



DiasporaTürk

DiasporaTürk brings together volunteers and researchers to collect and share the stories and experiences of Turkish migrants living around the world, exchanging hundreds of photographs, personal stories and immigration objects. Through our social media accounts, we interconnect digitally with people living today in many different countries as well as in Turkey. Since 2016 we have organised three exhibitions – in Gaziantep, Berlin and Bursa – as well as related conferences and seminars to tell these stories of immigration and to understand the dynamics of the modern phenomenon of migration.

🐦 diaspora_turk @ diasporaturk

Acknowledgements and Credits

Exhibition curated by ALART, DiasporaTürk, Philip Grover and Emre Eren Korkmaz

Organised in collaboration with DiasporaTürk, Turkey

Case and print design by ALART

Conservation by Jennifer Mitchell

Installation by Adrian Vizor

Slideshow by Tim Myatt

Special thanks to Bekir Cantemir, Gökhan Duman, Merve Genç, Aslıhan Kazancı and Yasin Tütüncü; and to the owners/lenders of the photographs, documents and objects in the exhibition: Ay family, Aygün family, Burhan Bektaş, Abdullah Belgin, İsmail Beyhan, Çakır family, Çelebi family, Çolak family, Şaban Dedeagaç, Delibaşoğlu family, Deniz family, DiasporaTürk collection, Gündüz family, Kafkas family, Fatih Ketancı, Neng family, Müzeyyen Önal, Özel family, Özer family, Pakel family, Soyhan family, Sönmez family, Şora family, İbrahim Tenzile, Muharrem Tezer, Turhan family, Feramuz Türkan, Fikriye Ulusoy and Durmuş Zirgi



Research
England



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Memoirs in My Suitcase

Pitt Rivers Museum

10 December 2019 – 31 May 2020



diaspora • *diaspeirein* — *dia* + *speirein*
Greek 'disperse' 'across' 'scatter'

Among those travelling abroad to meet the labour needs of Europe in the 1960s were many Turks. In Germany they were called 'Gastarbeiter', i.e. guest workers. They were supposed to work in the country for a few years, to save money for their families, and then return home. Workers underwent rigorous health inspections, and they put up with this in order to earn money to pay for their wedding, to be able to buy a tractor, or to send wages back to their hometown. But this was not the only hardship which those who went would have to endure: a train journey that took three days and two nights, the worker dormitories which slept eight to ten people and dated back to the war years, difficult working conditions, and a foreign environment with different language, lifestyle, traditions and culture were just some of the challenges of their new lives.

None of this, however, prevented a steady increase in the number of trains filling up and departing from Istanbul station. At first the worker trains departed only twice a week. Then they became as frequent as every day, and even twice a day, transporting Turkish workers to jobs in the mines and factories of Western Europe. In this way, hundreds of thousands of people who did not know each other came together, bound by the same fate. Suitcases, tickets, food packages, water flasks, family photographs, and so much more: the everyday lives of workers converged on these objects of immigration. Many letters were written and many cassette tapes were recorded. Poems and songs kept them company.

Although the dream of returning to the homeland always persisted, it was not easy. Many of those who went abroad stayed there. They took their families with them and settled in the countries where they had found work. New generations were raised in the languages of both their country of origin and the host country. The immigrant families of Europe lived in cheap and dilapidated housing. In fact, districts like Kreuzberg in Berlin came to be known as ghettos. Reminiscent of the darkest times of World War Two, the word 'ghetto' was also used for immigrant housing. What had started as guest-host relationship continued in the ghetto, exacerbating racial tensions that have been on the rise ever since.

Life went on. As the immigrants started small businesses like shops, restaurants, cinemas and offices, as well as mosques, schools and language courses, the number of permanent settlers increased. In the 1970s, following the world oil crisis, West Germany stopped recruiting workers; and in the 1980s laws incentivising a return to the homeland resulted in thousands of Turkish families going back to Turkey. Nevertheless, many more people in these communities preferred to stay in Germany and other European countries. By this time the idea of 'homeland' had become mainly a holiday destination in the summer months. Europe was their second home now, the place where they would live and die.

The guest workers setting out with suitcases from Sirkeci Railway Station in Istanbul in the 1960s led the way for the Turkish diaspora, which today numbers 6.5 million people. This is our story; it's the story of our people.

