Deutschland: Politiken und Maßnahmen. Studie der deutschen nationalen Kontaktstelle für das Europäische Migrationsnetzwerk (EMN)“ / “Integration of Migrants in Germany: Policies and Measures. Study by the German National Contact Point for the European Migration Network (EMN).”

- 
- Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF). “Third-Country Nationals: Immigration to Germany.” Last modified November 28, 2025. <https://www.bamf.de/DE/Themen/MigrationAufenthalt/ZuwandererDrittstaaten/zuwandererdrittstaaten-node.html>.
  - Fratzscher, Marcel. “Deutschland ist nicht das Paradies.” *Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung (DIW)*, April 8, 2024. [https://www.diw.de/de/diw\\_01.c.898910.de/nachrichten/deutschland\\_ist\\_nicht\\_das\\_paradies.html](https://www.diw.de/de/diw_01.c.898910.de/nachrichten/deutschland_ist_nicht_das_paradies.html).
  - Gergen, Mary M., and Kenneth J. Gergen. “Performative Social Science and Psychology.” *Forum: Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 12, no. 1 (2011).
  - Geurts, N., T. Davids, and N. Spierings. “Two Peas in a Pod? How to Mix Methods in Ethnic and Migration Studies.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 51, no. 12 (2025): 3041–59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2025.2487740>.
  - Glorius, Birgit, Izabela Grabowska-Lusińska, and Aimee Kuvik, eds. *Mobility in Transition: Migration Patterns after EU Enlargement*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013.
  - Hackmann, Angelina, Konstantin A. Kholodilin, Teresa Schildmann. “Mehr Migration könnte Potenzialwachstum der deutschen Wirtschaft deutlich erhöhen” / “More Migration Could Significantly Increase Germany’s Potential Economic Growth.” *DIW aktuell* Nr.101. DIW Berlin, 2025. [https://www.diw.de/de/diw\\_01.c.934290.de/publikationen/diw\\_aktuell/2025\\_0101/mehr\\_migration\\_koennte\\_potenzialwachstum\\_der\\_deutschen\\_wirtschaft\\_deutlich\\_erhoehen.html](https://www.diw.de/de/diw_01.c.934290.de/publikationen/diw_aktuell/2025_0101/mehr_migration_koennte_potenzialwachstum_der_deutschen_wirtschaft_deutlich_erhoehen.html).
  - Knowles, J. Gary, and Arda L. Cole, eds. *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research: Perspectives, Methodologies, Examples, and Issues*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2008.
  - Kück, S. *Heimat und Migration: Ein transdisziplinärer Ansatz anhand biographischer Interviews mit geflüchteten Menschen in Deutschland / Home and Migration: A Transdisciplinary Approach Based on Biographical Interviews with Refugees in Germany*. 1st ed. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2021.
  - Löfgren, Orvar, and Regina Bendix. “Double Homes, Double Lives?” *Ethnologia Europaea* 37, no. 1 (2007): 7–16. <https://doi.org/10.16995/ee.1009>.
  - UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe. *Flüchtlingszahlen / Refugee Figures*. Accessed Nov 28, 2025. <https://www.unofluechtlingshilfe.de/informieren/fluechtlingzahlen>.
  - Metzling, Maria, Adriana R. Cardozo Silva. “Bildungsabschlüsse von Migrantinnen und Migranten. Sozialbericht 2024” / “Educational Attainments of Migrants. Social Report 2024.” Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, November 6, 2024.
-

- 
- Netzwerk Fluchtforschung. *Von der Willkommenskultur zurück zur Kontinuität defizitorientierter Migrationsdiskurse / From a Culture of Welcome Back to the Continuity of Deficit-Oriented Migration Discourses*. Accessed November 28, 2025, <https://fluchtforschung.net/von-der-willkommenskultur-zurueck-zur-kontinuitaet-defizitorientierter-migrationsdiskurse/>.
  - Netzwerk MiRA. *Kritische Migrationsforschung? Da kann ja jeder kommen / Critical Migration Research? Anyone Can Join* February 2012. <https://edoc.hu-berlin.de/server/api/core/bitstreams/a773d400-dlab-44f4992b27665c38f084/content>.
  - Pfeffer-Hoffmann, Christian, ed. *EU-Zuwanderung nach Deutschland: Analysen zur Diversität von EU-Zugewanderten in Deutschland / EU Immigration to Germany: Analyses on the Diversity of EU Immigrants in Germany*. Berlin: Mensch & Buch Verlag, 2019.
  - Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung. *Zuwanderungsdiskurse, Migrantinnen, multikulturelle Gesellschaft und Rechtsextremismus in den Massenmedien / Discourses on Immigration, Female Migrants, Multicultural Society and Right-Wing Extremism in the Mass Media*. Accessed November 28, 2025, <https://www.rosalux.de/>.
  - Spitaleri, Laura. “Der Migrant-Gender-Pay-Gap: Sind die Gehälter niedrig, trifft es alle.” *Minor. Projektkontor für Bildung und Forschung*; July 2022.
  - Stadt Regensburg, Amt für Integration und Migration. *Integrationsmonitoring der Stadt Regensburg: Berichtszeitraum 2012–2017*. 2019. <https://www.regensburg.de/fm/121/integrationsmonitoring-regensburg-2012-2017.pdf>.
  - Stiftung Mercator. *Medienanalyse Flucht und Migration / Media Analysis: Flight and Migration*. Stiftung Mercator, 2021.
  - Stiftung Zentrum für Türkeistudien und Integrationsforschung. *Arbeitsmarktintegration von Geflüchteten und Migrantinnen / Labour Market Integration of Refugees and Migrants*. 2024.
  - Theocharidou, A. A. “Brain Drain, A Modern Issue for the EU.” *HAPSc Policy Briefs Series* 4, no. 1 (2023): 142–48.
  - Werding, Martin. *Migration und ihr Beitrag zum Staatshaushalt / Migration and Its Contribution to the Public Budget*. Mediendienst Integration, 2025.