

## Migration Museums as Catalysts for Local and Migrant Interaction<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This study explores the role of immigration museums in promoting social cohesion between local communities and immigrants. Immigration movements are an ongoing feature of current global dynamics and influence the cultural and artistic spheres. Integrating immigrants into local societies has become a core goal of nation-states and requires innovative approaches. Traditionally viewed as repositories of cultural artifacts, museums have evolved into dynamic spaces that promote cultural interaction and mutual understanding. This study focuses on immigration museums in Germany, Poland, Brazil, and Türkiye, exploring how these institutions contribute to social peace by documenting migration processes and facilitating contact between immigrants and natives. The study uses a situational description approach to conduct a case study of the Immigration Museum and its activities. These museums actively combat bias, promote empathy, and foster community through exhibits, educational programs, and interactive demonstrations. The findings highlight the importance of immigration museums in bridging cultural gaps and strengthening social cohesion. These museums help create inclusive societies that respect and value diverse backgrounds by providing spaces for cultural exchange. The research highlights the transformative potential of contemporary museology to address the complexities of migration and integration and provides valuable insights for policymakers and cultural practitioners.

### Research Article

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## 1. Introduction

Migration is one of the most pressing issues on local, national, and global agendas today. With increasing national and international inequalities, the spatial distribution of migration is also diversifying daily. As of May 2024, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that there are approximately 63 million forcibly displaced people worldwide. The United Nations estimates the total number of migrants to be around 281 million<sup>2</sup>. The world is witnessing unprecedented large-scale human mobility. Türkiye<sup>3</sup>, due to its strategic location and political, economic, and social conflicts in neighboring countries, has become a central hub for migration. The integration of these migrant populations into local societies has

posed significant challenges, necessitating effective policies and innovative solutions [1].<sup>4</sup>

Despite extensive research on migration and integration policies, the role of cultural institutions, particularly migration museums, in fostering social cohesion remains underexplored. Conventional integration strategies frequently ignore the potential for cultural and creative endeavors to heal cultural gaps in favor of economic and social integration. By investigating the role that migration museums play in promoting societal cohesion, this study seeks to close this research gap.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate how migration museums can facilitate encounters between migrants and local communities, thereby promoting mutual understanding and reducing

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2 (<https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/what-we-do/foreword/foreword>)

3 In 1935, 6% of the country's population was born abroad (TÜİK General Population Censuses). Now, the rate of foreigners is close to this rate. Today, the number of legal migrants, those under temporary protection, and other populations under international protection amounts to 4.6 million. Of these, 3.4 million (including 3.1 million Syrians) are international asylum seekers.

4 Türkiye — Migrant Presence Monitoring — Situation Report (January 2024) (<https://dtm.iom.int/reports/turkiye-migrant-presence-monitoring-situation-report-january-2024#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20latest%20available,been%20granted%20temporary%20protection%20status.>)

prejudices. Through case studies of migration museums in Germany, Poland, Brazil, and Türkiye the research explores the evolving role of these institutions within the framework of contemporary museology, known as the new museology. By highlighting the dynamic and interactive nature of modern museums, the study seeks to demonstrate their potential in enhancing social cohesion and integration.

This study employs a situational descriptive method, focusing on examples from existing migration museums. It aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of how these museums contribute to social cohesion, offering valuable insights for policymakers, cultural practitioners, and academics. The findings will underscore the importance of cultural and artistic activities in the integration process, advocating for a more holistic approach to migration and social harmony.

## 2. Social Harmony, Museology and Migration Museums

The concept of coherency respects the migrant as a human being and acknowledges their culture. Since the beginning of creating institutional formations and legal frameworks in our nation, policymakers in the field of migration have taken this idea of cohesion as their guide. This study addresses the issue of migration in conjunction with the concept of social harmony.

Acquiring knowledge through experiences results in observable changes in behavior, which is referred to as learning. This process involves various neural and cognitive mechanisms that operate at different spatial and temporal scales, some of which are not directly observable in experiments.

Recent policies in migration view migrants as active participants, emphasizing mutual adaptation between local populations and migrants. Social cohesion is seen either as the reorganization of lives to meet the destination's expectations [2-4] or as efforts by both societies to build a satisfying life together. This study focuses on social harmony, which is essential for sustainable development and societal well-being, highlighting the integration of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Spatial tools and migration museums are effective in fostering mutual respect and understanding and bridging cultural gaps. According to Bilirdönmez and Karabulut, art education facilitates societal adaptation [5]. Parlakkalay views art as a communication and social integration realm, emphasizing public art's role in transforming passive observers into active participants [6]. Artistic urban spaces enhance sensitivity and awareness, foster communication, and improve relationships between migrants and locals.

Görgün notes that communication issues between local and immigrant communities arise from their similarities and differences, shaped by "rejection" and "integration" processes [7]. Art can mediate these processes. Duncan and Wallach highlight museums as prestigious places to view art, essential for understanding the concept of art [8].

Focusing solely on the economic or social dimensions of migration can result in ineffective policies [9]. This

study emphasizes the often-overlooked role of art and culture in integration. Effective social cohesion efforts require observing the culture and adaptation strategies of migrants [10]. Museums play a crucial role in this observation and monitoring process, highlighting migrants' contributions to local society and preventing marginalization.

From the first encounter between local and migrant communities, integration policies are essential to prevent strained communication [10]. Museums, aided by technology, raise awareness of art and culture through educational programs and exhibitions. The goal is a society where mutual respect, understanding, and effective communication, and a guiding attitude toward uncertainties prevail.

