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MIGRATION, POST-SOCIALISM, AND DIASPORIC EXPERIENCES: FRAGMENTED LIVES, ENTANGLED WORLDS

MIGRATION, POST-SOZIALISMUS UND DIASPORA-ERFAHRUNGEN: FRAGMENTIERTE LEBEN, VERFLOCHTENE WELTEN

Herausgegeben von
Alina Jašina-Schäfer
Nino Aivazishvili-Gehne

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Introduction: Navigating Migration, Post-Socialism, and Diasporic Experiences. Fragmented Lives, Entangled Worlds

This special issue focuses on migration and the diasporic experiences of individuals from the former Soviet Union, and looks at their complex histories, current realities, and future hopes. It is set against the disruptive backdrop of the war in Ukraine, as Europe faces profound political shifts and debates over belonging. In this context, scholars critically evaluate the terminology and frameworks traditionally used to describe the former Soviet Union and its people. They advocate for the adoption of more nuanced analytical approaches to capture the varied and complex processes of transformation experienced by the countries in question, their inhabitants, as well as those diasporic communities that have established themselves in new locales.[1]

Transitioning from these broader discussions, we narrow our focus on the everyday lives of diasporic populations, informed by our active participation in the research network "Ambivalences of the Soviet".[2] This network, which centred on communities of German late repatriates and Jewish minorities, aimed to illuminate the nuanced practices of diasporic people, their life during the Soviet period, personal memories of that time, and the reconstruction of communities following migration to countries like Germany. Simultaneously, individual projects within the network sought to critically evaluate the term 'diaspora' itself, engaging it in dialogue with other notions.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and in light of evolving realities of global migration, the term 'diaspora' gained prominence in academic, political, and public discourses. Its meaning has since evolved significantly from the notion of diasporas as homogenous entities defined by common origins, history, and language, to a more nuanced and historically grounded perspective. In his research, Brubaker, for example, considers 'diaspora' not as a descriptor of a specific group type, but as a project, stance,

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1 Cf. Eggart, Claudia: The End of the Post-Soviet. In: ZoiS Spotlight. 01.06.2022. URL: https://www.zois-berlin.de/en/publications/zois-spotlight/the-end-of-the-post-soviet; Sagatienė, Dovilė: Challenging the 'Post-Soviet' Label and Colonial Mindsets. NATO Summit in Vilnius. In: Verfassungsblog. 11.07.2023. URL: https://verfassungsblog.de/challenging-the-post-soviet-label-and-colonial-mindsets/ (27.03.2024).
2 Cf. Ambivalences of the Soviet. Diaspora Nationalities between Collective Experiences of Discrimination and Individual Normalization, 1953 – 2023. Research Network 2020 – 2023: About the Research Network. URL: https://www.ambivalenzen.uni-goettingen.de/en/research-network/ (27.03.2024).

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and claim that is continuously negotiated.[3] Similarly, Anthias conceptualised the term as a particular condition "structured through the trajectory of movement".[4] She specified that this condition is influenced by emotions pertaining to both the movement from one's homeland and the settlement in a new location. For Anthias, any future diaspora studies should then pivot towards examining dynamic, transnational, and translocal processes while acknowledging the existence of difference and diversity.[5]

Drawing on these interpretations, within our network we have come to view diasporas as the experience of an entanglement and division.[6] Our objective became to explore the variety of issues that underscore this experience, including distinct practices, imaginations, and claim-making.[7] To this end, we organised a conference in February 2022, which laid the groundwork for this special issue. Delving into discussions on 'flexible socialism' and its manifold ambiguities and tensions, we examined the different historical subjectivities, values, and self-conceptions it produced among diasporic populations.[8]

At the same time, we sought to offer examples of dialogue that could arise in the process of thinking about complex spatio-temporal concepts like 'diaspora' and 'post-socialism'. Both 'post-socialism' and 'post-Soviet' have recently been subject to extensive critique, with some scholars suggesting the need to rethink or completely abandon these terms due to their pejorative political connotations of the regions in question.[9] Yet, we argue that dismissing post-socialism as merely a "political phantom" of a bygone world,[10] destined to fade over time,[11] overlooks its current relevance. We there-

3 Cf. Brubaker, Rogers: Ethnicity Without Groups. In: European Journal of Sociology 42/2 (2002), 163–189.

4 Anthias, Floya: Evaluating 'Diaspora': Beyond Ethnicity? In: Sociology 32/3 (1998), 557–580, here 565.

5 Cf. ibid, 558.

6 Cf. Charim, Isolde: Einleitung. In: Eadem; Auer Borea, Gertraud (Eds.): Lebensmodel Diaspora. Über moderne Nomaden. Bielefeld 2012, 11–16.

7 Cf. Darieva, Tsypylma: Making a Homeland. Roots and Routes of Transnational Armenian Engagement. Bielefeld 2023.

8 Cf. Aivazishvili-Gehne, Nino: Multiple Vertrautheit – Plädoyer für die Einführung eines neuen Begriffs. ‚Russlanddeutsche' in Deutschland. In: Paideuma. Zeitschrift für Kulturanthropologische Forschung 68 (2022), 149–165; eadem: Hoping for Others: Entangled Emotional States of ‚Russian Germans' and the Multifaceted Aspects of ‚Successful' Migration. In: Zeitschrift für Migrationsforschung 3/2 (2023), 83–104; Jašina-Schäfer, Alina: Gendered Work and Socialist Pasts. Memories and experiences of Women Repatriates in Germany. In: Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies. Latest Articles. 24.02.2023. URL: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1369183X.2023.2181128 (27.03.2024).

9 Cf. Müller, Martin: Goodbye, Postsocialism! In: Europe-Asia Studies 71/4 (2019), 533–550; Platt, Kevin M. F.: The Post-Soviet is Over. On Reading the Ruins. In: Republics of Letters: A Journal for the Study of Knowledge, Politics, and the Arts 1/1 (2009), 1–21.

10 Oushakine, Serguei Alex: The Patriotism of Despair. Nation, War, and Loss in Russia. Ithaca-London 2009, 27.

11 Cf. Hann, Chris M.; Humphrey, Caroline; Verdery, Katherine: Introduction: Postsocialism as a Topic of Anthropological Investigation. In: Hann, Chris M. (Ed.): Postsocialism. Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia. London-New York 2002, 1–29.

fore advocate for a more nuanced examination of how, where and in what ways this term still resonates.[12] Despite its association with knowledge hierarchies and Orientalism, we believe, this concept maintains its value as an analytical tool.[13] Specifically, in the context of diaspora studies, it can facilitate a deeper understanding of the intricate temporal and spatial relationships that people from the former socialist worlds weave into their daily lives, practices and processes of meaning-making. In other words, it can offer useful insights into the manner in which aspects of previous lives, though no longer present in their familiar forms, persist in shaping experiences in diverse ways.[14]

Using post-socialism as an analytical lens, we look thus at processes of diasporic "re-existence in a changing world",[15] which involves the blending of specific past and present fragments that transcend former socialist contexts.[16] Viewed in this way, we seek to challenge the perceived narrative coherence of particular empirical contexts, experiences, and the so-called 'post-Soviet condition'. While some studies may use the terms 'post-socialist' and 'post-Soviet' almost synonymously, we distinguish between the two. For us, the latter denotes particular ways-of-belonging and non-belonging among diasporic people that rests on shared geographical, historical and cultural experiences situated in the Soviet Union;[17] whereas the former explores how these experiences are integrated into people's embodied memories, their geopolitics of being, and perception.

However, the state-socialist past is not the only relevant analytical category within post-socialism that elucidates diasporic life contexts. As the contributions in this volume illustrate, other temporalities and dimensions significantly influence migration, individual coping strategies, and the sense of belonging in new environments. Our approach carefully examines how factors rooted in the many presents and concerns with the future, such as citizenship (Irby), language issues (Lucchetti), or struggles for communal authority (Matevosyan), play a role in reshaping the relationship between the past and present fragments. While keeping focus on commonalities and broader polit-

12 Cf. Brković, Čarna: Between Decolonial and Postsocialist Political Imaginations. Redescribing Present Failures in Mostar. In: Fretter, Klara; Nagel, Carina (Eds.): Living in the Post. Ethnographische Perspektiven auf Postsozialismus und Erinnerung. Berlin 2022 (Berliner Blätter 85), 33 – 49 (URL: https://doi.org/10.18452/23979).

13 Cf. Pank, Julia Friederike; Schiedlowski, Felix: 'Postness', a Contemporary Human Condition? Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute. Virtual Issue. 22. 04. 2023. URL: https://rai.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/toc/10.1111/(ISSN)1467-9655.postness (27. 03. 2024).

14 Cf. Fretter, Klara; Nagel, Carina: Living in the Post. Einleitende Überlegungen zu den Potentialen und Grenzen postsozialistisch-ethnographischen Forschens. In: Fretter/Nagel, Living in the Post (cf. n. 12), 5 – 19, here 10.

15 Tlostanova, Madina: What Does It Mean to be Post-Soviet? Decolonial Art from the Ruins of the Soviet Empire. Durham-London 2018, 24.

16 Cf. Gille, Zsuzsa: Is There a Global Postsocialist Condition? In: Global Society 24/1 (2010), 9 – 30.

17 Cf. Panagiotidis, Jannis: Postsowjetische Migration in Deutschland. Eine Einführung. Weinheim 2021, 19 f.; see also the article by Christiana Lucchetti in this issue.

ical-historical processes, empirical examples showcase the emergence of differences within specific social and local frameworks.

This issue unites a wide range of voices and disciplines to explore the potential of a dialogue between concepts like 'post-socialism' and 'diaspora', recognising their varying relevance across different contexts. Our contribution covers a range of topics including language and belonging, forced resettlement under Soviet rule, mobility and citizenship, diasporic competition, and grassroots challenges to legal statuses. These diverse approaches reveal how specific spatio-temporal settings inform, and are informed by, individual historical perceptions and modes of existence. We start with a detailed overview of our engagement with pivotal debates in post-socialist literature as well as migration and diaspora studies. This is followed by summaries of the individual articles that advance our understanding in three key areas: 1) sources of local histories and knowledges about diasporas, 2) diasporic self-making, and 3) post-socialist memories.

Post-socialism, spatio-temporal fragments, and changing contexts

As previously noted, the post-socialist optic is marked by inherent ambivalence. It has been critiqued for inducing analytical paralysis through a hierarchised mental mapping of the Other. Simultaneously, it is acknowledged for its potential to critically reinterpret current existential conditions, offering alternative forms of modernist thinking and thus pathways towards decoloniality.[18] However, as Kesküla observes, most frequently the term has been used "carelessly", gradually evolving into an empty signifier and a fashionable label, albeit with significant real-world implications.[19]

In this introduction, we do not aim to provide an exhaustive overview of the ontological evolution of the term, its various functions, or its integration into everyday language, political discourse, and artistic-activist realms. Instead, our focus is elsewhere, acknowledging that numerous scholars have extensively explored conceptual changes, raising questions of its relevance.[20] Their discussions symbolise the ongoing re-interpretation of the term, highlighting how debates over relevance or irrelevance are often intertwined with evolving theoretical perspectives on the world and the hierarchies of knowledge and power between the West and East.

18 Cf. Karkov, Nikolay R.; Valiavicharska, Zhivka: Rethinking East-European Socialism: Notes toward an Anti-Capitalist Decolonial Methodology. In: Interventions 20/6 (2018), 785 – 813.

19 Kesküla, Eeva: Mining Postsocialism: Work, Class and Ethnicity in an Estonian Mine. PhD Goldsmiths College, University of London 2012. URL: https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/17308216.pdf (27.03.2024), 21.

20 Cf. for example Burawoy, Michael; Verdery, Katherine (Eds.): Uncertain Transition. Ethnographies of Change in the Postsocialist World. Lanham-Oxford 1999; Hann, Postsocialism (cf. n. 12).

Over the past two decades, different aspects of post-socialism have been deemed pertinent. Initially, the prefix 'post-' was seen as a transient indicator suggesting transition towards a capitalist democracy, social change, and development. More recently, it has come to describe the unequal social, political, and economic transformations characterised by historical ruptures and continuities. Furthermore, some have adopted a post-socialist approach as a means to critique hegemonic narratives and counteract the powerful effects of Western stereotypical constructions of the East as economically and politically inferior, thereby deconstructing these narratives in the process.[21]

Despite the wide range of approaches and discussions around post-socialism, its interpretations are often still tethered to a specific historical period and a confined number of regions.[22] As Brkovic points out, many studies in this field continue to interpret the post-socialist present "through the lens of the (socialist) past or, more recently, as an inspiration for envisioning alternative futures".[23] This approach, however, leads to an epistemic impasse, as it fails to recognise post-socialism as an ongoing contemporary process, "an iteration of neoliberal capitalism" from its very inception.[24] By confining post-socialism to either the past or hypothetical futures, Brkovic suggests, we risk neglecting its "coevalness" and inadvertently contribute to the Othering of its people and places. In her own work, Brkovic examines Mostar's Hurqulaya project, asking what political imagination around Mostar's Partisan Monument in Bosnia and Herzegovina it offers. The project, which engaged residents in a collective reflection, depicted the monument not merely as a relic of socialist failure or a symbol of utopian future (i. e., alternative modernity). Rather, it was perceived as a nexus of conflicting emotions and daily experiences, intertwined with both fond and distressing memories that serve as foundations from which people act and attempt to repair what has failed.

Beyond the temporal multiplicity that the concept affords,[25] post-socialism is also argued to represent a global condition, extending to and affecting places typically not associated with socialism.[26] Deakin and Nicolescu, for example, draw parallels between

21 Cf. Dzenovska, Dace: Historical Agency and the Coloniality of Power in Postsocialist Europe. In: Anthropological Theory 13/4 (2013), 394–416.

22 Cf. Boatča, Manuela: Uneasy 'Posts' and Unmarked Categories: Politics of Positionality between and beyond the Global South and the European East. An Interview by Madina Tlostanova. In: Koobak, Redi; Tlostanova, Madina; Thapar-Björkert, Suruchi (Eds): Postcolonial and Postsocialist Dialogues. Intersections, Opacities, Challenges in Feminist Theorising and Practice. London-New York 2021, 185–193, here 186.

23 Brković, Čarna: Between Decolonial and Postsocialist Political Imaginations. Redescribing Present Failures in Mostar. In: Fretter/Nagel, Living in the Post (cf. n. 12), 33–49, here 34.

24 Ibid.

25 Cf. Ringel, Felix: The Time of Post-Socialism: On the Future of an Anthropological Concept. In: Critique of Anthropology 42/2 (2022), 191–208.

26 Cf. Keough, Leyla J.: Globalizing 'Postsocialism'. Mobile Mothers and Neoliberalism on the Margins of Europe. In: Anthropological Quarterly 79/3 (2006), 431–461; Rogers, Douglas: Postsocialisms Unbound: Connections, Critiques, Comparisons. In: Slavic Review 69/1 (2010), 1–15.

Britain and Romania.[27] They scrutinise the controversies surrounding the demolition of council housing estates in London and the work practices in Romanian production cooperatives. This comparison reveals historical cross-border interactions and uncovers notable similarities across socialist remnants.

Migration, which is central to this volume, can be seen as another pathway through which post-socialism de-territorialises, blending Eastern and Western spaces to facilitate an understanding of contemporary post-socialist relations characterised by decline and devaluation.[28] In the context of migration, multiple coordinates between times and spaces emerge, evidencing a "contradictory complementarity"[29] between remote experiences that span periods marked by distinct ideologies, across nation-states, and between public and domestic spaces.[30] By broadening its spatio-temporal scope, post-socialism elucidates how individuals forge links to and detachments from locales, navigating the complexities of their present and anticipated futures.

Debates surrounding the legacy, current relevance, and potential future value of the concept of post-socialism continue, with various perspectives being presented on how to articulate former socialist experiences within a critical discourse on the global world order. Notable examples include recent volumes edited by Gallinat and Kaneff, Fretter and Nagel, and Rekhviashvili et al.[31] While it is clear that post-socialism should not be used as a universal explanatory tool for processes better explained by other analytical frameworks, the empirical examples in this volume suggest that there is room for more nuanced ways of working with and through the concept.

This collection of contributions explores the ways in which migrants' histories, current lives, and relationships are shaped by diverse spatio-temporal orders. We examine their ties to the past, the present, and the future, arguing that 'postness' transcends merely identifiable characteristics or individual identification with the term. Rather, it represents a processual mode of being in the world, where people forge connections

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27 Cf. Deakin, Robert; Nicolescu, Gabriela: Socialist Fragments East and West. Towards a Comparative Anthropology of Global (Post)-Socialism. In: Critique of Anthropology 42/2 (2022), 114–136.

28 Cf. Kaneff, Deema: Extending the Reach of 'Post-Socialism': A Commentary. In: Critique of Anthropology 42/2 2022), 209–218, here 212; Tuvikene, Tauri: Strategies for Comparative Urbanism. Post-Socialism as a De-Territorialised Concept. In: International Journal of Urban and Regional Research 40/1 (2016), 132–146.

29 Pasieka, Agnieszka: Resurrected Pigs, Dyed Foxes and Beloved Cows. Religious Diversity and Nostalgia for Socialism in Rural Poland. In: Journal of Rural Studies 28 (2012), 72–80, here 74.

30 See also Bloch, Alexia: Sex, Love, and Migration. Postsocialism, Modernity, and Intimacy from Istanbul to the Arctic. Ithaca-London 2017, 57.

31 Cf. Critique of Anthropology 42/2 (2022). Special Issue: The Anthropology of Postsocialism: Theoretical Legacies and Conceptual Futures. Ed. by Anselma Gallinat and Deema Kaneff; Fretter/Nagel, Living in the Post (cf. n. 12); Rekhviashvili, Lela; Narkowicz, Kasia; Karkov, Nikolay; Valiavicharska, Zhivka; Tichindeleanu, Ovidiu (Eds.): EEGA Leibniz ScienceCampus. Special Issue 2 (2021): Conjunctural Geographies of Post-Socialist and Postcolonial Condition. URL: https://www.leibniz-eega.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Special_Issue_No2_web.pdf (27.03.2024).

and disconnections, and construct their own contexts for the interpretation of their existence.

In the literature, context is often treated as a self-evident attribute that facilitates context-dependent explanations of phenomena.[32] For us, and through the lens of post-socialism, context is viewed as a patchwork composed of various incomplete fragments that people bring together in their efforts to interpret the present or to reshape it. These fragments may be deemed relevant or irrelevant by individuals at different times, providing explanation, meaning, and interpretation, or leading to disjunctions. In our case, these fragments, drawn from past Soviet places and times, become entwined in a network of relations and meaning making by people, evolving and generating new sets of features.

For instance, in her article, Irby examines the feelings of loss resulting from economic and social dislocation, as well as the politics of post-independence nationalism in Tajikistan. These factors have transformed migration to Russia into a life strategy for many, evoking longings for the past, perceived as more nationally authentic and characterised by local production, work, and life. As Irby phrases it, these are longings for 'the futures of the past'. Similarly, Gebel, in his article, explores the perception of freedom among people from the former Soviet Union living in Germany. Public discourses often label them as apolitical, desirous of authoritarian structures, and inept at utilising the freedom that the German political and economic system offers. However, Gebel discovers that these migrants have developed their own contrasting conceptions of freedom, rooted in their past (geographical, material, and political) experiences, which they use to challenge negative stereotypes in their daily lives. These varied examples underscore the fragmentary nature of post-socialist experiences, which reemerge in a process that is "unable to complete itself".[33] People continue to variously draw upon these experiences as a means of making sense of their present lives, as a means for social and personal reinvention in present-oriented struggles over the categories of humanness and human worth.

Migration and 'chaorder' of diasporic experiences

Migration and mobility are critical phenomena that not only bring together the concepts of 'post-socialism' and 'diaspora' in unique ways but also prompt their re-evaluation. Echoing Bloch, who provides intimate accounts of women migrating from the former Soviet countries for various work opportunities in Turkey,[34] we view migration as a portal to understanding shifting ideals about modernity, knowledges, and the in-

32 Cf. for critique: Dilley, Roy: Introduction: The Problem of Context. In: Idem (Ed.): The Problem of Context. New York-Oxford 1999, 1–47, here 2.

33 Martinez, Francisco: Narva as Method: Urban Inventories and the Mutation of the Postsocialist City. In: Anthropological Journal of European Cultures 29/2 (2020), 67–92, here 71.

34 Cf. Bloch, Sex, Love, and Migration (cf. n. 30).

terpretation of one's own environment. This includes insights into communal and familial relations, freedoms, values, and morality.

The histories and forms of Soviet and post-Soviet mobilities are vast and diverse, a topic that extends beyond this introduction's scope. However, the articles in this volume provide insights into various forms of mobility. They cover marginalised socialist histories involving forced resettlements, remittance-dependent mobilities, and post-Soviet repatriations to countries like Germany, Israel, and Lithuania. Additionally, they explore East to East migration and situations where individuals experienced displacement as the political borders shifted over their homelands without them actually moving. These different migratory routes and patterns will illustrate that diasporic experiences extend beyond binary understandings of migrants oscillating merely between 'homelands' and 'host countries', belonging exclusively to one or being torn between. These routes represent not just a linear transition from one place and time to another, but rather intricate interweaving and change. Mobility places people in diverse contexts, necessitating unique responses to new realities.

In their exploration of how migrants form social relationships, encounter exclusion, or express feelings of belonging, scholars often highlight the processual and ambiguous nature of settlement.[35] They observe that settlement is deeply shaped by the broader 'social field' in which migrants exist, compete, and navigate struggles:[36] all within specific contexts. This perspective on the varied ways that migrants establish themselves within new environments led to discussions about their "differentiated embedding";[37] encompassing multiple forms of emplacement, or the reconstruction of networks amid displacement.[38] These insights into migrant 'embedding' complicate the understanding of functional or organic solidarity within diasporic communities. Instead, concepts like 'colliding worlds' become more relevant, highlighting that despite commonalities, even small domains like families, which may seem homogenous, are fraught with multiple cultural tensions.[39]

In her seminal paper, *The Place which is Diaspora: Citizenship, Religion and Gender in the Making of Chaordic Transnationalism*, Werbner advocates for viewing diasporas as "chaordic" structures, "inscribed both materially and imaginatively into space, time

35 Cf. Glick Schiller, Nina; Darieva, Tsypylma; Gruner-Domic, Sandra: Defining Cosmopolitan Sociability in a Transnational Age. An Introduction. In: Ethnic and Racial Studies 34/3 (2011), 399–418.

36 Cf. Lulle, Aija: The Affective Field of Working Class among 'Eastern European' Migrants in the UK. In: The Sociological Review 71/2 (2023), 1–17.

37 Ryan, Louise: Differentiated Embedding: Polish Migrants in London Negotiating Belonging over Time. In: Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 44/2 (2018), 233–251.

38 Cf. Glick Schiller, Nina; Çağlar, Ayse: Displacement, Emplacement and Migrant Newcomers: Rethinking Urban Sociabilities within Multiscalar Power. In: Global Studies in Culture and Power 23/1 (2016), 17–34.

39 Cf. Hage, Ghassan: The Diasporic Condition: Ethnographic Explorations of the Lebanese in the World. Chicago-London 2021, 127–140, here 140.

and objectifying practices".[40] Werbner characterises diasporic groups by their multiple discourses, internal dissent, and competition among various religious, gendered, or political groups, all identifying with the same diaspora. Under what appears to be a single identity, there exists a multitude of opinions, traditions, subcultures, lifestyles, and modalities of existence.[41]

In our discussion, we shift the focus from viewing diaspora primarily as a 'chaorder' to examine the rich experiences that arise from migration and give rise to 'chaorders'. We recognise diverse issues that mark differences and diversity within diasporas, especially the unique paths and trajectories of movement that shape them.[42] Our analysis explores the internal variations in power dynamics, positionalities, and claims;[43] and we also give weight to "the symbiotic ties" that link individuals to both physical and metaphorical spaces beyond national or state lines.[44]

Memory, alongside other material and immaterial reminders, as illustrated by empirical examples in this issue, plays a crucial role in the ways 'chaorders' and relations between spaces emerge within diasporic milieus. While memories often present as fragmented and contested, the reminders tend to manifest more tangibly in the reality of the post-migration life. Such reminders can take a variety of forms, ranging from the deeply personal and individual, to more collective and physical manifestations.[45] Examples include personalising one's own living space (such as decorating an apartment or cultivating an allotment garden) and the formation of attitudes towards one's state of residence and former homeland, influencing post-migration relationships.[46] Memories, on the other hand, may act as coping mechanisms to re-evaluate the present or to navigate daily challenges. Thus, memories and reminders not only facilitate the development of new coping strategies but also exemplify the complex interplay of spatio-temporal dynamics. In other words, they showcase how diasporic people 'handle time', how they work through the past in the present, and how they combine it with visions of the future. These different coordinates, highlighted particularly in the works of Gebel, Irby, and Tchintcharauli, demonstrate what can be termed as multi-relationality between experiences that appear to be remote.

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40 Werbner, Pnina: The Place which is Diaspora: Citizenship, Religion and Gender in the Making of Chaordic Transnationalism. In: Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 28/1 (2002), 119–133, here 119.
41 Cf. ibid, 123.
42 Cf. Hall, Stuart: Thinking the Diaspora: Home-Thoughts from Abroad. In: Small Axe 6 (1999), 1–18, here 5.
43 Cf. Anthias, Evaluating 'Diaspora' (cf. n. 4); Brah, Avtar: Cartographies of the Diaspora. London 1996; Werbner, The Place which is Diaspora (cf. n. 40).
44 Anthias, Evaluating 'Diaspora' (cf. n. 4), 559.
45 Cf. Martinez, Francisco: Remains of the Soviet Past in Estonia. An Anthropology of Forgetting, Repair and Urban Traces. London 2018; Pelkmans, Mathijs: The Social Life of Empty Buildings: Imagining the Transition in Post-Soviel Ajaria. In: Focaal-Utrecht (2003), 121–136; Ringel, The Time of Post-Socialism (cf. n. 25).
46 Cf. Aivazishvili-Gehne, Nino: Auf der Suche nach dem guten Leben. Postsowjetische Gemeinschaften in Osnabrück. Bielefeld 2024.

While discussing the diasporic experiences as 'chaorders' that connote multiplicity, we must acknowledge that traditional notions of territorially fixed communities and stable, localised cultures still significantly influence scholarly and political perspectives on nations and their inhabitants. Cultural essentialism, which perceives cultures as homogeneous and separate entities, promotes antagonistic relationships between groups and a superficial sense of 'groupism'.[47] As Hercberga notes in this volume, these rigid national narratives and classifications, though often challenged, tend to resurface during crises. In such times, diasporic people are frequently cast as the homogenous 'other', perceived as occupying problematic 'grey zones' of indeterminacy. They are seen as either caught between two cultures or, in more extreme cases, as not belonging to the 'host states' at all. Specifically, in the context of Latvian Russian speakers, Hercberga illustrates how state and media discourses frequently depict them as 'being lost' and 'lagging behind' the progressive Latvian nation.

Despite this, the articles in this special issue are dedicated to challenge the seemingly monochromatic 'grey zones', revealing the multiplicity, ambiguity, and fragmented nature of post-socialist diasporic experiences. These articles explore how these experiences intersect with other subjectivities related to the embedding and disembedding of migrant communities. Rather than adhering to a single methodological formula for examining various aspects of diasporic life, the eight articles present diverse approaches to exploring it.

Additionally, this special issue focuses on diasporic individuals, who are diverse not just in their backgrounds, but also in the motivations for their immigration, their destinations, and the specific historical periods of their individual journeys or forced resettlement. Many of the contributors to this volume come from diasporic backgrounds themselves. This personal connection infuses our work with a deep commitment to the topics, spaces, and communities we explore in our writing.

Sources of local histories and knowledges about diasporas

The methods and approaches used to study diasporic lives not only shape our understanding of these experiences but can also simultaneously present challenges and unveil new possibilities. To this end, *Lena Hercberga*'s research offers a critical reflection on the predominant quantitative methods, such as surveys and opinion polls, used in studying diasporic experiences. These approaches, she argues, can work to reinforce hierarchies and social boundaries, community binarism as well as oversimplified interpretations of the identities of immigrant populations. Drawing from Bourdieu's critiques of the polling industry's role in perpetuating a hegemonic view of reality, Hercberga delves into the 'politics of numbers' and the 'politics of categories' within the

47 Cf. Brubaker, Ethnicity without Groups (cf. n. 3).

ethno-protectionist and highly antagonistic inter-ethnic landscape of Latvia. In this context, the titular Latvian nation is frequently contrasted against the Russian-speaking minority, who are perceived as problematic remnants of the Soviet past posing security threats to contemporary national existence.

Hercberga analyses two major opinion polls conducted in Latvia following the onset of Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine. Her analysis focuses on the language employed in inquiries about the Russian-speaking community and provides an in-depth examination of the so-called 'grey zones', as revealed through responses such as 'don't know'. Building on her ethnographic work with young Russian speakers, she argues that the functional construction of a homogenised and alienated 'Russian speaker' disrupts the local minority's processes of self-perception. This creates tensions with the actual complexity and contingency inherent in their everyday negotiations of 'self'.

Daria Svirina's research, in turn, takes us to a different place and time. While focusing on the letters written by Soviet Germans to the Supreme Soviet authorities, she explores the individual struggles for citizens' rights as well as individual encounters with the state within the bureaucratic 'arena'.[48] She delves into an ambivalent aspect of Soviet nationality policy and narrates the ordeal of deported Germans who, despite the lifting of exile after Stalin's death, faced persistent bureaucratic hurdles when seeking residence permits (*propiska*).

By analysing personal letters of complaint as sources of local histories, Svirina provides a window into the interactions between state and citizens at the crossroads of formal and informal spheres. These letters, while official in nature, contain deeply private and individual sentiments. The language used therein is particularly telling, lending significant insight into the critical assessment of historical narratives. These letters, as she argues, are not merely formal pleas; they are imbued with emotional and empathetic undertones. They reveal attempts by individuals to convey their family status and social class in hope of achieving a favourable outcome. More profoundly, they reflect the citizens' loyalty to the state, underscoring the complex relationship between personal identity and national allegiance.

Diasporic self-making

The next set of articles in this special issue reinforces the notion of diaspora as a lived practice and imaginative category. This perspective acknowledges the fluid interplay between multiple temporalities and spatialities: the coordinates of leaving and living. Such an approach reveals the complex and dynamic nature of diasporic identity and belonging, highlighting its multifaceted and evolving character.

48 Cf. Gupta, Akhil: Blurred Boundaries: The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics, and the Imagined State. In: Idem; Sharma, Aradhana (Eds.): The Anthropology of the State. A Reader. Malden/MA 2006, 211–242.

Drawing on the theories of Bourdieu and Hall, *Hakob Matevosyan* presents an investigation into the Armenian diaspora in Hungary. He examines how migration reshapes diasporic lives, both individually and collectively, and explores the creation of social and symbolic cross-border ties within three diasporic milieus: Transylvanian Armenians, late and post-Soviet Armenians, and Middle Eastern Armenians. Each milieu claims its own authenticity while often denying it to others. Matevosyan's constructivist approach uncovers the intricacies of diasporic identities and the struggles for authority within these communities, marked by differing perspectives on cultural legitimacy, economic interests, and integration into Hungarian society.

Matevosyan's examination of late-socialism contributes significantly to this special issue, shedding light on how past socialist experiences fragment into diverse diasporic narratives. His research underscores the fluidity of identity, challenging fixed categories and acknowledging ongoing shifts in personal experiences. Furthermore, his work engages with the discourse on diasporic memory strategies, examining how past experiences are reinterpreted and harnessed in current contexts. The study reveals how individuals can assert control over these historical narratives. Viewing these narratives as a form of resource suggests that those with access to them hold the symbolic capital necessary to skilfully navigate contemporary global trends.

Gintare Venzlauskaitė's contribution concentrates on the Lithuanian diaspora, shaped by forced migration resulting from Soviet deportations, and discusses the complexities and potential explanations for the ambiguous nature of victim diasporas in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. Echoing Matevosyan, her focus is on the experiences that forge and dissolve diasporic identities. Additionally, her work aligns with Tchintcharauli's examination of the traumatic experiences of forced displacement and victimisation. Her article provides an extensive historical overview, tracing the developments from imperial Russia to the post-socialist era, and also touches on the recent war in Ukraine. Venzlauskaitė highlights the developmental challenges faced by the Lithuanian displaced community in Russia and reveals the lack of a unified perspective on how this community is perceived from Western, Eastern, and insider (emic) viewpoints. The difficulty in forming a traditional diasporic network that actively nurtures and expresses national sentiments has led to the categorisation of Lithuanians outside the Lithuanian SSR as a dispersion rather than a diaspora. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has further strained relations between Lithuanians in Russia and those abroad. Venzlauskaitė posits that Lithuanian diaspora communities are diminishing, driven by repatriation due to increasing political pressures and a heightened sense of the potential political repercussions.

Cristiana Lucchetti offers a socio-linguistic perspective on diasporic self-making, underpinned by fieldwork and qualitative interviews conducted between 2019 and 2023 with Russian-speaking young adult immigrants in Israel and Germany. This research explores the role of language in negotiating social identity and belonging in the context of migration from the post-Soviet space. It reveals the tensions and conflicts arising from the discrepancy between individuals' self-identifications and administra-

tive labels imposed on them, highlighting the challenges faced by migrants who must conform to predefined administrative categories to fulfil emigration requirements.

Lucchetti's work underscores the notion of multilingualism as a valuable resource for identity-building and favourable self-positioning in situations where identity is constantly questioned externally. This perspective challenges the notion that multilingualism leads to a sense of displacement; instead, it facilitates communication with the surrounding society and can be leveraged to construct identities such as 'multilingual Jew', 'multilingual Ukrainian', or 'multilingual Russian'. Furthermore, Lucchetti engages with the concept of 'post-Soviet' as a "profound ambiguity"[49] spanning times and spaces. The study demonstrates how this ambiguity is proactively utilised by respondents as a resource to negotiate their identities in their new societies. Thus, their self and communal belonging is intricately woven from references to various countries, languages, and cultures, illustrating their "multiple inhabitance"[50] and showcasing the dynamic nature of diasporic identity formation.

Post-socialist memories

Migration is a multifaceted process that engages with the future, present, and past simultaneously. In everyday life, individuals' experiences shape their memories, which then influence their current social interactions, perceptions of the environment, and understanding of both local and global contexts. As Pine observes, memories act as a foundational element, enabling people to reinterpret the present and adapt to ongoing changes.[51] At times, these memories can also become tools for fostering alternative perspectives or subjectivities that enable an individual to reclaim one's own dignity and respect. In this section, our aim is to delve into these temporal dynamics from both an emic and presentist perspective.

