

EDITORIAL

Dear Reader,

Mobility is a basic need for many people. This is evident, for example, in current discussions about the price of gasoline and diesel, public transit, or vacation flights. We tend to forget that even before the invention of engines, people had the urge to move around, to change location, and often to enter uncharted territory.

At the same time, mobility is not a purely human phenomenon; animals are, likewise, known to travel long distances. Wildebeests and reindeer, whales, fish, and sea turtles – not to mention countless birds – cover hundreds or even thousands of miles, year after year. In doing so, they follow a genetic program that researchers at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Biology are studying in detail using the example of blackcaps. Their research has shown that genes not only dictate whether a bird will migrate in the fall, but also where to.

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Humans are at least partially free to decide where they want to stay put, however, living conditions often provide very little leeway here. When traditionally nomadic ethnic groups like the Wodaabe in Niger lose a large part of their herds as the result of drought, they have to find other ways to make a living; hence, in recent decades, many Wodaabe have sought work in cities. Those working in the cities use the money they earn to support nomadic livestock farming in the countryside, as a researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology has observed. With this strategy, they spread financial risk and secure an income.

Within the European Union, citizens of member states are free to choose where they live and work, and for many, leaving their original home is a decision for life. How migrants fare in old age has been a subject of research for a team at the Max Planck Institute for Social Law and Social Policy, with varying results depending on whether one compares their well-being with those who stayed at home or with their fellow dwellers in their new home country.

The question of “Should I stay or should I go?” arises time and again in a wide variety of contexts. If you find yourself facing precisely this choice, then we suggest you take the time to do some reading – whether at home or on the move.

In any case, we hope you enjoy this issue!

Your editorial team