Migration museums, through exhibitions, educational programs, film screenings, interactive displays, and other activities, bring together local populations and migrants, fostering a sense of unity and shared community.

### 2.1. Development of Museology and the Formation of Migration Museums

In its beginnings, museology was a field focused on collecting rare works, often associated with influential individuals, thus catering to a select group. Museums have since become vital in conveying ideology and instilling societal values [11]. Visitors to museums identify with key state values, increasing the importance of museums in social structure and urban architecture. Since the late 18th century, European museums have played a crucial role in modernizing individuals and fostering national and universal ideas, becoming centers of civilizational learning [12]. The French Revolution introduced new ideas, evolving museology towards a broader understanding.

The history of museology in Europe can be divided into three main periods. The first phase involved collecting rare works until the Renaissance. The second phase, from the Renaissance to the 19th century, marked institutionalization. The third phase, from the French Revolution to the present, focused on creating national consciousness and embodying state values [13]. A fourth period, emerging post-1980, introduced contemporary understandings. Non-Western and ethnic minorities criticized post-colonial museology, prompting a rethinking of museum practices [14].

Museums, originally places for collecting, storing, and exhibiting works, have evolved significantly. The emphasis on inclusive education, lifelong learning, and intangible cultural heritage has expanded museums' roles in social life [15]. In 2019, ICOM redefined museology to include democratizing, inclusive, and polyphonic areas for dialogue [16]. Today, museums are dynamic centers of preserving and interpreting cultures rather than static exhibition spaces [17].

Research on museums, particularly cross-cultural comparative studies, highlights the evolving role of museology in various national and cultural contexts [18]. Historically, museums were seen as guardians of history and national identity [19]. Contemporary museology, however, focuses on the intended audience

and the context of the works, moving away from object-oriented approaches [20].

The educational role of museums has become more prominent due to increased expectations. Due to a belief in the value of knowledge and art, collecting art was a part of education in the 19th century. Post-World War I, museums adopted many educational roles. Various learning models in museology, particularly in art museums, include behaviorist, constructivist, and postmodern approaches [21]. Behaviorist models view museums as passive repositories, while constructivist models emphasize interactive, meaning-making experiences. Postmodern theories advocate for ongoing dialogue, with museum educators acting as facilitators rather than experts [21].

Rethinking museums involves intertwining "nature, aesthetics, and society" [22]. Museums are now seen as centers for public awareness, education, and dynamic activities. New museums address contemporary social issues and human rights violations, transforming from mere memory repositories to proactive spaces addressing social problems and human rights [23].

Migration, globalization, identity, and memory have increasingly influenced world museums. Nationally focused museums have transformed due to migration movements. By the early 21st century, the number of migration-dedicated museums had noticeably increased [24]. Recent years have seen initiatives reflecting marginalized cultures, particularly those representing the working class and oppressed cultures [25].

Due to the influence of specialized institutions, migration museums, which do not fall into a specific category within museum typologies, have been multiplying. These museums have developed significantly in their activities [15]. Social heritage museums also counter the stereotypical presentations of migrants, depicting migration with enthusiasm, complexity, and strategies fostering participation, empathy, and enjoyable experiences [26].

Before the establishment of dedicated migration museums, migration was addressed through various exhibits and activities in different museum types, such as city museums, neighborhood museums, Jewish museums, folk museums, and eco-museums. These events remain common today.

In this study, "migration museums" refer to museums that comprehensively address migration. They focus on historical and contemporary migration issues in their exhibitions, programs, and educational activities, explaining who economic migrants and refugees are.

The emergence of new immigrant museums in Europe coincided with globalization, increasing diversity, identity formations in metropolitan cities, urban transformation, and intensifying mass migration. While political contexts and mainstream media often view refugee and migration flows as problematic, migration heritage museums have developed in

opposition to this perspective. These museums frequently receive funding from the private sector, local governments, and civil institutions, in contrast to elite institutions that concentrate on nation-building [26].

At the first Expert Meeting on Migration Museums (2006) organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Rome, the role of migration museums in promoting contemporary immigrant integration and cultural diversity was emphasized. The "International Network of Migration Museums" project emerged from this meeting, expanding through the work of museums and citizen participation globally [27]. This network allows for the sharing of museum works, exhibitions, and training programs.

Migration museums primarily focus on memory, which forms the foundation of migrants' identities and cultural exchanges with host societies. Individual stories displayed in migration museums help construct migrants' cultural identities, dismantle stereotypes, and develop empathy between migrants and host communities. Memory bridges the past and present, providing physical spaces for experiencing migrant memories.

Countries like the United States, Australia, Canada, and many European nations have recently focused on creating cultural environments that facilitate intergenerational transmission and encounters between migrants and the host population [27].

Migration museums fulfill their role in preserving social memory through three main initiatives: showcasing migrants' contributions to host societies, encouraging a sense of belonging among migrant communities, and fostering empathy within the local community. These museums offer spaces for preservation, archiving, and exhibitions while working with communities and schools. They engage second and third generations through forums, discussions, and social activities, providing a vibrant meeting place for young artists and the broader community.