In his article, *Daniel Gebel* adopts a present-oriented analysis of socialist memories to examine how Germany's politics of belonging, migration, and integration intersect with migrants' personal notions of freedom and their recollections of life under the Soviet totalitarian regime. Focusing on German (late-)repatriates and Jewish contingent refugees from Siberia and Central Asia, Gebel discusses their portrayal in national discourses as inclined towards authoritarianism and having a limited understanding of freedom. Concerns about their passive political involvement in Germany cast doubt on their allegiance to democratic principles. Utilising oral history interviews, Gebel seeks to broaden the understanding of freedom, offering an alternative reading to

49 Dobrenko, Evgeny; Shcherbenok, Andrey: Introduction. Between History and the Past: The Soviet Legacy as a Traumatic Object of Contemporary Russian Culture. In: Slavonica 17/2 (2011), 77–84, here 77.
50 Hage, The Diasporic Condition (cf. n. 39), 95.
51 Cf. Pine, Frances: Migration as Hope: Space, Time, and Imagining the Future. In: Current Anthropology 55/9 (2014), 95–104, here 96.

the Western narratives that often marginalise his respondents due to their past under an authoritarian regime.

He reveals how many, feeling neglected and unheard in contemporary Germany, reminisce about Soviet times as a period of greater freedom. This perception of freedom is not tied to political activism or openness but is rooted primarily in socio-economic aspects, such as homeownership, which to many symbolise resilience and the capacity to rebuild lives despite forced resettlements and the authoritative nature of the Soviet system. Freedom, as perceived by Gebel's interviewees, also relates to self-fulfilment and social value. The ability to pursue varied careers during Soviet times contrasts sharply with the economic disenfranchisement they face in Germany, leading to a material and moral devaluation and a resultant sense of constraint. Therefore, their notions of freedom transcend simple nostalgia or an uncritical yearning for the socialist past. Instead, the past acts as a valuable resource for navigating the intricate realities of life after migration, offering a means to counterbalance their perceived shortcomings and to dilute the social stigma in the new context.

Anna Tchintcharauli's historical contribution focuses on the resettlement experiences and memories of the Khevsurs, Georgian mountain dwellers, to the Georgian lowlands, and the Chechens and Ingush who were deported to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia. Her study underscores how the past, laden with pain and manifested in poignant remnants like half-destroyed, seasonally inhabited villages in Georgia, can stir deep emotions. Tchintcharauli reveals that these memories of violent displacement are not static; they are dynamically revised and selectively transmitted to younger generations, tailored to meet specific objectives and needs. Central to her analysis is the role of unofficial narratives and 'untold' stories, which often provide perspectives that diverge significantly from the dominant, mainstream accounts.

Tchintcharauli's examples also help piece together the complex and ambivalent nature of Soviet nationality policy. Her findings resonate with Matevosyan's work, emphasising the past as a powerful resource for inter-ethnic and international negotiations, through which people actively shape their identities and perceptions. The ability to narrate one's own story is especially vital, as Tchintcharauli demonstrates with the deported groups she studies. For them, retaining control over their narratives and avoiding being solely remembered as victims in future generations' memories is essential.

Her work also unveils a fascinating interplay at the intra-ethnic level. Here, the past becomes a shared resource that different generations negotiate. The strategies and choices of narratives vary, with younger generations, less directly affected by trauma, enjoying more freedom in this selection and expression. This process of negotiation gives rise to varied interpretations of the concept of home(-land), illustrating its fluid and multifaceted nature.

Mariana Irby delivers an anthropological exploration of diasporic memories, drawing on 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Russia and Tajikistan. She delves into the experiences of Central Asian migrant communities in Russia, who have transitioned from being citizens of the Soviet Union to becoming 'diasporas' within a country

where they were once passport-holders. This shift to being perceived as racially marked 'guest workers', susceptible to discrimination and exploitation, profoundly impacts their remembrance and interpretation of the Soviet past, both individually and within the larger national narrative.

In addition to examining the erosion of comprehensive citizenship rights, Irby investigates the interconnectedness of Tajikistan's structural shift towards a precarious, post-industrial economy reliant on remittances, and the spatial reorientation of labour sites to urban Russia. She argues that these transformations have fostered a yearning for a more 'nationally authentic' era within the Soviet framework. This nostalgia manifests in the narratives of the social reality of 'before Russia', a term frequently used by Irby's subjects to refer to Tajikistan's Soviet history, contrasted with the present-day dislocations and disruptions. Irby's work raises critical questions about the implications of these memories and experiences for the scholarly understanding of the broader social, political, and economic transformations since the end of Soviet rule in Central Asia. Furthermore, she explores what these 'afterlives' reveal about the nature of Soviet governance itself.

Concluding Remarks

The articles in this issue provide interdisciplinary insights into the daily lives and meaning-making processes among the diasporic people from the former socialist worlds. Together, they examine the spatio-temporal dimensions of migration, including how past lives persist in shaping present experiences in diverse ways, what strategies people develop to negotiate belonging in new contexts, how individuals navigate the challenging circumstances of the 'here and now', and how they maintain cross-border ties. Featuring examples from different regions of the (former) Soviet Union, this special issue responds to calls for more nuanced discussions on the transformation processes affecting these countries and their inhabitants. It broadens these discussions by creating productive synergies between notions of 'diaspora', 'post-socialism', and 'migration'. This approach reveals the 'here and now' of diasporic populations as shaped by manifold ambiguities of their self-conceptions, values, and memories. We therefore hope that readers of this issue will not only deepen their understanding of the diverse communities from the former Soviet Union but also discover conceptual insights applicable to other locales around the world.

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Lena Hercberga

Discerning Colours in Greyness. Defying Essentialist Representation of Latvian Russian Speakers in Surveys and Public Narrative

Abstract: This paper is a call for a methodological expansion in studies of the Russian-speaking community in the former Soviet spaces and beyond. The article critically reflects on the dominant quantitative approaches to studying Russian-speaking identities in Latvia and emphasises the need to engage with more qualitative and refined methods – those that allow space for agency in respondents' self-identification. A growing concern about the Russian-speaking minority in the Baltic states, increases the need for academic and public explorations of the sense of 'self' and belonging amongst the local Russophone community. Despite a growing number of studies that point to conceiving representatives of the Russophone community as complex and heterogeneous, the public polling system and the political elite discourse are failing to account for multiplicity and situatedness of self-identification, tending to reconstruct an ethnicised and homogenised identity of local Russian speakers as lagging in progressive European values, as benighted, as a 'grey zone' of indifference. The author uses this tension between the complex self-making of Russian speakers and their essentialist reconstruction through the polling system and media as an entry point to invite social scientists working in the field to approach the 'grey zones' in East European studies not as monochrome, but as rich in meaning and encompassing ambiguity, thus offering new insights into the Russian speaking diaspora, empirically and/or analytically.

Keywords: Russian speakers, Latvia, ethnoprotectionism, minority, methodology

Introduction

In the scope of this article, I critically discuss how dominant quantitative approaches aiming at producing original knowledge about the Russian-speaking community in Latvia – namely surveys and opinion polls, as well as representation of their results in the media – tend to reconstruct a hegemonic binarism of a 'progressive' titular nation and local Russian speakers lagging in European values. I am drawing predominantly on Bourdieu's critical assessment of: 1) the role of the polling industry in reinforcing a hegemonic vision of reality,[1] and 2) the political ramifications of 'don't know' responses.[2]

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1 Cf. Bourdieu, Pierre: Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste. London 1984, 397–465; idem: In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology. Cambridge-Oxford 1990, 168–174; idem: Language and Symbolic Power. Cambridge-Oxford 1991, 163–251; idem: Sociology in Question. London 1993, 149–157.

2 See also Myles, John A.: Bourdieu, Language and the Media. Basingstoke 2010, 111–123.

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A large body of literature has demonstrated how opinion polls, surveys and censuses are not merely capturing social reality but (re-)creating it.[3] I will engage with the socio-political implications of "the politics of numbers"[4] and "the politics of categories"[5] in the ethno-protectionist context of Latvia,[6] wherein members of the Russian-speaking minority experience a sense of alienation[7] and de-normalisation,[8] while being highly securitised.[9] Aside from a confined critique of the performative nature of categories used in some Latvian opinion polls[10] or of the dominance of quantitative methods to understand the complex identities of local Russophones,[11] there has been little critical debate on: 1) the political factors impacting the selection of analytical tools and representation of results; or 2) the social and political effects of the latter on the self-perception of Latvians and on their inter-relations. Meanwhile, the already highly antagonistic inter-ethnic relations in the country[12] highlight the need for a critical discussion on the performative nature of opinion polls.

3 Cf. Anderson, Benedict R.: Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. Revised Edition. London-New York 2006, 163–185; Brubaker, Rogers; Loveman, Mara; Stamatov, Peter: Ethnicity as Cognition. In: Theory and Society 33/1 (2004), 31–64, here 34 f.; Hacking, Ian: Biopower and the Avalanche of Printed Numbers. In: Cisney, Vermon W.; Morar, Nicolae (Eds.): Biopower: Foucault and Beyond. Chicago 2015, 65–81, here 66–79; Loveman, Mara: National Colors. Racial Classifcation and the State in Latin America. Oxford 2014, 3–42; Kertzer, David I.; Arel, Dominique: Censuses, Identity Formation, and the Struggle for Political Power. In: Idem (Eds.): Census and Identity. The Politics of Race, Ethnicity, and Language in National Censuses. Cambridge 2002, 1–42; Petersen, William: Politics and the Measurement of Etnicity. In: Alonso, William; Starr, Paul (Eds.): The Politics of Numbers. New York 1987, 187–234.

4 Urla, Jacqueline: Cultural Politics in an Age of Statistics: Numbers, Nations, and the Making of Basque Identity. In: American Ethnologist 20/4 (1993), 818–843, here 819.

5 Brubaker, Rogers: Ethnicity without Groups. Harvard 2006, 13.

6 Cf. Björklund, Fredrika: The East European "Ethnic Nation" – Myth or Reality? In: European Journal of Political Research 45/1 (2006), 93–121; Melvin, Neil J.: Post-Imperial Ethnocracy and the Russophone Minorities of Estonia and Latvia. In: Stein, Jonathan P. (Ed.): The Politics of National Minority Participation in Post-Communist Europe. State-Building, Democracy and Ethnic Mobilization. New York 2000, 129–166.

7 Cf. Cara, Olga: Acculturation Strategies and Ethno-National Identification – a Study of Adolescents in Russian-Language Schools in Riga. PhD Thesis. University College London 2013, 221–230; Gruzina, Ieva: Relationship between History and a Sense of Belonging – Russian Speaking Minority Integration in Latvia. In: CEU Political Science Journal 6/3 (2011), 397–432.

8 Cf. Cheskin, Ammon: Russian Speakers in Post-Soviet Latvia. Discursive Identity Strategies. Edinburgh 2016, 1–7.

9 Cf. Kuczyńska-Zonik, Aleksandra: The Securitization of National Minorities in the Baltic States. In: Baltic Journal of Law & Politics 10/2 (2017), 26–45.

10 Cf. Ekmanis, Indra: Host Land or Homeland? Civic-Cultural Identity and Banal Integration in Latvia. PhD Thesis. University of Washington 2017, 31 f.; Karklins, Rasma: Integration in Latvia: A Success Story? In: Journal of Baltic Studies 52/3 (2021), 455–470.

11 Cf. Hercberga, Lena: How to Be Many. Understanding Difference and Disagreement among Young Russian Speakers in Latvia. PhD Thesis. University of Bristol 2023, 23 f.; Karklins, Integration in Latvia (cf. n. 10), 466.

12 Cf. Cheskin, Russian Speakers in Post-Soviet Latvia (cf. n. 8).

Throughout this article I argue that, firstly, the current polling system, in synergy with the local media, re-construct a putative homogenised identity of Latvian Russian-speakers as those lagging in progressive European values, as a 'grey zone' of indifference. Secondly, this re-creation of the local Russian-speaking diaspora as inferior, as benighted contributes to a paradox – wherein the Latvian state strives to get rid of everything (post-)Soviet/Russian in the process of returning to Europe[13] – yet reproduces it through the polling system and the representation of the results in the media. I suggest that the re-creation of the internal 'other' as inferior is used in the re-construction of the imagined community of ethnic Latvians as 'superior' and concerns the latter's own "ontological insecurity"[14] of being "the European other [...] mired in socialist legacies".[15] While attempting to address one group's existential anxiety this paradoxical, yet purpose serving, construction of the homogenised and othered Russian speaker interferes with the processes of self-perception of the local minority as it comes in conflict with the complexity and contingency of their everyday negotiations of 'self'. Moreover, reproduction of the binary hierarchy might intensify inter-ethnic relations in the country since categories based on ethnicity are more resilient to disconformation, or the alteration in perception brought about by further interaction.[16] Because of these social and political effects, it is vital to challenge the dominant "methodological simplicity"[17] in studies of Russian-speaking identities in the current highly politicised context in Latvia.

I start by briefly demonstrating how Russia's aggression towards Ukraine has induced new waves of academic and public concerns about the sense of belonging amongst the Latvian Russian-speaking diaspora. I then summarise the critique in relation to the politics of categorisation and over-reliance on quantitative methods to understand the complexity that constitutes a human being.[18] I then apply this critique to the Latvian case, namely to the methods and the language used in inquiries into the Russian-speaking community. I go on to consider the so-called 'grey zones' – the 'don't know' responses of the representatives of the Russian-speaking diaspora – scrutinising them through the Bourdieu's work. It is not my ambition here to provide a

13 Silova, Iveta: Returning to Europe: The Use of External References in Reconceptualizing Minority Education in Post-Soviet Latvia. In: Nóvoa, António; Lawn, Martin (Eds.): Fabricating Europe. The Formation of an Education Space. New York et al. 2002, 87–107.

14 Djatkovica, Evija: Discoursive Region Building in Latvia: The Case for a Contemporary Identity Search. In: Alternatives. Global, Local, Political. Online First. 23.09.2023, DOI: 10.1177/03043754231197549, 1–17, here 4.

15 Dzenovska, Dace: School of Europeanness. Tolerance and Other Lessons in Political Liberalism in Latvia. Ithaca 2018, 11.

16 Cf. Levine, Hal: Reconstructing Ethnicity. In: The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 5/2 (1999), 165–180, here 169.

17 Dixon, John; Elcheroth, Guy; Kerr, Philippa; Drury, John; Bzour, Mai Al; Subašić, Emina; Durrheim, Kevin; Green, Eva: It's not just "us" versus "them": Moving beyond Binary Perspectives on Intergroup Processes. In: European Review of Social Psychology 31/1 (2020), 40–75, here 42.

18 Cf. Anderson, Imagined Communities (cf. n. 3), 184.

comprehensive analysis of all surveys into the Russian-speaking diaspora in Latvia. I will engage with the results, and their representation in the Latvian media, of two major opinion polls on the Russia's aggression in Ukraine to illustrate the performative nature of the latter in the ethno-protectionist context of Latvia. The selection is rationalised on two grounds. Firstly, opinion polls on politically sensitive topics make their performative nature more noticeable.[19] Secondly, the results of the aforementioned surveys have had a high resonance in the local media and political discourse and thus provide rich data to work with. The article concludes with a call to consider alternative methods to study this complexity of identities, namely those of a more qualitative nature: those that would offer more insight into unconscious practices rather than conscious interpretations.

Alienation and securitisation of the Russophone minority in Latvia

The post-Soviet transition period in Latvia is characterised by a "struggle between different groups to define and redefine what is socially 'natural' and 'normal'".[20] The self-perception of Latvians shifted from being 'the norm' (pre-Soviet path of development) to 'minority' (during the Soviet occupation) and back to restoring 'normality' at the end of the 20th century with the return of independence. Simultaneously, the status of Russian-speakers in Latvia has changed from a privileged position during the Soviet times, i. e., their 'normality', to the status of "subordinated minority".[21] There is a partial conviction "that fifty years of Soviet power were deviation from normal path of the political, economic and cultural development of Latvia".[22] As such, 'normality' is seen as something shared or owned by the dominant culture, i. e., ethnic Latvians, and all that belongs or is associated with the Soviet past, should be abandoned, replaced and forgotten.[23] This conception of 'normality' and 'deviation' along ethnic lines has greatly shaped the course of nation building as well as the local politics of integration.

19 Cf. Bourdieu, In Other Words (cf. n. 1), 168–174.

20 Eglitis, Daina S.: Imagining the Nation. History, Modernity, and Revolution in Latvia. University Park/PA 2002, 10.

21 Volkov, Vladislav: Ethnic Self-Categorisation of the Russian-Speaking Population in Latvia. In: Barnabas, Sylvanus G. (Ed.): Indigenous and Minority Populations. Perspectives from Scholars and Writers across the World. London 2023, 119–136, here 120.

22 Rozenvalds, Juris: Latvia after Twelve Years of Renewed Independence: the Search for Normality. In: Latvijas Universitātes Raksti 663 (2004), 7–22, here 14.

23 Cf. the analysis of a similar narrative in the early post-socialist nationalism of Lithuania: Klumbyte, Neringa: Ethnographic Note on Nation: Narratives and Symbols of the Early Post-Socialist Nationalism in Lithuania. In: Dialectical Anthropology 27/3–4 (2003), 279–295.

Since regaining independence in 1991, Latvia is believed to have pursued an ethnic approach to state and nation building,[24] and democracy,[25] characterised by not equating nation to citizenry or demos but to a specific ethnicity. Thus, belonging to a nation cannot be acquired, but is predicated by birth and origin.[26] As such, the ethnic understanding of nation is exclusive and to a greater degree centred on the us/them distinction since the borders of these categories are not easy to permeate. The ethnic approach to nation building in post-Soviet Latvia, as well as the protectionist status of the titular language, have been justified by the historic trauma caused by the lingering effects of the Soviet occupation and thus the desire to protect and restore the dominant status of Latvian ethnicity and language.[27] In other words, Latvian nationalism, applying Brubaker's thinking, exemplifies "a remedial political action"[28] that is aimed at addressing 'pathological' (post-)Sovietness and Russianness on the path to recovery, i. e., restoration of the Latvian 'normality'.

Enduring de-normalisation of the Russian-speaking minority is linked to the sense of alienation and separation of Russian speakers,[29] i. e., it has had an effect on their self-perception, which exacerbates with time.[30] This peripheral positionality of the Latvian Russophones is re-emphasised and capitalised by an on-going Russian state influence.[31] The latter raises concerns amongst some scholars about the allegiances of the Russian-speaking diaspora[32] and prospects of national security threats.[33] Security con-

24 For a more elaborate discussion on this matter cf. Björklund, The East European "Ethnic Nation"– Myth or Reality? (cf. n. 6).

25 Cf. Smith, Graham: The Ethnic Democracy Thesis and the Citizenship Question in Estonia and Latvia. In: Nationalities Papers 24/2 (1996), 199 – 216; Melvin, Post-Imperial Ethnocracy (cf. n. 6), 129 – 131; Pettai, Vello: Emerging Ethnic Democracy in Estonia and Latvia. In: Opalski, Magda (Ed.): Managing Diversity in Plural Societies. Minorities, Migration and Nation-Building in Post-Communist Europe. Nepean 1998, 15 – 32.

26 Cf. Björklund, The East European "Ethnic Nation" – Myth or Reality? (cf. n. 6), 96 – 100.

27 Cf. Ibid, 113 – 114; Rozenvalds, Juris: The Soviet Heritage and Integration Policy Development Since the Restoration of Independence. In: Muižnieks, Nils (Ed.): How Integrated Is Latvian Society? An Audit of Achievements, Failures, and Challenges. Rīga 2010, 33 – 60, here 35 f.; Solska, Magdalena: Citizenship, Collective Identity and the International Impact on Integration Policy in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In: Europe-Asia Studies 63/6 (2011), 1089 – 1108, here 1089 f.

28 Brubaker, Rogers: Nationalism Reframed. Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe. Cambridge 1996, 79.

29 Cf. Birka, Ieva: Expressed Attachment to Russia and Social Integration: The Case of Young Russian Speakers in Latvia, 2004 – 2010. In: Journal of Baltic Studies 47/2 (2016), 219 – 238; Cara, Acculturation Strategies (cf. n. 7), 224 – 229; Lulle, Aija; Jurkane-Hobein, Iveta: Strangers within? Russian-Speakers' Migration from Latvia to London: A Study in Power Geometry and Intersectionality. In: Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 43/4 (2017), 596 – 612, here 603; Smith, Graham: Nation-Building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands. The Politics of National Identities. Cambridge 1998, 110 f.

30 Cf. Volkov, Ethnic Self-Categorisation (cf. n. 21).

31 Cf. Birka, Expressed Attachment (cf. n. 29), 231 – 234.

32 Cf. ibid.; Kaprāns, Mārtiņš; Mieriņa, Inta: Minority Reconsidered: Towards a Typology of Latvia's Russophone Identity. In: Europe-Asia Studies 71/1 (2019), 24 – 47, here 24 f.

cerns have grown in importance after the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the start of the Russia's full-scale invasion in Ukraine in 2022, leading to the securitisation of the Russian-speaking minority,[34] their media consumption,[35] and memory.[36]

Minority securitisation is accompanied by a range of issues, one of them being that it does not necessarily enhance state security but rather places some social groups – most notably minorities and immigrants – in more precarious and insecure conditions.[37] Additionally, as Browning argues,[38] on the example of another alleged threat to security and national identity – migrants – their securitisation "places them in the almost impossible position of constantly having to prove their belonging",[39] i. e., puts them under rigorous scrutiny and subjects them to regular loyalty checks.[40] As such, the securitisation of the Russian-speaking community in Latvia lays out a ground for academic studies into understanding identities and a sense of belonging for the Russophone minority. In addition, an array of opinion polls, conducted by private research companies (e. g., Baltic Institute of Social Sciences (BISS), Socially Correlative Data Systems (*Sociāli korelatīvo datu sistēmas [SKDS]*), Latvian Facts (*Latvijas Fakti*) and commissioned by government agencies or non-for-profit organisations (e. g., *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*), draw significantly on in the academic and public knowledge production of the Russian-speaking diaspora in Latvia.

However, as I will flesh out in the following pages, the recent proliferation of studies into the Russian-speaking diaspora in Latvia tend to be over-reliant on quantitative data, while the language used in the surveys as well as in the representation of the results is performative, i. e., it reconstructs a hegemonic imagery of the Latvian nation and the Russian-speaking minority.

33 Cf. Ozoliņa, Žaneta: Introduction. In: Eadem (Ed.): Social Security. Inclusion-Exclusion Dilemma. A Portrait of the Russian-Speaking Community in Latvia. Zinātne 2016, 7–12; Vanaga, Nora: Is Russia Still a Threat to Latvia? An Analysis of Latvia's Security Strategy. In: Security Dimensions of Central and Eastern Europe 11/5 (2013), 123–137.

34 Cf. Kuczyńska-Zonik, The Securitization of National Minorities in the Baltic States (cf. n. 9).

35 Cf. Vihalemm, Triin; Juzefovičs, Jānis: How Baltic Russian-Speaking Audiences Outmaneuver Securitization, Essentialization, and Polarization in Times of Crisis? In: Journal of Baltic Studies 53/4 (2021), 495–517.

36 Cf. Hanovs, Deniss: Concrete Dust Versus Angel's Wings? Sacralization of the "Victory Monument" and Postcolonial Memory Politics in Latvia. In: Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe 43/9 (2022), 1–26.

37 Cf. Baar, Huub van; Ivasiuc, Ana; Kreide, Regina: The European Roma and Their Securitization: Contexts, Junctures, Challenges, in: Idem (Eds.): The Securitization of the Roma in Europe. Human Rights Interventions. Basingstoke 2019, 1–25.

38 Cf. Browning, Christopher S.: Security and Migration: A Conceptual Exploration. In: Bourbeau, Philippe (Ed.): Handbook on Migration and Security. Cheltenham-Northampton/MA 2017, 39–59.

39 Ibid., 55.

40 For an empirical demonstration of this cf. Hercberga, How to Be Many (cf. n. 11).

The authority of numbers and neutrality of categorisation challenged

The dominance of quantitative approaches in understanding identities of Russian speakers in Latvia is merely a local example of a global and protracted phenomenon. Indeed, there is a large body of literature, which offers a critical reading of "the avalanche of printed numbers"[41] in an attempt to understand the social world. Rooted in the Enlightenment, the idea of quantitative ways of knowing being pure and impartial has occupied a position of authority.[42] The way big data has been deified recently, and, indeed, how datafication has been normalised "as a new paradigm in science and society",[43] does indicate that the authority of numbers is here to stay.

In terms of the scope of this article, there are a few problems associated with the hegemonic status of numbers as steadfast truth-tellers.[44] Firstly, quantitative data occupy a position outside and above of social context, they omit any contextual nature of the lived experiences of respondents and the situatedness of knowledge construction.[45] As regards the former, Abramson, on the analysis of politics of census categories in post-Soviet Uzbekistan for example, claims that the way people respond to census is contingent and might differ from their responses in other forums.[46] In a similar way, through ethnographic work with young Russian-speakers in Latvia, Hercberga demonstrated how performance of their own difference as well as their perception of 'the other' depends greatly on their assessment of the context and thus, again, contingent and situated.[47] Put differently, surveys are not able to engage with this contingency of self-identification. Additionally, the recognition of the impact that an analyst's background and positionality might have on their analysis defies the argument for the unbiased and impartial nature of knowledge construction.[48] In other words, ethnic assumptions that reside in the imagination of an analyst might impact ethnic labelling

41 Hacking, Biopower and the Avalanche of Printed Numbers (cf. n. 3), 66.
42 Cf. Urla, Cultural Politics in an Age of Statistics (cf. n. 4), 820.
43 Dijck, Jose Van: Datafication, Dataism and Dataveillance: Big Data between Scientific Paradigm and Ideology. In: Surveillance & Society 12/2 (2014), 197–208, here 198.
44 Cf. Urla, Cultural Politics in an Age of Statistics (cf. n. 4), 819.
45 Cf. Edmond, Jennifer; Horsley, Nicola; Lehmann, Jörg; Priddy, Mike: The Trouble with Big Data: How Datafication Displaces Cultural Practices. London 2021, 12 f.
46 Cf. Abramson, David: Identity Counts: The Soviet Legacy and the Census in Uzbekistan. In: Kertzer/Arel, Census and Identity (cf. n. 3), 176–201.
47 Cf. Hercberga, How to Be Many (cf. n. 11).
48 Cf. Haraway, Donna: Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. In: Feminist Studies 14/3 (1988), 575–599; Boyd, Danah; Crawford, Kate: Critical Questions for Big Data. In: Information, Communication & Society 15/5 (2012), 662–679, here 667 f.

and categorisation employed in the scope of a national polling, as well as the interpretation of the results.[49]

The second complication associated with the hegemony of numbers is that counting is "hungry for categories"[50] and thus involves processes of classification and labelling, which does not occur in a vacuum but is influenced by the dominant ethnic politics.[51] As such, the state discourse delineates a putative in-group from a putative outergroup,[52] which has a profound impact on self- and other-perception,[53] as well as on the production of difference.[54] Brubaker calls this process 'groupism', i. e.,

> "the tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis. [...] [A]s substantial entities to which interests and agency can be attributed."[55]

The process of classification and labelling is linked to inter-group conflicts developed through depersonalising from "unique persons to exemplars of named groups", accompanied by the homogenisation of groups and heightening differences.[56] Moreover, the 'objective' predefined categories offered by the analyst limit options for arbitrary self-identification[57] and thus foreclose space for respondents' agency in offering their own interpretations of situated experiences.

Finally, what emanates from the above is the critical argument of the performative nature of categorisation. Since the ethnic labels and categories tend to be "narrated into being"[58] they reinforce ethnic 'groupism' in the everyday life. Therefore, as Levine suggests, "ethnicity moves around in *everyone's* head, not just the social scientist's",[59] making categories active part of larger feedback loops and thus more difficult to deconstruct.

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49 Cf. Banks, Markus: Ethnicity. Anthropological Construction. New York 1996, as cited in Levine, Reconstructing Ethnicity (cf. n. 16), 177.

50 Hacking, Biopower and the Avalanche of Printed Numbers (cf. n. 3), 66.

51 Cf. Urla, Cultural Politics in an Age of Statistics (cf. n. 4); Abramson, Identity Counts (cf. n. 46); Grommé, Francisca; Scheel, Stephan: Doing Statistics, Enacting the Nation: The Performative Powers of Categories. In: Nations and Nationalism 26/3 (2020), 576–593.

52 Cf. Bourdieu, Language and Symbolic Power (cf. n. 1), 220–228; Levine, Reconstructing Ethnicity (cf. n. 16), 169.

53 Cf. Kertzer/Arel, Census and Identity (cf. n. 3), 5–10, 177.

54 Cf. Grommé/Scheel, Doing Statistics, Enacting the Nation (cf. n. 51), 580–587; Levine, Reconstructing Ethnicity (cf. n. 16), 169.

55 Brubaker, Rogers: Ethnicity without Groups. In: European Journal of Sociology 43/2 (2002), 163–189, here 164.

56 Levine, Reconstructing Ethnicity (cf. n. 16), 169.

57 Cf. Kertzer/Arel, Census and Identity (cf. n. 3), 2.

58 Grommé/Scheel, Doing Statistics, Enacting the Nation (cf. n. 51), 580.

59 Levine, Reconstructing Ethnicity (cf. n. 16), 177.

"What do Russians think?" Language of polls as divisive and exclusive

Language used in the opinion polls is not merely a tool capturing and describing social reality, it plays an important role in constructing it, i. e., it is political.[60] The complications of the reported interrelation between the language of the polls and its role in authorising a certain vision of the reality are many-fold.[61] What is worth mentioning in relation to the proliferation of studies into the Russian-speaking diaspora in Latvia is that they continue and reinforce the previously reported distinct oppositional delimitation between two imagined 'groupisms' of ethnic Latvians and non-Latvians in cultural, political, and social terms.[62]

For example, Ekmanis critically discusses the binary and exclusionary wording of some of the questions used in Birka's study aiming at operationalising the "willingness to identify with national group"[63] amongst the Russian-speaking youth

> "by asking informants to respond to statements such as 'Latvians and Russians (Russian speakers) are two conflicting camps' and 'I have no problem with Latvians; Latvians are the same as everyone else' (Birka 2016, p. 226). The first statement explicitly puts these narrowly defined groups in conflict with one another. The second statement similarly implies that the respondent is not analytically Latvian; that is, even if Russian speakers and Latvians are 'the same', the question explicitly differentiates the respondent from the national titular group."[64]

To extend the above critique, the wording used in the aforementioned quotation illustrates how "answer is induced by the way the question is asked".[65] As Grommé and Scheel demonstrated in their study, the way questions are asked and categories are worded often emanates from social biases and implicit assumptions about nationhood, 'self' and 'the other' circulating in society.[66] As discussed earlier, scholars are also part of these feedback loops. However, by making an assumption part of a questionnaire, scholars' biases enter the process of constructing a public opinion by foregrounding questions and categories respondents would never think about, at least not in the sug-

60 Cf. Bourdieu, Distinction (cf. n. 1), 459–465; idem, Language and Symbolic Power (cf. n. 1), 39–41.
61 Ibid.
62 Cf. Cheskin, Ammon: The Discursive Construction of "Russian-Speakers": The Russian-Language Media and Demarcated Political Identities in Latvia. In: Golubeva, Maria; Gould, Robert (Eds.): Shrinking Citizenship. Discursive Practices That Limit Democratic Participation in Latvian Politics. Amsterdam 2010, 133–154, here 151–153; Wallace, Claire; Patsiurko, Natalka: Citizenship, Europe and Ethnic Boundary Making among Russian Minorities in Latvia and Lithuania. In: Migration Letters 11/2 (2014), 187–205, here 200.
63 Birka, Expressed Attachment (cf. n. 29), 226.
64 Ekmanis, Host Land or Homeland? (cf. n. 10), 76.
65 Bourdieu, Sociology in Question (cf. n. 1), 149.
66 Cf. Grommé/Scheel, Doing Statistics, Enacting the Nation (cf. n. 51).

gested way,[67] i. e., artificially reinforcing inter-ethnic cleavage and conflict, and implanting a certain trajectory in the way that they are thought about (e. g., as conflictual, as oppositional).

To use another example, despite most post-2014 opinion polls collecting data from across the ethnic groups in Latvia, the language used in the dissemination of their results, however, sets the focus on the Russian-speaking diaspora, e. g.: *Peace and Security. Under Pressure. An Analysis of the Russian-Speaking Minority in Latvia*;[68] *What Do Russians Think?*;[69] *The War Continues to Divide. How Has Latvian Russians' Assessment of Russia's War in Ukraine, of Putin and of the Possibility of Ethnic Conflicts Changed this Year?*[70] The chosen frame of reporting puts the Russian-speaking community in the spotlight, what do Russians think about the war, not more inclusively, Latvians or inhabitants of Latvia. This presents the bounded ethnicity of Russian speakers as the main unit of analysis, as the ones to be concerned about; while the titular nation is used as the control group: as the benchmark, – 'the norm' to compare against. This reporting approach echoes the one-way minority politics in Latvia, wherein the success of integration is deemed the responsibility of the Russian-speaking minority rather than a mutual rapprochement.[71] In other words, this divisionary and exclusivist language in the reporting of the survey results continues the ethnonational trajectory of the Latvian state that is organised along the line of ethnic difference.[72]

By putting the spotlight solely on the Russophone community through these exclusive forms of language, the media authorise the idea that support of Russia is predetermined by ethnicity. Additionally, despite the reported differences in self-perception between Russian-speaking diasporas and citizens of Russia,[73] the linguistic choice to confine diverse Latvian Russian-speakers with the homogenised category of 'Russians' (in the examples above and below) reduces the complexity of self-identification of the local Russophone community to one denominator and overtly assigns them an identity of 'the other'. This "lumping together" of the ethnic minority with an external nation,

67 Cf. Bourdieu, Sociology in Question (cf. n. 1), 149–157.

68 Krumm, Reinhard; Šukevičs, Krists; Zariņš, Toms: Peace and Security. Under Pressure. An Analysis of the Russian-Speaking Minority in Latvia. Rīga 2023. URL: https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/baltikum/20445.pdf (07.03.2024).

69 Ločmele, Nellija: Ko Domā Krievi? [What Do Russians Think?]. In: Ir Žurnāls. 13.07.2022. URL: https://ir.lv/2022/07/13/ko-doma-krievi/ (07.03.2024).

70 Eadem: Karš Turpina Šķelt [The War Continues To Divide]. In: Ir Žurnāls, 13.07.2023, 14.

71 Cf. Rozenvalds, The Soviet Heritage and Integration Policy Development Since the Restoration of Independence (cf. n. 27), 55.

