

## Revisiting “Guest Work” through audio letters: Intergenerational memory in family archives of migrants from Turkey in Austria

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### ABSTRACT

Mainstream representations of “guest workers” in the German-speaking world often rely on reductive and homogenized narratives that obscure the complexity of migrant experiences, broadly categorizing them as “Turkish” and gendered as “male.” While recent efforts to establish migration-focused archives have expanded documentation, critical engagement with the politics of collecting—who collects, what is preserved, and how these practices shape future knowledge—remains limited. This paper examines analog audio letters from the personal family archives of people from Turkey who migrated to Austria in the 1970s, exploring how family archives challenge dominant migration narratives. Drawing on biographical interviews and a hermeneutic case study approach, it investigates how migrant archivists curate personal histories, transmit memory across generations, and negotiate belonging. These intergenerational narratives offer nuanced insights into the lived realities of migration, labor, and family life, complicating monolithic representations of “guest work.” The paper argues for integrating such personal, gendered, and generational accounts into public archival frameworks, advocating for a more inclusive and critically informed historiography of migration.

### CV

**Dr. Faime Alpagu** is a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Germanic Languages at Columbia University and holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Vienna. Her awardwinning research—supported by institutions such as the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the Max Kade Foundation in New York City—explores migration through biographical, auditory, visual, and memory-based perspectives. Her work focuses on the intersections of migration and refugee studies, audio-visual and archive studies, biographical research, memory, and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in academia. She applies an interpretative social research approach throughout her work. Faime is currently conducting a comparative study on migration from Turkey to Austria and the United States.