## 2.2. Encounter Places and Migration Museums in Cities

Today, the global urbanization rate stands at 57%, with this figure exceeding 75%<sup>5</sup> in North America, Latin America, and Europe. In Türkiye, the de facto rate is around 80%, while legally it stands at 93%<sup>6</sup>. These percentages indicate that, regardless of the social issue being discussed, these topics should predominantly be addressed within the urban context. The future of the world, unfortunately, will be centered on urban areas due to the concentration of populations in cities. Therefore, the issue of migration must also be examined through the lens of urban settings. Cities are places that continuously draw people from different social classes and shape them through both internal and external migration. A city is a settlement where encountering strangers and tolerating differences are inevitable and

<sup>5</sup> (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/270860/urbanization-by-continent/#:~:text=In%202022%2C%20the%20degree%20of,are%20defined%20as%20%22cities%22>)

<sup>6</sup> Since the metropolitan areas matched the provincial borders as of Law No. 6360, rural areas were suddenly included in the metropolitan borders, and the official urbanization rate increased considerably. However, it is estimated that the areas that actually show urbanization characteristics were above the 75% rate before this law was enacted.

continuously practiced [9]. However, there is always a struggle over who claims ownership of the place [28]. Whether this struggle unfolds smoothly depends significantly on how the local space is organized. Policy decisions regarding space should aim to achieve social harmony and foster positive interactions. This requires spatial patterns that can host diverse functions and interactions.

Many public spaces form the basis for the relationship that immigrants from different countries, races, and cultures have with the society and daily life in which they live. These areas can also be called "encounter spaces" with those in society who are different from us. These places can be listed as streets, avenues, stopping points, shopping malls, gastronomy venues such as cafés, and education, health, and administrative facilities, which are also mainly transit areas. In these places, we try to be together with people who are similar to ourselves. Likewise, immigrants tend to be with people they know and who are similar to them.

For the immigrant, "a place is constructed both physically and by being interpreted, felt, perceived, narrated, and, in short, lived" [29]. Immigrants, who build their own stories through acquaintances, have limited and short-term interactions with the local people. These interactions are often confined to specific contexts, such as workplaces or public transportation, which limits deeper social integration. Therefore, it is necessary to plan an active social life with intercultural dialogue in places where immigrants and local people meet in cities in order to achieve social harmony. By creating spaces that encourage meaningful exchanges, both groups can develop a better understanding and appreciation of each other's cultures, fostering a more cohesive community. By fostering environments that encourage meaningful interactions, societies can break down barriers and build bridges between diverse groups. This intentional design of public spaces can facilitate greater understanding and cooperation among all residents.

In urban areas, there is a need for spaces where societies can express themselves, find something that belongs to them, and have opportunities to recognize, understand, and interact with different cultures. The concept of belonging is crucial in this context [30]. When an individual uses urban space and sees themselves as part of that space, they can also feel a sense of rights and responsibilities towards it. "Attachment to a place fosters a sense of belonging and causes the individual to become part of the community to which they belong" [29]. Museums can be such spaces that establish these bonds of belonging and facilitate communication and interaction. Museums, with their rich displays of cultural heritage, offer opportunities for both immigrants and locals to engage with each other in meaningful ways. Through exhibits and events that celebrate diverse backgrounds, museums can become hubs of cultural exchange and mutual respect. This reinforces the idea that public spaces, thoughtfully designed and utilized, are instrumental in creating a sense of community and belonging for everyone.

If migration museums are considered memory spaces of cities, they can serve as centers where old cultures are remembered and new cultures, brought by recent

migrations, are blended with the old ones, becoming focal points for shared experiences. Immigration museums are becoming centers of intercultural exchange and cultural encounter. This study examines immigration museums in Germany, Poland, Brazil, and similar activities in Türkiye within the framework of contemporary museology, discussing whether they contribute to the local community's understanding of immigration and vice versa.

The expected impact of migration museums is to contribute to breaking down existing prejudices against migrant groups in society and supporting social unity. The study explores whether this impact is realized through examples. Capturing the multifaceted and dynamic nature of international migration in a time-space context involves looking back at historical information and documents and evaluating them. In this historical retrospection, museum activities are highly functional, particularly in terms of collecting, storing, and displaying information and documents.

### **3. Method**

Interdisciplinary approaches are often adopted to explore how museums construct and communicate migration narratives. This study employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate the role of migration museums in promoting social harmony. The research design integrates both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

Case Studies: Detailed case studies of three migration museums were conducted. The selected museums include the Documentation Center and Immigration Museum for Immigration to Germany (DOMID) in Germany, the Gdynia Migration Museum in Poland, and the São Paulo Immigration Museum in Brazil. These museums were chosen based on their historical significance, geographical diversity, and the variety of their exhibitions. Apart from these, before moving on to the topic of migration museums, the MeLa project, which is an important project, was examined in terms of social harmony efforts. In addition, examples from museums in Türkiye that can be considered related to migration were examined, and some exhibition activities related to migration were discussed.

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with museum curators, educators, and visitors. The interviews focused on the participants' perceptions of the museums' role in fostering social harmony and their personal experiences with the exhibits.

Examining the themes and narratives that the museums present required conducting a content analysis of the exhibits and educational materials. This analysis focused on identifying how these institutions portray migration histories, highlight migrant contributions, and address contemporary migration issues.

By integrating these methods, the study aims to provide a holistic understanding of how migration museums contribute to social harmony. The findings will offer insights into the effectiveness of these institutions



in fostering mutual understanding and respect among diverse communities.