72 For similar practices in Estonia cf. Grommé/Scheel: Doing Statistics, Enacting the Nation (cf. n. 51).

73 Cf. Kolstø, Pål: Territorialising Diasporas: The Case of Russians in the Former Soviet Republics. In: Millennium 28/3 (1999), 607–631; Cheskin, Russian Speakers in Post-Soviet Latvia (cf. n. 8).

with which the minority share an ethnic and cultural background, "bounds group identity by ethnicity, not civic nationality" and raises the likelihood of conflict.[74]

To reengage with Brubaker, the examples above demonstrate how Latvian Russian-speakers are discursively portrayed as distinctly dissimilar to ethnic Latvians, as a unified collective with shared values, beliefs and orientations, which are predetermined by their ethnicity – a sort of a "monochrome ethnic [...] bloc".[75] This colourless bloc is often depicted in grey tones, signifying the abstention and indifference of local Russian speakers and, as I will argue, any lack of the state's genuine interest in them.

'Don't know' answers or 'grey zones' of 'indifference'

Grey colour, usually connoting neutrality, is traditionally used in the display of survey results to mark those who have not yet made up their mind, those who are not able or find it difficult to answer a survey question. Bourdieu suggests the need to take the 'don't know' answers seriously and calls them "the most important information supplied by opinion polls".[76]

Grey colour has been very prominent amongst the answers given by Russian-speaking respondents in the two opinion polls assessing the views on Russia's full-scale invasion in Ukraine amongst the inhabitants of Latvia, conducted a few months after the start of the war in 2022,[77] and a year after in 2023.[78] I will now continue to develop my critique of the dominant analytical methods in order to engage with the Russian-speaking community in Latvia by analysing the grey areas in these surveys as well as their representation in the local media due to the latter's prominent role in shaping public opinion,[79] and constructing everyday borders.[80]

Bourdieu's intellectual interest in the 'don't know' answers lies in what they disguise – not merely about the respondents themselves – but about the political system, which relies on abstentionism amongst marginalised groups to function.

> "Abstentionism is perhaps not so much a hiccup in the system as one of the conditions of its functioning as a misrecognized – and therefore recognized – restriction on political participation."[81]

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74 Kachuyevski, Angela; Olesker, Ronnie: Divided Societies and Identity Boundaries: A Conflict Analysis Framework. In: International Journal of Conflict Management 25/3 (2014), 304–321, here 306.

75 Brubaker, Ethnicity without Groups (cf. n. 55), 164.

76 Bourdieu, Distinction (cf. n. 1), 399.

77 Cf. Ločmele, Ko Domā Krievi? (cf. n. 69).

78 Cf. Krumm/Šukevičs/Zariņš, Peace and Security (cf. n. 68).

79 Cf. Bourdieu, Distinction (cf. n. 1), 440–451.

80 Cf. Knudsen, Ida Harboe; Frederiksen, Martin Demant: Introduction: What Is a Grey Zone and Why Is Eastern Europe One? In: Idem (Eds.): Ethnographies of Grey Zones in Eastern Europe. Relations, Borders and Invisibilities. London 2015, 1–22.

81 Bourdieu, Distinction (cf. n. 1), 398.

This observation switches the analytical focus from 'the abstention' as a problem to the 'political system' as a problem. Bourdieu equates "the propensity to speak politically" to "the sense to having the right to speak".[82] When citizens share a sense that their voices would not influence the state of affairs in the country, they opt to abstain from answering by choosing the 'don't know' option. This means that Bourdieu does not equate the 'don't know' answers with ignorance or indifference, but with impotence.[83] However, this impotence is not so much indicative of the respondents' agency as of the structures in place: the political system that restricts political participation of marginalised social groups, namely the working class when it comes to the intellectual focus of Bourdieu.

Bourdieu correlated the abstention from answering questions on politics with levels of cultural and economic deprivation.[84] Therefore, although ethnicity as such was not his focus, it is the socially and politically marginalised status of the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia (as discussed earlier) that makes the application of his thinking valid in the scope of this article.

The numbers of "don't know" and "none of the options" answers amongst the responses given by the Russian-speaking respondents are striking in the results of the aforementioned surveys. For example, to one of the key questions of the survey, "Which of the fighting sides do you support?", in 2022 49 percent of respondents who speak Russian at home chose the "none of the sides" answer option, while 10 percent answered: "hard to say".[85] The proportions of the 2023 'grey zones' were very similar: 51 percent and 8 percent respectively.[86]

It would be wrong to say that this heightened level of abstention amongst Russian-speaking respondents to give a definitive answer goes unrecognised. Unequivocally, because of the high securitisation of the minority identities and the highly political nature of the question, this reported neutrality or inability to take one of the sides is indeed seen as a problem and denounced by the public discourse, as much as it is not often taken at face value. This abstention to define one's position in a time of the war is condemned in the public narrative due to its consonance with the 'everything is not so clear-cut' narrative (*ne vsjo tak odnoznachno*) that has become a leitmotiv of Kremlin propaganda to justify the 2022 invasion.[87] This neither/nor position is con-

82 Ibid., 411.

83 Cf. ibid.

84 Cf. ibid.; idem, In Other Words (cf. n. 1), 168–174; see also Myles, Bourdieu, Language and the Media (cf. n. 2), 117–123.

85 Ločmele, Ko Domā Krievi? (cf. n. 69).

86 Krumm/Šukevičs/Zariņš, Peace and Security (cf. n. 68), 10.

87 Cf. Litvinenko, Anna: Propaganda on Demand: Russia's Media Environment during the War in Ukraine. In: Global Media Journal 12/2 (2022), 1–14; Foht, Elizaveta: "Gde vy byli vosem' let" i "ne vse tak odnoznachno". Antropolog Arkhipova o tom, kak i pochemu rossiyane opravdyvayut voĭnu v Ukraine ["Where Have You Been for Eight Years" and "Not Everything Is So Simple." Anthropologist Arkhipova on How and Why Russians Justify the War in Ukraine]. In: BBC News Russia. 27.04.2022. URL: https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-61235671 (07.03.2024).

sidered as 'impossible' by the public media and by the political elite, as can be seen in this comment by Egils Levits, then President of Latvia:

> "I think that Russians living in Latvia should take a clear position. And most of them have done so. Because in this situation, a neutral attitude is impossible. If a person is neutral, it means that he has not understood the essence of the matter."[88]

To be fair, this neutrality is also condemned by the Russian-speaking elite in the country. A couple of months into the war, 114 prominent and less so representatives of the Russian-speaking diaspora signed an open letter condemning the war and inviting its readers to address the 'neutrality' in their intimate circles:

> "If you have closed ones, friends or acquaintances in Russia or here in Latvia who still support the war in Ukraine or do not believe that unimaginable evil is happening there, talk to them. Make sure that people in your circle cannot turn a blind eye and 'remain neutral', remain 'out of politics', or otherwise silently support the war crimes being committed by the Russian military."[89]

Apart from providing an additional illustration of the public recognition and condemnation of neutrality in relation to the war in Ukraine, the above quote equally demonstrates fragmentations within the Russophone community in Latvia,[90] and simultaneously starts to reveal its internal complexity and heterogeneity. Although this is still expressed in a binary and simplified mode: one group of 'good' Russian speakers addresses another group of 'bad' Russian speakers.

The anecdotal social category of 'the good Russian' (or 'proper' or 'correct' Russian) appeared before the start of the Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014, yet became more prominent in the ensuing years. This category includes those Russophones who have not only become fluent in Latvian, but who have acquired a certain set of cultural beliefs and values that have been considered as 'correct' or 'right' in contemporary Latvian society, e. g., acknowledging the fact of the Soviet occupation of Latvia in 1940 or being critical about the Russian interventions in politics of the former Soviet republics, but also simple everyday practices like the choice of cultural events or entertainment places.[91] Russia's aggression added another point to the list of evaluation criteria: one's stance towards the war and the Russian state.

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88 Levits intervijā Krievijas TV izsakās par krieviem Latvijā [Levits Speaks about Russians in Latvia in an Interview on Russian TV]. 24.07.2022. In: Tautasruna.lv. URL: https://tautaruna.nra.lv/citi/387080-levits-intervija-krievijas-tv-izsakas-par-krieviem-latvija/ (07.03.2024).

89 Voĭna i mȳ: otkrȳtoe pis'mo russkoyazȳchnȳkh Latvii [The War and Us: Open Letter to Latvian Russian Speakers]. In: Delfi.lv. 08.04.2022. URL: https://rus.delfi.lv/57860/latvia/54226442/voyna-i-my-otkrytoe-pismo-russkoyazychnyh-latvii (07.03.2024).

90 Cf. Kaprāns/Mieriņa, Minority Reconsidered (cf. n. 32).

91 Cf. Petrenko, Dmitrijs: Man jākļūst par pareizo krievu [I Must Become a Proper Russian]. In: Providus Domnīca. 20.04.2011. URL: https://providus.lv/raksti/man-jaklust-par-pareizo-krievu/; Procevska, Olga: Labā Krieva Uzvedības Kodekss [Code of Conduct of a Good Russian]. In: Satori. 27.03.2013. URL: https://satori.lv/article/laba-krieva-uzvedibas-kodekss (07.03.2024).

The categorisation into 'bad' and 'good' Russian speakers continues the state's discourse of omitting the contingency and complexity of everyday processes of self-making amongst Russian speakers in Latvia. In this hierarchy, 'good' Russian speakers occupy a position of knowledge, of expertise and enlightenment that allegedly grants them the right to claim to know 'the other' that is the 'bad' Russian speaker, as can be seen from the following quotation by a Russian-speaking journalist: "But by and large, all these neutral positions have a common place. They somehow find an excuse for Russia and the ongoing war".[92] The state of expertise and superiority that can be traced in the quotes above does not challenge but reinforces the social binarism, and could be interpreted as a 'self' reification through opposition to difference.

While respecting and sympathising with the expressed public disapprovals of, and worries associated with, the pronounced 'grey zone' in the surveys in question, this article is not a moral exercise in condemning the political stances of a part of the Russian-speaking community in Latvia. Drawing on Frederiksen and Knudsen's valorisation of greyness in East European ethnographies,[93] I am more interested in understanding what these 'grey zones' disguise. In what follows, I will attempt to demonstrate that the heightened abstentionism amongst the Russian-speaking community might reveal more than merely an alleged universal support of Russia's foreign policy.

Re-production of the category 'Russian speakers' as lagging

As I have demonstrated in the previous section, contrary to Bourdieu's conception of 'don't know' answers as an exclusionary mechanism to further disregard opinions of already marginalised classes,[94] the 'neither/nor' answers of the Russian-speaking respondents are clearly acknowledged and condemned. However, similar to Bourdieu's thinking, this generalisation of the group's identity serves the purpose, viz. sustaining the narrative of the image of 'Latvianess' as that of returning to Europe after a prolonged deviation caused by the Soviet occupation. For that to happen, as I demonstrate in this section, the reported 'neutrality' amongst Russian-speakers is extended to the whole Russophone community and explained by its ethnicity. In the example below, then Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence of Latvia, Artis Pabriks, makes reference to the reported indeterminacy among the local Russian speakers by enacting a hierarchical binarism on the basis of ethnicity:

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92 Lipin, Artjom: "Vse ne tak odnoznachno" – chto na samom dele znachit neĭtral'naya pozitsiya ["Everything Is Not So Clear-Cut" – That Actually Means a Neutral Position]. In: TVNET.lv. 31.03.2022. URL: https://rus.tvnet.lv/7487799/vse-ne-tak-odnoznachno-chto-na-samom-dele-znachit-neytralnaya-poziciya (07.03.2024).

93 Cf. Knudsen/Frederiksen, Introduction (cf. n. 80).

94 Cf. Bourdieu, Distinction (cf. n. 1), 411–419.

> "The Russian ruthless aggression in Ukraine gives a great opportunity of choice for Latvian Russians to be with Latvia and the free world. I extend you my hand. The other choice is to be supporters of the Russian crime and never be understood in the free Latvia."[95]

Apart from homogenising the Russian-speaking diaspora under the 'undecided' label, this text is equally an example of equating 'Latvian' values with a progressive mindset, as those of 'the free world', while presenting all Latvian Russians as lagging: being lost somewhere in the grey zone of indeterminacy or supporting Russia's crime. A comparable message can be discerned in the rhetoric by another former Latvian president, Valdis Zatlers:

> "Latvian Russians are still afraid to reveal their opinion, but it is necessary to help these people overcome their insecurity, because Latvians are currently showing self-confidence, but Latvian Russians cannot do this yet."[96]

This narrative continues the subjectivation of the whole Russian-speaking diaspora as deviant, that is lacking confidence and a sense of security to use the example above, and those who need help, such as from ethnic Latvians who are presented homogeneously in the narrative of both politicians and in the Latvian media (below) as those who can provide this support:

> "[T]his target group [Russian speakers] has lost reference points of value orientation, and by receiving a friendly invitation, encouragement and support from the Latvian-speaking European value-carrying part of the society, we can get a significant population group loyal to the state."[97]

Such binary and hierarchical representation of the titular nation and local Russian-speaking diasporas can be traced through studies in other contexts, where migrants from the post-Soviet context are portrayed as lacking a progressive mindset making them unfit for modern-day European societies:[98] as apolitical, unappreciative of freedom, and yearning authoritarianism.[99]

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95 Pabriks, Artis. In: Twitter. 04.04.2022. URL: https://twitter.com/Pabriks/status/1511000241448833030 (07.03.2024).

96 Zatlers: krieviem jāsaprot, ka karš Ukrainā atrāvis latviešu vēsturiskās rētas [Zatlers: Russians Must Understand That the War in Ukraine Removed the Historical Scars of Latvians]. In: VS.lv. 04.05.2022. URL: https://vs.lv/raksts/sabiedriba/2022/05/04/zatlers-krieviem-jasaprot-ka-kars-ukraina-atravis-latviesu-vesturiskas-retas (07.03.2024).

97 Starp "vatņikiem" un "mūsējiem". Kā Krievijas iebrukums Ukrainā izmainījis Latvijas sabiedrību [Between "Vatniks" And "Ours". How the Russian Invasion of Ukraine Has Changed Latvian Society]. In: Jauns.lv. 28.03.2023. URL: https://jauns.lv/raksts/zinas/551709-starp-vatnikiem-un-musejiem-ka-krievijas-iebrukums-ukraina-izmainijis-latvijas-sabiedribu (07.03.2024).

98 Cf. Senders, Stefan: Aussiedler Repatriation: Rhetoric, Reproduction, and Demography in the Context of the Welfare State. In: Zeitschrift für Ethnologie 131/1 (2006), 71–89.

99 Cf. the article by Daniel Gebel in this issue and Klingenberg, Darja: Auffällig unauffällig. Russischsprachige Migrantinnen in Deutschland. In: Osteuropa 69/9–11 (2019), 255–276.

What makes the above cases of use, in terms of the numerous 'don't know' answers amongst Latvian Russian-speakers standing out, is that their readings by some Latvian media outlets and members of the political elite suggest that it is not merely socialisation in the former Soviet context that makes the Russophonic diaspora prone to political and moral backwardness – simply because the ethnic Latvians share a prolonged Soviet history too – it is the ethnic belonging that is presented as the cause of lagging in a 'progressive' mindset, represented by the ethnic Latvians. The conception of society's morality along ethnic lines resonates with the state building project in Latvia since the regaining independence in 1991: the aspiration to return to Europe[100] constructed in contrast with all that is (post-)Soviet/Russian embodying "deviation from normal path of political, economic and cultural development of Latvia".[101]

The imaginary, discursively constructed nature of the two opposites, is further accentuated by the fact that a relatively high percentage of those ethnic Latvians who have opted for the 'grey-toned' answers is almost omitted from the public narrative. In the 2022 survey 14 percent of ethnic Latvian respondents replied "neither of the sides", while 3 percent chose the "hard to say" option.[102] In 2023 the distribution of the answers was 19 percent and 1 percent, respectively.[103] Apart from contributing to further antagonise social relations, this tendency to shadow off the above results amongst ethnic Latvians supports the construction of the Latvian European (i. e., progressive) identity in opposition to its threats,[104] i. e., the post-Soviet legacy – the Russian-speaking minority.

Discussion: Discerning colours behind the 'greyness'

Despite the public acknowledgement and problematisation of the large 'grey areas' of alleged apathy amongst the Russian-speaking respondents, these areas remain unexplored, they are homogenised, concerned about yet left to themselves. Because, as I have demonstrated, some media outlets and representatives of the political elite use this 'grey zone' to reconstruct the imagined 'groupism'[105] of the Russian-speaking minority, and thus also of the Latvian majority, it serves their purpose to preserve these zones as colourless, as unmapped, as monochrome.

Are these 'grey zones' so colourless and shapeless, though? Frederiksen and Knudsen invite us to reimagine greyness in the context of Eastern Europe as "the combina-

100 Cf. Djatkovica, Discoursive Region Building in Latvia (cf. n. 14); Silova, Returning to Europe (cf. n. 13); Dzenovska, School of Europeanness (cf. n. 15).

101 Rozenvalds, Latvia After Twelve Years of Renewed Independence (cf. n. 22), 14.

102 Cf. Ločmele, Ko Domā Krievi? (cf. n. 69).

103 Cf. Krumm/Šukevičs/Zariņš, Peace and Security (cf. n. 68), 10.

104 Feldman, Gregory: Development in Theory: Essential Crises: A Performative Approach to Migrants, Minorities, and the European Nation-State. In: Anthropological Quarterly 78/1 (2005), 213–246, here 238.

105 Cf. Brubaker, Ethnicity without Groups (cf. n. 5), 164.

tion of all colours in one place";[106] as encompassing and signifying ambiguity, with its exploration requiring "the kind of multi-coloured analysis".[107] Drawing from this thinking, I suggest that an advancement of the understanding of the Russian-speaking community, as much as the success of the social integration lies in starting to discern colours in the reported greyness, i. e., recognising and working with a complexity of meanings behind the everyday experiences of Russian speakers, including behind the heightened abstention from answering political questions.

For a start, I would seek to recognise the partiality and situatedness of knowledge, including that stemming from quantitate data. Paraphrasing Bourdieu,[108] there is a scientist behind the polling industry – categorisation, data gathering and analysis – who acts both as "an object of enquiry and the means of analysing".[109] This partiality and situatedness of knowledge could be seen as a strength, though, as it strives to build connections with other positions, with other incomplete knowledges in order "to see together without claiming to be another".[110] Such relations across positionalities require space for self-reflexivity within the enquiry, so to unpack not only the studied complexity but also that of the researcher. Ethnography is believed to help to unpack or at least to foreground the complexity behind mundane experiences,[111] as well as to work with everyday practices,[112] with the implicit and *in situ.*[113]

Despite the domination of quantitative approaches, there have been a number of ethnographies looking into everyday experiences of Latvian Russian-speakers. These qualitative, at times (self-)reflexive, enquiries have challenged the essentialist and homogenised depiction of the Russophone community described earlier. For example, Lulle and Jurkane-Hobein's study on the self-perception of London-based, young Russian-speaking immigrants from Latvia demonstrate the performative and contextual nature of their identities within the diversity of London.[114] Cara,[115] Cheskin,[116] Ekmanis,[117] Hercberga,[118] and Laizāne et al.[119] all report the complexity and multiplicity of

106 Knudsen/Frederiksen, Introduction (cf. n. 80), 3.
107 Budandt, Nils: Coda: Reflections on Grey Theory and Grey Zones. In: Knudsen/Frederiksen, Ethnographies of Grey Zones (cf. n. 80), 187–198, here 195.
108 Cf. Bourdieu, In Other Words (cf. n. 1), 168–174.
109 Probyn, Elspeth: Sexing the Self. Gendered Positions in Cultural Studies. London 1993, 91.
110 Haraway, Donna: Simians, Cyborgs, and Women. The Reinvention of Nature. London 1991, 193.
111 Cf. Anderson-Levitt, Kathryn M.: Ethnography. In: Green, Judith L.; Camilli, Gregory; Elmore, Patricia B. (Eds.): Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education. Washington 2006, 279–296, here 279.
112 Cf. Livingstone, Sonia; Sefton-Green, Julian: The Class. Living and Learning in the Digital Age. York 2016, 45.
113 Cf. Adams, Laura L.: Techniques for Measuring Identity in Ethnographic Research. In: Abdelal, Rawi; Herrera, Yoshiko M.; Johnston, Alastair Iain; McDermott, Rose (Eds.): Measuring Identity. A Guide for Social Scientists, Cambridge 2009, 316–341, here 317.
114 Cf. Lulle/Jurkane-Hobein, Strangers within? (cf. n. 29).
115 Cf. Cara, Acculturation Strategies (cf. n. 7).
116 Cf. Cheskin, Russian Speakers in Post-Soviet Latvia (cf. n. 8).
117 Cf. Ekmanis, Host Land or Homeland? (cf. n. 10).
118 Cf. Hercberga, How to Be Many (cf. n. 11).

resources enacted in the process of the construction of 'self' among contemporary Latvian Russophones, thus confronting the homogenised image of the latter as victims of the Kremlin's propaganda or being stuck in Soviet nostalgia.

Hercberga, in particular, demonstrates that the grand narratives of political apathy, fear, and indeterminism that are assigned to the Russian-speaking residents in Latvia should not be taken at face value.[120] Moreover, with a more elaborate set of analytical tools and a great interest in the community, they can tell more than appears on the surface. Her research demonstrates how young Russian speakers could be seen as critical thinkers – knowledgeable of the political affairs in the country, following the policies that impact their lives, being able to internalise them as well as to defend their positions, and engaging with the latest developments in global and local political affairs. This positions research participants as having agency in the process of self-making rather than being passives recipients of one or another discourse.

However, Hercberga's research participants are conscious that they are partially limited in expressing their opinions that differ from those of the state authority. Indeed, the research demonstrates how young Russian speakers operate on various levels and how their self-identification is situated and contextual. Her research participants are cautious about standing out and proclaiming their discontent with state politics when the state's gaze is present (in fact or as a possibility). On the 'surface' they conform to a rather fixated identity of 'a good Russian speaker' to avoid ramifications towards themselves, their future, their peers, their teachers, the school, and potentially the wider Russian-speaking community. By performing as 'the good Russian-speaking subject' on the surface, the research participants are thus delineating for themselves a less restricted private space.

In this 'backyard' away from state hegemony, young people have more agency to navigate their complex identities: to accommodate multiple, diverse, and even conflicting sources for self-identification. The described behaviour of the research participants had clear purposes – to survive or to protect themselves and others in their community in a highly politicised national context. Their survival is not a loud proclamation of their existence or a constant vocalisation of their discontent with state politics. Their survival becomes a silent reminder of the exclusionary nature of the political regime in Latvia. Their survival strategy is not selfish either – young people's decisions to act in one or another way was driven by the care of a wider collective, for example, their school and teachers. This way their performed political apathy could be viewed an act of empathy and care for others.[121]

As such, Hercberga's ethnographic research could explain the reported 'indifference' of a large part of the Russian-speaking population of Latvia by presenting

119 Cf. Laizāne, Māra; Putniņa, Aivita; Mileiko, Ilze: Mazākumtautību Skolu Skolēnu Identitāte Un Piederība Latvijai [Identity and Belonging of Minority School Pupils in Latvia]. Rīga 2015.

120 Cf. Hercberga, How to Be Many (cf. n. 11).

121 See also Norgaard, Kari Marie: Living in Denial. Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life. Cambridge-London 2011 for a similar conclusion in a different context.

their abstentionism as a conscious self-censorship and protectionist practice. Moreover, the prominent 'don't know' answers could be seen as the respondents' way to align to the class ethos – "a system of implicit values which people have internalised from childhood and from which they generate answers to very different types of questions",[122] wherein broader discursive forms of exclusion and marginalisation from the political arena play a significant role.[123] Since Bourdieu equates "the propensity to speak politically" to "the sense to having the right to speak",[124] the conscious choice to abstain from speaking openly amongst Russian speakers could be linked to their acceptance of "status-linked incompetence"[125] developed through long-lasting ethnocentrism as well as through othering practices and narratives. This conscious choice to adhere to the social norms and the group ethos as the subaltern that cannot speak openly,[126] i. e., requires to adjust one's opinion according to the dominating discourse, speaks to the illusion that everyone is equal in politics.[127]

The few highlights from previous studies start to demonstrate the capacity of more qualitative, notably ethnographic enquiries, to offer more colours to the understanding of the aforementioned greyness of the Russophone diaspora, to suggest meanings behind numbers, and to add perspective to the two-dimensional depiction of the Latvian society.

I am not suggesting that any forms of qualitative research or any ethnography would necessarily produce a more accurate description of the social world or generate 'better' data. Indeed, this text is not a call to abandon quantitative methods in the studies of Russian-speaking identities, nor in studies of any identities for that matter. In the construction of my own argument, as the reader might have noticed, I do myself engage with statistics. Instead, I argue that more qualitative, reflexive and critical research can contribute to adding another jigsaw puzzle to our understanding of the complexities that constitute everyday practices and experiences of the Russophone diaspora.

For Bourdieu the solution to address the performative nature of opinion polls lays in the discontinuity between ethos and logos.[128] The survey translates "experience into discourse",[129] i. e., fixates and reifies "unformulated ethos into a constituted, constituting logos".[130] Therefore, discussions on political topics should engage with "class unconscious rather than a class consciousness".[131] Since respondents from marginalised groups recognise and consciously answer political questions according to social

122 Bourdieu, Sociology in Question (cf. n. 1), 152.
123 Cf. Bourdieu, Distinction (cf. n. 1), 460–462.
124 Ibid., 411.
125 Ibid., 417.
126 Cf. Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty: Can the Subaltern Speak? In: Cain, Peter H.; Harrison, Mark (Eds.): Imperialism. London 2023, 171–219.
127 Cf. Bourdieu, Distinction (cf. n. 1), 417.
128 Ibid, 461.
129 Ibid., 460.
130 Ibid.
131 Ibid., 419.

norms, it is potentially the turn to unconscious that might shed some interesting light into the complexity of everyday diasporic experiences, as well as foreground the agency of the representatives of the Russian-speaking community in the process of self-making, thus allowing them to walk away from the rigid and predefined categories of surveys, allowing for the situatedness and contingency of self-expression.

The article's contribution to the present volume lies in its reminder that knowledge creation is impacted by how we – as scholars and analysts – conceive the concept of 'knowledge',[132] as well as other notions we study. How can we advance understanding about diasporic communities in a broader sense, and about the everyday complexities of the post-Soviet experiences specifically, if we do not open up to epistemological and methodological complexity that would allow us to foreground and work with this complexity?

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132 Cf. Strathern, Marilyn: Opening Up Relations. In: Cadena de la, Marisol; Blaser, Mario (Eds.): A World of Many Worlds. Durham-London 2018, 23–52.

Daria Svirina

"They Categorically Denied *propiska* to Us because We Are Germans". The Problem of Internal Migration of Soviet Germans in 1955 – 1972

Abstract: This paper is concerned with the problem of residence permits for Soviet Germans in the USSR from 1955 to 1972, during which there were limits for this section of the population after the special settlement period. Soviet Germans had sent many letters to the Supreme Soviet authorities and if we consider these letters, they appeared united by one common problem – all the writers wanted to solve the issues of limitation of their rights. Drawing on archival sources, mostly letters from Germans to the authorities in the middle of the 1960s, I explore issues around their rights as citizens, which were not an empty concept during that period. The context for these discussions is framed by the decree of 1964, according to which Germans were cleared of all charges against them, but the ban on returning to the places from which they were evicted was not lifted. I examine the formation of Soviet German positions through individual appeals against the refusal to provide a residence permit by local bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The content and language of these written appeals reflects how their authors viewed their position in the Soviet community, how they interpreted their nationality and argued their legal status. The supreme state body ultimately had to eliminate the existing restrictions on registration and confirm the equal status of German-citizens of the USSR with that of other peoples within the Soviet Union.

Keywords: Soviet Germans, Soviet nationality policy, citizenship, Soviet history, post-World War II era

Introduction

In 1967, the Head of the Reception Room of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Mikhail P. Sklyarov, reported to the Chairman, Nikolay V. Podgorny, about the appeals that citizens of German nationality sent to the Presidium. One of the authors of such a letter wrote that his wife, children, and he himself moved to the Crimean region from the Tselinograd district of the Kazakh SSR but were refused registration because his wife was German.[1] According to this and others such letters, Sklyarov highlighted the main problem that the Soviet Germans were facing: "They ask to abolish the existing restrictions on the right to permanent residence in places from where they were evicted during the Great Patriotic War".[2] The issue lay with the refusal of local author-

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1 Gosudarstvennyĭ Arkhiv Rossiĭskoĭ Federatsii [State Archive of the Russian Federation], Moscow (GARF), f. 7523, op. 83, d. 402, l. 209.

2 Rossiĭskiĭ gosudarstvennyĭ arkhiv noveĭsheĭ istorii [The Russian State Archive of Contemporary History], Moscow (RGANI), f. 5, op. 33, d. 221, l. 201. The 'Great Patriotic War' is a term in the USSR and mod-

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ities to provide a person with a local residence permit (*propiska*) because he was registered as a German by nationality. This restriction on rights was imposed on Germans in the USSR as a result of their deportation in 1941, shortly after the start of the military conflict between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany.[3] Restrictions on returning to the places from which Germans were expelled remained in place even after their release from special settlements at the end of 1955.[4]

Since the inception of Soviet power, a system of ways of interacting with the population was formed: from written appeals to elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.[5] On the one hand, these communication channels performed the function of monitoring the work of officials at different levels (Soviet citizens could write complaints about the work of local officials). On the other hand, with their help, control over public sentiment was carried out. At the same time, while the inclusion of citizens in such communication practices should have contributed to the formation of a sense of unity. These same practices also shaped Soviet identity, in which the Soviet citizen played an active role. In this process, the state acted as an agent that constantly educated and controlled its citizens.

The civil rights declared and guaranteed by the state were one of the instruments used in the nurturing of individuals. Golfo Alexopoulos suggests that, in the 1920s and 1930s, the policy surrounding the status of citizenship was shaped by the struggle against internal and external enemies, which led to the formation of a hierarchy of civil statuses.[6] This status itself became an integral attribute for, and a powerful tool in, influencing a person's position. Moreover, the passport system itself served as an instrumental embodiment to manipulation the status of citizenship. Much depended on the fixation of its significant attributes within the system.

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ern Russia, as well as foreign post-Soviet states, to describe the Second World War and especially the conflict between the USSR and Nazi Germany from the 22nd June 1941 to the 9th May 1945. Since the discourse about the 'Great Patriotic War' is very significant for society, I use this term when I quote sources. In other cases, I use the term 'Second World War'. To know more about the constructing of the myth of the Second World war in the USSR see Weiner, Amir: Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution. Princeton 2002.

3 Prezidium Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR [The Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet]: Ukaz o pereselenii nemtsev, prozhivayushchikh v raĭonakh Povolzh''ya [The Decree on the Resettlement of Germans Residing in the Volga Region]. 28.08.1941. In: Biblioteka normativno-pravovykh aktov SSSR [Library of normative-legal acts of the USSR]. URL: https://www.libussr.ru/doc_ussr/ussr_4332.htm (23.11.2023).

4 Idem: Ukaz o snyatii ogranicheniĭ v pravovom polozhenii s nemtsev i chlenov ikh semeĭ, nakhodyashchikhsya na spetsposelenii [The Decree on Lifting Restrictions Relative to the Legal Status of Germans and their Family Members Assigned to Special Settlements]. 13.12.1955. In: Biblioteka normativno-pravovykh aktov SSSR [Library of normative-legal acts of the USSR]. URL: https://www.libussr.ru/doc_ussr/ussr_5049.htm (23.11.2023).

5 For instance, Serhy Yekelchyk shows as the participating in political practices (elections, state holidays, parades, mass rallies) forms relationships between the state and its citizens. Cf. Yekelchyk, Serhy: Stalin's Citizens. Everyday Politics in the Wake of Total War. Oxford 2014.

6 Cf. Alexopoulos, Golfo: Soviet Citizenship, More or Less. Rights, Emotions, and States of Civic Belonging. In: Kritika. Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History 7/3 (2006), 487–528.

Despite the declared freedom of movement within the country, the residence permit (*propiska*), about which a corresponding entry was made in the passport, was an instrument for controlling the movement of the population. This system of internal passports was one of the administrative tools for monitoring the population and influencing its movements, thereby forming a certain territorial classification.[7] Citizens had to live in the place to which they were assigned:

> "Since 1932, the residence permit had a permissive nature, and therefore was already restrictive (in other words, a person could be allowed to register in the place they chose, or they [the authorities] could refuse even without explaining the reasons)".[8]

If the residence permit provided opportunities – including access to medical care, the ability to send children to the nearest school, and job support – being denied this registration meant that the person had to return to the previous place of residence or look for a new place to live. Therefore, the opportunity to register significantly determined the capabilities of Soviet citizens.

Although the use of the construct of hatred towards any enemy lost its significance after Stalin's death and ceased to be employed, the concept of 'enemy of the people' still remained. As Miriam Dobson demonstrated, 'enemies of the people' were present in Soviet culture until the 1950s and, after that, their existence came into question, which disoriented the population.[9] On the one hand, former prisoners sought rehabilitation, and ordinary citizens aimed to realise the 'fallacy' of their views regarding them. At the same time, certain categories of citizens continued to experience the deprivations imposed during the Stalinist period, which were not automatically lifted after the condemnation of Stalin's policies. One such restriction was the prohibition for Soviet Germans, liberated from special settlements, to resettle in the places where their families lived before deportation.

The purpose of this article is to analyse how the authors of written appeals represented themselves in these letters, how the refusal of registration based on nationality forced them to reflect on their status. I examine the letters of Soviet Germans as a way for them to express their views towards their civil rights, which were limited due to their nationality. To this end, it is necessary to consider the constitutive elements of the public appeals process. As such it is important to understand what demands, or requests, they sent to the institutions of power and what ideas or episodes from their life, they put forward to give credibility to their position.

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7 Cf. Garcelon, Mark: Colonizing the Subject. The Genealogy and Legacy of the Soviet Internal Passport. In: Caplan, Jane; Torpey, John (Eds.): Documenting Individual Identity. The Development of State Practices in the Modern World. Princeton 2001, 83–100.

8 Baĭburin, Al'bert: Sovetskiĭ passport. Istoriya – struktura – praktiki [The Soviet Passport. The History, Nature and Uses of the Internal Passport in the USSR]. Sankt-Peterburg 2017, 151.

9 Cf. Dobson, Miriam: Khrushchev's Cold Summer. Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin. Ithaca-London 2011.

The letters addressed to the Soviet party, divisions and government bodies at various levels, or to the press were accessible and developed a means of communication between the state apparatus and the Soviet society, as evidenced by numerous letters from the Soviet citizens preserved in the archives. This research examines a group of letters from 1965 to 1967 written by Germans ten to twelve years after their release from a special settlement to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. In addition, I explore the reports of the Letters Department of the Supreme Soviet, which summarise the main topics of such letters and provides information about the practice of granting residence permits to Germans locally.

