

Title

Academic Migrant Scrapbook

Subtitle

How can academic migratory experiences be collected, preserved, and commemorated?

Author information

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Bio

Theresa Kohlbeck Jakobsen is a researcher, translator, and artist currently working on their doctorate in Faroese literature studies. They are affiliated with the Nordeuropa-Institut, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

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Funding statement & UiT context

This work is connected to a presentation held at a session on “Creating and Communicating Arctic ArtScience” organized by UiT’s Center for Arctic Humanities and the UArctic Thematic Network Environmental Humanities in May 2026 at the UArctic Congress in Tórshavn, Faroe Islands. The work was made possible through a PhD scholarship from the foundation Cusanuswerk.

Abstract

This visual essay presents a scrapbook kept during a research stay at Aarhus University as both an everyday, domestic craft and an arts-based research method for documenting academic migration. Combining photographs, cut-outs, and handwritten diary entries, the scrapbook is presented as a haptic, multisensory approach to knowing that eased one visiting scholar's adjustment to a foreign environment and offered comfort on difficult days. Drawing on sensory and visual ethnography, autobiographical memory research, and art therapy, the piece reflects on documenting experiences without screens. When opened to colleagues on the author's final day, the private object became a living archive (Sabiescu 2020): a model for how collecting, preserving, and sharing the ephemeral experiences of visiting scholars can build community, solidarity, and a sense of belonging across institutions.

Keywords

Arts-based methods, reflective practice, visual essay, autoethnography, living archive

Cover image



Title: Academic Migrant Scrapbook Cover, [CC BY 4.0](#)

Filename: AcademicMigrantScrapbookCover_4284 × 4284.jpeg

Alternative text: The front cover of an A5-sized notebook. On a red background five blue fish are positioned in a row from top to bottom looking towards the right side, except the second fish which is looking the opposite way.

Creative material

During the spring of 2026 I stayed at Aarhus University as a visiting researcher. I was primarily working on the theory and methods chapter of my PhD thesis, which is positioned on the intersection of literary gender, work, and multispecies studies. At the same time, I was reviewing an article in which I was involved that examined the potential of combining collages and collaborative auto-ethnography (CAE). In the evenings, inspired and empowered by working on the article, I started filling a scrapbook with photographs, cut-outs, diary entries, and other materials, unconsciously exploring what Ros Walling-Wefelmeyer (2020) calls the “process of saving, sharing, and making sense(s) of the everyday and ephemeral”, and what ultimately makes a scrapbook “an approach to knowing” (p. 4). Back in Berlin, I realised how my scrapbooking not only had picked up and transferred my work on collage and CAE from my professional to my private life, but that it had in fact turned it into a visual as well as textual memory tool (Phillip, 2016). The materiality of the scrapbook is haptic and tactile, conveying different textures. Further, the photographs of food I ate and places I visited convey tastes and smells, turning it into a multisensory object (Pink 2009, 2021). In hindsight, I must also acknowledge that establishing a routine around scrapbooking helped me adjust to my new and foreign environment more quickly, and it provided a source of comfort on challenging days. This personal experience is supported by art therapy research (e.g. Fiorito et al. 2020; McCarthy and Genone Sebaugh 2011). On my last day in Aarhus, I opened this creative and deeply personal memory practice up to the faculty at my guest institution. I encouraged my colleagues to leave their marks in the scrapbook which turned it into a living archive (Sabiescu 2020). Collecting, preserving, and sharing the experiences of academic migrants such as visiting scholars therefore has the potential to foster community and create networks of solidarity, offering validation and a sense of belonging in a foreign work environment. What started as a spontaneous and intuitive idea to document visually and materially, away from screens, my experiences as a German academic migrant in Denmark, ended up becoming a reflective practice symbolizing a vision for future works and collaborations.



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Alternative text: The front cover of an A5-sized notebook. On a red background five blue fish are positioned in a row from top to bottom looking towards the right side, except the second fish which is looking the opposite way.



Title: Academic Migrant Scrapbook March, [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Filename: AcademicMigrantScrapbookMarch_4284 x 4284.jpeg

Alternative text: A collage mixing photographs and handwritten diary entries dated between 19 and 25 March 2026. The dominant colors are pink and blue. The composition is made up of cut-out words and pictures of different cafés in Aarhus, together with colorful lines and stripes of tape.



Title: Academic Migrant Scrapbook February, [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Filename: AcademicMigrantScrapbook_4284 × 4284.jpeg

Alternative text: A collage mixing photographs and handwritten diary entries dated between 2 and 6 February. The dominant colors are yellow and blue with pink and orange highlights. The composition includes pictures from an exhibition at Moesgaard Museum, the entrance of the Royal Danish Library and some food items, together with multi-colored lines and stripes of tape.

References

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