#### 4. Findings

This section presents the findings from the analysis of migration museums in Germany, Poland, Brazil, and Türkiye, as well as insights from the MeLa Project. The study explores how these museums contribute to social cohesion and integration by documenting migration processes, facilitating cultural exchanges, and promoting mutual understanding between local communities and migrants. Each museum's unique initiatives and programs are examined to understand their impact on fostering social harmony and addressing migration-related challenges.

##### 4.1. The MeLa Project and Its Impact on Migration Museums

The MeLa Project, a comprehensive four-year research initiative funded under the Seventh EU Framework Program, has provided invaluable insights into the evolving role of museums in 21st-century Europe. This project, which brought together nine research institutions and museums from across Europe, aimed to explore how the migration of people, cultures, and ideas can be effectively exhibited to foster mutual understanding and create a shared perspective. This endeavor has become particularly pertinent in what is often referred to as the "age of migration," where new museological practices must constantly reexamine, recreate, and renegotiate intercultural heritage to meet the diverse expectations of people with varying cultural values [31].

###### *Objectives and Findings of the MeLa Project*

One of the primary objectives of the MeLa Project was to examine the roles of museums and their activities in shaping an awareness of an inclusive European identity. To achieve this, an expert team conducted in-depth ethnographic research, focusing on the historical and contemporary relationships between museums, spaces, and identities across Europe. They also analyzed the impact of migrations on museology practices.

###### *Case Studies and Analyses*

The National Museum of Scotland, the Amsterdam Museum, and the Silesian Museum in Görlitz were scrutinized to understand how they addressed issues of national and individual identity, colonialism, and state-sponsored migration. The research delved into the development of exhibitions and the responses of visitors, particularly those of migrant origin. The research highlighted that museums play a crucial role in promoting social cohesion and understanding by narrating the stories of migrant communities and creating public forums for discussions on migration and national identity [32]. However, it was found that overly detailed and differentiated content, as seen in the Diocesan Museum in Milan, could place visitors in a passive role, discouraging active participation [31].

Migration museums are increasingly involved in public debates about migration. Notable examples include: Muzeum Emigracji w Gdynia (Immigration

Museum in Gdynia, Poland): The museum's permanent exhibition presents the history of emigration from Polish lands from the nineteenth century to the present. Activities: It also engages in educational and scientific activities, shifting the narrative focus to contemporary migration [15]. Deutsches Auswandererhaus (German Immigration Centre, Bremerhaven, Germany) This museum explores the history of German emigration, providing a rich context for understanding migration patterns and their impacts on both emigrants and their new homelands.

The study also examined migration museums in Germany, Poland, and Brazil and highlighted a few examples from Türkiye. These museums serve as crucial cultural and educational institutions, providing spaces for preserving, archiving, and exhibiting the rich tapestry of migrant experiences. They work with communities and schools, engaging second and third generations through forums, discussions, and social activities, fostering a vibrant meeting place for young artists and the broader community.

Migration museums focus on memory, which forms the foundation of migrants' identities and cultural exchanges with the host society. Individual stories displayed in these museums contribute to the construction of migrants' cultural identities, dismantle stereotypes, and develop empathy between migrants and the host community. Memory serves as a bridge between the past and present, offering physical spaces where migrant memories can be experienced.

The MeLa Project has underscored the evolving role of museums in the "age of migration," highlighting the importance of creating inclusive, participatory spaces that reflect the diverse cultural values and experiences of migrant communities. Migration museums, by preserving and presenting migrant memories, play a pivotal role in fostering social cohesion, understanding, and empathy within multicultural societies. Through their dynamic exhibitions and activities, these museums not only document migration but also actively contribute to the ongoing dialogue on identity, belonging, and integration in contemporary Europe.

Now, examples of migration museums in Germany, Poland, Brazil and Türkiye will be explained. Then, an example of an escape from Türkiye will be discussed.

##### 4.2. Documentation Center and Immigration Museum for Immigration to Germany (DOMID)

(Dokumentationszentrum und Einwanderungsmuseum für Einwanderung nach Deutschland)

###### *History and Evolution*

In 1990, DOMIT was established as a non-profit organization by four Turkish migrants to preserve the historical heritage of migrants from Türkiye. It later merged with the "Museum of Migration in Germany" association, broadening its focus to include migrants of various backgrounds in Germany. Renamed DOMID (Documentation Center and Museum of Migration in Germany), the center now reflects the social, cultural, and everyday history of all migrants in Germany [33].

The aim of DOMID is to preserve the historical legacy of immigrants for future generations and make it accessible to the public. Founded in 2003 in Cologne

(Figure 2), the Migration Museum in Germany association brought together representatives of various migrant communities and scientists [34]. DOMID has evolved into a venue for integration efforts, showcasing cultural diversity through its extensive collection of over 150,000 social, cultural, and everyday historical records. It aims to establish a central migration museum in Germany, fostering understanding, reducing prejudices, and promoting a multi-perspective historical consciousness to strengthen democratic awareness and civil society.

Immigration museums, like DOMID, play a crucial role in fostering societal understanding, celebrating cultural diversity, and informing historical and contemporary discourses on migration. By showcasing diverse narratives, these institutions challenge monolithic national histories and promote a more inclusive understanding of society [35].

From a cultural perspective, immigration museums serve as platforms for expressing marginalized cultural identities. Exhibiting objects and stories that hold significant personal and cultural meaning helps bridge cultural divides and fosters a sense of community among diverse populations [36].