On the situation of Germans in the Soviet Union

The dismantling of the special settlements began in the middle of March 1953, with the issue of the release of certain categories of special settlers, followed by the lifting of certain restrictions of rights discussed in April 1954.[10] At the beginning, the transformations were of a general nature, in other words decrees and resolutions applied to all special settlers, with only later changes concerning certain categories. According to the first such decree of September 17, 1955, Soviet citizens accused of collaborating with German troops in the occupied territories were amnestied.[11] The order was issued in December 1955, in relation to the German population of the USSR, according to which they were released from the administrative supervision of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. However, it remained impossible for them to receive compensation for the property taken away during deportation and to return to the places from where they were evicted. This was not just the case for residents of the former Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Volga Germans (ASSR Volga Germans), but all Germans and their family members who were evicted from the western territories of the country during the Great Patriotic War, fell under the action of these laws.[12]

10 Cf. Sovet ministrov SSSR [The Council of Ministers of the USSR]: Postanovlenie o snyatii nekotorykh ogranicheniy v pravovom polozhenii spetsposelentsev [The Decree on the Removal of Certain Restrictions on the Legal Status of Special Settlers]. 05.06.1954. In: Reabilitatsiya: Kak éto bylo. Dokumenty Prezidiuma CK KPSS i drugie materialy. T. 1: Mart 1953 – fevral' 1956 [Rehabilitation. As it was. Documents of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU and Other Materials. Vol. 1. March 1953 – February 1956]. Moscow 2000, 158 f.

11 Cf. Prezidium Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR [The Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet]: Ukaz ob amnistii sovetskikh grazhdan, sotrudnichavshikh s okkupantami v period Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny 1941–1945 gg. [The Decree on Amnesty for Soviet citizens who Collaborated with the Occupiers during the Great Patriotic War]. 17.09.1955. In: Biblioteka normativno-pravovykh aktov SSSR [Library of normative-legal acts of the USSR]. URL: http://www.libussr.ru/doc_ussr/ussr_5035.htm (23.11.2023).

12 The 60,000 Germans expelled from the Crimea were the first, after which it was the turn of the Volga Germans. For a list of regions from which Germans were deported, cf. O pereselenii nemtsev iz rayada oblasteĭ, kraev i respublik Soyuza SSR [On the Resettlement of Germans from a Number of Economic, Territories and Republics of the USSR]. 25.12.1941 In: Spravka otdela spetspereseleniĭ NKVD SSSR. Depor-

At the twentieth Congress of the Party, Nikita S. Khrushchëv raised the issue of the "gross violation of the basic Leninist principles of the national policy of the Soviet state".[13] By this he meant the mass resettlement of peoples and the abolition of their national autonomies. Shortly after that, in 1957, pre-war national rights and autonomies were restored to Chechens, Ingush, Kalmyks, Karachays and Balkars. This list did not include peoples like Crimean Tatars and Germans who were also resettled and deprived of their national autonomies during the war. The text of the report was not published in the press and was distributed only within party cells. However, the information about it spread by word of mouth, and because of this the Central Committee of the CPSU started receiving letters from repressed peoples with requests for the restoration of previously existing national autonomies. The ideas embedded in the renewed Soviet ideology pushed the Soviet Germans to appeal to the highest officials of the USSR and the party elite with a demand for the full restoration of their rights, which they lost because of deportation and did not receive in 1957 along with the rehabilitated peoples.

The decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR from 29 August 1964, according to which the Germans were cleared of complicity with Germany during the war, did not lift the existing ban of return to native places. This was justified with the argument that Germans were now settled in their new places of residence. The decree from August 1964 is perceived as an important catalyst for the organisation of a delegation of Soviet Germans to visit Moscow. This was in order to meet with the highest officials in the country and discuss the possibility of full rehabilitation, which meant the lifting of all restrictions on Germans and the restoration of national autonomy. This group of Soviet Germans arrived in Moscow in January 1965 and received an audience with Anastas I. Mikoyan, who at that time was the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.[14]

The history of the Soviet German delegations explains the logic of the formation of the archival case, the letters from which form the basis of this article. The meeting in

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tacii narodov SSSR (1930–1950). T. 2: Deportaciÿa nemtsev (sentÿabr 1941 – fevral 1942 goda). [Deportations of the Peoples of the USSR (1930s – 1950s). Vol. 2: Deportation of Germans (September 1941 – February 1942)]. Moscow 1995, 47–56.

13 Khrushchëv, Nikita Sergeevich: Doklad na zakrytom zasedanii XX s"ezda KPSS "O kul'te lichnosti i ego posledstviyah" ["On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences". Delivered at a Closed Session of the 20th Congress of the CPSU]. Moscow 1959, 40.

14 Cf. German, Arkadiĭ A.: Istoricheskiĭ put' poslevoennogo natsional'nogo dvizheniya rossiĭskikh nemtsev: obshchiĭ analiz [The Historical Path of the Post-War National Movement of Russian Germans: a General Analysis]. In: Rossiĭskie nemtsÿ: 50 let poslevoennomu obshchestvennomu dvizheniĭu. Ot pervÿkh delegatsiĭ v pravitel'stvo cherez "Vozrozhdenie" k sovremennoĭ sisteme Samoorganizatsii (1964–2014 gg.). Materialÿ 5-ĭ Mezhdunarodnoĭ nauchno-prakticheskoĭ konferentsii, Moskva, 11–16 fevralĭa 2015 g. [Russian Germans: 50 Years of the Post-War Social Movement. From the First Delegations to the Government through the Renaissance to the Modern System of Self-Organization (1964–2014). Proceedings of 5th International scientific and practical conference, Moscow, February 11–16, 2015]. Moscow 2015, 8–19, here 13 f.

January 1965 was a trigger to "get acquainted with the issues of work and life of Soviet citizens of German nationality" and serves here as an entry point.[15] Data was collected from the districts of the Saratov and Volgograd regions, which included the territories of the former ASSR. Statistical information was collected on the number of German citizens living there and was deposited in the collection of documents of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in a case which focused on the Germans expelled from the Volga region.[16] The case also included individual complaints about problems with registration for 1967 citizens who did not participate in the work of delegations. All these complaints demonstrate that the local body of the Ministry of Internal Affairs refused to register the authors of the letters due to the German nationality indicated in their passports. This practice of prohibition continued to exist until 3 November 1972, when the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR "On lifting restrictions on the choice of place of certain categories of citizens" was issued.[17]

The expansion of civil rights for representatives of former exiled people extended their status of Soviet citizenship, regardless of their past status as 'enemies of the people'. The national intelligentsia was rethinking the past and striving to expand the boundaries of national self-expression.[18] Writers, teachers, and lecturers sought access to various privileges, in particular, in the formation of the state institutions that would represent their national interests.

Studying appeals to the authorities in the Soviet Union

The allocation of letters to the authorities as a special type of communication between a state and citizens, and as a peculiar type of communication during the Soviet period based on the analysis of letters of the 1920s to early 1950s.[19] Sheila Fitzpatrick, who has

15 GARF, f. 7523, op. 83. d. 423. l. 134.

16 GARF, f. 7523, op. 83. d. 423.

17 Cf. Prezidium Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR [The Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet]: Ukaz o snyatii ogranicheniya v vybore mesta otdelnykh kategorii grazhdan [The Decree on Lifting of Restrictions on the Choice of Place of Certain Categories of Citizens]. 03.11.1972. In: Auman, Vladimir A.; Chebotareva, Valentina G. (Eds.): Istoriya rossiyskikh nemtsev v dokumentakh. T. 1: 1763–1992 gg. [The History of Russian Germans in Documents. Vol. 1: 1763–1992]. Moscow 1993, 178 f.

18 Cf. Kozlov, Deniz; Gilburd, Eleonory: The Thaw as an Event in Russian History. In: Idem (Eds.): The Thaw. Soviet Society and Culture during the 1950s and 1960s. Toronto 2013, 18–83, here 32.

19 A number of collections with archival documents have been published. Cf. Gorskaya, Galina V.; Astakhova, Marina S.; Dönninghaus, Victor; Kirillova, E. E.; Kochetova, Anna (Eds.): Poslednie pis'ma Stalinu, 1952–1953. Rekonstrukciya dokumental'nogo kompleksa [The Last Letters to Stalin, 1952–1953. Reconstruction of the Documentary Complex]. Moscow 2015; Shishkin, Vladislav I. (Ed.): Pis'ma vo vlast' v epohu revolʹutsii i grazhdanskoĭ voĭnʹy (mart 1917 – noyabr' 1919 g.). Sbornik dokumentov [Letters to the Authorities in the Era of Revolution and Civil War (March 1917 – November 1919). A Collection of Documents]. Novosibirsk 2014; Kodin, Evgeniĭ V. (Ed.): "Proverkoĭ zayavleniya ustanovleno…". Povsednevnaya

made a significant contribution to such research, examined the written appeals of peasants in the 1930s to various authorities, based on the concept of 'everyday resistance' by James Scott. According to Fitzpatrick, the peasants' letters were a reaction to collectivisation, in which they sought to defend themselves:[20]

> "It was one of the best functioning channels of communication between citizens and the state, offering ordinary people without official connections one of the few available ways of redressing a wrong or provoking official action on the writer's behalf."[21]

According to Miriam Dobson, the period of de-Stalinisation is characterised by a radical reassessment of the status of the enemy through letters. Enemies were present in Soviet culture until the 1950s and, after the release of many convicts from the camps, the questioning of their existence disoriented the population. Such ambiguity became the reason for the new appeals to the authorities of both citizens who did not have the status of an enemy, and those who were released and reported their unfair treatment as enemies and sought to convince the addressee otherwise.[22]

Elena Bogdanova considers citizens' complaints to the authorities from the 1960s to the 1980s as an experience of defending their interests in the field of consumption. The focus of her attention is on the legal relations that arose based on these appeals.[23] Like Fitzpatrick, she proceeds from a certain position of power whereby the state expresses its patronage towards the population.

In his research into the practices of the workers of the 1930s within the framework of the new Soviet industrial city of Magnitogorsk, Stephen Kotkin concluded that, for the Soviet worker, an important way to talk about self was that of the 'labour autobiography', which helped determine his place among others. As a consequence, the Soviet worker was required to have a 'labour biography' that reflected his activity in politically significant categories. This statement is also true for other citizens. With the help of written appeals to the authorities, and directly through the writing of such letters, Soviet citizens learned the official language – the language of the regime, which implied

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zhizn' lyudeĭ v pis'makh i obrashcheniyakh k vlasti. 1930-e godȳ ["Verification of the Application Established …". The Daily Life of People in Letters and Appeals to the Authorities. The 1930s]. Smolensk 2013; Livshin, Aleksandr J. (Ed.): Pis'ma vo vlast'. Zayavleniya, zhalobȳ, donosȳ, pis'ma v gosudarstvennȳe strukturȳ i bol'shevist (sovetskim) vozhdyam [Letters to the Authorities. Statements, Complaints, Denunciations, Letters to State Structures and Bolshevik (Soviet) Leaders]. 2 vol. Moscow 1998/2002.

20 Cf. Fitzpatrick, Sheila: Stalin's Peasants. Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization. Oxford-New York 1994, 4–16.

21 Eadem: Everyday Stalinism. Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s. New York 1999, 175.

22 Cf. Dobson, Miriam: Khrushchev's Cold Summer. Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin. Ithaca-London 2009, 13 f.

23 Cf. Bogdanova, Elena: Complaints to the Authorities in Russia. A Trap between Tradition and Legal Modernization. London-New York 2021.

certain rules of the game: citizens understood which facts of their biography should be included, and which information should be avoided.[24]

Thus, in exploring these letters to the authorities, the researcher needs to consider not only the author's strategy throughout the letter but also the role the addressee and his or her value systems play in the writing process.[25] Since the relationship between a citizen and the state is realised in written appeals to the authorities, the act of writing a letter can be considered as an attempt to establish and try to consolidate the legal status of a citizen, inscribing himself into the existing political system.[26] In her research Christa Goff considers petitions from representatives of ethnic minorities in the North Caucasus in similar ways.[27] The Georgian-Ingilo who were living in the territory of the Azerbaijani SSR and the Lezgins who were living in the Georgian SSR complained in their letters to Khrushchëv about their legal situation and sought to realise the rights attributed to any Soviet people, especially rights to education in their native language. The petitions of Georgian-Ingilo were a tool for challenging the borders of citizenship in terms of everyday practice, opportunities for negotiations, and disputes with officials regarding their rights.[28] The general atmosphere of the thaw, which is characterised as an atmosphere of invigorating optimism, inspired Soviet citizens to have a more open and direct interaction with the state as a whole.[29]

The language of appeals

A new stage in the legal status of Germans in the USSR was marked by the Decree of 1964. According to this decree, Soviet Germans were cleared of the charges of sabotage and espionage, said to be made in favour of Germany, that were put forward in 1941. As can be seen from the text of the decree, Germans earned this decision with their conscientious work and significant participation in the socio-political life of Soviet society. According to the same decree, Germans were recognised as equals with Soviet citizens, i. e., there are no legal restrictions on them. However, letters from the German population about problems with registration provoked a discussion of their legal status.

In the final report, compiled in the February of 1965, the deputy Head of the Reception of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Alexey N. Kopenkin, estab-

24 Cf. Kotkin, Stephen: Magnetic Mountain. Stalinism as a Civilization. Berkeley 1995, 198–237.

25 Cf. Utekhin, Ilya: Iz nablyudeniĭ nad poetikoĭ zhalobȳ [From Observations on the Poetics of Complaint]. In: Studia Ethnologica. Trudȳ fakul'teta etnologii 2 (2004), 274–306, here 278.

26 Cf. Dobson, Miriam: Letters. In: Eadem; Ziemann, Benjamin (Eds.): Reading Primary Sources. The Interpretation of Texts from Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century History. London 2008, 57–73, here 64.

27 Cf. Goff, Krista A.: "Why Not Love Our Language and Our Culture?" National Rights and Citizenship in Khrushchev's Soviet Union. In: Nationalities Papers. The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity 43/1 (2015), 27–44, here 28 f.

28 Cf. ibid.

29 Cf. Kozlov/Gilburd, The Thaw as an Event in Russian History (cf. n. 18), 32.

lished several elements in the processing of Germans' registration in the Saratov and Volgograd regions. Firstly, that the peak of migration from Siberia and the Urals to these areas occurred in 1956–1959 and that the beginning of this period coincides with the liberation of Germans from special settlements. Secondly, statistics were provided on the applications received for registration and on the solution of this issue: "According to incomplete data from the Department of Public Order Protection of the Saratov Regional Executive Committee, 897 applications were received in the period from 1956 to 1965," of which 419 citizens received a positive response.[30] Kopenkin added that due to the increase in the number of Germans coming into these areas, restrictions on registration were strengthened. Germans, in turn, wrote in their letters of complaint that the refusal of their registrations was motivated by the Decree of 13 December 1955.[31] Another characteristic of the registration process highlighted by Kopenkin was that Germans' inability to register in the Volgograd region could turn into an opportunity to register in the Saratov region and vice versa.[32] This was an indicator that "the restrictions provided for by the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of 13 December 1955, [were] only partially effective".[33]

The issue of registration of Germans caused two polarised points of view among the representatives of the local governing bodies of the Saratov and Volgograd regions. The overwhelming majority believed that restrictive measures had outlived their usefulness, and that Germans should be registered on a regular basis. However, some of the authorities feared the mass return of Germans to their former places of settlement, suspecting that this would cause them to raise the issue of restoring autonomy.[34] Despite these concerns, Kopenkin suggested that the restrictions on the registration of Germans in the Saratov and Volgograd regions should be completely lifted, arguing that "the absolute majority of Soviet citizens of German nationality are conscientious about work, the preservation of socialist property and the observance of public order [and their] political mood is quite healthy".[35]

In 1967, following on from a new report on the letters sent by Germans, the refusal of registration in the Saratov and Volgograd as well as in Crimea regions was still regarded as a problem. This is because the public law enforcement agencies of the Saratov and Volgograd regions only granted registration in isolated cases when they received appeals from German nationals to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.[36] Sklyarov, Head of the Reception Office of the Presidium, who provided

30 GARF, f. 7523, op. 83, d. 423, l. 137.
31 Cf. ibid.
32 Cf. ibid.
33 Ibid. l. 143.
34 Cf. ibid. l. 144.
35 Ibid. l. 143.
36 GARF, f. 7523, op. 83, d. 402, l. 201.

this report, indicated that it was clear that Germans were being denied registration because of their nationality.[37]

The Sklyarov's report was accompanied by five letters from Soviet Germans, in which they wrote about their problems in obtaining a resident permit. The example below dates from May 1967:

> "I am asking you, Comrade Podgorny to explain to me my question, which is given below.
>
> I am Koch E. E. and I was born in 1932 in Saratov region in a family of Volga Germans [the underscores here and further are made by a person reading the letter in the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR]. In 1941, my family was evacuated to Siberia. In 1942, my father was taken to the labor army, where he died, my mother remained with five children. My mother died in 1956. From an early age, we were working and living in difficult conditions. In 1958, I came from the collective farm to the Forestry industry, where I work now. I have a wife and two children. I am a member of the Communist Labor Brigade [*brigada kommunisticheskogo truda*]. You can find out about my characteristic in the Household plot of Kezhimskiy LPH. And certainly, my health has failed and it is desirable to move to a place where climatic conditions will support my health. We turned to the Crimean region. Krasnoperekopsky district to the police chief about registration. They answered us that they don't make a residence permit for our nationality. There are no words to express what a deep wound lay on my heart. What is the reason? Why do I not have all Soviet citizen's rights? From an early age, I gave my life to work and honesty, and I never suspected that I differed in rights in some way from others. If someone is guilty of something, then not everyone should answer. And our children? They were born here. It's a shame to move this wound. Many Germans live here, most of them are hard workers [*stachanovcy*] and deputies of local councils, they are trusted. So, what is the difference between these people and those who live there? Please explain to me the reason and tell me if it is possible by any method to achieve being on the common rights of the citizens of the Soviet Union. I must, as a father, worry about the future of my children."[38]

Addressing this letter to the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, E. E. Koch seeks to set out his case almost from the outset. His self-description, in this case, is based on the details of his biography: date and place of birth; situation during the war; circumstances that emphasise the severity of the situation (death of parents and the need to work from an early age); professional career; family composition; socially significant status (member of the Communist Labour Brigade). What, then, can this tell us about the author of the letter?

At the time of writing this letter Koch was 35 years old, he was married and had two children. Participation in the Second World War is not used by the author of the letter as an argument in his favour. This is dictated by the fact that the Germans were evicted to special settlements and their participation in hostilities was not envisaged. Nevertheless, many of the authors of the letters tried to emphasise that they had nothing to do with assisting the German invaders, since they were resettled even before the occupation and could not take part in military incursions. The circumstances of reset-

37 Cf. ibid. l. 203.

38 Ibid. l. 213–214ob.

tlement in 1941 are presented through the prism of evacuation – that is, as a salvation from the war, and not by seeing deportation as a punishment. As a consequence, the main attention is focused on the general tragic fate of the population.

Writing out his biography, Koch shows that the loss of his parents forced him to work from an early age, but that he achieved great success in this work, as he is in the Communist Labour Brigade. Such brigades were part of a new movement for high performance, which marked "the beginning of a new stage in the struggle of the Soviet people to achieve labour productivity that was seen as being inaccessible to capitalism and necessary for the transition to the highest phase of communism".[39] The mention of these matters underlines a certain position not only in Soviet society, but also Koch's attitude to the ideological aspects of developed socialism. Thus, Koch seems to signal to his addressee that he, too, has contributed to the common cause of the state. All these biographical facts demonstrate that both the author of the letter and his concerns are worthy of attention and deserving a solution to the issue of the redistribution of goods (in this case, non-material). They also highlight how the legal situation of the Germans was caused by injustices that need to be reversed.[40]

By examining this letter, one can also discern those aspects which were favoured by the Presidium of the Supreme Council in the process of reading. Information about the applicant, about his family, about his employment history and the reason for the complaint seemed of particular importance, while the Presidium appeared indifferent to the words about these experiences being hurtful. Koch's account of the shame and pain that he was forced to experience because of his nationality were read and were also included in Sklyarov's report.

According to the author of another letter, Schäfer, he and his wife wanted to move to Crimea, but they were refused even though they were Germans who lived in the Crimea before the war and did not commit any crime:

> "The decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of September 5th, 1967 is a great joy for citizens of Tatar nationality who lived in the Crimea, they became full citizens of the USSR. (I and my wife), [name], (are German by nationality, we were born in Crimea, but not only we, and our parents, our grandfathers and great-grandfathers were born in Russia) and all of them are Russian subjects. But (the treacherous attack of fascist Germany on the Soviet Union was apparently the reason that we are still restricted in rights, i. e., we are not allowed to return to the Crimea) without committing the slightest crime. (If even a small part of the Crimean Tatars collaborated with the German invaders, then citizens of German nationality who lived in the Crimea for a long time before the occupation of the Crimea were taken to remote areas of the country). For this reason, I gave 40 years of work honestly and conscientiously to the motherland. In the jubilee year of the Soviet Government, I turn 60 years old […]. The factory where I work accompanies me on a well-deserved vacation. The health of both me and my wife is severely undermined. I am a

39 Gershberg, Semen R.: Vozniknovenie v SSSR dvizheniya brigad i udarnikov kommunisticheskogo truda [The Emergence of the Movement of Brigades and Strikers of Communist Labor in the USSR]. In: Voprosȳ istorii 15/3 (1960), 3–18, here 18.

40 Cf. Utekhin, Iz nablȳudeniĭ nad poetikoĭ zhalobȳ (cf. n. 25), 284.

> disabled worker. Therefore, we have an earnest request to you (to allow us to enjoy equal rights with all citizens of our vast homeland)."[41]

By taking the parts of the letter that are underscored, it can be assumed that it was read at least twice. At the one reading, significant lines were highlighted in orange brackets: information about the applicant and his family, his nationality, a fact from the biography (about the eviction), and the reason for the appeal. At the other reading, the reader emphasised important, in his or her opinion, information with a blue pen, for example information about a certain status (as a disabled worker), and an introductory sentence expressing 'joy' for citizens of Tatar nationality was added.

Sometimes the refusal to register all family members led to family dramas. Viktoria A. Karmeeva from Uralsk, Kazakh SSR, wrote that her husband was disabled during the Second World War and doctors recommended that he to moves to the sea, where the climate was milder. A family with two children decided to move to Crimea, where her husband once lived. He was registered but she was not because she was German by nationality. She and the children had to return: "So, the family began to disintegrate".[42] Karmeeva describes the difficulty of defining her as German because her father was Russian and her mother was German. Due to the lack of a birth certificate, she received a passport in which the nationality of her mother's passport was recorded, meaning that she was German, not Russian. Furthermore, they did not change her nationality, even when her Russian birth certificate was restored.[43] So, in this case, it is problems with the Soviet bureaucracy that are considered by the author of the letter as the reason for the unfairness.

Some of the letters concerned registration in the Crimea. It is difficult to trace the deep motivation of the authors of these complaints, why they sought to move to the Crimea, except that it is a favorable place to live because of the proximity to the sea and a milder climate (all the authors going to the Crimea left the regions of the Urals or Siberia). In addition, the actions of Crimean Tatars in 1967 also complicated matters for those Germans who were, seeking a residence permit in that area, and whose letters had been previously held back. They, like the Germans, were still not allowed to return back to the Crimea. But the Crimean Tatars unauthorised resettlement from the places to which they were deportated, led to a specific situation in which the issue of registration on the Crimean Peninsula was considered in a particularly strict manner.[44]

41 GARF, f. 7523, op. 101, d. 409, l. 37–37ob.

42 Ibid. l. 35f.

43 Cf. ibid.

44 Cf. Fisher, Alan: The Crimean Tatars. Stanford 1978, 181–184.

Conclusion

Certain contradictions in the idea of what rehabilitation is arose in Soviet society in the late 1950s after the "exposure of the cult of personality". In February 1956, almost a year after Stalin's death, during the twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the USSR, Khrushchëv talked about the violation of the basic principles of the Party and the policy of the Soviet state which Stalin allowed. As a consequence, it was necessary to revise measures that did not comply with socialist legality, including the mass resettlement of peoples and the abolition of their national autonomies. In 1957, the charges previously brought against several repressed peoples were dropped and national autonomies were restored. At the same time, expectations were formed for the rehabilitation of Soviet Germans. Since the second half of the 1950s, Soviet Germans sent individual and collective letters to the highest party and state authorities on the issue of their rehabilitation, something that was upheld in the decree of 1964.

In the 1960s Soviet state citizenship acquired a criterion defining its legal consciousness. This marked a departure of the Soviet authorities from granting rights to certain social groups as classes, towards the development of a universality of civil rights.[45] New opportunities for understanding and discussing the civil rights were provided by the thaw. The appeal to the language of law was also facilitated by the drafting of a new Constitution that updated the basic law of 1936. In April 1962, a Constitutional Commission was formed, its main goal being "to develop, discuss together with all the people and adopt a new Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics".[46] In the summer of that year nine sub-commissions were formed which were engaged in the development of individual issues, including issues of national policy and national-state construction.[47] The authors of the letters often referred to the legal practice and legislative acts of both the USSR and other countries. This opened one of the ways of communicating with the authorities on a legal basis.

Rights discourse also acquired special significance with the development of the dissident and human rights movement. Human rights defenders compiled collective petitions to the Soviet authorities, courts, and the prosecutor's office to draw attention to violations of the rights of various groups of the population, including national minorities, who sought support from them.

However, there were still numerous restrictions, in particular in registrations in places from where the Germans were evicted. The letters discussed above can be attributed to complaints that were appropriate when there was an asymmetry of resources and power between the addressee and the sender. Within the framework of this model, the complainant counted on the care of the state, which had the resources and could

45 Cf. Nathans, Benjamin: Soviet Rights-Talk in the Post-Stalin Era. In: Hoffmann, Stefan-Ludwig (Ed.): Human Rights in the Twentieth Century. Cambridge-New York 2011, 166–190, here 176.

46 Pravda. No. 116 (15972). 26.04.1962, 1.

47 Cf. Pravda. No. 167 (16023). 16.07.1962, 1.

distribute them. The authors of the complaints were looking for understanding, sympathy, and a fair trial. This is why they prescribed their status in their appeals, which could consist of a set of components (gender, age, nationality, social titles, family status, profession, and other criteria) and thereby demonstrated their position in the social hierarchy, which was supposed to contribute to a positive solution for their problems. The abundance of notes made by the authorities confirms the hypothesis that such rhetorical techniques were read by officials and could have contributed to a positive resolution of the issue.

The letters in question demonstrated a specific request: namely a residence permit. There was territorial differentiation in the USSR, and part of it consisted of closed cities that were integral to the military and industrial infrastructure. Living was only permitted in these cities through special requests or permission. Soviet Germans were denied registration and the right to live in closed cities, as well as in 'open' territories, solely based on their nationality, which was also an essential characteristic of being a Soviet citizen. This ban persisted as a relic of Stalinist era policies, even during a time when his repressive regime was being criticized. Despite this contradiction, the Germans reaffirmed their loyalty to the political system and the Soviet state.

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Hakob Matevosyan

Diasporic Authority and Cultural Identities in the Armenian Diasporic Field of Post-Socialist Hungary

Abstract: This paper provides an analysis of the Armenian diaspora communities in Hungary, examining their struggles for diasporic authority and the distribution of diasporic capital. Using Bourdieu's social field theory as a framework, the paper emphasises the significance of Stuart Hall's concept of diaspora as a cultural identity that is consistently shaped by narrative. The methodology used includes 33 in-depth interviews conducted between 2015 and 2016 with individuals of Armenian descent based in Hungary. The paper presents three empirical investigations that provide insights into the positions and relationships within the Armenian diasporic field in Hungary. The first investigation focuses on Transylvanian Armenians and their diasporic self-image, the second explores the perspectives of late- and post-Soviet Armenians, and the third examines the positioning of Armenians from the Middle East who settled in Hungary. The analysis reveals the power dynamics and struggles for diasporic authority, highlighting the complexities of diasporic identity constructions.

Keywords: diasporic social field, Armenians in Hungary, diasporic authority, cultural identity

Introduction

The term 'diaspora' is used to describe various theoretical perspectives and discussions that reflect the complex social and cultural experiences of displaced populations across the world. This paper examines these different lenses, while emphasising the importance of Stuart Hall's view of diaspora as a cultural identity. The paper also introduces Bourdieu's social field theory as a framework for understanding intricate social phenomena, particularly the struggle for diasporic authority and the distribution of diasporic capital within the Armenian diaspora in Hungary.

The paper examines how the Minority Law of 1993 influenced the diasporic field, creating intra-group divisions and conflicts among the competing groups of Armenians in Hungary. It discusses how different groups utilised available resources to establish a new local social order and (re-)define collective identities. The concept of diasporic authority is also explored, particularly the power to authenticate diasporic status-identity through contested classificatory systems.

The methodology used in this study includes 33 in-depth interviews conducted between 2015 and 2016 with individuals of Armenian descent based in Hungary. These interviews aimed to comprehensively explore their experiences within the diaspora, including their roles and social contexts. Held in diverse venues like cafes, parks, and homes, the interviews prioritised comfort and open dialogue. Respondents could

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choose from languages such as Armenian, English, Russian, or Hungarian. Attending cultural and commemorative events further enriched the study. Anonymity was strictly upheld throughout the analysis, with no personal details or names disclosed.

The empirical section of the paper presents three investigations that provide insights into the positions and relationships within the Armenian communities in Hungary. The first investigation focuses on Transylvanian Armenians and their diasporic self-image as 'Transylvanians of Armenian origin in Hungary', as well as the power dynamics they navigate with other Armenian groups. The second investigation explores the perspectives of late- and post-Soviet Armenians, highlighting the distinction between Armenian-speaking Armenians and those of Armenian descent, while analysing the portrayal of Transylvanian Armenians in this context. The third investigation examines the positioning of Armenians from the Middle East settled in Hungary, highlighting the complexities of diasporic self-identification and the factors influencing their place within Hungarian society.

Diaspora as cultural identity and a social field

'Diaspora' remains a dynamic and multifaceted concept, subject to diverse theoretical lenses and debates, reflecting the complexity of its social and cultural manifestations across the globe. While numerous understandings of diaspora exist, the theoretical framework that underpins this paper is firmly rooted in Stuart Hall's insightful conceptualisation of diaspora as a cultural identity.[1] His contributions go beyond the prevailing dominant-hegemonic perspectives that associate cultural identity with notions of ethnicity, nation, territory, and an essentialised notion of cultural integrity and authenticity. Instead, he offers a more nuanced conceptualisation, positing that the diaspora experience is not rooted in essence or purity but rather in the acknowledgement of necessary heterogeneity and diversity.[2]

According to Hall, identities are never fixed or completed; instead, they are continually formed within a dialogical interplay between two opposing vectors of cultural identity such as similarity and continuity, and difference and rupture. The former sees identity as shared codes and historical experiences that foster unity despite histor-

1 Cf. Hall, Stuart: Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In: Rutherford, Jonathan (Ed.): Identity. Community, Culture, Difference. London 1990, 222–237. Numerous interdisciplinary publications have critiqued Hall's theoretical frameworks, particularly identity construction in relation to hybridisation. Cf. Turner, Simon: The Social Construction of Diasporas. Conceptual Development and Rwandan Case. In: Cohen, Robin; Fischer, Carolin (Eds.): Routledge Handbook of Diaspora Studies. London-New York 2019, 40–46; Davis, Helen: Understanding Stuart Hall. London-Thousand Oaks-New Delhi 2004; Zhang, Liang: How to Understand Stuart Hall's "Identity" Properly? In: Inter-Asia Cultural Studies 18/2 (2017), 188–196; Rojek, Chris: Stuart Hall. Cambridge 2003.

2 Cf. Hall, Cultural Identity and Diaspora (cf. n. 1), 235.

ical fluctuations.[3] The latter, embracing ruptures, highlights crucial points of difference that shape individuals and communities over time, challenging the notion of unchanging identity and acknowledging the significance of discontinuities. This approach does not negate shared experiences but emphasises their role in our collective experience of profound change.

Without assuming or ascribing cultural similarity to community members, my study of diasporic identity formation considers the heterogeneity of actors' diasporic experiences, acknowledging their distinct understandings of ethnicity, sameness, and otherness across various temporal and spatial contexts. This perspective ensures an empirical research of diasporas that transcends homogenisation and also surpasses methodological nationalism.[4] Furthermore, drawing on Hall's definition, this study considers the interplay of multiple boundaries that produce a diaspora through the lived experiences of actors and their social interactions, as well as within the broader social structure in which power and hierarchies are embedded.[5] This conceptual perspective is grounded in the idea that diaspora involves practices characterised by "decentred attachments" – the experience of being simultaneously "at home away from home",[6] "living-in-the-betweens",[7] and exhibiting "multi-locality".[8] James Clifford further suggests that this dual nature of diaspora arises from the collision and dialogue of cultures and histories, intertwined with the rootedness and routed-ness of diaspora subjects.[9]

To comprehend the dialogical and transformative characteristics of diasporas, it is additionally advantageous to approach them through the lens of social fields theory. According to Bourdieu, the social space consists of multiple inter-related social fields[10] – arenas of practice, power, and struggle, which revolve around the monopoly of legitimate authority and the preservation or subversion of the distribution of specific cap-

3 Cf. ibid, 223. Cf. Kleist, Nauja: In the Name of Diaspora: Between Struggles for Recognition and Political Aspirations. In: Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 34/7 (2008), 1127–1143.

4 Cf. Wimmer, Andreas; Glick Schiller, Nina: Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration. An Essay in Historical Epistemology. In: International migration review 37/3 (2003), 576–610, here 598.

5 Cf. Amelina, Anna; Barglowski, Karolina: Key Methodological Tools for Diaspora Studies. Transnational and Intersectional Approach. In: Cohen/Fischer, Routledge Handbook of Diaspora Studies (cf. n. 1), 31–39, here 32.

6 Vertovec, Steven: Three Meanings of "Diaspora", Exemplified Among South Asian Religions. In: Diaspora 6/3 (2007), 277–299, here 281f.

7 Duarte, Fernanda: Living in 'the Betweens'. Diaspora Consciousness Formation and Identity among Brazilians in Australia. In: Journal of intercultural studies 26/4 (2005), 315–335, here 333.

8 Schwalgin, Susanne: Why Locality Matters. Diaspora Consciousness and Sedentariness in the Armenian Diaspora in Greece. In: Alfonso, Carolin; Kokot, Waltraud; Tölölyan, Khachig (Eds.): Diaspora, Identity and Religion. New Directions in Theory and Research. London 2004, 72–92, here 75.

9 Cf. Clifford, James: Diasporas. In: Cultural anthropology 9/3 (1994), 302–338, here 319.

10 Cf. Bourdieu, Pierre: The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups. In: Theory and Society 14/6 (1985), 723–744, here 723f.

ital.[11] Established actors often resist newcomers attempting to challenge their positions, thus making struggle a defining characteristic of a field's existence.[12] Within each field, individuals and institutions in occupying positions establish boundaries to differentiate themselves from others. These boundaries are not fixed; they can expand, contract, or even redefine themselves, thereby transcending the confines of a single society or nation.

This approach provides a foundation for researching diasporas as transnational communities, going beyond nation-state confines. Employing the analytical properties of the diasporic field allows researchers to explore the unequal power dynamics, shifting boundaries, and relationships between agents and institutions, striving to accumulate and monopolise valuable capital. Instead of fixity, the boundaries of diasporic communities emerge through the negotiations and actions of individuals seeking a sense of belonging.[13] The diasporic social field also involves the analysis of practices by people establishing enduring cross-border ties, which may or may not involve homeland or host-land ideologies. These practices are influenced by various socially constructed differences such as gender, ethnicity, and class, which must be studied empirically.[14]

By focusing on diaspora as a social field, we can better understand the fluid and dynamic nature of diaspora and cultural identities in terms of being and becoming, as suggested by Stuart Hall. This involves examining the relationships and strategies individuals and institutions used to strengthen their positions and impose hierarchies. To achieve success in the field, they must accumulate specific capital and develop strategies based on their positions. Observing these strategies is therefore crucial for understanding their impact on the field's structure.

The diasporic field is interconnected with various other national, transnational, and global social fields, such as politics, media, and religion which influence the valorisation of the capital at stake. Those who have accumulated capital in different domains engage in power struggles within the diasporic field to transform and convert their capital into diasporic capital which signifies how diaspora actors struggle to monopolise 'diasporic authority' as the valued resource.

Employing the concept of social fields, we can scrutinise the features of diasporic relationships encompassing their "structured and conflictual (agentive) dimensions", along with the cultural and economic aspects of domination.[15] This analytical approach is crucial as the diaspora process involves the transformation of power dynamics, often marked by change and contention.

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11 Cf. idem; Wacquant, Loïc: An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology. Chicago 1992, 98.

12 Cf. idem: Sociology in Question. London-Thousand Oaks-New Delhi 1993, 73.

13 Cf. Wimmer, Andreas: The Making and Unmaking of Ethnic Boundaries. A Multilevel Process Theory. In: American Journal of Sociology 113/4 (2008), 970–1022.

14 Cf. Amelina/Barglowski, Key Methodological Tools for Diaspora Studies (cf. n. 5), 32.

15 Tabar, Paul: The Lebanese Diasporic Field. The Impact of Sending and Receiving States. In: Immigrants & Minorities 34/3 (2016), 256–275, here 257.

The diasporic field refers to the social space where established and novice diaspora actors, institutions, and laypeople interact and engage in constant struggles. It addresses the dynamics within the community, such as new migration movements, mobilisation strategies of the dominant section to attract new arrivals, and self-mobilisation schemes of novice players. The diasporic field involves all actors with varying degrees of belonging to multiple homelands and host-lands. Finally, it encompasses processes of positioning within and beyond ethnicity, within and beyond historical continuities and ruptures in identity references, and within and beyond the nation-states.

The emergence of the Armenian diasporic field in Hungary

In Hungary, there are multiple Armenian groups,[16] each claiming to be the only authentic Armenian diaspora and denying this status to the other groups.[17] One group comprises descendants of Armenians who migrated to Hungary from Armenian centres in Transylvania during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Other Armenian groups in Hungary were established as a consequence of different waves of migration: one followed the Armenian Genocide by the Ottomans in 1915, while another resulted from the late-Soviet and post-Soviet Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, and because of economic and political difficulties in post-Soviet Armenia, particularly in the early 1990s. During Soviet times, a few Armenians moved from Soviet Armenia to Socialist Hungary. Additionally, several Armenians from the Middle East settled in Hungary in the 1980s and early 21st century. Recent immigrants from Armenia and other diasporas also joined the Armenian post-Genocide diaspora and held leading positions in diasporic organisations. This unification of post-Genocide Armenians and post-Soviet Armenians in Hungary was facilitated by common cultural elements such as the memory and commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, affiliation with the Armenian Apostolic Church, and knowledge, at least partial, of the Armenian language. However, all Armenian groups

16 For an historical overview of the Armenians in Hungary see the following selection: Kovács, Bálint: Örmények Magyarországon a két világháború között. kapcsolatok és önszerveződés [Armenians in Hungary between the Two World Wars. Connections and Self-Organisations]. In: idem; Botos, Máté (Eds.): Az emlékezet száz éve: Így látja az utókor az örmény népírtást [One Hundred Years of Memory: How Posterity sees the Armenian Genocide]. Budapest 2019, 123–146; Őze, Sándor; Kovács, Bálint: Örmény diaszpóra a Kárpát-medencében II. A Piliscsabán, 2006, április 25-én megrendezett tudományos konferencia tanulmányai [Armenian Diaspora in the Carpathian Basin. The Studies of the Scientific Conference Held in Piliscsaba on 25 April, 2006]. Piliscsaba 2007; Pál, Judit: Armenians in Transylvania: From Settlement to Integration. In: Kovács, Bálint; Pál, Emese (Eds.): Far Away from Mount Ararat. Armenian Culture in the Carpathian Basin. Budapest-Leipzig 2013, 9–16.

17 Cf. Matevosyan, Hakob: Incompatible Identities. The Armenian Diasporic Communities in Hungary. In: Siekierski, Konrad; Troebst, Stefan (Eds.): Armenians in Post-Socialist Europe. Köln 2016, 170–178, here 171f.

in Hungary, including the Transylvanian Armenians, are not homogeneous, as they consist of Armenians who speak or do not speak any of the Armenian languages (Eastern or Western Armenian), profess different faiths (Apostolic, Catholic, Protestant), consider themselves irreligious, hold different political ideologies, and have mixed ancestries.

In 1993, as an outcome of the constitutional amendments in 1989, the Hungarian Parliament passed the LXXVII Nationality and Ethnic Minority Rights Law (hereafter Minority Law of 1993).[18] With the Minority Law of 1993, Hungary legally recognised and acknowledged national and ethnic minorities to protect their collective and individual rights.[19] The Minority Law was established in Hungary to create specific guidelines for minority registration. To qualify, one of the requirements was that the minority must have resided in Hungary for a minimum of 100 years. The Armenians who sought refuge in Hungary after the 1915 Genocide in the Ottoman Empire or arrived following the collapse of the Soviet Union did not meet this criterion. Nevertheless, their minority status endured as a result of the presence of Transylvanian Armenians.

Another criterion introduced by the Law was that the minority group must speak their native language. This requirement would have excluded the Transylvanian Armenians from attaining recognition as a national minority, given their shift away from speaking Armenian. However, they continue to hold this status due to the presence of post-Genocide and post-Soviet Armenian diasporic groups. As a result of state regulations, various Armenian groups with different cultural-linguistic and socio-historical backgrounds had to unite to register as a national minority. Despite this unification, genuine connections between them failed to materialise, leading to struggles for the legitimation and recognition of contested classificatory systems regarding the definition of an authentic Armenian descent in Hungary.

According to Fligstein and McAdam, a social field is formed when two or more groups seek to occupy a previously unorganised social space.[20] The Minority Law of 1993 played a significant role in shaping the Armenian diasporic field in Hungary. The law brought to light the historically constructed differences between various groups of Armenians, which created inter- and intra-group divisions and conflicts. In response, actors of Armenian descent in Hungary strategically utilise available resources from political, religious, and mass media fields to create new cultural frames and establish a new local social order. This struggle for stability and redefinition of collective identities highlights the importance of the Minority Law of 1993 as an external structuring condition for the configuration of the Armenian diasporic field in Hungary.

18 The Minority Law of 1993 was repealed by the Act CLXXIX of 2011 on the Rights of Nationalities. The new act included significant legal and terminological amendments. For instance, the former "national and ethnic minorities" were renamed as "nationalities." In the context of the current discussion, legal amendments play a peripheral role; hence, this paper does not include any discussions pertaining to them.

19 Cf. Tóth, Ágnes (Ed.): National and Ethnic Minorities in Hungary, 1920 – 2001. Boulder/Col. 2005.

20 Cf. Fligstein, Neil; McAdam, Doug: A Theory of Fields. Oxford-New York 2012, 109.

Diasporic authority, diasporic capital and relational position

Bourdieu asserts that power dynamics within a field shape its structure, which is subject to ongoing transformations.[21] In the case of the Armenian diaspora in Hungary, the diasporic field embodies resource distribution and positioning among diaspora actors and institutions, all striving for influence. Emerging from competition among Hungarian Armenians, this field revolves around diasporic authority acquisition. Such authority validates diasporic status-identity through contested classifications gauging alignment of descent and conduct. This authentication process determines the multiple constructs of Armenianness upheld in Hungary.

This study analyses the Armenian diaspora in Hungary and how its configuration impacts the struggle for diasporic authority. Resources, including diasporic capital and its forms, are pivotal. The capital accumulation process established a classificatory system that creates intra-group distinctions and power dynamics. This system distinguishes diaspora positions according to the alignment of lineage and conduct, shaping existing and novel differentiations. Within Hungary's Armenian diasporic field, the classificatory structures extend beyond ethnicity, transcending ethnic profiling. Derived from descent knowledge, distinctive categories govern actors' relationships and frame diverse contested diasporic identities. Through diaspora institutions, actors promote particular versions of diasporic identities to succeed in the struggle for authority. These institutions connect with settings defined by Hungarian state policy on national and ethnic minorities.

Distinct self-ascriptions and external ascriptions define each actor group. For instance, the Transylvanian Armenians in Hungary identify themselves as such, while others label them old Armenians, people of Armenian descent, Hungarians, Hungarian-Armenians. Late- and post-Soviet Armenians self-identify as Armenian-speaking Armenians and distinguish 'Market Armenians' as a newer migrant group. Others view them as Armenians from the East. To prevent confusion and clarify the actor groups, the graph below simplifies categories based on migration/settlement time and prior dispersion (see Fig. 1).

The Armenian diasporic social field features two key axes: descent and practice. Descent ranges from strong ancestral connections (plus pole) to weaker connections (minus pole), while practice spans active engagement (plus pole) to limited cultural expressions (minus pole). This framework reveals diasporic dynamics, showcasing how ancestry and practices shape distinct positions. Within the Armenian diasporic social field, two groups excel on both axes, displaying varying degrees of engagement in diasporic practices. Another group has descent characteristics but lacks practice. This group exhibits heritage-focused diasporic identity.

21 Cf. Bourdieu, Sociology in Question (cf. n. 12), 73.

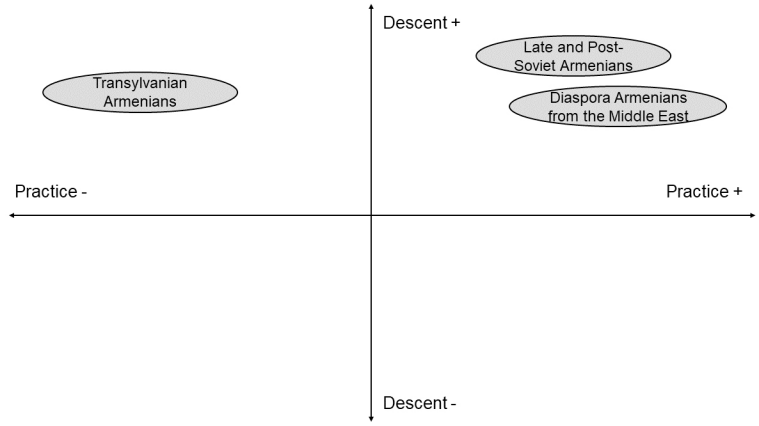

Fig. 1: The structure of the Armenian diasporic field of Hungary

Armenian origin unearthed in Transylvania

In this section, I examine the positions and relationships between Hungarian Armenians, focusing on the viewpoint of Transylvanian Armenians who distinguish two key Armenian collectives: Old Transylvanian Armenians and Newcomer Armenians from the East. First, I delve into how Transylvanian Armenians portray their diasporic identity as "Transylvanians of Armenian origin in Hungary", utilising cultural authentication to transcend mere ethnicity. Subsequently, I analyse power dynamics among Armenian groups to unpack the "Armenians from the East" categorisation.

Diasporic self-picture: "Transylvanian of Armenian origin in Hungary"

Mavika, a woman in her late 60s, was born during her parents' move from Transylvania and re-settlement in Hungary after World War II, identified herself as Transylvanian of mixed origin – "Armenian and Szekler". Mavika's identification as an Armenian originating from Transylvania asserts her symbolic authority in validating her genuine Armenian lineage. A pivotal aspect of this symbolic power is the emphasis on purity of origin, signifying Armenian parentage, as she asserts, "on my father's side [...] both families were pure Armenians from Transylvania." Additionally, Mavika underscores her Transylvanian autochthonous identity, noting their earlier settlement, and intertwines it with a narrative tracing the ancestral descent to the medieval Arme-

nian capital Ani, "we arrived from Ani".[22] Her symbolic power is further bolstered by substantial economic capital – "my ancestors were wealthy salesmen, and they bought vast lands" – and ancestral noble titles as cultural capital – "we are also present in the Armenian nobles' genealogy".

Her self-concept emphasises pluralism as a means of authenticating her heritage. This complex perspective weaves together references from various origins and her Armenian lineage. For Mavika, being a "Transylvanian of Armenian origin in Hungary" holds profound cultural significance amid assimilation:

> "[Hakob:] What does that mean – Transylvanian of Armenian origin in Hungary?
>
> [Mavika:] A Transylvanian of Armenian origin in Hungary is a person who was born in Transylvania, whose country of origin is Armenia, whose sacred mountain is the Ararat, but someone who is also nurturing the Transylvanian culture and traditions because it's his family heritage. Someone who is aware of his Armenian roots, but also the Transylvanian ones, because that's what runs in his family. Our community assimilated to the Hungarian society and culture 350 years ago. But is still nurturing the Armenian culture and traditions. The other community keeps saying that only they can speak Armenian. Well, I say, knowing how to speak Armenian is not enough. You have to know the culture as well! Because that's what we need. The culture that can be brought from the East. Because that's how the Armenians of Hungary can be united, but they didn't get it. For them, the Armenian culture is what they brought with them! The problem is that they didn't bring anything."

Mavika presented the diasporic self-understanding as a Transylvanian Armenian in Hungary in opposition to other Armenian groups in Hungary who speak Armenian. She emphasised cultural authentication as the primary criterion for affirming her Armenian lineage, countering the other Armenian groups' emphasis on linguistic authentication.

Picturing others: "Armenians from the East – that's how we call them"

Having established her diasporic self-image as a "Transylvanian of Armenian origin in Hungary," Mavika, mirroring many Transylvanians, labeled other Armenian groups as "The Armenians from the East". This term, notably, holds derogatory connotations within power dynamics among Armenian groups in Hungary, denoting those who settled from Armenia and other post-Soviet states since the mid-20th century.

Mavika initially highlighted the incremental migration of this group, contrasting it with forced dispersion due to the 1915 Genocide and the 1920 Treaty of Trianon. Then, she emphasised cultural authentication for lineage affirmation, thereby refuting such

22 Cf. Kovács, Bálint: Die Armenische Hauptstadt Ani als *lieu du mémoire.* In: Müller, Dietmar; Skordos, Adamantios (Eds.): Leipziger Zugänge zur rechtlichen, politischen und kulturellen Verflechtungsgeschichte Ostmitteleuropas. Leipzig 2015, 253–262.

authentication for the Armenians from the East, attributing their motivations primarily to economic interests. Furthermore, Mavika viewed the pure economic interests of the Armenians from the East as a strong deviation from descent, potentially jeopardising the Armenians of Hungary's standing by devaluing their symbolic capital accumulated over centuries.

> "The Armenians from the East – that's how we call them – came a few decades ago, for money. The members of this community came one by one to have a better life, to gain a lot of money. They heard about the self-governments, about the money, the money. [...] After the 1990s, a lot of people came here around that time. A lot of them joined the self-governments only to gain money. They were motivated by money. We were motivated by our common culture and history. They don't care about the culture or anything else. All they care about is money. So, for us it's hard to see what's happening because our ancestors have already conciliated the respect of the Hungarians in the last 350 years."

The economic interest of the Armenians from the East, juxtaposed with the Transylvanians of Armenian origin in Hungary who emphasise cultural priorities, shape power relations between them in terms of authentication of Armenian descent. These contrasts can result in the denial of Armenian authentication for one group or exclusive self-authentication by the other.

> "[Mavika:] They want the money for themselves, and they try to keep the entire funds to their group. As we are not considered Armenians, we don't have the right to get any money. [...] They completely exclude us until this day, until this day. We are not considered Armenian, but only them.
>
> [Hakob:] What do they consider you, then?
>
> [Mavika:] Nothing. We are only those who say that we are Armenians. [...] During the past 22 years, I talked to two [high ranking politicians from Armenia], and they both told me that those who immigrated to Hungary in the 1990s are a waste. They are not Armenians but financiers."

Drawing on the observations of high-ranking politicians, Mavika refuted the authentication of the Armenians from the East as true Armenians, particularly those who emigrated to Hungary after the 1990s. Mavika's refusal to authenticate the Armenians from the East as Armenians also reflects a mismatch between Armenian heritage and the anticipated econocentric behaviour. This mismatch arises from Mavika's prioritisation of culture and the requirement of cultural authentication of both Armenian descent and identity, a criterion not met by econocentric behaviour of the Armenians from the East.

A further mismatch between Armenian descent and the conduct of the Armenians from the East concerns religion. Mavika identified a broad spectrum of non-religious practices among this group, such as not being baptised, lacking religious engagement in Armenia, and even attending the Armenian Church in Budapest while engaging in disputes outside its premises. This amplified in her eyes the divergence between Armenian descent and (religious) behaviour.

Late- and post-Soviet Armenians profiling the Armenians in Hungary

Armenian speaking Armenians and those of Armenian descent

Robert, an Armenian in his late-50s from Armenia, moved to Hungary in the mid-1980s to reunite with his Hungarian wife. He has since resided in Budapest with his family. Prior to settling in Hungary, he worked as a professional musician, touring Hungary and Czechoslovakia in the 1980s. Following his move to Budapest, Robert began seeking out his fellow Armenians. His first encounter was with an Armenian who settled in Hungary during the 1960s, to whom Robert humorously referred as "one of the leaders of the so-called Armenian community."

Robert's use of the term "Armenian community" referred specifically to a linguistically distinct group of Armenians, namely the "Armenian-speaking community". This group encompasses a relatively small number of individuals who arrived in Hungary within three decades before the 1990s, mainly from Soviet Armenia, along with others from various Soviet states, Middle Eastern Armenian diasporas, as well as refugees who came to Hungary from Armenia in the 1990s. The boundaries of this community are defined by the alignment of descent and behaviour/communication (language), with Robert's assumption that Armenians from Armenia, including Soviet Armenia, naturally speak Armenian:

> "The Armenian community was very small; I mean our Armenian-speaking community. We were small in our number, and even today. Then, in the 1990s, refugees arrived, but I cannot provide precise numbers of our Armenian-speaking community. I mean, there is no accurate statistic about any of the ethnic minorities of Hungary. Perhaps, there is a maximum of 200 Armenian-speaking Armenians in Hungary, including the refugees. There are those of Armenian descent who, unfortunately, do not speak Armenian. They are assimilated and Catholic. I cannot provide their number as well but, in my opinion, it is about 2,000 – 3,000. But not everyone deals with their Armenian descent in their everyday life. It is the reason that there are many Armenians with an ancestral origin, but they don't want to deal with it, they don't join us, they don't want to have any connection with us. They have a very cold attitude towards their descent."

Robert highlighted the contrast between the Armenian-speaking community and the larger group of those of "Armenian descent". He emphasised several identifiers of incongruity between descent and behavior in the larger group. The primary indicator of this mismatch pertains to assimilation in terms of language and religion, with many being Catholic and not speaking Armenian. Another disparity is their limited engagement with Armenian heritage in daily life.

Transylvanian Armenians: "their Armenian origin is a flag in their hands"

Levon, a man in his 50s who settled in Hungary in the 1970s and was actively engaged in the Armenian diaspora institutions in Hungary, denied the claims of Transylvanian Armenians as "the true Armenians" describing them rather as Hungarians who demand social seniority based on the presence of Armenian ancestors in Transylvania.

> "I mean, if you look at the old group. Well, they are ordinary people. But the thing is that they are Hungarians. There is nothing Armenian, they are simply Hungarians. They can tell that their grandparents made some Armenian soups, or my grandma's name is something, similar to an Armenian name. And they are arrogant, and that disturbs me. I mean, they tell 'we came to Hungary earlier, we are older, we were rich', then 'we are the true Armenians, and the others, who came later they are riffraff'. I have to tell you, that their Armenian origin is a flag in their hands. It is written 'we are Armenians' on that flag. I mean, their identity, self-identification is mixed and unclear. I guess they also do not understand whether they are Hungarians or Armenians. But rather Hungarians. Imagine a two-sided picture. They show the face according to the circumstances. But they are Hungarians. That would be correct to say it is like a club, I mean to come together, drink tea, and they are elderly people. There are no young people among them. And what is important, they never consider Armenia as their homeland, but Transylvania. They tell that our homeland is Transylvania. And they tell that we, the Armenian speaking Armenians, are some incomprehensible tribe."

Levon highlighted a disconnection between descent and behavior by emphasising that the Transylvanian Armenians lack correspondence between their heritage and their actions and are thus not Armenian. He portrayed them as a mere social gathering of elderly people without any reference to Armenian identity or Armenian homeland. This mismatch led Levon to question their cultural authentication.

In terms of power relations between Transylvanian Armenians and Armenian speakers, Levon sees the former as potent game-changers. This relates to their potential to reshape local diasporic order by excluding the Armenian-speaking Armenians from the Armenian National Minority Self-Government, if they were to win the minority elections. Levon anticipates a scenario where Armenian speakers would be "wiped out".

Like Levon, according to Robert, the Transylvanian Armenians could translate their social capital, particularly their government connections, into supportive symbolic influence from the Hungarian government. Unlike Armenian-speaking Armenians, the Transylvanian Armenians engage actively in cultural activities, such as erecting a cross stone and bringing exhibits from Transylvania to an exhibition. Robert, who questions the Transylvanian Armenian authenticity, still acknowledges their capability to maintain a certain diaspora order, distinguishing them from Armenian speakers.

Diasporic actors, positions and the Armenians from the Middle East in Hungary

Diasporic positioning: "Perhaps I am a little more emphasised Armenian"

Nairuhi, a diaspora Armenian woman in her mid-40s from the Middle East,[23] settled in Hungary in the mid-1990s. She began our conversation by connecting her everyday life in Hungary with her Middle Eastern roots, emphasising her diasporic identity as a "[Middle Eastern]-Armenian by roots". Nairuhi then highlighted the interplay of her descent and country of settlement, a characteristic that Razmig Panossian considers as "exemplary" for Middle Eastern Armenian diaspora.[24] Going further, Nairuhi emphasised her distinct diaspora identity through by valuing the (institutionalised) cultural capital she accumulated in Armenia.

> "Perhaps, I am a little more emphasised Armenian, because I went to study in Armenia. I studied philology at an Armenian University. Then I worked as a teacher in [the Middle East]. And surely this description has a great effect on my everyday life now. I can say that I live in Hungary with 100 percent Armenian thoughts, and I live in Hungary by creating the Armenian environment."

Instead of physically returning to Armenia as a homeland, Nairuhi viewed Armenia as a source of cultural capital crucial for her identity as an authentic Armenian. She expanded this cultural capital beyond Armenia's national borders, utilising it within the diasporic space. Her Middle Eastern background and cultural capital accumulated in Armenia significantly shaped her everyday life in Hungary, emphasising her diasporic identity. Nairuhi highlighted the absence of an Armenian environment in Hungary, drawing parallels with her previous experience as diaspora in the Middle East.

> "Well, we could not manage to open 'Sunday Schools' as the parents do not have any understanding of it. I know it very well, but other parents do not. They are too far from that environment, and you know why? Because I am from diaspora, and they are from Armenia. [...] And Hungary is my second diaspora, I came from diaspora, and I live here now. [...] My mind is already entirely grounded with diaspora ideas. They are a little bit far away from it."

Conversely, she dismissed any diasporic socialisation for Armenians who migrated to Hungary from Armenia, attributing to them an objectively non-diasporic mindset. Nairuhi vividly portrayed Hungary's Armenian diasporic space, inhabited by actors with distinct diasporic habitus shaped by specific time-space circumstances of socialisation.

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23 I opted for a more generalised location instead of specifying a country to protect the anonymity of respondents, due to the community's small size.

24 Panossian, Razmik: The Armenians. From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars. New York 2006, 292 f.

She also described multiple, incompatible versions of Armenian identities constructed within Armenia, the Middle East, and Hungary.

Nairuhi further explored the factors influencing her diasporic habitus as a Middle Eastern Armenian diaspora. Initially, she explained her transition into diaspora life and how her Arab education laid the foundation for the Armenian cultural identity. Her grandparents, survivors of the 1915 Genocide, resettled in the Middle East in the 1920s. For Nairuhi, the Genocide became a narrative of embodied trauma that underscored her self-presentation as a diasporan. Distinguishing herself as the grandchild of Genocide survivors rather than a broad third-generation diasporan, she established a connection to her diasporic status. Through the lens of embodied trauma, she drew a line of continuity of diasporic existence across generations.

> "[Nairuhi:] You know it is difficult to explain my [child] that I became diasporan because of my tragic history.
>
> [Hakob:] May I ask you, what do you mean?
>
> [Nairuhi:] The Genocide. The reason for my tragedy is the Genocide that I appeared in [the Middle East]. I mean, my ancestors, my grandparents, my great grandparents from both sides. For instance, my grandparents from my mum's side were five-six and seven-eight-year-old kids who somehow escaped and after a long, dangerous, and hard way they reached to [a country in the Middle East]. They were orphans and had gone through all the horrific sufferings before their arrival at the orphanage of [a city in the Middle East]. They grew up in the orphanage, and then they found their life partners and created their new families. I am their grandchild, and therefore my [child] is their great grandchild. I tried to explain to [my child] all this story, but [s/he] always expressed straightforwardly: 'Yes, but mum now we have Armenia.'"

By stating "I appeared in [the Middle East]", Nairuhi dismissed the country of her birth in the Middle East as a homeland, distinguishing it from an actual or imagined ancestral homeland. She also viewed her diasporic status, attributed to the Genocide, as a permanent condition and sought to extend a similar status to her child through her diasporic agency. Nairuhi's child, growing up with a diasporic socialisation in Hungary, grapples with the bestowed diasporic identity as a great-grandchild of Genocide survivors, while simultaneously recognising Armenia as an existing geographical entity. Nairuhi's child negotiates their diasporic status within the binaries of 'stateless' and 'state-linked' diaspora, thereby transcending the Genocide's trauma as the sole factor of their diasporic identity.

Later, Nairuhi delved into her early schooling, highlighting the controversial aspects of language and religion. She noted that her education predominantly occurred in Arabic, which was at odds with her desire to learn about Armenian history, literature, and culture. This schooling structure significantly impacted her daily life:

> "I chose my education to be related to Armenians. [...] I wanted to know my history, my literature, my culture, because I was really suffering that I was studying in Arabic, the life of Arab poets, writers. I used to learn by comparing everything to the Armenian to learn Armenian. [...] How beautiful our own history was, I mean at that time we also studied some Armenian history but just a

> little. In there I could find more exciting things for me because it was closer to me. [...] That was the time when I felt discomfort, but I had to learn Arabic to fulfill all the requirements of the school."

Nairuhi's educational path shaped her as a diaspora actor, instilling her with specific yet limited knowledge about her origin valuable within her diasporic context. In response, she questioned her role within diaspora while concurrently affirming her ability to counterbalance the impacts of the structural forces by being able to accumulate the institutionalised cultural capital from Armenia after her schooling in the Middle East. Furthermore, her choice "to be related to Armenians" and "to have links to Armenia" was purposeful for two reasons. Firstly, it solidified her position as an actor with a diasporic habitus. Secondly, it empowered her as an active agent, committed to upholding a distinctive form of Armenianness rooted in the ongoing process of social construction.

In search of similarities and differences

Descent with an expiration date: "their ancestors were Armenians, but not they"

Nairuhi depicted the Transylvanian Armenians as a group that has undergone "full assimilation", primarily comprised of a small number of elderly individuals who assert their Armenian heritage. The act of proclaiming one's roots involves intricate negotiations of descent, serving as a continuous link between the ancestral past and their current self-identification as diaspora participants. However, Nairuhi challenged the notion of an unbroken link between possessing Armenian roots and asserting a diasporic identity in the case of Transylvanian Armenians. She perceived a disconnect, indicating that the claims to Armenian descent lacked ongoing relevance due to the complete assimilation of this group. Nairuhi's perspective introduced a temporal limitation to claims of Armenian ancestry and in this light she rejected the Transylvanian Armenians as diaspora actors of Armenian descent who, unlike their ancestors, are no longer Armenians.

Unlabelled: "consider what you want"

Nairuhi included the post-Genocide Armenians as her second diaspora group, encompassing both the Genocide survivors who settled in Hungary a century ago and their second and third generations born in the country. Nairuhi viewed this group as having a strong relationship to Hungary, with many of them being born, raised, and growing up in the Hungarian environment. Similar to the Transylvanian Armenians, Nairuhi also considered the post-Genocide Armenians as assimilated. Moreover, she defined as-

similation through the diminishing use of the ethnic language – "they sometimes know some Armenian or do not know" – and mixed marriages to non-Armenians.

She depicted this group's claim to Armenian identity as stemming from a continuity of ancestral descent over several generations, despite assimilation. More specifically, their claims of being Armenian relied on the perception of inheriting their Armenian heritage from parents. Nairuhi challenged these claims, not because the link to ancestral descent has 'expired' as in the case of the Transylvanian Armenians, rather because of mixed-marriages, which she saw a disruptive factor of the continuity of ancestral descent. As a result, she hesitated to authenticate the further generations of mixed-marriages as Armenians – "I let you think about their children, consider what you want."

Armenians after the 1990s: "different people with different backgrounds"

Nairuhi described the Armenians who settled in Hungary after the 1990s from Armenia as "different people with different backgrounds." These 'Armenians after the 1990s' from Armenia as a group of diasporic actors constitute a 'social generation'[25] that migrated in the same period of the 1990s and from the same place. Nonetheless, the "different backgrounds" of these diaspora actors call into question the 'same' qualifier for both the period of migration and the place of departure and imply differentiations beyond (dis-)continuity of descent like in the cases of the present generations of the Transylvanian and post-Genocide Armenians.

> "For instance, there are Armenians who are from the regions of Armenia, and they even had not visited Yerevan in their whole life while living in Armenia. They do not have any understanding of city life, they did not experience city life, and they are too far from that. So imagine now they somehow appeared in Budapest, in Hungary, and even in the small towns."

One of such "different backgrounds" relates to the behaviour of diasporic actors before and after settlement in Hungary. In that vein, Nairuhi envisioned incompatibility of behaviours between the actor's life experiences in rural areas of Armenia and the urban life after the settlement in Hungary. She identified the diaspora actors with a lack of necessary experience of living in urban areas to demand authentication of diaspora actors through behaviour in the Armenian diaspora setting of Hungary where the majority of the Armenians live in Budapest.

For completing the authentication of those diaspora actors, Nairuhi observed the institutionalised cultural capital of the Armenians after the 1990s as another characteristic of "different backgrounds". Moreover, Nairuhi identified the social positions of

25 Cf. Mannheim, Karl: Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge. London 1952; Eckstein, Susan; Barberia, Lorena: Grounding Immigrant Generations in History. Cuban Americans and Their Transnational Ties. In: International migration review 36/3 (2002), 799 – 837.

these actors by unpacking their capital packages, as well as the strategies of conversion of the capitals. For Nairuhi, the actors with no institutionalised cultural capital – "the ones who do not have an education" – are also economically powerless. Nairuhi recalled the Armenian language as the marker of cultural identity for diaspora Armenians, and for that reason, she did not authenticate these actors, who migrated from Armenia, as carriers of the Armenian cultural identity. She pictured the everyday life of these actors as a "struggle for survival" and specified their social position with the absence or low volume of cultural and economic capitals.

> "Some people know that they have to struggle because they cannot earn in the offices in front of their desks. That is why they found jobs in the markets to solve the problems of their everyday lives."

By contrast, Nairuhi pictured the Armenians with institutional cultural capital – "the others who have an education" – as strategic social actors – "they are very nimble and clever in their steps [...] they learn the language, the laws." These Armenians strategically accumulate the capitals and knowledge – "they use great efforts to learn Hungarian as quickly as possible" – valuable for their self-positioning among the Hungarians. For Nairuhi, such a disposition guides self-initiated and swift integration of these actors into the Hungarian society in terms of the language and everyday life. Nevertheless, the self-positioning of these actors as culturally integrated among the Hungarians is authenticated by the others, first of all, the Hungarians.

Conclusion

This research into the diverse aspects of diasporic experiences and identity formation has emphasised the importance of understanding cultural identity without essentialism. I have highlighted the significance of heterogeneity, diversity, and hybridity as essential components of diasporic identity. The analysis has demonstrated the significance of Stuart Hall's concept of diaspora as a cultural identity that is consistently shaped by narrative. Additionally, Bourdieu's social field theory provided a framework for understanding the complexities of diasporic social phenomena and comprehending diasporas as transnational communities operating within multiple interrelated social fields. Ultimately, this research emphasises the dynamic nature of identity formation and the need to transcend rigid categorisations, recognising that cultural identity is ever-changing.

The analysis of the Armenian diaspora in Hungary has revealed the power dynamics, struggles for diasporic authority and the distribution of diasporic capital, focusing on cultural identity constructions within different groups. The in-depth interviews provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of individuals of Armenian descent in Hungary and shed light on the complexities of diasporic experiences and identity constructions in the context of globalisation and migration. Through exemplary

stories we have gained insight into the contrasting views on cultural authentication, economic interests, and integration into Hungarian society.

This research contributes to the broader understanding of diasporic phenomena and offers insights into the dynamics of contemporary societies and their multifaceted interactions. Ultimately, the study of diasporas as ever-evolving cultural identities, situated within and beyond national borders, can enrich our understanding of the global flows of culture, representation, and identity.

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Gintarė Venzlauskaitė

The (Im-)Possibility of 'Victim Diasporas' in Russia. The Case of Lithuanian Communities in Siberia

Abstract: By taking the case of the Lithuanian diaspora occasioned by forced migration to Siberia, this article discusses the (im-)possibility – and possible explanations for the ambiguous character – of 'victim diasporas' in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. I assert that, differently from its counterparts in the West, the Lithuanian diaspora of displacements in Russia represents an atypical case that bears signs pertinent to 'victim', 'accidental', as well as 'demobilising' diaspora. Among the key reasons for this are a historically restrictive socio-political environment towards victimised groups, limitations for the organisation and activity of ethno-national communities, as well as more of an amplified state agenda by the Russian government presided by Vladimir Putin. The discussion draws on the relevant theoretical considerations and qualitative primary research conducted as part of a PhD project on Lithuanian diasporas of displacements. Taking into account the time of writing, it has been adapted to include a brief commentary on the impact of Russia's war in Ukraine on the Lithuanian diaspora.