Historically, immigration museums document how migration has shaped national economies, social structures, and cultural landscapes. DOMID's Virtual Migration Museum, which offers a digital exploration of German migration history, underscores migration as a historical norm rather than an exception [37]. This perspective is crucial for understanding contemporary migration issues and informing future policies.

Education is a fundamental aspect of immigration museums. DOMID not only preserves historical artifacts but also actively engages the public through educational programs, collaborations with academic institutions, and research on integration, identity, and social cohesion [38]. Additionally, these museums serve as sites of political activism and social justice, showcasing the struggles and achievements of migrant communities to combat racism and promote equality [39].

Since its inception, DOMID has aimed to become a central museum of migration. With plans to develop a permanent exhibition and complete construction by 2029, the Cologne City Council granted heritage building rights for "Halle 70" to DOMID, allowing it to use the land and building for 99 years [33].

**Figure 1.** DOMID Migration Museum

### **Key Initiatives and Projects**

**#meinwanderungsland Project:** In 2018, DOMID launched the '#meinwanderungsland' (#mycountryofmigration) project (Figure 2), an interactive exhibition and storytelling platform that took place over 92 days in various public spaces. Activities included dialogues, workshops, city tours, and readings across 16 federal states. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the project continued digitally, gathering stories, videos, and photos published on the project's blog and social media, and adding them to DOMID's archive [40].



**Figure 2.** Kiel interactive exhibition

**The Virtual Migration Museum:** This project enables viewers to explore the impact of migration on various aspects of life through objects and stories from different periods. DOMID has digitized 80 items from its collection, presenting them in a three-dimensional format. The museum features nine themed buildings that can be explored virtually, inside and out, with close-ups of objects [41].

The office building displays citizenship application documents and information on migration rights. The train station symbolizes migrants' journeys and memories, while the media section, covers migration topics through various media. The shopping street illustrates migrants' economic contributions, and the factory building discusses their integration into society. The cultural center emphasizes cultural diversity, and the school building presents the experiences of students, parents, and teachers. The dormitory, often the first living space for migrants, addresses racism, and the apartment building focuses on private housing challenges [41]. The Virtual Migration Museum's page includes an explanatory glossary in German and English,



though it lacks Turkish and other languages.

### **Past Exhibitions of DOMID:**

**'Foreign Home: Fremde Heimat-Yaban Silan Olur':** Held from February 15, 1998, to August 2, 1998, at the Ruhr Museum in Essen, this exhibition reflected the labor recruitment process from the 1961 German-Turkish Worker Recruitment Agreement to the 1973 recruitment ban. It featured worker dormitories, original furniture,



personal memories, documents, and photographs, with tours in German, Turkish, and sign language, and a bilingual catalog (Figure 3).

**'40 Years: Foreign Home.** The Immigration from Türkiye to Cologne': Held from October 27, 2001, to November 23, 2001, in Cologne, commemorating the 40th anniversary of the German-Turkish labor recruitment agreement. It featured migration stories from guest workers and their interactions with the local population.



**Figure 3.** A workers' dormitory from the exhibition

**'Project Migration':** Held from September 30, 2005, to January 15, 2006, in Cologne, this exhibition showcased labor migration and its associated social changes through research projects, artworks, and film screenings.

**'Divided Home/ Shared Home: 50 Years of Migration from Türkiye':** Shown in Berlin, Düsseldorf, and Cologne in 2011, this exhibition highlighted the experiences of three generations of migrant families in Germany.

**'Motiv Migration-Göçün Motivasyonu':** Held from March 16, 2019, to April 12, 2019, this exhibition featured research projects, art campaigns, events, and film screenings.



**Figure 4.** Multaka exhibition

Other museums in Germany also address integration efforts. The MULTAKA project<sup>7</sup> is notable in this context. 'Multaka,' meaning 'meeting point' in Arabic, is a project titled 'Multaka: Museum as Meeting Point: Refugee Guides at Berlin Museums,' launched in 2015 in

partnership with the Museum of Islamic Art and three other Berlin museums (Figure 4). By training Syrian and Iraqi refugees or migrants as museum guides, the project enables them to play an active role in communicating the host country's history and culture through museums. This approach aims to empower refugees and migrants, fostering a constructive connection with cultural institutions. The project's sustainability and wide participation network have made it a model for integration efforts [40]. It has significantly contributed to the development of migrants' social networks and cultural experiences [42].

#### 4.3. Emigration Museum in Gdynia-Poland (Muzeum Emigracji in Gdynia)

The Emigration Museum in Gdynia, officially opened in 2015, is dedicated to narrating the history of Polish emigration from the 19th century to the present. It is located in the historic Marine Station (Figure 5), a building that has significant historical relevance as a departure point for many Polish emigrants [43]. The museum showcases individuals who have excelled in fields such as science, sports, commerce, and the arts.



**Figure 5.** Museum in the heart of the port

The museum's exhibits include personal artifacts, letters, photographs, and multimedia installations that provide a personal and humanistic perspective on emigration. These exhibits are designed to evoke the emotional and human aspects of the emigrant experience, highlighting both the challenges and the resilience of those who left their homeland in search of better opportunities [43].

The Emigration Museum in Gdynia also serves an educational role, offering programs that aim to bridge the gap between the historical experiences of Polish emigrants and contemporary migration issues. The museum's educational initiatives are designed to foster a deeper understanding of the socio-economic and political dimensions of emigration, promoting empathy and awareness among visitors [44].