Keywords: Lithuanian diaspora in Russia, Lithuanian communities in Siberia, victim diasporas, forced migration, diaspora theory

Introduction

This article focuses on the Lithuanian diaspora in Russia that occurred as a result of Soviet mass deportations between 1941 and 1952. The overarching discussion highlights the challenges of the so-called 'victim diasporas' – i. e., diasporas born out of traumatic forced migration in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia both in practice and in diaspora theory.[1] By extension, the article draws attention to the relevance of the Lithuanian case for extending or exemplifying other theoretical notions of diaspora. These include Rogers Brubaker's term of 'accidental diasporas', referring to communities originating from the movement of borders across people;[2] and Victoria Redclift's take on the 'demobilisation' of diasporas, as partially determined by absent or conflicting collective memory.[3]

The impact of the collapse of the Soviet Union turned a new page in the academic debates around topics such as nation-building, transitional processes, and nationalities

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1 Cf. Cohen, Robin: Global Diasporas. An Introduction. London ^{2}2003, 2.

2 Brubaker, Rogers: Accidental Diasporas and External "Homelands" in Central and Eastern Europe: Past and Present. Wien 2000 (Reihe Politikwissenschaft 71).

3 Redclift, Victoria: The Demobilization of Diaspora. History, Memory, and 'Latent Identity'. In: Global Networks 17/4 (2017), 500 – 517.

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ethnicities and identities; with migration and diaspora being no exception.[4] Attention has been especially drawn to the millions who were left 'stranded' across the territories of the successor states. The most staggering example was the approximately 25 million Russians and Russian speakers who suddenly found themselves 'abroad'. Other nationalities in a similar position, such as Ukrainians, Kazakhs, Armenians and Jews, have been also receiving attention.[5]

However, when it comes to Lithuanians (and displacement-caused dispersals in particular), the literature has been relatively scarce. Unsurprisingly, most of the existing coverage originates from Lithuanian researchers, although their work typically discusses Lithuanian communities in Russia, in the wider context of Soviet repressions, or the history of the Lithuanian diaspora. While this is sufficient for understanding the origins and causes of different waves of migration and the particularities of their lives, authors covering the Eastward Lithuanian diaspora generally do not delve too deeply into theoretical interpretations.

By the same token, not nearly as much scholarly attention has been shown to the Eastward Lithuanian diaspora in comparison with the Western Lithuanian refugee diaspora prompted by the Soviet occupation. It could be traced back to the differences in the empirical outputs generated by both diasporas. Over the last century, Lithuanians in the West have gathered rich community-held archives of documents, cultural artefacts, recordings, and multi-media; all of which are reflective of the global organisational activity that was possible due to their living in democratic countries. In contrast, the records of and about displaced Lithuanians in the Russian Empire, and later the Soviet Union, are predominantly state-run, with the material and literary heritage reflective of life in exile mostly gathered after the restoration of Lithuanian independence (11 March 1990). Attempts to obtain and record the heritage of Lithuanians in Siberia exists,[6] but the overall status of the documentation, and access to these archives, is reflective of the impact that the political conditions over the last couple centuries in Russia have had on Lithuanians' voice and representation, including in research.

This article is driven by the question of what the Lithuanian case can tell us, not only about the notion of diasporas of forced migration, but also about diasporas in post-Soviet Russia more generally. As such, this article draws theoretical and empirical attention to this understudied diaspora. Moreover, it contributes to this Volume by talking about the limitations of conceptual notions pertaining to diaspora(s), while also of-

4 Cf. for example Kølsto, Pål: Russians in the Former Soviet Republics. London 1995; Smith, Graham; Law, Vivien; Wilson, Andrew; Bohr, Annette; Allworth, Edward: Nation Building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands. The Politics of National Identities. Cambridge 1998.

5 Cf. King, Charles; Melvin, Neil J. (Eds.): Nations Abroad. Diaspora Politics and International Relations in the Former Soviet Union. New York 1998.

6 Cf. for example Bilotas, Viktoras: Su Lietuva susijęs 1773–1923 m. dokumentinis paveldas Sibiro archyvuose [Documentary Heritage of 1773–1923 of Siberian Archives with Significance to Lithuania]. In: Knygotyra 79 (2022), 250–269.

fering insights on the social processes and political conditions that determine the making and unmaking of diasporas.

I argue that while framing similar cases as 'victim diaspora' is key, it is important to acknowledge their ambivalent character and general 'impossibility' of such diasporas in Russia as theoretically fully understood. The historically restrictive socio-political environment for victimised groups, limitations for the organisation and activity of ethno-national communities, as well as the amplified political agenda by the Russian government presided over by Vladimir Putin since February 2022 means that, unlike its counterparts in the West, the Lithuanian diaspora in Siberia represents an atypical case that contains elements of being the 'victim'; but also 'accidental', as well as a likely 'demobilising' diaspora.

The discussion is drawn from relevant literature and qualitative PhD fieldwork conducted in 2016 and 2017.[7] However, recognising the gravity of the political developments in Russia and the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, it also incorporates follow-up insights for the purposes of this exploratory contribution. Stretching broadly from imperial Russia to the end of the Soviet Union, the first section provides a background and context. The second section expands on the earlier-mentioned theoretical considerations seen as applicable to the Lithuanian diaspora in question. The third and fourth sections discuss the development of this diaspora during and after the Soviet period as well as making observations about it in conjunction with the war in Ukraine.

Background and context

WWII and the successive Nazi and Soviet occupations of Lithuania resulted in the loss of over one third of its pre-war population through death and large-scale involuntary migration.[8] Almost the entire Lithuanian Jewish population (over 200,000 people) was annihilated during the Holocaust.[9] Subject to involuntary or forced migration, ~490,000 were repatriated to Germany and Poland,[10] while ~80,000 Lithuanians fled westwards as political refugees.[11] Finally, ~456,000 fell victims to Soviet repression.[12] As a result of those seeking political refuge in the West and deportations to the East, the number of

7 Qualitative research was grounded in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of 120 in-depth semi-structured interviews in five countries where significant numbers of the members of the Lithuanian diaspora live or returned to live as a result of the Second World War and Stalinist repressions: Lithuania, the United States, the Russian Federation (multiple locations in Siberia, Kaliningrad), Latvia, the United Kingdom. Most of the interviews in Russia have been conducted in Russian, with the support of a research assistant.

8 Cf. Anušauskas, Arvydas: Teroras 1940–1958 m. [Terror 1940–1958]. Vilnius 2013, 280.

9 Cf. Eidintas, Alfonsas: Jews, Lithuanians, and the Holocaust]. Vilnius 2003, 16.

10 Cf. Anušauskas, Teroras (cf. n. 8), 280.

11 Cf. Bartusevičius, Vincas: Lietuviai DP stovyklose Vokietijoje, 1945–1951 [Lithuanians in DP camps in Germany, 1945–1951]. Vilnius 2012, 11.

12 Cf. Anušauskas, Teroras (cf. n. 8), 280.

new – and the size of previously existing[13] – Lithuanian diaspora in countries such as United States, Canada, Australia, Argentina, the United Kingdom, and Russia increased significantly. However, in comparison to some Lithuanian diasporic communities born out of initial mass (and generally economic) waves of migration to countries like the UK or the US, the origins and trajectories of Russia-bound migrations are more complex as a result of the greater political transformations involved and with fewer historical records remaining.

Historians have discovered that, when it comes to 19th and early 20th century Lithuanian migration to the Russian empire (which Lithuania was a part of until 1918), the numerous dispersals in the East were a mixture of exiles from the 1831 and 1863 rebellions, industrial workers, army recruits, students, and WWI retreats.[14] Indeed, this period saw its fair share of intellectual engagement among Lithuanian people, including sowing seeds for cultural activity not only in big cities, but also in Siberia. According to Linas Saldukas' research, for example, a Lithuanian school, publishing house, and a bookshop were all present in Tomsk.[15] However, their communal activity was significantly restricted by the imperial government, later side-lined by the Bolshevik revolution, and completely shut down in the wake of the Soviet Union.

In the early years of the first Lithuanian Republic,[16] a quarter of a million WWI refugees and exiles that went to Russia between 1915 and 1918, repatriated to Lithuania with an increasingly developing sense of cultural-political awareness and support for the cause of Lithuanian independence – something that was attributed to the efforts of the Lithuanian relief administration in Russia.[17] Those remaining were subjected to socio-political changes in the Soviet Union, including those who sympathised with its ideology.

After the occupation of Lithuania in 1940, followed by the Soviet repressions and mass deportations administered between 1941 and 1952, over 300,000 people from Lithuania were deported, imprisoned and exiled in remote areas of Yakutia, Altai, Krasnoyarsk, Tomsk, Irkutsk, Sverdlovsk, Novosibirsk, and other areas across wider Soviet Union at the time (e. g., Kazakhstan, Tajikistan).[18] It is estimated that ~28,000 of them died from extreme travel, living and labour conditions and treatment by the Soviet ad-

13 N.B. Sparked by abolition of serfdom, military reform in the Russian Empire, and uprisings against the government; the 19th century marked the first substantial waves of migration from Lithuania, the most significant one being economic migration. Cf. Aleksandravičius, Egidijus: Karklo diegas. Lietuvių pasaulio istorija [Willow Sprout. A History of the Lithuanian World]. Vilnius 2013.

14 Cf. Balkelis, Tomas: Forging a 'Moral Community'. The Great War and Lithuanian Refugees in Russia. In: Idem / Davoliūtė, Violeta (Eds.): Population Displacement in Lithuanian in the Twentieth Century. Experiences, Identities, Legacies. Leiden-Boston 2016, 42–61, here 43; Aleksandravičius, Karklo diegas (cf. n. 13), 117–122, 145–153.

15 Cf. Saldukas, Linas: Lithuanian Diaspora. Vilnius 2002, 191f.

16 The first Republic of Lithuania was established in 1918 and lasted until 1940 when it was occupied by the Soviet Union.

17 Cf. Balkelis, Forging a 'Moral Community' (cf. n. 14), 58.

18 Cf. Anušauskas, Teroras (cf. n. 8), 280.

ministration and its functionaries.[19] As a consequence, these communities are good candidates for a contemporary case of 'victim' or 'classic diaspora' – a term rooted in the so-called prototypical cases of displaced groups (e. g., Jewish, Greek, Armenian, Palestinian, etc.) – because of the traumatic way in which they were uprooted.[20] However, their consolidation as diaspora never transpired in a way similar to involuntary Lithuanian migrants who ran towards the West as political refugees and fit the definition to the letter.

'Victim diasporas' are generally defined by the experience of forced migration, memory of loss, myths and idealisation of homeland. Trauma and a strong sense of belonging facilitate consolidation of the group of common roots and fate, possibly complex relationships with host societies, actions to preserve traits of cultural identity, and the determination to return and actively restore what has been lost, including political activism geared towards the (re-)building of a nation state.[21]

The involuntary nature of their departure gave Lithuanian refugees the political impulse to gather into culturally and ethnically insular communities. Secondly, diasporic life was seen as a way to retain national identity and ensure continuity of what was abruptly lost. Thirdly, their personal and communal life was characteristic of diasporic activity geared towards community building, national-cultural education, and a Lithuania-focused upbringing of further generations. Finally, a significant part of their activity was dedicated to the Lithuanian political cause exercised by way of protesting, lobbying local and national officials, communications to national and international authorities (such as the United Nations), and relaying and publishing about Soviet repressions.[22] This was largely possible because they settled in countries that were proud of their democratic governance. Lithuanians could exercise their rights to civil and economic liberty, freedom of speech and expression, and utilise it in order to represent their own voices as well as voices of those in the Soviet Union.

The case of their counterparts – people deported and dispersed in the Soviet Union – further highlights the importance of the socio-political conditions for the development of the 'by-the-book' ethno-national 'victim diasporas'. This also explains what makes Lithuanian deportees' communities in Russia an atypical 'victim diaspora' case and opens doors to other theoretical and conceptual considerations.

19 Cf. ibid, 276.

20 Cohen, Global Diasporas (cf. n. 1), 2 f.

21 Cf. ibid, 2, 17, 39 f.

22 Cf. for example Aleksandravičius, Egidijus; Kuizinienė Dalia; Dapkutė, Daiva: The Cultural Activities of Lithuanian Émigrés. Vilnius 2002; Banionis, Juozas: Lietuvos laisvinimas vakaruose 1940 – 1975 [Lithuanian Liberation in the West 1940 – 1975]. Vilnius 2010; Čiubrinskas, Vytis: Strengthening Mono-Cultural Nationalism in the Transatlantic Space. The Cases of Ethno-Cultural Revivalism and Diasporic Nationalism in Lithuania and the USA. In; Ruegg, François; Boscobainik, Andrea (Eds.): From Palermo to Penang. A Journey into Political Anthropology. Berlin 2011, 103 – 118; Dapkutė, Daiva: Lithuanian Diaspora: From Displaced Persons to Diaspora Politics. In: Balkelis/Davoliūtė, Population Displacement (cf. n. 14), 236 – 258.

Theoretical considerations

Traditionally, diaspora has been associated with imposed migration experiences, which later became aligned with 'victim' or 'classic' diaspora types. As more flexibility to diaspora theory developed to accommodate contemporary dispersals, the more indicative sign of diaspora as a phenomenon became a triadic transnational connection with a country of origin ('homeland'), country of residence ('hostland'), and to the extended global diasporic network.[23]

Since the 1990s, 'diaspora' continued to grow in popularity as a concept and was explored, altered and applied within and beyond the academic community. Rogers Brubaker even commented ironically that the employment of the term for "any and every nameable population category that is to some extent dispersed in space [ideological, political, activist, linguistic, and other communities] [...] results in the disappearance of diaspora".[24] This semantic exhaustion added some confusion for those who prefer its more traditional uses, but it also inspired those looking for vocabulary to explain the different migration-incepted communities. While it is generally agreed that global migratory movements spark dispersions, and what Gabriel Sheffer called "incipient diasporas",[25] these movements are far from uniform or, in words of Ato Quayson and Girish Daswani, "not all dispersals lead to diasporas".[26]

The emergence of 'transnationalism' theory, also in the early 1990s, introduced further nuance. It pursued the exploration of people who maintain mobile connections between two and more countries, transnationally divide their loyalties, juggle identities, engage with nation-building or social change projects, share economic and professional capital and so on.[27] 'Transnationalism' extended invitations to debates about 'incipient diasporas' and the conditions that promote or prevent their transformation into diaspora in a more classical sense.[28] Authors like Gabriel Sheffer added to this debate by distinguishing between 'ethno-national' diasporas and transnational communities in attempt to show that not all dispersals of people organise themselves as diasporas culturally or politically. He also suggested that many transnational dispersals are typically labelled as such 'from above' (for example, linguistic or religious communities),

23 Cf. for example Tölölyan, Khachig: The Nation-State and Its Others. In Lieu of a Preface. In: Diaspora. A Journal of Transnational Studies 1/1 (1991), 3–7; Bruneau, Michel: Diasporas, Transnational Spaces and Communities. In: Faist, Rainer; Bauböck, Thomas (Eds.): Diaspora and Transnationalism. Concepts, Theories and Methods. Amsterdam 2010, 35–71.

24 Brubaker, Rogers: The 'Diaspora' Diaspora. In: Ethnic and Racial Studies 28/1 (2009), 1–19, here 3.

25 Sheffer, Gabriel: The Emergence of New Ethno-National Diasporas. In: Migration. A European Journal of International Migration and Ethnic Relations 28/2 (1995), 5–28, here 8.

26 Quayson, Ato; Daswani, Girish: Introduction – Diaspora and Transnationalism. Scapes, Scales and Scopes. In: Idem (Eds.): A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism. Chichester 2013, 1–16, here 3.

27 Cf. Basch, Linda; Glick-Schiller, Nina; Szanton Blanc, Cristina: Nations Unbound. Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States. Hoboken 1993, 7.

28 Cf. ibid.

while ethno-national diasporas typically consolidate and define themselves 'from below'.[29] It is worth noting, however, that his work also asserted that many migrant communities are in constant transformation, conditioned by various socio-political aspects in their countries of origin and countries of destination.[30]

'Diaspora' and 'transnationalism' continue to be discussed in tandem as new research allows these concepts to be adopted, adapted, and aggregated. For example, Ghassan Hage's work emphasises the importance of exploring the diversity and complexity of the diasporic condition, and what he calls 'diasporic lenticularity' – "a mode of existing in multiple realities"[31] – and how this may challenge perceptions of both: social realities as well as who are "thought of as 'diasporic subjects'".[32] Similarly, Tsypylma Darieva synthesised those concepts in her research of the Armenian diaspora. She captures diasporic behaviours of the third and later generations that were unprecedented in their predecessors, which somewhat echoes Sheffer's insight about constant transformation.[33] As this article aims to demonstrate, the transformation as and of diaspora is particularly related to political conditions and events.

Robin Cohen distinguished five types of diaspora: 'victim' or 'refugee', 'imperial' or 'colonial', 'labour' or 'economic', 'trade/business' as well as 'cultural/hybrid/postmodern'.[34] In the first edition of his book on global diasporas, Cohen also included his take on dispersals resulting from 'moving' borders (i. e. separated by war, peace treaties, or without moving in any other way), calling them 'stranded minorities', yet expressing reservations for calling such groups as strictly diasporic in his own terms.[35] Rogers Brubaker proposed to call such populations 'accidental diasporas' – the label similarly exemplified by dispersals resulting from the break-up of the Ottoman, Romanov and Habsburg empires, as well as the Soviet Union.[36] Brubaker drawn attention to the unique self-perception of similar groups in that they rarely consider themselves to be voluntary migrants or immigrants because, even if they moved from one place to the other, the territory was defined differently. Using the Russians as an example, he said: "[e]ven those who had themselves migrated from the Soviet core to the periphery had not crossed state borders; rather, they had moved *within* the territory of the Soviet state".[37] Moreover, he explained that many of those who found themselves in a new country, "felt themselves to 'belong' by ethnocultural nationality, though not by legal

29 Cf. Sheffer, Gabriel: Transnationalism and Ethnonational Diasporism. In: Diaspora. A Journal of Transnational Studies 15/1 (2006), 121–145.

30 Cf. Sheffer, The Emergence of New Ethno-National Diasporas (cf. n. 25), 8.

31 Hage, Ghassan: The Diasporic Condition. Ethnographic Explorations of the Lebanese in the World. Chicago-London 2021, 5.

32 Ibid., 7.

33 Cf. Darieva, Tsypylma: 'Journey to the Future': Imaginaries and Motivations for Homeland Trips among Diasporic Armenians. In: Global Networks 17/3 (2017), 423–440, here 436 f.

34 Cohen, Robin: Global Diasporas. An Introduction, London 1991, 190 f.

35 Ibid, 18; 191.

36 Cf. Brubaker, Accidental Diasporas (cf. n. 2).

37 Ibid., 3.

citizenship, to a 'homeland' state from which they were separated by new – or newly significant – state borders".[38]

Although neither Cohen nor Brubaker distinguish between the types of migration leading to likes of accidental diasporas, I suggest that diasporas originating from forced migration can fit under this term. This is especially the case when it comes to the generations born in the territory that their predecessors were brought to against their will and is not their historical homeland. This, by extension, speaks to the issue of split and shifting identities common in diaspora descendant generations, especially when the intergenerational transmission of memory (or 'communicative memory', to use Jan Assmann's term)[39] pertinent to diasporic identity is fractured.

By the same token, as Victoria Redclift's work asserts, when the forgetting of, or alienation with, homeland is more prevalent, this can lead to the demobilisation of diaspora.[40] She also suggests that (re-)surfacing memories which suddenly expose silences or competing narratives within the community (or between the community and homeland's grand narratives) can be reasons for demobilisation. As the case of the Lithuanian diaspora shows, resurfacing memories can mobilise a community, especially after a period of silence facilitated by external influence, e. g., political power. However, the same is true for diaspora demobilisation caused by competing perspectives and alienation with the homeland.

In summary, it is important to acknowledge the relevance of 'ambivalence' and 'ambiguity' when it comes to theorisation of the forced migration of the Lithuanian diaspora in Russia. 'Ambivalence' as an expression of plurality of the existing possibilities and qualities, and 'ambiguity' as means of affirming that something is neither one nor the other, from whatever point it is looked at.[41]

The (im-)possibility of Lithuanian 'victim diaspora' in Russia

The Soviet Union prided itself in all-inclusive policies for Soviet nationalities, which provided them with a considerable range of opportunities to combine "national form with the Soviet content", particularly for nationalities that 'had' their own titular territory, such as Lithuania.[42] However, as pointed out by Terry Martin, Stalin did not explain what that exactly meant, suggesting that "the closest translation best capturing

38 Ibid.

39 Cf. Assmann, Jan: Communicative and Cultural Memory. In: Cultural Memory Studies. International and Interdisciplinary Handbook. Berlin-New York 2008, 109–118.

40 Cf. Redclift, The Demobilization of Diaspora (cf. n. 3).

41 Cf. Augé, Marc: A Sense for the Other. The Timeliness and Relevance of Anthropology. Stanford 1998, 30 f.

42 Slezkine, Yuri: The USSR as Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism. In: Slavic Review 53/2 (1994), 414–452, here 414.

the meaning of Stalin's *natsionalt'naia kul'tura* is not 'national culture', but 'national identity' or 'symbolic ethnicity'".[43] This strategy focused on the aggressive promotion of national self-consciousness expressed through "symbolic markers of national identity: national folklore, museums, dress, food, costumes, opera, poets, progressive historical events, and classic literary works".[44] He emphasised, however, that the Soviet nationalities policy cannot be fully understood without the context of Soviet terror. While referring to the campaigns between late 1920s and 1930s, he pointed to the misalignment between the support and encouragement of non-Russian ethno-national culture and the hard-line targeting of "bourgeois nationalists", who were seen as a threat.[45] In other words, the nationalities policy was applied with exceptions of individuals and/or groups when other core Soviet values stood higher.

The Soviet nationalities policy is important in not only appreciating the (im-)possibility of the inception of deported Lithuanians as a 'victim diaspora', but also of its typical development and continuity during and after the Soviet era. The forced uprooting, dispersal in foreign territory and traumatic experience determined patterns attributed to a 'victim diaspora'. However, as a group and individually, these people were largely stigmatised, silenced, and disenfranchised. This suppressed or delayed political action, mobilisation and self-organisation of returnees, as well as the diasporic community of those who remained in Russia.[46]

The whole set-up of the Stalinist Soviet system determined the deportees' relationship with the structural domains as inevitably submissive and directly obedient. Their status as a group was defined in a rather normatively-ideologically marginalising fashion manifesting itself in derogatory labelling as well as legal constraints. The sentence of imprisonment and exile could span anywhere from ten years to a lifetime and included hard labour as well as travel and movement restrictions. Exiles were only allowed to stay and work within a designated area and had to register at the local commandant's office on a regular basis to prove that they had not escaped.

Many deportees exercised their determination to return by escaping exile, with ~3,890 fugitives making or attempting to go back to Lithuania illegally,[47] and with around 60 percent of deportees repatriating to Lithuanian SSR before 1970 despite hostile policies tailored to discourage, intimidate and discriminate returnees.[48] The deported Lithuanians also tried to preserve their national culture in exile and harboured or

43 Martin, Terry: The Affirmative Action State. Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union 1923–1939. Ithaca-London 2001, 12.

44 Ibid., 13.

45 Ibid., 23.

46 Cf. Saldukas, Lithuanian Diaspora (cf. n. 15), 193.

47 Cf. Racėnas, Rimvydas: Į mielą šalį Lietuvą. Tremtinių bėglių ir našlaičių pargabenimo istorijos [To the Dear Land Lithuania. The Stories of Deportees-Fugitives and Orphan Transport to Lithuania]. Vilnius 2013, 8–10.

48 Cf. Anušauskas, Arvydas; Bubnys, Arūnas; Kuodytė, Dalia; Jakubčionis, Algirdas; Tininis, Vytautas; Truska, Liudas (Eds.): Lietuva 1940–1990. Okupuotos Lietuvos istorija [Lithuania 1940–1990. The History of Occupied Lithuania]. Vilnius 2007, 421.

acted upon their feelings of longing for the homeland through traditional celebrations, preservation of folklore, cultivation of exilic narratives and so on.[49] Nevertheless, it would typically not to extend beyond the privacy of one's notebook or the boundaries of family/settlement. The authorities monitored activities expressive of national identity, and exiles could be punished for public displays of affection toward their country and national identity:

> "We celebrated Easter, Christmas, other occasions. We gathered, cooked, baked. Everybody would bring something. We sang, danced, played music. Only Lithuanian songs and dances. However, because our home was usually the gathering spot, my mother and I were called in by the authorities several times. They would keep us quite long, interrogated." (Anonymous, Barnaul 2017).

However, people also remember local officials turning a blind eye, especially in later years, which can be explained by destalinisation and a more flexible approach to nationalities policy.[50]

As some accounts show, during Nikita Khrushchëv's 'Thaw' (eventually resulting in the amnesty of deportees), Lithuanians were even able to gather into folklore groups. A booklet (*Little Lithuania in Irkutsk*) explains how, despite concerns over possible uninvited attention from the security services, the local youth organised a song and dance group in Irkutsk.[51] Starting its activity in 1956, the invitations to various city events followed, including a song and dance festival in the Irkutsk region. The collective ceased its activity in Siberia after more and more Lithuanians decided to return home.

However, while possibilities of expression and more dignified life increased with destalinisation, deportees' stories also suggest that in later decades many kept relatively silent about their former status. This was incorporated in social and professional life strategies in the hope of increasing geographical and social mobility, taking an assimilationist approach to raising offspring, withholding the memory of trauma, and generally refraining from congregating as a group and from collective activity.[52]

This is supported by interviews with Siberian exiles' offspring, whose reflections reveal a considerable memory vacuum that descendants were subjected to with regards to knowledge about their parents' past. 'Knowledge' is an important word to take a note of since, as suggested by Jan Assmann:

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49 Cf. for example Balkelis, Tomas: Ethnicity and Identity in the Memoirs of Lithuanian Children Deported to the Gulag. In: Idem; Davoliūtė, Violeta (Eds.): Narratives of Exile and Identity. Soviet Deportation Memoirs from the Baltic States. Budapest-New York 2018, 41–64.

50 Cf. Kemp, Walter A.: Nationalism and Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. A Basic Contradiction? London 1999, 134–136.

51 Cf. Jankauskienė, Rožė; Jankauskas, Alfonsas (Eds.): Maža Lietuva Irkutske. Lietuvių meno saviveikla Irkutske 1955–1962 [Little Lithuania in Irkutsk. Lithuanian Artistic Activity in Irkutsk]. Kaunas 1994.

52 Cf. Koustova, Emilia; Megowan, Erina: (Un)Returned from the Gulag: Life Trajectories and Integration of Postwar Special Settlers. In: Kritika. Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History 16/3 (2015), 589–620.

> "On all levels, memory is an open system. Still, it is not totally open and diffuse; there are always frames that relate memory to specific horizons of time and identity on the individual, generational, political, and cultural levels. Where this relation is absent, we are not dealing with memory but with knowledge. Memory is knowledge with an identity-index, it is knowledge about oneself, that is, one's own diachronic identity, be it as an individual or as a member of a family, a generation, a community, a nation, or a cultural and religious tradition. Groups are formed and cohere by the dynamics of association and dissociation which is always loaded (to varying degrees) with affection. [...] These 'affective ties' lend memories their special intensity. Remembering is a realization of belonging, even a social obligation. One has to remember in order to belong".[53]

This argument significantly resonates with Victoria Redclift's point about forgetting as a factor that is instrumental to the demobilisation of diaspora, which can be observed in the case of the Lithuanian diaspora in the Soviet decades following destalinisation.

While the second-generation Lithuanian interviewees in the United States talked about growing up with stories about displacement and injustices done to Lithuania, this generation's participants in Siberia noted that they knew only a little about the circumstances and experiences of their parents' deportation and exile, suggesting that most of this knowledge came later in their lives and often after the collapse of the Soviet Union. For example, when asked about when and how a participant (b. mid-1960s) from Irkutsk region acquired an understanding of what happened to her parents (both were political prisoners), she admitted that it was very belated and prompted by her son's interest: "My father used to say to us that 'you know it all, but don't talk about it so it does not harm you. It is better to keep silent'."

For those who did not repatriate to Lithuania and stayed in the Russian SSR, a similar approach inadvertently resulted in the level of assimilation that prevented the language and memory being passed on to the next generation – another otherwise typical behaviour of 'victim diaspora' that has been prevalent in the refugee Lithuanian diaspora in the West.

It was not until significant political changes, and the inner partitions of the Soviet Union becoming international borders after its collapse in 1991, that the status of Lithuanians who resided in the territories outside of the Lithuanian SSR changed. This transformative event paradoxically made it an 'accidental' diaspora and brought about a possibility to gather as a formal community.

The lack of opportunities for forced migrants to develop as a typical diasporic network during the Soviet period is hardly surprising, considering they were subjected to a totalitarian and later authoritarian regime. However, instead of dismissing this as obvious, I further consider what effect it had on the development of the Lithuanian diaspora once the Soviet Union was no more, as well as its continuity.

53 Assmann, Communicative and Cultural Memory (cf. n. 39), 113 f.

Lithuanian diaspora in Russia after 1990

Scholars who researched the Soviet nationalities policy and/or the approach towards ethno-national minorities in the Russian Federation generally agree that, although not directly, the former informed the latter, more specifically, in principles and underlying objectives used to manage ethnic diversity.[54] One of the most common forms of this is known as non-territorial cultural autonomy or national-cultural autonomy (NCA). In Russian law, it refers to "first, a general principle by which individuals use various institutional formats to collectively pursue their rights and interests related to their ethnic origin, language, and culture", and "second, a specific form of ethnicity-based organization".[55] Alexander Osipov points out that although legally NCAs are presented as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), they have been lacking in the instruments and authority to operate as such, instead representing a symbolic "Russian public consensus" vis-à-vis ethnic minorities.[56]

The extent to which the ethnic minority organisations have been able to express themselves in Russia because of prescribed frameworks of national minority policies, largely limit them to ethno-cultural folklore-based symbolic activity which reveals enduring Soviet legacies.[57] However, Federica Prina explains that politics is not exactly excluded from the expectations for these communities. While the Russian state places national-cultural autonomies within cultural (and outside political) spheres, they are expected to convey the country's socio-political dynamics and support meta-narratives maintaining the political status quo:

> "Ethnic institutions must be understood in the context of the Russian leadership's centralized political system. Meanwhile, the Soviet folkloristic, ethnographic approach to inter-ethnic relations continues, revealing the enduring relevance of Soviet legacies".[58]

These considerations are critical when looking at the case of Lithuanian diasporic communities. Soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, a network of Lithuanian communities across Russia emerged. However, this is where the gap in the development as a classic 'victim diaspora' resulting from long-term socio-political pressures, transgenerational vacuums, and the fear of repercussions during Soviet times appeared significant for the way that Lithuanian diasporic communities in post-Soviet Russia were

54 Cf. Osipov, Alexander: National Cultural Autonomy in Russia: A Case of Symbolic Law. In: Review of Central and East European Law 35/1 (2010), 27–57, here 33–37; Prina, Federica: National in Form, Putinist in Content: Minority Institutions 'Outside Politics'. In: Europe-Asia Studies 70/8 (2018), 1236–1263, here 1237.

55 Osipov, National Cultural Autonomy in Russia (cf. n. 54), here 35 f.

56 Ibid.

57 Prina, National in Form, Putinist in Content (cf. n. 54), 1237, 1259.

58 Ibid., 1236.

organised. This was especially the case in Siberia where the concentration of former exiles was the most prominent.

The idea of establishing Lithuanian communities outside Lithuania, where such communities did not formally exist, was first discussed as early as 1990 in a summit of Lithuanian diaspora in Vilnius. In July 1991, a Lithuanian delegation visited the city of Barnaul in Altai with a goal to start a Lithuanian community. A community in Novosibirsk was founded a few months after, through a similar initiative. To agree with Egidijus Aleksandravičius, the reason this external push was needed is because the diasporic condition of Lithuanians in Russia during the Soviet period was significantly determined by political circumstances.[59] Circumstances that were marked by the absence of opportunities to develop cultural-voluntary organisational skills as well as the lack of confidence in the individual initiative to group effort.[60]

Gabriel Sheffer emphasised that ethno-national diasporas typically consolidate quite organically, through a connection of common fate and close networks which mobilise it from the ground-up.[61] Transnational communities, however, are not always self-aware as a network or organise themselves culturally or politically. Instead, they can be identified based on various commonalities by others, i. e., from above. While not in those precise terms, both of those notions resonate with the Lithuanian case, which makes it something between a diaspora and a transnational dispersal, again signalling a level of ambivalence.

As Simonas (b. early 1940s), interviewed in Krasnoyarsk in 2017 explained, 1990s were promising in giving space for reactivating silenced voices. The Yeltsin government was relatively supportive of the rehabilitation of the former victims of Stalinist repressions, encouraging the establishment of national communities, and the introduction of social programmes for those who were formerly repressed.[62] However, the founding and acceleration of communities came from the Lithuanian government, public organisations, and the Western diaspora. They helped Lithuanians in Russia with organisational practices, reaching out to local populations in search of Lithuanians, and establishing communities institutionally.[63] People were still cautious because of the ghosts of the recent past and had their reservations about the organisational efforts. In words of Simonas,

> "[o]n 28 May 1992, a few Lithuanians arrived in Krasnoyarsk. They announced on the radio and the paper that a gathering of our co-nationals – former deportees, political prisoners and other Lithuanians living in this city – will be organized. It was about 10 of us marking the birthday of Lithuanian cultural community *Lituanica.* But it was difficult to find people. Not that many Lithuanians knew other Lithuanians; everybody were apart, strongly russified, in oblivion of Lithuanian

59 Cf. Aleksandravičius, Karklo diegas (cf. n. 13), 569.

60 Cf. ibid, 569 f.

61 Cf. Sheffer, Transnationalism and Ethnonational Diasporism (cf. n. 29), 126 – 128.

62 Boris Yeltsin was inaugurated as the president of the Russian Federation in 1991 and resigned in 1999. His role was taken by Vladimir Putin in 2000.

63 Cf. Saldukas, Lithuanian diaspora (cf. n. 47), 193.

> traditions, language. How can you remember all of that after 50 years?... It was also difficult to believe that the government will not destroy this community. Although the CPSU at that point did not rule the country, it was frightening. It seemed that KGB would come, knock on our door, take us down." (Simonas, Krasnoyarsk 2017)

Despite the above concerns, officially registered Lithuanian communities sprung up around the Russian Federation (and especially Siberia) in the 1990s and have been active locally as well as transnationally until fairly recently. In 1992, three Lithuanian communities in Tomsk, Barnaul, and Krasnoyarsk have formed the Lithuanian Union in Siberia, which was followed by Siberian Lithuanians' integration as members of Lithuanian World community by the Lithuanian parliament.[64] Other communities across the Siberian regions followed (e. g., Yakutia, Irkursk, Buryatia), most registering as national-cultural communities.