The Emigration Museum in Gdynia, contributes significantly to the democratic public sphere by promoting inclusive dialogue and understanding. These museums provide opportunities for marginalized

<sup>7</sup> MULTAKA. (2021, January 26). Concept. Retrieved from <https://multaka.de/en/concept/>

communities to share their stories and for the public to engage with diverse cultural narratives. This engagement fosters social cohesion and mutual respect, which are essential components of a democratic society [44].

The historical context of the Emigration Museum is particularly poignant, given Poland's long history of emigration due to political, economic, and social factors. The museum captures this history through its carefully curated collections and exhibits (Figure 6), making it a vital resource for understanding the broader impacts of emigration on Polish society and beyond [45].



**Figure 6.** One part of permanent exhibition in the museum

It aims to highlight the achievements and stories of the 20 million people of Polish descent living outside Poland through its exhibitions, while also serving as a place for educational and cultural projects that facilitate encounters and interactions with immigrants to Poland. The permanent exhibition at the Gdynia Migration Museum chronicles the migration from Poland from the 19th century to the present. It covers major migrations during the Industrial Revolution, mass emigration to the United States, life in Brazil, the tragedies during and after World War II, and the challenging years of the Polish People's Republic, concluding with Poland's accession to the European Union. The exhibition also includes displays on the departure of Poles from the port and the immigration procedures at Ellis Island in the United States [46]. The museum's website features a Migration Archive section, which collects and preserves the stories of Poles who migrated westward or eastward.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when museums were closed and travel restrictions were in place, many museums increased their virtual offerings. The Gdynia Migration Museum provided a three-dimensional virtual tour of its temporary exhibition, Carboland. This exhibition, which explores the migration history of Poles who went to work in France and Belgium between 1919 and 1939, features 350 objects that tell migration stories. Another project of the museum focuses on giving children a voice in the museum. This initiative involves a team of 10-year-old guides who lead tours of the permanent exhibition for their families, teachers, and friends. The project aims to develop social and informational skills in children and young people, strengthen family bonds, integrate the local community,

and engage participants of all ages and backgrounds with the museum.

Various conferences and seminars are also held at the museum to support scientific research and examine the situation of Poles around the world. To promote participation in the city, the 'Ladies and Gentlemen and the City' project was implemented, involving participants over the age of 55 in creating memory maps and participating in creative writing workshops. This initiative has demonstrated that museums are dynamic spaces, providing educational opportunities and ongoing engagement for all ages. The symposiums, scientific activities, and exhibitions predominantly focus on the Polish Diaspora. Through its projects and initiatives, the museum operates as a democratic and participatory meeting place, fostering community involvement.

#### **4.4. Sao Paulo Immigration Museum, Brazil (Museu da Imigração do Estado de São Paulo)**

##### ***Collection and Archives***

The São Paulo Immigration Museum was established to preserve the history of people coming to Brazil (Figure 7). This museum, which combines migrant memories to understand and reflect on the migration process, allows the local population to see the memories, travel conditions, adaptation to new jobs, and lives of people who came from distant lands. It serves as a contemporary center that not only considers past migrations but also addresses current relocations and the arrival and impact of millions of migrants in the city [47].



**Figure 7.** Sao Paulo Immigration Museum

The archives of the Immigration Museum in Brazil consist of four groups: a public archive, a digital archive, a museological collection, a library, an oral history collection, and an institutional archive. The digital archive includes official documents such as records, passenger lists, invitation letters, photos, maps, and newspapers, and it belongs to the São Paulo State Public Archive, with over 250,000 images digitized. The museum collection comprises objects donated by immigrants, their families, and institutions, including suitcases, personal documents, clothing, and household and work items (Figure 8). The oral history collection, initiated in 1993 consists of contributions from immigrants and their descendants and continues to expand. The bibliographic collection, initially formed by



the Immigration and Colonization Services Directorate's library from 1939 to 1967, now includes works, theses, books, periodicals, catalogs, films, and electronic content on migration-related topics [47].



**Figure 8.** One section of the museum

### ***Exhibitions and Community Programs***

- ***Permanent Exhibition:*** One of the museum's permanent exhibitions, "Migration: Experiences, Memories, and Identities," showcases the main themes of preservation and research. This eight-part exhibition addresses migration waves, migration policies, and the daily lives of migrants, shedding light on human history. It does not limit migration studies to the past but also displays the dialogue of individuals displaced and migrating in the contemporary world [48].
- ***Temporary and Virtual Exhibitions:*** The museum's temporary exhibitions include "Who Tells This Story: Refugee Journalists or Journalist Refugees?" "On Names," "Surnames," "Breath," "La Jornada: The Resistance of the Venezuelan People Seeking Refuge in Brazil," and "Feeling at Home." Among its virtual exhibitions, "Immigrant Party: 25 Years of Shared Cultures and Experiences" highlights the cultures and traditions of those who migrated to São Paulo, their families, and more recent refugees. This exhibition, featuring various photos, videos, and graphics, allows visitors to travel through time by discovering the evolution of the city and the presence of new nations through the testimonies of immigrants and refugees. The "Recipe Crossings" exhibition is a virtual display aimed at discussing the relationship between food and migration, where immigrants and their descendants share recipe books via social networks. Kitchen utensils and souvenirs are also exhibited alongside the recipes, reflecting the power of tastes to evoke memories and emotions and bridge distances.