When it comes to the nature of diasporic activity of the Lithuanian communities, as with many of their counterparts in the country, the most important focus of the activity has been ethno-cultural. This includes language classes, folklore song or dance lessons, events of historical and religious importance locally, representation of the community in ethnic minority events, participation in global Lithuanian diaspora gatherings internationally, workshops for those interested in Lithuanian traditional crafts, and publications in global diaspora periodicals. The activity has also traditionally encompassed community-initiated commemoration events and the erection of monuments for victims of Stalinist repressions, visiting and up keeping deportees' burial places, and collaboration with Lithuanian authorities and civil society organisations in support of such efforts.

However, since 2018, similar collaborations and mnemonic activity has been diminished or halted altogether due to ever straining relationships between the Russian and Lithuanian political establishments, as well as memory wars about WWII and its aftermath. This development speaks particularly strongly to Federica Prina's assertion about the limiting Russian national-cultural autonomies policy and unwritten expectation for communities to respond to the discursive trends of the state.

The stiffening political climate in Russia and its impact on communities could also be felt back in 2017, when my research assistant and I visited Siberia and Kaliningrad. It was evident that inherent cautionary attitudes originating from Soviet times, as well as the increasingly stringent Putin's regime with its various implications (including the laws targeting various organisations as foreign-run), were relevant to these communities. Some people felt uncomfortable signing consent forms (symptomatic of the untrustworthiness going back to the Soviet bureaucratic culture), while questions were sometimes raised about the funding of the research, to which no affiliation to Lithuanian governmental bodies had to be re-confirmed.

In Kaliningrad (the Russian conclave and military base where many former deportees moved to following the struggle to register in Lithuanian SSR upon return

64 Cf. ibid, 193 f.

from exile), despite the welcome that was initially extended from the community representatives, I realised that my interest in prospective interviews on the subject of exile was perceived as a potential threat to the community's existence. One member disclosed concern that they could get in trouble with authorities referring to such experience of the local German diaspora. It was not difficult to appreciate where those concerns lay. After all, it was during the time of the ongoing war in Eastern Ukraine, Russian opposition demonstrations across the country, and a year before the presidential elections, to name just few.

While we, as researchers, took the decision to avoid contemporary political topics in advance of this fieldwork, a fraction of participants were forward in initiating such conversations. As citizens of a country that has ideologically been part of the geo-political West, we also received peculiar questions about life and politics in Lithuania, the European Union, NATO activity in Lithuania, as well as Scotland (our country of residence), whereby quite a few myths had to be debunked. Also, in some cases, we received (what could only be described as unsolicited) declarations of fondness and support for Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia at the time, from a handful of participants.[65]

Inevitably, however, there were also those who took the opportunity to express criticism and disappointment with the political situation in Russia, commenting on corruption, disagreement with the current government's policies and its geopolitical trajectory, disillusionment about the possibility of positive developments locally, as well as lack of personal opportunities. These were mostly members of the younger generation who got a Lithuanian passport through the right of dual citizenship, available to the descendants of those who were citizens of Lithuania before 1940. Many of them had plans or were in the process of repatriation to Lithuania, which brings me to the last consideration regarding this diaspora – demobilisation.

Egidijus Aleksandravičius notes that upon their organisation in the 1990s, the communities assumed a peculiar role.[66] They became national-cultural entities mobilising for the revival of Lithuanian memory and ethnic culture in a land that is so significant in the Lithuanian collective memory. They also became active in helping Lithuanians with decisions prompted by the repatriation programme tailored and curated by the Lithuanian government for former deportees and their descendants. This meant that such communities often lost their most active and/or youngest members.

Aleksandravičius's assessment is largely fair. Once hundreds-strong Siberian communities in Barnaul (Altai) and Tomsk were no longer officially registered upon our visit in 2017, while their remaining members suggested only meeting informally. Conversations with a few younger participants in the bigger community of Krasnoyarsk

65 Vladimir Putin first became the president in 2000 and held the role until 2008. After a break as a prime minister, he returned as a president in 2012 and has been in the post since.

66 Aleksandravičius, Karklo diegas (cf. n. 13), 572.

also led to the conclusion that, while active in the community's life, they also saw it as a bridge towards an alternative life outside Russia.

In the light of the proliferation of the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, and in contemplation on how things have changed in the communities I visited since 2017, I interviewed a former participant of one of my research projects on Lithuanian communities in Russia. Previously a very active member of the diaspora, Dana moved to Lithuania in 2016. Nevertheless, she has been organising projects linking and visiting Lithuanian communities in Russia, as well as initiatives supporting those repatriated with integration into Lithuania. When asked to share her insights on how the situation in Russia and its war on Ukraine affected the diaspora, she said:

> "Many Lithuanians have left. In my Telegram group alone there are 40 people, the majority are young, 30-40-year-olds with their families, descendants of former deportees. Obviously, those who support the war in Ukraine don't even think of leaving or repatriating. However, those who want – cannot. Since the war, it is harder to get Lithuanian citizenship now from the bureaucratic standpoint for those who did not seek one before. It is harder to get a visa to Lithuania, where one can apply for a card proving you are of Lithuanian descent." (Dana, Lithuania, Dec. 2022)

Based on her experience engaging with the communities in person and remotely, Dana noted that the majority of Lithuanians in Russia "think like most of the Russian society":

> "At the moment, there are those who are *za* (for) and those who are against the invasion. There are some (including an odd community leader or two) who even run around their respective communities collecting money for the Russian army, drones, attending fundraisers and rallies. Paradoxically, some have relatives who were victims of the Soviet repressions, who received support from the Lithuanian government after the 1990s (e. g., flats in Lithuania). Typically, those communities are not very active anymore, though." (Dana, Lithuania, Dec. 2022)

The participant's insights suggest that in some cases, the current (geo-)political situation might have affected the continuity of communities not only from the outside (greater political pressure from the government) but also from the inside, as this has sharpened communal rifts and personal reservations:

> "Some try to stay active, but the divisions are clear, and when talking to me they say 'oh, is it really like that?... but they show it differently on our television...'. It is possible to pick up their leanings, but they avoid talking about it with us here. Communication has declined. We feel that there is avoidance of answering calls or meeting based on fear of surveillance. In any case, there are still at least a couple of Siberian communities that are very active culturally (not sure what's going on in Moscow or St Petersburg). Their leadership, though, is very strict about no-politics policy in the community and forbids communication about it on diaspora's social media/messaging spaces." (Dana, Lithuania, Dec. 2022)

It is necessary to point out that the political climate at the time of writing makes it generally hard to assess what the atmosphere is like in Lithuanian communities. Reaching out to one of them elicited a message indicating willingness to reflect on recent devel-

opments but also reservations and indications that it might not be possible. The eventual response cautiously outlined the recent developments, awareness of propaganda and dominant narratives in Russia, the sense of uncertainty about the survival of the community. It also featured a complementary attachment containing an article written by this interlocutor about the history of Lithuanian communities in Siberia and the burial places the community has been taking care of over the years – a testimony of community's efforts of recording and reflecting on its activity and legacy.

Overall, the Lithuanian diaspora of forced migration in Russia started with a great impetus to mobilise, consolidate and continue to grow after the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, the Soviet-legacy-bearing ethnic-minority policies that have made communities increasingly avoidant of activity potentially deemed political and harmful to their continuity, ever tightening suppression of the freedoms of speech and expression, the return of the increasingly overt glorification of Stalin, and gradually eroding (geo-)political relations between Lithuanian and Russian political establishments had a demobilising effect on the diaspora since its formal inception in the early 1990s.

This assertion is also supported by statistics, namely, the slow but steadily growing numbers of repatriates, and decreasing number of Lithuanians in Russia. Return or repatriation generally is characteristic of classic or victim diasporas and is typically driven by a patriotic sense of duty to return to historical homeland.[67] However, the interviews with a few who expressed intention and repatriated to Lithuania since 2017 showed that, unsurprisingly, this was largely driven more by the political and economic situation in Russia rather than just by national sentiments for Lithuania. The comparison of Russian censuses of 2010 and 2020, shows a 42 percent decline in the number of Lithuanians in this ten-year period in Russia overall, as well as 39 percent decline of Lithuanians registered in Siberia.[68]

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to look at the Lithuanian diaspora of forced migration in Russia by considering historical and socio-political factors that pose challenges to its conceptualisation as 'victim diaspora' as well as how this diaspora could otherwise be best framed theoretically.

The key insight is that, in comparison to the Lithuanian refugees in the West who have been regarded as classic 'victim diaspora', the Eastern one is much more difficult to put into one box. Forced displacement and dispersal in a foreign land alone automat-

67 Cf. Cohen, Global Diasporas (cf. n. 1), 26.

68 Cf. Federal'noe agentstvo po delam natsional'nosteĭ [Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs]: Vserossiĭskaya perepis' naseleniya 2020 [All-Russian Population Census of 2020]. URL: https://fadn.gov.ru/otkritoe-agenstvo/vserossijskaya-perepis-naseleniya-2020/; Federal'naya sluzhba gosudarstvennoĭ statistiki [Federal State Statistics Service]: Vserossiĭskaya perepis' naseleniya [All-Russian Population Census of 2010]. URL: https://rosstat.gov.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis_itogi1612.htm (20.02.2024).

ically indicates the traumatic nature of migration that aligns it with the key descriptor of a 'victim diaspora'. However, the virtual impossibility to transform and function as a typical diasporic network that openly cultivates and declares national sentiments meant that Lithuanians outside the Lithuanian SSR territory were technically deemed a dispersal rather than diaspora. Upon the collapse of the Soviet Union, those who could not or did not want to return to Lithuania during the Soviet period found themselves abroad and yet technically in the same state, and to an extent assimilated with local populations. Officially Lithuanian communities were organised only in the wake of the establishment of the new Russian state and not without the external help of the Lithuanian government and other communities and organisations.

The otherwise expected transformation of Lithuanian communities into a 'victim diaspora' as theoretically fully understood in the newly established Russian Federation needed external help and, although having a promising start and accelerating in activity, it has been slowly neutralised by (socio-)political conditions and its implicit expectation for communities to stay apolitical while simultaneously maintaining Russia's political meta-narratives. In Lithuanian's case, despite cultural-educational activity locally and interactions with homeland and other Lithuanian communities via various projects internationally, in recent years this expectation also means lessened activity around the memory of Soviet repressions that this diaspora in Russia was subject to.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine shifted the gears further towards distancing relations between Lithuanians in and outside of Russia. It is safe to say that due to the repatriation driven by growing political restrictions and an awareness of possible implications, as well as alienation with the homeland and compatriots elsewhere resulting from competing perspectives, Lithuanian diaspora communities are diminishing. It is uncertain if further demobilisation of this diaspora is imminent. However, this analysis shows that without meaningfully and continuously accessible freedoms of organisation, speech and expression, 'victim diasporas' specifically (but also diasporic networks in general) are challenged to mobilise and endure to match the theoretical predispositions applied to them.

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Cristiana Lucchetti

The Role of Language in the Identity Practices of Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union in Israel and Germany

Abstract: In the context of transnational migration, the meanings people attach to languages and to their speakers are a lens through which the migration process can be observed, providing original insight into the mechanisms of social identity formation. This paper applies the study of language attitudes to the investigation of social identity formation processes amongst young adult immigrants from the former Soviet Union to Israel and Germany. It regards the immigrants' social identity as being tightly connected to the networks in which immigrants are situated. Besides the process of social identity formation from below, i. e. modeled by the immigrants themselves, there are often categorisation constraints from above, i. e. imposed on the immigrants by social and national policy. The paper addresses some of the main contrasts emerging between these two opposite dynamics in the context of post-Soviet migration. It relies on data collected during fieldwork in Israel and Germany with Russian-speaking young adult immigrants. Through examples from a mixed-method corpus collected both on-field and through online surveys, it shows that immigrants from the former Soviet Union in Israel and Germany process their migration experience by constructing multiple identities in which their multilingual practices have a valorising function. The analysis points at the need to engage with a critical, more nuanced use of the term 'post-Soviet', as it describes a highly dynamic reality.

Keywords: language, attitude, identity, migration, post-Soviet

Introduction

In 2020, just weeks before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, I was carrying out fieldwork in Israel as a part of my doctoral dissertation, consisting of an extensive case study, eventually conducted between 2018 and 2021 among Russian-speaking immigrants in both Israel and Germany. The following excerpt stems from one of the 56 biographical interviews I carried out during fieldwork. It serves to introduce the issues treated in this paper and is discussed at greater length below.

> "[Cristiana:] What would you say, which role does the concept of language play in your life?
>
> [Sveta:][1] A fairly big one, because it's what connects you to other people. To me, language really is a communication tool. There are people, like linguists – this you know better than me – who perceive language, I don't know, as an art, as some kind of thing to itself, as a particular object of interest. But to me language is indeed an instrument, it's not the aim, it's rather a means, but this

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1 This, along with other personal names in the paper, is a participant pseudonym to guarantee anonymity.

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> means is a very important one, because I'm a very sociable person, that is, I really want to identify with other people. To me, having no language is like having no hands."

The example above brings to the fore an everyday perspective of what in linguistics is termed a language attitude – to put it simply, somebody's stance towards language in its broadest meaning. Sveta, a 32-year-old female informant from Israel, highlights how she sees language mainly as an instrument for the creation of an identity within a social context. Her view concisely summarises the central argument of this paper, namely that studying language attitudes provides invaluable insights into processes of social identity formation. The nexus between language attitude and social identity is especially visible in contexts affected by migration and multilingualism, although the latter are far more the rule than an exception, as has been noted by Teresa Barberio and Claudia Riehl amongst others.[2]

The second argument of this paper is that migration between and from the countries of the former Soviet Union (henceforth FSU), also called post-Soviet migration, provides an especially fitting frame for the study of identity dynamics. This is because the entire nation-building process of the Soviet Union was carried out by targeting the identities of the so-called nationalities, understood as groups with a different ethnic or ethnonational self-identification than (only) Russian. When the Soviet Union collapsed, some of these nationalities were allowed to emigrate precisely based on their belonging to a nationality. The latter is valid especially for the Jewish and German nationality categories: the first one constitutes the basis for the category of (prospective) *'olim*[3] to Israel and *jüdische Kontingentflüchtlinge* (jewish quota refugees) to Germany, and the second corresponds to the *(Spät-)Aussiedler* ([late] resettlers) category in co-ethnic migration to Germany. The different immigration categories are discussed in further detail in the next section.

The majority of post-Soviet immigrants, particularly in the context of Israel and Germany, arrived within the framework of co-ethnic migration programs whose main criteria was ethnonational identification as Jewish or German, which were also two of the many Soviet nationalities.[4] As Jannis Panagiotidis notes, post-Soviet migration is highly reliant on identity categories into which immigrants are pigeonholed

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2 Cf. Barberio, Teresa: Schreiben in zwei Sprachen. Argumentative und narrative Texte bilingualer italienisch-deutscher Schülerinnen und Schüler. Doctoral dissertation. LMU München 2021. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5282/oph.11 (28.12.2023); Riehl, Claudia Maria. 2014. Mehrsprachigkeit. Eine Einführung. Darmstadt 2014.

3 "An *'oleh* (Hebrew; plural *'olim*) is somebody immigrating to Israel based on their Jewish heritage in compliance to the Law of Return." Lucchetti, Cristiana: Language Attitudes and Social Identity. A Study on Russian-Speaking Immigrant Communities in Israel and Germany. Doctoral dissertation. LMU München 2023, DOI: https://doi.org/10.5282/edoc.32749, 75 (28.12.2023).

4 For a thorough discussion of the co-ethnic principle in post-Soviet migration, cf. Panagiotidis, Jannis: The Unchosen Ones. Diaspora, Nation and Migration in Israel and Germany. Bloomington/In. 2019, 3.

by immigration policy,[5] from which emerge tensions and conflicts on an individual and group level both in the "sending" and in the "receiving" societies, to employ the terminology of Danièle Joly.[6]

One of the most available instruments to study the reliance of post-Soviet migration on the nationalities policy of the FSU is language, which itself was a central issue in Soviet nation-building policies. In this paper I provide examples, based on empirical research, showing that membership of a nationality other than Russian, whether self-attributed by migrants or externally attributed by migration policy, influences immigrants' attitudes towards the languages which are relevant to their biographies. Moreover, a major finding of this study is that post-Soviet immigrants to Israel and Germany regard their multilingualism as a positive resource for identity-building in a context where their belonging – be it ethnonational in Germany or ethnoreligious in Israel – is constantly being questioned from the outside.

By shedding light on the social identities of immigrants from the FSU in Israel and Germany through the lens of language attitude, this paper aims to provide a picture of contemporary migration phenomena in the so-called post-Soviet space and illustrate the tensions and conflicts by which it is characterised on different levels. The lens of language attitude is also especially relevant because of the politically charged role of language in the Soviet Union: through phases of russification and *korenizatsiya* (indigenisation),[7] Soviet authorities used language as an instrument of propaganda, and Russian was – and still is, to different extents in different post-Soviet countries – propagated as the hegemonic language.

This paper is structured as follows. In the first section, I introduce the main working notions of my research activity in Israel and Germany. Most of them have already emerged in this introduction, such as language attitude, social identity and migration; other significant conceptualisations are such as integration and the notion of post-Soviet.

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5 Cf. Panagiotidis, Jannis: Postsowjetische Migration in Deutschland. Eine Einführung. Weinheim-Basel 2021, 123.

6 Joly, Danièle: Some Structural Effects of Migration on Receiving and Sending Countries. In: International Migration 38/5 (2000), 25–41.

7 The relationship between russification and indigenisation policies in the Soviet Union is described by Andrzej Wierzbicki as "propagating the national languages in the administration, educational system, and the press, and promoting the indigenous culture and customs. However, it did not act to deprive Russians or Russian-speaking people of party or state-level positions. Korenizatsiya was often understood as implementing the language of local people". Wierzbicki, Andrzej: Ethnicity and Power in the Soviet Union. In: Post-Soviet Issues 4/3 (2017), 240–255, here 246. As I elaborate elsewhere, "[f]ar from promoting the cultures and languages of other nationalities of the Soviet Union than Russian, 'korenizat͡siĭa' pursued the aim of propagating the Soviet ideologies even in the remotest areas of the Soviet Union. On the other hand, was so-called russification, a policy intensely applied under Stalin to promote the Russian language and culture with the ultimate aim of (re-)establishing Russia as the core of the Soviet empire". Lucchetti, Language Attitudes and Social Identity (cf. n. 3), 34.

The next section deals with the methods employed in this study and the theoretical observations behind them. The study is based on empirical data collected in qualitative interviews with post-Soviet immigrants to Israel and Germany. Its methods are situated in qualitative sociological research and qualitative approaches in sociolinguistics; the theoretical frame of reference is the sociology of language.

This is followed by the data analysis and the main results of the study. Several examples from interview recordings are presented and analysed in detail; they point to the emergence of a view of post-Soviet migration as a migration between categories of identity which never fully match the self-perceptions of the participants. At the same time, the participants' standpoints hint at the importance of multilingualism as a resource for identity construction by which in-betweenness can be contrasted or even reappropriated.

Finally, I carry out a concluding discussion and present challenges for future studies. One of the biggest challenges outlined by this study lies in the urgence of critically reflecting upon the forcibly imposed identity categories of both Soviet state ideology and post-Soviet migration policy in order to place the immigrants' perspectives in the foreground; this urgency represents a challenge because, on the one hand, it involves a shift or, at least, a partial re-orientation from the researcher's to the participant's perspective and, on the other hand, it has conceptual and methodological implications for future research.

Working terminology

Language attitudes

A short layman's introduction on the construct of language attitude has been provided in the excerpt from an interview with Sveta in the section above. Research on language attitudes is thriving in linguistics, especially in the field of sociolinguistics, in which the study of language variation and change is carried out by looking at such sociological and sociodemographic parameters as, for example, gender, age, education level, and so on.

The definition of language attitudes which best fits the scope of my research is the one by Marko Dragojevic et al., who speak of language attitudes in terms of "the social meanings people assign to language and its users".[8] Language attitudes have become a highly popular subject in linguistics and migration studies, especially the last two decades, gaining their way into the titles of increasingly numerous articles and monographs on multilingualism and second language learning (e. g. Ángel Huguet, Deyuan

8 Cf. Dragojevic, Marko; Fasoli, Fabio; Cramer, Jennifer; Rakić, Tamara: Toward a Century of Language Attitudes Research. Looking Back and Moving Forward. In: Journal of Language and Social Psychology 40/1 (2021), 60–79, here 60.

He and David Li, Lauren Miller).[9] At the same time, language attitudes are often regarded as side factors, correlates or predictors of, for example, language competence, language variation and language behavior in general, rather than as a subject in its own right. This explains why theoretical and methodological work on language attitudes still lacks a due degree of implementation.

Data collected within this study highlight how the importance of language attitudes for the study of migration phenomena has been underestimated. I argue that language attitudes are performative utterances along the lines of the definition provided by John L. Austin, according to whom "the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action – it is not normally thought of as just saying something".[10] Thus, by uttering a language attitude, people perform a social action in that they are carrying out social categorisation and acting towards oneself and others by it. Expressing a language attitude means positioning oneself and others in society, from which it becomes clear that language attitude is strictly connected identity, in particular social identity. In the next section, I provide a working definition and elaborate on the connection between language attitudes and social identity.

Social identity

My understanding of social identity orients itself towards the established social-psychological definition provided by Henri Tajfel and John Turner. According to them, social identity "consists of those aspects of an individual's self-image that derive from the social categories to which he perceives himself as belonging."[11] The link between language attitudes and social identity becomes evident when juxtaposing the two definitions in that they both revolve around such basic and omnipresent cognitive processes as categorisation and conceptualisation. On the one hand, language attitudes are the expression of complex yet virtually automatic processes by which people categorise languages and/or their speakers based on characteristics which they attribute to the said languages and speakers, that is based on their conceptualisation of them. Conceptualisation has been defined by Vyvyan Evans as "the ways in which we construe or 'see' the range of sensations, experiences, reflections and so on, that make up our men-

9 Cf. Huguet, Ángel: Language Use and Language Attitude in Catalonia. In: Lasagabaster, David; Huguet, Ángel (Eds.): Multilingualism in European Bilingual Contexts. Language Use and Attitudes. Clevedon-Buffalo-Toronto 2007, 17–39; He, Deyuan; Li, David C. S.: Language Attitudes and Linguistic Features in the 'China English' Debate. In: World Englishes 28/1 (2009), 70–89; Miller, Lauren: The Relationship between Language Proficiency and Language Attitudes. Evidence from Young Spanish-English Bilinguals. In: Spanish in Context 14/1 (2017), 99–123.

10 Austin, John L.: How to Do Things with Words. The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955. Ed. by James O. Urmson and Marina Sbisà. Oxford ^{2}1975, 6 f.

11 Tajfel, Henri; Turner, John: An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict. In: Austin, William G.; Worchel, Stephen (Eds.): The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations. Monterey/Ca. 1979, 33–47, here 40.

tal life".[12] Categorisation is tightly connected to the latter and can be defined as "the basic cognitive ability to see sameness in difference".[13] On the other hand, social identity relies on categorisation processes which may or may not (but often do) have language as an identity-defining element; the creation of a social identity involves the categorisation of the self in relation to others, be it a relation of similarity or difference.

I regard the immigrants' social identity as tightly connected to the so-called migration networks in which immigrants are situated, defined by Sonja Haug as "a composite of interpersonal relations in which migrants interact with their family or friends" providing "a foundation for the dissemination of information as well as for patronage or assistance".[14]

Migration

Here, a further question emerges: what is migration? Migration can be broadly described as a move from one place to another. In many cases, it confronts people with new languages, new cultures and ultimately with the necessity of re-categorising the self and others. However, while moving from one place to another and negotiating their language attitudes and social identity anew, people do not necessarily abandon those attitude and identity categories which had been relevant before. Rather, it can often be observed how migrants – to different extents – relate their existence to several categories and places – both physical and imagined – at one time. This phenomenon has been appropriately termed "multiple inhabitance" by anthropologist Ghassan Hage, who describes it as "the mark of diasporic reality".[15] Within the scope of this paper, my use of the term migration refers to transnational mobility, i. e. migration as "a move from human insecurity to human security,"[16] as is often the case for migration phenomena from the countries of the FSU, which are often labeled under the umbrella term 'post-Soviet'.

Integration

Directly related to the notion of migration is integration. As hinted at above, migration entails the crossing of borders and categories and therefore has a massive influence on

12 Evans, Vyvyan: Cognitive Linguistics. A Complete Guide. Edinburgh 2019, 7.

13 Xu, Wen; Fu, Zhengling: Categorization. In: Xu, Wen; Taylor, John R. (Eds.): The Routledge Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics. New York 2021, 173–190, here 173.

14 Haug, Sonja: Migration Networks and Migration Decision-Making. In: Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 34/4 (2008), 585–605, here 588.

15 Hage, Ghassan: The Diasporic Condition. Ethnographic Explorations of the Lebanese in the World. Chicago 2021, 95.

16 Sirkeci, Ibrahim: Transnational Mobility and Conflict. In: Migration Letters 6/1 (2009), 3–14, here 3.

the sense of belonging of individuals and groups, i. e. their social identity. Integration, too, has an effect on the immigrants' identity. But how can it be defined and how is it different from such as assimilation, one the most popular notions in the discussion of migration?[17]

The perspective of the participants in this research provides a fundamental orientation for the meaning with which the concept of integration is employed in this study. What emerges from the interviews is that "participants see integration as the process of finding their place in society by learning the receiving society's new language and cultural values".[18] This view on integration is rather distant from the classical sociological definition of integration dating back to Émile Durkheim, who speaks of integration in terms of the mechanism binding individuals to society and uniting the subsystems which make up society.[19] Rather, the concept of integration applied to this study coincides with assimilation, defined by Robert Park and Ernest Burgess as follows: "a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups, and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life".[20] It must be noted that integration (or assimilation) is to be seen not as a one-way process by which immigrants cancel aspects of their identity related to the culture of their previous country in order to adapt to the receiving society. Instead, I regard integration as a two-way process, in which aspects of two or more cultures and places – physical or imaginary – interact, coexist and form a new identity.

The concept of integration also plays such a significant role in this study because of the divide between the participants' view of it and its application in the immigration policy of the receiving states. This point is elaborated upon in the next section, in which I expand on the characteristics of post-Soviet migration and critically look at the term 'post-Soviet'.

The 'post' in post-Soviet migration

Usage of the term post-Soviet in scholarship contains some degree of fuzziness: while debates on whether the post-Soviet is still ongoing or whether it is over are thriving – especially since the beginning of Russia's invasion of Ukraine – only a limited number

17 Cf. D'Amato, Gianni; Wanner, Philippe; Steiner, Ilka: Today's Migration-Mobility Nexus in Switzerland. In: Steiner, Ilka; Wanner, Philippe (Eds.): Migrants and Expats: The Swiss Migration and Mobility Nexus. Cham 2019, 3–20.

18 Lucchetti, Language Attitudes and Social Identity (cf. n. 3), 18.

19 Cf. ibid.

20 Park, Robert E.; Burgess, Ernest W.: Introduction to the Science of Sociology: Including the Original Index to Basic Sociological Concepts. Chicago 1969, 735.

of researchers have engaged with the 'post-Soviet' theoretically, trying to define it.[21] One remarkable exception is a 2022 article by Claudia Eggart in which she deals with this terminological fuzziness and problematises an uncritical use of this term, hoping that "more precise and nuanced terms will come to the fore in future – ones which finally reveal the use of the phrase 'post-Soviet space' to describe the former Soviet republics to be outdated and problematic from a language policy perspective".[22]

Here, the term 'post-Soviet' is employed not only with chronological reference to the era following the breakup of the Soviet Union; it also encompasses a set of aesthetic, ideological, political and societal phenomena emerging with the breakup of the Soviet Union. These are all characterised by "profound ambiguity" due to the chronological and cultural rupture.[23] According to Serguei Oushakine, the ambiguity of the post-Soviet expresses itself in "a certain feeling being caught *in-between:* between two classes (poor/rich), between two times (past/future), between two systems (Soviet/non-Soviet)".[24] The transition from the Soviet to the post-Soviet poses challenges for individuals' self-positioning in society, too: as Oushakine puts it, "[t]he post-Soviet threshold, the post-Soviet transitionality and in-betweenness thus has a peculiar nature – it does not provide any cues about the direction to follow, it does not channel one's identificatory process."[25]

This paper adds a further perspective to this understanding of the post-Soviet by presenting examples from data showing that this alleged condition of in-betweenness can be transformed into a positive resource for identity construction in the receiving society. The post-Soviet context is a fruitful ground for the study of language attitudes, especially since linguistic hierarchies are continually being renegotiated in it and discussions about the usage and public status of Russian are thriving.[26] Another reason why post-Soviet migration serves exceptionally well to the study of language attitudes and processes of identity formation emerges from the following observation by Jannis Panagiotidis:

> "Identity categories are especially relevant in the context of post-Soviet migration because they constitute the basis of the immigration process itself. […] To put it metaphorically, migrants were pigeonholed or had to pigeonhole themselves during the immigration process."[27]

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21 A theoretical engagement with the post-Soviet as well as references to work by other scholars can be found in Lucchetti, Language Attitudes and Social Identity (cf. n. 3).

22 Eggart, Claudia: The End of the Post-Soviet. ZOiS Spotlight 21/2022 (01.06.2022). URL: https://www.zois-berlin.de/en/publications/zois-spotlight/the-end-of-the-post-soviet (28.12.2023).

23 Dobrenko, Evgeny; Shcherbenok, Andrey: Introduction. Between History and the Past: The Soviet Legacy as a Traumatic Object of Contemporary Russian Culture. In: Slavonica 17/2 (2011), 77–84, here 77.

24 Oushakine, Serguei: Third Europe-Asia Lecture. In the State of Post-Soviet Aphasia: Symbolic Development in Contemporary Russia. In: Europe-Asia Studies 52/6 (2000), 991–1016, here 995.

25 Ibid.

26 Cf. Smagulova, Jyldyz; Madiyeva, Dinara: Normalizing a New Language Hierarchy: Event Names in Post-Soviet Urban Space. In: Russian Journal of Linguistics 25/4 (2021), 1004–1023.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, when emigration became possible on a broad scale, the Russian-speaking diaspora took on vast proportions, being directed primarily towards Israel, the United States, Germany and, to a lesser extent, Canada.[28] Nonetheless, especially from a linguistic perspective, comparative studies devoted to the Russian-speaking diaspora have been relatively sparse, with Germany being frequently the more neglected destination. This is all the more surprising considering that Russian-speaking emigration phenomena to Germany and to Israel arguably have more reciprocal points of comparison than is the case with other destinations of the Russian-speaking diaspora.

One of the most striking similarities between Israel and Germany in this respect is the fact that, just as Soviet Jewry would choose Israel as their preferred destination next to the US, Germany was the main country of 'repatriation' not just for Soviet Jews (a category named *jüdische Kontingentflüchtlinge* (jewish quota refugees) in German administration) but also, and most remarkably, for so-called *Russlanddeutsche* (Russia Germans) and, in general, so-called *(Spät-)Aussiedler* ([late] resettlers), i. e. the ethnic German minority which had been present on the territory of the FSU since at least the 18th century.

As mentioned above with reference to Panagiotidis, the history of post-Soviet migration is one characterised by pre-defined administrative categories to which migrants are ultimately forced to conform themselves in order to fulfil emigration requirements.[29] In the case of immigration to Germany, these requirements include "a commitment to German ethnicity" and "German language competences," amongst others.[30] Such linguistic and identity-related criteria are also pressure factors for the immigrants who have to comply with them.

In view of this, the emergence of conflicts between the self-identification of individuals and the institutional labels imposed on them from above is to be expected. If institutions are largely indifferent to such discrepancies between the immigrants' self-perception and their official status, I regard it as necessary for researchers in

27 Original text: "[P]ostsowjetische Migration [ist] nun in besonderem Maße durch Identitätskategorien geprägt, da bereits der Zuwanderungsprozess als solcher auf diesen Kategorien basierte. […] Bildlich gesprochen wurden die Migranten im Verlauf ihrer Aufnahme in Schubladen gesteckt bzw. mussten sich selbst in diese Schubladen begeben." Panagiotidis, Postsowjetische Migration in Deutschland (cf. n. 5), 123.

28 Cf. Tolts, Mark: Demography of the Contemporary Russian-Speaking Jewish Diaspora. In: Gitelman, Zvi (Ed.): The New Jewish Diaspora: Russian-Speaking Immigrants in the United States, Israel and Germany. New Brunswick-New Jersey-London 2016.

29 Cf. Panagiotidis, Postsowjetische Migration in Deutschland (cf. n. 5).

30 Original text: "Bekenntnis zum deutschen Volkstum durch entsprechende Nationalitätserklärung oder auf andere Weise" and "deutsche Sprachkenntnisse, die für ein einfaches Gespräch ausreichen". Bundesverwaltungsamt: Spätaussiedler. Die Verfahren und die rechtlichen Voraussetzungen. URL: https://www.bva.bund.de/DE/Services/Buerger/Migration-Integration/Spaetaussiedler/01_Antrag_stellen/08_Voraussetzungen/06_Voraussetzung_Aufnahme_node.html (28.12.2023).

the field of post-Soviet studies to give migrants from the FSU a voice and provide them with the possibility to express their identity both as individuals and as groups.

Methodology and theoretical background

Referring back to the introduction, this paper brings forth two main arguments: a) that studying language attitudes provides invaluable insights into processes of social identity formation, and that b) post-Soviet migration is an especially fitting frame for the study of identity dynamics. The major objective of the present study is to shed light on the social identities of immigrants from the FSU in Israel and Germany through the lens of language attitude. One of the advantages of researching social identity through the analysis of language attitudes is that the latter, just like attitudes in general, can be studied in a relatively straightforward way. Albarracin and Shavitt note that "[a]ttitudes can be measured by simply asking respondents to report their attitudes or by inferring attitudes from spontaneous evaluative reactions to the presentation of the attitude object."[31]

The techniques usually employed for the study of language attitudes in sociolinguistics are biographic interviews, sociolinguistic questionnaires and so-called matched-guise tests, the latter being "a research technique which makes use of language and dialect variations to elicit the stereotyped impressions or biased views which members of one social group hold of representative members of a contrasting group."[32] Although the constructs of language attitude and social identity are tightly interconnected, research on their reciprocal interaction has been sparse especially in traditional sociolinguistic approaches, where identity is sometimes looked upon with skepticism as too blurry and vague a concept for application.[33]

This paper is methodologically rooted within an approach in sociolinguistics termed 'sociology of language'. This approach was first introduced by Joshua Fishman, who describes it as "an interdisciplinary social science approach to language in society".[34] Its goal could be summarised as follows: looking at language to understand society. This perspective emerged as a sociologically concerned reaction to traditional sociolinguistic approaches after William Labov, which are predominantly quantitative

31 Albarracín, Dolores; Shavitt, Sharon: Attitudes and Attitude Change. In: Annual Review of Psychology 69 (2018), 299–327, here 299.