### ***Collaborative Activities***

The Immigration Museum collaborates with other museums, local communities, civil society, and private companies to conduct its activities. The "Immigrants' Café" exhibition, in collaboration with the Coffee Museum, reflects the stories and memories of immigrants working on coffee plantations. Through collaboration with foundations, the museum has created a reading area for children called "Semear Leitores." This

space, equipped with accessible shelves, poufs, and seating areas, allows children to engage interactively, exploring themes related to the museum with about a thousand books and tales involving transportation means used by immigrants, such as trains and ships. The museum also hosts storytelling activities to develop children's imagination and storytelling abilities, supported by associations and foundations.

Another popular museum activity for both adults and children is the Maria Fumaça Steam Train. This nostalgic tour of an old steam train, which was the arrival point for thousands of immigrants to São Paulo, is part of the museum's offerings. The authentic steam locomotive from 1922 offers historical tours of the city's landmarks. The 25-minute journey aims to give participants a sense of traveling in the last century. These tours, run on weekdays and weekends by the Brazilian Association for the Preservation of Railways (ABPF), feature guides who demonstrate some of the customs of bygone train journeys. Visitors can choose to travel in a wagon from 1950 or 1928, both of which maintain their original wooden construction, color, assembly, and dimensions. Guides provide information to passengers throughout the tour [47].

## **4.5. The Examples from Türkiye**

Since the establishment of the Republic, the number of museums in our country has periodically increased. When classifying museums under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism into state museums and private museums, it is evident that the number of private museums has grown. The Koç family established Sadberk Hanım Museum, the first private museum, in 1980. Subsequently, the Sabancı Museum opened in 2002, Istanbul Modern in 2004, Pera Museum in 2005, Rezan Has Museum in 2006, and Santralistanbul in 2007. Families and businesspeople are in competition to establish museums and create art collections [49].

### ***Çatalca Mübadele Museum***

As part of the 2010 European Capital of Culture Istanbul initiative, urban projects were implemented to support cultural activities and the establishment of new museums. Türkiye's first contemporary city museum, Adalar Museum, was opened in 2010 under this project. The Çatalca Mübadele Museum, the first migration-themed museum, was also opened with support from this urban project [50]. Another example is the 500th Year Foundation Museum of Turkish Jews, which exhibits the culture, religion, and artifacts of Turkish Jews.

Türkiye's first migration-themed museum, the Çatalca Mübadele Museum, opened on December 20, 2010. Although a proposal was submitted to the 2010 European Capital of Culture Istanbul agency in 2008, due to protocols, the museum's construction, decoration, and curation were completed, and it opened to visitors in approximately four months [48]. The museum, mainly ethnographic, exhibits embroidered fabrics, woven sheets, and bridal trousseaus and features a music section with information about artists and their instruments. It also showcases photographs, documents, family donations, and memorabilia, as well as kitchen

utensils, spoons, pans, trays, raki glasses, iron irons, gas lamps, and glass hammers from that period [51]. While the Çatalca Mübadele Museum does not hold temporary exhibitions or educational activities, it conveys the history of the population exchange through its permanent exhibition. Collaborating with the Lausanne Treaty Emigrants Foundation, the museum hosts temporary exhibitions, publications, emigrant gatherings, and homeland visits. There are also reciprocal museum visits in Greece and Türkiye [52].

### Adalar Museum

The Adalar Museum, Istanbul's first example of a modern city museum, promotes urban awareness and works to integrate a cosmopolitan population as a result of migration. The museum's collection includes hundreds of objects, 20,000 documents, 6,000 photographs, documentation recordings, films, and oral history records [53]. The museum has played an active role in past projects, including a workshop in Sweden under the EU Museums and Intercultural Dialogue Programme's Introduction to Urban Museology in Türkiye project in 2012. Oral history interviews with Turks living in Sweden were conducted for the Migration Exhibition [53].

### İMTİZAC Exhibition

A comprehensive research exhibition example, though not a museum, is the İMTİZAC: Integration without Segregation Exhibition by the Urban Issues and Local Governance Research and Application Center at Marmara University. Held from November 7–20, 2017, the exhibition presented research findings on migration and social integration (Figure 9). It addressed prejudices and misinformation about Syrians stemming from biased media language, highlighted the positive aspects of migration through data on migrant entrepreneurs' contributions to the economy, and showcased video conferences and research results on migrants' rapid adaptation to local communities despite language barriers. The exhibition's visual design aimed to provide visitors with a full understanding of the migration process, fostering awareness and empathy [54].

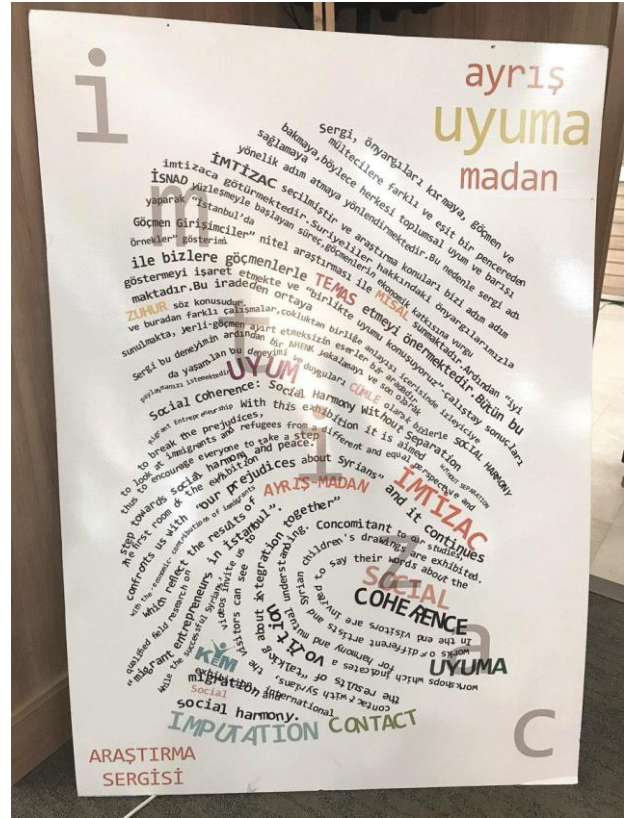


Figure 9. İmtizac exhibition

The exhibition's name, "İmtizac," an Arabic term meaning harmony and concord, was chosen to emphasize the goal of breaking down prejudices against migrants and refugees and promoting social cohesion and peace. The inclusion of Turkish, Arabic, and English explanations in the exhibition positively contributed to the need for multilingual social cohesion [55].

The exhibition consists of sections formed from the letters of the word "İMTİZAC" each associated with different research areas:

- İsnad: Prejudices
- Misal: Migrant Entrepreneurs
- Temas: Contact with Good Examples
- İrade: Discussing Integration Together
- Zuhur: From Diversity to Unity
- Ahenk: Achieving Harmony
- Cümle: Comments and Feedback on the Exhibition

### [56]

The exhibition, which features both economic and social success stories of migrants and refugees, also includes a feedback section. Due to its location in a tourist area, this section has received positive and appreciative feedback in multiple languages, highlighting the exhibition as a unique endeavor. The exhibition has been recognized as important for guiding future efforts and exploring further actions for integration [48].

Another noteworthy instance is the "Gurbette" exhibition that Şahin Yıldırım, who is continuing his migration-related work in the Netherlands, created in collaboration with Associate Professor Yasemin Çakırer Özservet from Marmara University. This exhibition, jointly organized by the Marmara University Urban Issues and Local Governance Research Center and Atlas Culture Center, was inaugurated on January 7, 2019, at the Atatürk Education Faculty of Marmara University.

The exhibition portrays the story of migration in Dutch artistic objects that depict themes of migration and expatriation from the perspective of visual arts students. Mr. Yıldırım noted that the first generation who came to the Netherlands worked for a living and did not return to Türkiye, leading the second and third generations to initiate foundation work and efforts to establish cultural centers and museums. Although the establishment of the Dutch Turkish Museum in The Hague was planned in 2009, the lack of support from the Dutch government prevented the museum from gaining official status. The coalition government and political reasons in the Netherlands have posed significant obstacles to the establishment of such museums and migration-refugee-related initiatives, unlike in Germany, the United Kingdom, and France. As a result, Mr. Yıldırım continues his efforts through traveling exhibitions across Türkiye and various countries and cities in Europe [48].

Many similar migration-themed artistic exhibitions are being held today. However, there is no comprehensive migration museum in our country. There is a significant need for a sustainable migration museum with permanent and rotating temporary exhibitions.

## 5. Conclusion

Place-making and city branding benefit greatly from the cultural infrastructure that museums provide in urban diplomacy [57]. As cities increasingly become places that many people see as "home," they have responsibilities toward all inhabitants. Moreover, cities must be flexible enough to adapt to changing global relationships [58]. Migration museums are vital in this context, reflecting the multicultural nature of cities and providing spaces for socialization and cultural exchange.

There is a growing belief that traditional museums cannot continue to exist in their current form in the 21st century [59-60]. Therefore, there is a significant need for dynamic, active, and participatory museums that engage visitors as contributors rather than passive observers.

The significance of migration museums in fostering cultural assimilation and social cohesion between host communities and migrants is demonstrated by this research. The research demonstrates, via studies of migration museums and facilities in Brazil, Türkiye, Germany, and Poland, that these institutions actively promote understanding and empathy among individuals. Migration museums provide platforms for dialogue and interaction among different cultures, fostering understanding and reducing biases by means of interactive exhibits, educational materials, and engaging public programs.

The findings emphasize the importance of these museums in documenting migration processes and showcasing the contributions of migrants to host societies. By preserving and presenting the narratives of migrant experiences, these museums not only educate the public, but also create spaces where diverse communities can connect and interact. This interaction is crucial for fostering a sense of belonging and community among both migrants and locals.

Furthermore, the study underscores the transformative potential of contemporary museology.

Migration museums, as part of the evolving field of new museology, move beyond traditional roles of collection and exhibition to become sites of social action and change. They address the complexities of migration and integration, offering valuable insights and practical approaches for policymakers, cultural practitioners, and academics.

In summary, by fostering inclusive narratives and enabling meaningful encounters, migration museums play a key role in building societal cohesion and peace. They serve as prime examples of how cultural organizations can be extremely important in tackling societal issues and creating more welcoming, compassionate communities. The knowledge gathered from this research supports a more comprehensive strategy for immigration and assimilation, one that acknowledges the role that artistic and cultural endeavors play in promoting societal cohesion.

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## Author contributions

**Yasemin Çakırer Özservet:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing-Reviewing, Editing and Validation.  
**Berk Koçak:** Field study, Writing-Original draft preparation.

## Conflicts of interest

There is no conflict of interest between the authors.

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