32 Lambert, Wallace E.: A Social Psychology of Bilingualism. In: Journal of Social Issues 23/2 (1967), 91–109, here 93.

33 For a review of literature on this issue, see Lucchetti, Language Attitudes and Social Identity (cf. n. 3).

34 Fishman, Joshua A.: The Sociology of Language: An interdisciplinary Social Science Approach to Language in Society. In: Idem (Ed.): Advances in the Sociology of Language. Vol. 1: Basic Concepts, Theories and Problems: Alternative Approaches. Berlin-Boston 1971, 217–404, here 217.

and oriented towards explaining language variation by looking at sociologically relevant parameters (such as, for example, gender, wealth, education level and so on).

What people think about a given language and how this influences their perception of themselves and other speakers is arguably a lesser preoccupation of traditional, Labovian sociolinguistic research than so-called microlinguistic phenomena, that is those pertaining to the linguistic system – morphosyntactic, lexical, grammatical etc.[35] Looking at microlinguistic phenomena in multilingual situations – such as those brought about by migration – can be highly insightful to identify systematic patterns in language variation and change, for instance. However, focusing only on microlinguistic phenomena would result in neglecting the broader picture, that is a multifaceted understanding how people interact and identify with each-other when they find themselves in a new societal context.

While language attitudes and identity do allow quantitative work, many fundamental facets of these phenomena cannot be quantified and call for a thorough qualitative analysis instead. This paper focuses on a qualitative analysis of data from a corpus consisting of 56 biographical interviews which I carried out between 2018 and 2021 with Russian-speaking young adult immigrants to Israel and Germany, both on site and online due to Covid-19 restrictions.[36] Most of the interviewees are between first and 1.5 generation, which means that they have first-hand immigration experience, although in the case of 1.5 generation immigrants the migration happened when they were "older children or adolescents."[37] Interviews were held in Russian, Hebrew, German or English depending on the interviewees' preference. Most of the interviews were carried out in a semi-structured fashion, involving an interview guide with essential questions of sociolinguistic interest. My usage of an interview guide was flexible, depending on the interview situation. It was not always necessary but provided a helpful orientation for the purpose of identifying the point of 'theoretical saturation', in which "no additional data can be found"[38] which is necessary for a fully-fledged analysis of the subject matter. The interview guide did not include explicitly formulated questions about such as evaluation of attitude towards Russian/German/Hebrew; instead, it consisted of short reminders about relevant topics depending on the demographic information which the respondent had shared during the recruitment phase.

35 Cf. "Microlinguistics". In: Matthews, Peter H.: The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics. Oxford ^{2}2007, S. 245.

36 An in-depth analysis of the entire data corpus is to be found in Lucchetti, Language Attitudes and Social Identity (cf. n. 3).

37 Remennick, Larissa: Generation 1.5 of Russian-Speaking Immigrants in Israel and in Germany. An Overview of Recent Research and a German Pilot Study. In: Isurin, Ludmila; Riehl, Claudia Maria (Eds.): Integration, Identity and Language Maintenance in Young Immigrants. Russian Germans or German Russians. Amsterdam-Philadelphia 2017, 69–98, here 70.

38 Rosenthal, Gabriele: Interpretive Social Research. An Introduction. Göttingen 2018, 76.

Data analysis

The graph below illustrates the absolute frequency of the languages in which the 56 interviews were partially or totally held. Cases when the informants decided to switch from one language to the other during an interview were not rare and are a significant source of information of sociolinguistic and ethnographic character; however, as the graph illustrates, Russian was the predominant language in most of the interviews.

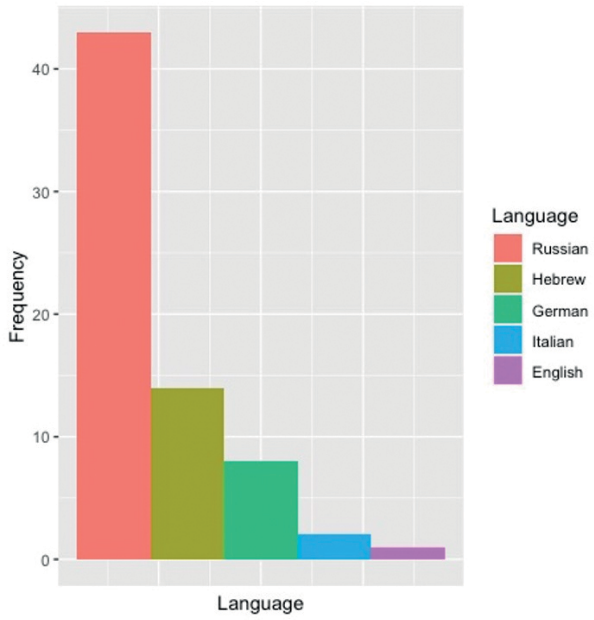

Fig. 1*:* Interview language by absolute frequency

The examples presented in this section were translated into English. The first example already appears in the introduction. It stems from an interview recording with participant Sveta, a 32-year-old woman born in Tatarstan who now lives in the northern Israeli city of Haifa, where she works as a scientist. In the excerpt, we openly discuss her views about the importance of language in her life. Sveta concisely illustrates the importance of picking that which linguists would call 'language attitudes' as an object of investigation. At the same time, she notes that the scientific study of language usually focuses on other aspects than those which she regards central to her view on language.

Sveta interestingly employs a bodily metaphor to describe her view of language, more specifically that which allows human beings to grab and move objects, to drive a car, to hug other people, and ultimately to be in control of a situation: a person's hands (Russian *ruki* denotes hands as well as arms, up to the shoulders). During our conversation, Sveta was overtly moving her hands to underline the relevance of her

description of language; in that moment, Sveta performed what Daniel Casasanto and Tom Gijssels refer to as an "embodied metaphor", i. e. one "instantiated at least in part by a simulation of prior or potential bodily experiences".[39]

Towards the end of the excerpt, before employing the metaphor 'language is body part', Sveta explains her view of language as that of an instrument thanks to which she knows her place in society. In her own wording, she wants to "identify with other people", which illustrates her motivation to establish social connections in an environment which is new to her. At the time of our meeting, she had been living in Israel for roughly four years. Despite the difficulties which she reported having in studying and learning Hebrew, she is a very active member of a local community. The community in which she is primarily active is not, however, a Hebrew-speaking one, but a rather international one.

In the following excerpt, Sveta illustrates her lack of a Jewish self-identification:

> "[Cristiana:] Does religion play an important role in your family?
>
> [Sveta:] No. In my family, my dad is Jewish and my mum is Tatar, but we have never lived with my dad, and therefore never really came in touch with the Jewish culture; and besides, he's always been an atheist, a Soviet man, so he himself didn't grow up in this culture. The same goes for my mum, who being ethnically Tatar grew up in the Soviet Union, and their culture simply is Soviet. And well, I find it interesting to learn about religion. But I have no kind of self-identification whatsoever."

During our conversation, Sveta reported having no particularly high motivation to learn Hebrew and had a higher emotional attachment to Russian and German than to Hebrew:

> "[Cristiana:] You know a lot of languages. Which is the most significant one in your life? With which language do you identify best?
>
> [Sveta:] It's a difficult question, especially now, 'cause Russian ultimately is my native language, and I probably feel more at home in it, but when it comes to my self-identification then it's a tricky question; German has a very important function to me, 'cause I spend a lot of my time with Germans and speak a lot of German with them; it's part of my private life, when I'm with friends. And then English is my working language [...] so there are different aspects to be considered, but Russian probably is the most fundamental language to me, 'cause it's the one in which I can express myself at the fullest."

The subjects of the excerpts above, that is her lack of religious affiliation and her language attitudes, appear to be interconnected; one could argue that the absence of religious self-identification – an identification which plays a fundamental role in Israeli society – is more or less intentionally compensated by her attitudes towards her autobiographically relevant languages, granting her access to networks in the receiving so-

39 Casasanto, Daniel; Gijssels, Tom: What Makes a Metaphor an Embodied Metaphor? In: Linguistic Vanguard 1/1 (2015), 327–337, here 334.

ciety which contribute to shape her social identity. Here it must be noted that Soviet nationality policy regarded Jewish identity in ethnonational and not in religious terms, also because religion was a taboo topic in the Soviet Union. This ethnonational take on Jewish identity is also reflected in Germany's policy for immigration from the FSU but not in Israel, where the Law of Return regulates *aliyah* (immigration to Israel based on Jewish heritage) based on Halakhic (i. e. religious) law and state ideology strongly relies on religion. Ultimately, Sveta's differing degrees of emotional attachment to and attitudes towards Hebrew, Russian, German and English seem to reflect her position in her social environment in the receiving society.

The next example enlightens another crucial characteristic of post-Soviet migration, i. e. the tension between the immigrants' self-identification and the administrative categories applied onto Soviet and post-Soviet immigrants through the immigration policy of the receiving societies. The excerpt below is drawn from an interview with Nora, a 34-year-old Russian woman living in Bremen, in Northern Germany. Nora's family is partly Jewish and has a history marked by several migration experiences, as she notes during the interview:

> "In 1990 came a period when, well the Soviet Union started to collapse and people started to think where to escape to, to search for their roots so as to find a way to emigrate. It was especially about the German and Jewish emigration paths. Everything happened so quickly, people would sell everything they had and leave."

As her remarks suggest, post-Soviet emigration is tightly interconnected with a need to identify with one of the ethnic minority categories which were first discriminated against under the Soviet regime. They were then granted a right to emigrate after the collapse of the Soviet Union; amongst them, ethnic Germans and Jews had a "great importance [...] in the emigration movements form the USSR" and the post-Soviet countries.[40]

Belonging to an ethnically defined category, which under the Soviet Union would have been highly disadvantageous in specific cases – including the Jewish nationality category – becomes a portal for access to essential services in the country of emigration, as she recounts in the following:

> "Speaking of Jewishness, [...] when the time came for my daughter to start going to kindergarten, well in Germany you can list three kindergartens, you write them on a piece of paper, each with their different locations. I filled out this paper and they gave us the worst one. [...] I went back home and started to cry. I didn't know what to do, they wouldn't let me pick my kindergarten. And then my friends told me, there's a Russian kindergarten here. And then I was like, that's the one I need. I called them on the phone [...] and it's a synagogue! And they go like, do you have Jewish heritage? And I go like, well, yes, I didn't think it would make a difference, 'cause you know, after living in Baikonur I kind of shut down the topic of my Jewishness, 'cause if you

40 Pinkus, Benjamin: The Emigration of National Minorities from the USSR in the Post-Stalin Era. In: Soviet Jewish Affairs 13/1 (1983), 3–36, here 3.

> were a Jew then you were bad [...]. I didn't know what to answer, is it a good thing or a bad thing? [...] [A]nd now they accepted us into kindergarten all because my grandma was Jewish!"

The excerpts show how the quest for self-identification and the struggle for positioning oneself in society also continues after emigration. On the one hand, Soviet Germans and Jews can be regarded as relatively 'privileged' emigrants due to the regulated emigration paths which they were granted. As Panagiotidis notes about post-Soviet immigration to Germany: "Members of these two categories had immediate access to a safe and unlimited residency status (in the case of late resettlers, even to German citizenship), as well as to extensive [...] integration support measures."[41] On the other hand, the need to adhere to ready-made administrative categories can be regarded as a factor of increased social pressure, exposing the immigrants to high expectations from the receiving society. Social pressure certainly affects many immigrant groups, regardless of the country and cultural context from which they come. Data collected within my study, however, suggest that this social pressure seems to particularly affect immigrants from the FSU due to the strict administrative categorisation of immigrants, and to the divide between administrative categories and the immigrants' self-perception.

As Nora notes, a change in her language attitude – specifically towards German in her example – provides her with an effective coping strategy against the difficulty of developing a self-identification in the new country while being exposed to top-down belonging categories:

> "When we moved to Germany [...] at first it was very hard to even hear German. Since our childhood, we've been watching movies about WWII, about the Germans and the Jews, about [concentration] camps, and so hearing the German language was painful as hell to me. And maybe because of this, I couldn't bring myself to learn German at once [...] and then at some point I just let go of this, [...] of the fact that I'm a Russian woman with Jewish roots, and then I started learning German and understanding Germans. I suddenly realised that, at the grocery shop, people were not barking to me; they'd say, please and thank you, I see that they are gentle and good to me, and then I let go of all the tension and started feeling at ease."

The difficulty of adhering to ready-made identity categories is addressed throughout all the interviews and is especially present in the story of Zina, a 32-year-old woman living in the city of Haifa in northern Israel. Although Zina was born in Belarus, she reports being well used to being labeled as a Russian by Israelis based on the fact that she, as many other immigrants from countries of the FSU to Israel, speaks Russian. However, she adds that she has had a hard time coping with the stereotypes associated with 'Russians' (that is immigrants from the FSU) and especially with Russian-speaking women in Israel:

> "We're all Russian speakers, no matter what. [...] Do you know the Russian saying, 'call me a kettle if you wish, as long as you don't put me in the oven'? Something like that. So I don't care if they call

41 Panagiotidis, Postsowjetische Migration in Deutschland (cf. n. 5), 20.

> me Russian, I won't correct them [...]. Still, for some time I was ashamed of being a Russian, because they don't have a good reputation in Israel. You know, they say Russian women are whores and they won't take you seriously, and I was very ashamed of this, and maybe I subconsciously tried to distance myself from it. And that's probably why I chose [to make closer contact with Israelis]."

Seventeen years after her immigration to Israel, Zina also reports still experiencing feelings of in-betweenness due to her ethnonational background. Certainly, a perceived condition of in-betweenness is common in all migration phenomena and not just in the case of post-Soviet migration. However, within the context of post-Soviet migration, the in-betweenness has a further dimension of relevance: in fact, in several successor states of the Soviet Union, the condition of in-betweenness is a characteristic in both the political reality and for daily life. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the feeling of belonging to a multinational empire dissolved for many Soviet citizens, and categories of belonging had to be reframed. Emigration from the FSU could be regarded as one possible attempt by the émigrés to reframe their belonging by relocating in a new society. Since the categories of belonging employed by the immigration policies of many receiving countries were and are still reliant on Soviet nationality policy, the in-betweenness of post-Soviet immigrants is manifold: between the Soviet and the post-Soviet, the East and the West, forcibly ascribed nationality and self-identification etc. The following excerpt from the interview with Zina illustrates this cleavage between sense of self and expectations of the receiving society, a common phenomenon in post-Soviet migration:

> "I'm going through a time where it really annoys me that I can't find my place. No matter how long I keep on living here and whatever I do, for them I'll always remain a Russian and it really pisses me off. Because, you know, in Russia they'll always tell you 'go to Israel, you filthy Jew', while here I'm the Russian. I feel like I have no place in the world."

In the case of post-Soviet migration to Israel, immigrants' difficulties at fulfilling the receiving society's expectations are certainly also due to the importance of ethnoreligious belonging in Israeli state ideology, which was completely missing under Soviet nationalities policy and, more in general, in Soviet ideology.

In spite of the distresses of trying to reach a feeling of belonging in Israel, Zina describes her high motivation to learn Hebrew, which appears to have played a fundamental role at allowing her to join a network of Hebrew speakers; her close contacts with networks of Hebrew speakers were also favored by Zina's military service in the Israel Defence Forces (IDF), as she recalls in the following:

> "When I started going to school in Israel, I could already speak Hebrew, but not that well. But I still spoke it, because I wanted to communicate with other kids. You know, there were many different layers at school, and it's boring if you only communicate with the people that they put you in a group with]just because you all speak Russian[. So I did speak Hebrew but not that well, because [...] even most of the teachers spoke Russian. But when my military service began, I spoke almost no Russian at all there. [...] [A]nd I never wanted to communicate with Russians; I always sought

> Hebrew-speakers […]. [M]ost of the time I think in Hebrew because it's the language that I use the most, both at work and with my boyfriend, who is a Hebrew-speaker."

The common element running through the examples above, and throughout the interview corpus, is the fact that attitudes towards language are employed by the immigrants to explain their process of finding their place in the receiving society. While this process can lead to feelings of in-betweenness and to an ambivalent relationship towards both the country of birth and the receiving societies, I argue that this in-betweenness can be used by immigrants as a positive resource to renegotiate their identity in a new society. Data collected within my study points to the fact that this identity can be made up of references to different countries, languages and cultures at the same time, along the lines of what Hage terms "multiple inhabitance"[42] and of what Majid Ibrahim Al-Haj terms "multiple identity".[43] The element of multiplicity is central to migration experiences and is highlighted in research throughout the disciplines.[44]

To draw a linguistic parallel to multiple identities, people with migration experience are often also multilingual; their multilingualism does not have to result in a feeling of being lost between languages, but it simply allows them to communicate with the surrounding society and can even be capitalised upon, resulting in the construction of an identity as a 'multilingual Jew', 'multilingual Ukrainian', 'multilingual Russian' and so forth, as some of the study participants defined themselves during the interviews. The following example from an interview with Katya, a 25-year-old Ukrainian who made *aliyah* to Israel, points at the positive evaluation of the migration experience based on the opportunity of multilingualism it involves, in this case for her child:

> "He [child] speaks Russian, Ukrainian, English and Hebrew. Four languages, and when they ask me, once it happened that I was sitting in a coffee shop and there was an Israeli woman who asked, she was like, 'my son only speaks, well, Hebrew, and he just started to learn English', and I was like, 'well, I think that's just too bad. My son is only two years old and he already knows four languages.'"

This example points at an underlying conceptualisation of multilingualism as richness, as a resource which can be used by the immigrants to favourably position themselves in the new country and negotiate their relationship with native or more veteran members of the receiving society.

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42 Hage, The Diasporic Condition (cf. n. 15), 95.

43 Al-Haj, Majid Ibrahim: The Russians in Israel. A New Ethnic Group in a Tribal Society. London 2019, 119.

44 As an example, see the following two recent studies in anthropology and linguistics: Aivazishvili-Gehne, Nino: "Multiple Vertrautheit" – Plädoyer für die Einführung eines neuen Begriffes. "Russlanddeutsche" in Deutschland. In: Paideuma 68 (2022), 149–165; Becker, Anna: 'I'm also Trying to Figure out the Identity of my Students.' – Teachers' Multilingual Identity Negotiation in the Heritage Language Classroom. In: International Journal of Multilingualism (2022), DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2022.2078328 (28.12.2023).

Concluding discussion

In this paper, I showcase the potential of language attitudes for studying the formation of self-identification and social identity, with specific regard to post-Soviet migration. The examples analysed in this paper point to the importance of language attitudes and social identity: with the fall of the Soviet Union, the linguistic, social and cultural rootedness of millions of people were subject to dramatic transformations. This study shows that, in many cases, emigration represents a possibility for people to cope with these dramatic transformations, to search and find a new value system for orientation in a new society. The example of Nora is highly illustrative: she recounts how, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, masses of people started to "look for their emigration" (*iskat' svoyu émigratsiyu*) in the sense of the identity categories addressing minority nationalities in the FSU and allowing a facilitated emigration on an ethnonational basis. This is similar to what has been noted by Oushakine, the very fact of the collapse of the Soviet Union appears to have confronted millions of people with an urgent question: "who am I?"[45] It can be argued that the possibility of emigration, which is dependent on the identity categories employed by policy makers, at the same time provides (prospective) emigrants with the possibility of finding a temporary answer to the questions of identity.

The Soviet Union has been appropriately described by Francine Hirsch as an "empire of nations"[46] in that its project was based on the forcible unification of groups of people with different ethnonational self-identifications, languages, cultures and religions. To make the unifying effort work, Soviet nationality policy made use of two fundamental instruments: on the one hand, the principle of territoriality by which national groups were assigned territorial entities forming the subjects of the Soviet Union and which created many border disputes, among other things; on the other hand *korenizatsiya* opportunistically fostered "national cultures, literacy programmes and publishing in the local languages" so that Soviet ideology could "become rooted in the non-Russian nationalities".[47]

In this paper, I illustrate that the role of nationalities did not dissolve with the collapse of the Soviet Union, but retained its significance within the context of the massive post-Soviet migration phenomena. Thus, post-Soviet migration could be defined as the migration of nationalities, understood as groups with a different ethnic or ethnonational self-identification than (only) Russian. This study brings to the fore a challenge related to this framing of post-Soviet migration: that of a necessary shift in perspectives when studying migration in general, and post-Soviet migration in particular. Since immigrants from the FSU are heavily exposed to external attributions of identity, it is

45 Oushakine, Third Europe-Asia Lecture (cf. n. 24), 995.

46 Hirsch, Francine: Toward an Empire of Nations: Border-Making and the Formation of Soviet National Identities. In: The Russian Review 59/2 (2000), 201–226.

47 Smith, Jeremy: Red Nations. The Nationalities Experience in and after the USSR. Cambridge 2013, 50.

highly necessary for both policymakers and researchers to increasingly look at the immigration process from the vantage-point of the immigrant, taking into serious consideration the issues which immigrants highlight as relevant when it comes to the negotiation of belonging. This shift in perspective is highly challenging for both parties involved, since clear-cut categories are vital both in immigration policy and in research (in this case, linguistic and sociological). This paper does not call for abolishing immigration categories, but rather for a serious engagement with immigrants' self-identifications. In fact, if administrative categories of belonging largely fail to reflect actual feelings of belonging, this suggests that new categories can and should be created by which the in-betweenness involved in post-Soviet migration is positively addressed.

From the challenge above follow two further challenges for the study of post-Soviet migration: 1) Which theoretical and methodological frameworks allow for post-Soviet migration to be studied in a manner as exhaustive as possible? 2) Until which point does the term post-Soviet retain its validity, especially when it comes to the cultural, political and linguistic practices of people from the FSU?

Clearly, a comprehensive study of migration from the FSU entails thinking outside of the box of disciplines and employing theories and methods from sociology, linguistics, history, political sciences etc. This means that, for a phenomenon to be studied thoroughly, the theories and methods applied to its study should derive from the characteristics of the phenomenon itself, and not be solely situated within one pre-existing field, to which scholars are usually required to adhere.

The second question derives from the recognition that, while the term 'post-Soviet' is widely employed in public discourse and in academia, research I conducted shows that it is hardly employed as a self-identification by people born and raised in FSU countries.[48] Russia's full-scale attack on Ukraine in February 2022 and other dramatic events happening in the so-called post-Soviet space before and after it might well signify a fragmentation of that which was formerly imagined as a common space into a new reality for which the term 'post-Soviet' could be considered only partially adequate. This does not represent an invitation to abandon the term but rather a caveat to employ it mindfully from the emic (i. e. the participants') perspective. Reflecting on "when, where, and in what ways [this term] still resonate[s], and how [it] can illuminate our contemporary moment, if only partially" – as noted in the Introduction to this volume – could be the first step into a 'post' post-Soviet perspective.

With this caveat in mind, the post-Soviet has been described as being characterised by in-betweenness and ambiguity.[49] These two states do not abandon some of those who have decided to leave post-Soviet countries for Israel and Germany. The example of Zina brings to the fore precisely her feeling of being at a loss for her identity ("I feel like I have no place in the world") between Israel and Belarus. However, there are also examples in which the immigrants reappropriate this in-betweenness and transform it into a multiple

48 Cf. Lucchetti, Language Attitudes and Social Identity (cf. n. 3).

49 Cf. Dobrenko/Shcherbenok, Introduction. Between History and the Past (cf. n. 23), 77.

space cohabited by several identities at once. This is the case for participant Nora: in the first excerpt from the interview with her presented in the previous section she recounts that, while her Jewish belonging was looked upon negatively while she was living in the Kazakh city of Baikonur, it turned into a positive aspect of her life in Germany, as it allowed her to send her daughter to a school of her preference. This points at a different facet of post-Soviet immigration to the characteristics highlighted in the example of Zina: immigrants are aware of the identity categories imposed on them by immigration policies and can use them to their own advantage, reappropriating them and building an identity which includes aspects of several identity categories which they inhabit at the same time.

The examples presented in the empirical section show that the "diasporic condition" can but does not have to be defined in the sense of being "torn-between-this-and-that".[50] The examples of Sveta and Katya particularly illustrate that languages are treated by the immigrants as a symbol of their multiple identity: each language has different functions and meanings or evokes different associations; yet they all coexist in one person and play a fundamental role in the immigrants' self-positioning in society. The latter supports the importance of studying language attitude not only out of linguistic interest but also from a sociological and anthropological perspective, especially when dealing with migration phenomena.[51]

Based on my fieldwork observations and interviews, the uniqueness of post-Soviet migration lies in the tension between administrative categories of (ethno-)nationality and the immigrants' self-perception. While this tension can have a negative effect on the immigrants' quality of life in the receiving society, the immigrants ideologically engage with their multilingualism as a means to cope with the challenges of immigrant life, transforming the in-betweenness which is attributed to the post-Soviet into a multiple identity (also intended as multilingual identities) in which several places, histories, cultures, values and languages are contained.

Language attitudes, expressed as values, ideologies and opinions on the immigrants' biographically relevant languages, are a central resource for the immigrants to position themselves in the receiving society and develop a self-identification by gradually loosening the bonds to administrative identity categories.

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50 Hage, The Diasporic Condition, 65.

51 I elaborate on this in Lucchetti, Language Attitudes and Social Identity (cf. n. 3).

Daniel Gebel

“Freedom in Exile?” Russian Germans, Jewish Quota Refugees and Their Life Experiences in Siberia

Abstract: In the 1980s and 1990s, hundreds of thousands of Soviet citizens of German or Jewish nationality immigrated to the Federal Republic of Germany. Most of these emigrants came from Siberia or Central Asia – peripheral regions of the USSR – to which they were largely forcibly resettled during the Stalinist era. The majority lived there until the collapse of the Soviet Union, before they emigrated due to the worsening economic, professional and security conditions. When they arrived in the Federal Republic of Germany, many of them discovered that, despite the legal freedoms offered to them by the German state, they felt freer in the USSR. Russian Germans and Jewish quota refugees particularly remembered the period under Leonid Brezhnev (mid-1960s to early 1980s) as a period in which – despite the autocratic nature of the Soviet state – they enjoyed various freedoms, including on material, cultural and political levels. The perceived absence of the Soviet state allowed them to carry out individual actions in their everyday lives that they do not see as given in the Federal Republic due to the existing legal and social circumstances. As a result, many of them got the impression that they were ‘freer’ in their Soviet homeland than they are in their current everyday lives.

Keywords: freedom, Siberia, Russian Germans, Jewish Quota Refugees, Federal Republic of Germany

Introduction

“Oh, we’ll send them all to Siberia now. And then they built a district in the forest near Novosibirsk where a university was opened.”[1] This statement was made by my Jewish-Russian interviewee, E. C. (*1953), when we talked about her childhood. With a certain self-irony, she described how she imagined the founding of Akademgorodok[2] – the science district of Novosibirsk in 1957/58 – where she grew up with her parents.[3] E. C.’s statement, which I recorded when I interviewed her in Lower Saxony, Germany in the summer of 2021, is interesting because it provides insight into her perspective on life in the Soviet Union and how she imagines the relationship between the perceived totalitarian nature of the Soviet state and the freedom of the individual. This

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1 Interview with E. C. 19.07.2021 (in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation, the names of my interviewees have been anonymised here and below). E. C. alluded, among other things, to the practice of the Soviet or Tsarist Russian government of exiling ‘disagreeable elements’ to the area east of the Urals. Cf. Gladkov, Alexandra S.: Geschichte Sibiriens. Regensburg 2003, 56 f.

2 Cf. Dahlmann, Dittmar: Sibirien. Vom 16. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart. Paderborn-München-Wien 2009, 271.

3 Cf. the interview with E. C. 19.07.2021.

 https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111369204-007

perspective is particularly stimulating when considering the role of freedom in contemporary Germany, especially concerning the group of immigrants to which she also belongs: (post-)Soviet migrants.

Since the end of the 1980s, Soviet citizens increasingly migrated to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) as a consequence of the liberalisation of the Soviet migration regime under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachëv (1985–1991).[4] The two largest groups to migrate from the former Soviet Union in 2018 were the Russian Germans[5] (approx. 2.5 million) and the Jewish quota refugees (approx. 220,000). In addition to these two groups, other Russian-speaking people also migrated to Germany.[6]

As one of the largest immigration groups in Germany today, post-Soviet migrants play an important role in the country's migration and integration debates.[7] However, their portrayal is often ambivalent and carries strong negative connotations, particularly when looking back to the 1990s. During this period, Russian Germans were prominently featured in the press, commonly associated with issues such as criminality, unemployment, alcoholism, and integration.[8] Their socialisation in the Soviet Union was often cited in debates as a reason for them being apolitical, with a preference for authoritarian structures and a limited understanding of freedom. The concept of *homo sovieticus* was often invoked here. [9]

This is precisely why I found the interview with E. C. to be particularly stimulating. She took the time to explicitly express the value of freedom from her perspective and how her "place of exile"[10] in Siberia contributed to shaping her personal understand-

4 For an overview of Gorbachëv's time cf. Taubmann, William: Gorbatschow. Der Mann und seine Zeit. Eine Biographie. München 2018.

5 The term 'Russian Germans' originates from inter-war Germany and has its origins in the *völkisch* milieu. Since the term is often used colloquially by the German public, it is also used in the following work together with the legally correct term of *(Spät-)Aussiedler*; see also: Petersen, Hans-Christian; Weger, Tobias: Neue Begriffe, alte Eindeutigkeiten? Zur Konstruktion von ‚deutschen Volksgruppen' im östlichen Europa. In: Jahrbuch des Bundesinstituts für Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im östlichen Europa 25 (2017): Nach dem Großen Krieg: 1918–1923, 177–199; for an overview of the history of the Russian Germans see, among others: Krieger, Viktor: Kolonisten, Sowjetdeutsche, Aussiedler. Eine Geschichte der Russlanddeutschen. Bonn 2015.

6 Cf. Panagiotidis, Jannis: Postsowjetische Migration in Deutschland. Eine Einführung. Basel 2021, 17–21.

7 See for further references: Plamper, Jan: Das neue Wir. Warum Migration dazugehört. Eine andere Geschichte der Deutschen. Frankfurt/M. 2019.

8 Cf. Klimeniouk, Nikolai: Fleißige deutsche Opfer, frustrierte russische Täter. In: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. 11.10.2018. URL: https://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/russlanddeutsche/276854/fleissige-deutsche-opfer-frustrierte-russische-taeter#footnode2-2 (30.01.2024). Jewish quota refugees, on the other hand, were often accused of being 'passport Jews' and not 'real Jews', since many did not count as Jews according to halakhic law; see on this, among others: Körber, Karen: Juden, Russen, Emigranten. Identitätskonflikte jüdischer Einwanderer in einer ostdeutschen Stadt. Frankfurt/M. 2005.

9 For a detailed explanation of the term, see: Lewada, Jurij. A.: Der "Homo sowjeticus" fünf Jahre danach: 1989–1994. In: Jadow, Wladimir A.; Steiner, Helmut (Eds.): Rußland – Wohin? Rußland aus der Sicht russischer Soziologen. Berlin 1999, 54–67.

10 Dahlmann, Sibirien (cf. n. 2), 151.

ing of the concept. Similarly, other interviewees who relocated from Siberia and Central Asia reported how life in those places seemed freer to them.

This paper explores individual interpretations of freedom and its various dimensions, focusing on how life in Siberia and Central Asia shaped these views. It examines the influence of the Soviet state on notions of freedom, exploring whether it acted as a restrictive or enabling force. The interaction between legal freedoms and personal feelings of liberty is analysed, particularly in the context of an autocratic state. It looks at how memories of Siberia continue to affect migrants' understandings of freedom and whether their experiences in Germany have reshaped these perceptions. The paper compares the roles of the Soviet and German states in influencing interviewees' concepts of freedom and assesses how interviewees view themselves – as active defenders of freedom or as passive beneficiaries within the system. Finally, the research explores how interviewees engage with the legal freedoms provided by the democratic Federal Republic of Germany, and how this impacts their societal participation and sense of belonging.

To analyse this, I proceed as follows. First, I briefly outline the context in which post-Soviet migration to Germany took place. Secondly, I will give a short overview regarding the definitions of freedom and its connection to nostalgia. The main section focuses on the empirical examples of freedoms as emerged in the narratives of the respondents.

Post-Soviet migration to Germany

Since post-Soviet migrants are a very heterogeneous group, this article will focus on the Russian Germans and the Jewish quota refugees, since they have not only similar historical experiences but have also been subjected to a similar immigration process, which makes a comparison of these two post-Soviet migrant groups seem sensible.[11]

The immigration of Russian Germans was regulated by Article 116, Paragraph 1 of the *Grundgesetz* (Basic Law) and the *Bundesvertriebenengesetz* (Federal Expellees Act, BVFG), which came into force in 1953. In this law it was decided how the admission and integration of displaced persons from the German eastern territories and Eastern Europe was to be regulated in the immediate post-war period.[12] The Russian Germans could enter the FRG as so-called *(Spät-)Aussiedler* ([late] resettlers, literally 'out-settlers'), provided they could prove their *Bekenntnis zur deutschen Volkszugehörigkeit* (commitment to German ethnicity).[13] After arriving in Germany, they enjoyed various

11 At the same time, it should be mentioned that there were also differences between the two nationalities, e. g., Jews living in the big European cities and Germans living in rural parts of the Asian USSR.
12 Cf. Panagiotidis, Postsowjetische Migration (cf. n. 6), 43–45.
13 For a detailed defintion of the BVFG as well as the terms see: Panagiotidis, Jannis: Spätaussiedler, Heimkehrer, Vertriebene – Russlanddeutsche im Spiegel bundesdeutscher Gesetze. In: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. 17.09.2018. URL: https://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/russlanddeutsche/

'privileges', including the acquisition of German citizenship and financial assistance for integration, such as low-cost language courses. Despite the energetic support of the conservative-liberal government of Helmut Kohl (1982–1998), there was a change in *Aussiedler* policy in the early 1990s.[14] In 1992/93, it was agreed to limit Russian German immigration to a quota of about 220,000 per year, and in 1996 a compulsory language test was introduced.[15]

The immigration of Soviet Jews to Germany was also based primarily on nationality or ethnicity. The first democratically legitimised government of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) initially took this on when it offered all Jewish citizens abroad the opportunity to apply for asylum in the GDR. Those responsible were aware that Jews from the USSR would particularly accept the offer. Since anti-Semitism was not officially present in the socialist states and there was no desire to snub the Soviet ally, the USSR was not officially mentioned. The offer of asylum was not specifically aimed at Soviet Jews, but it was they who were mainly affected by the rise of anti-Semitism in the USSR.[16]

In the course of reunification, the Bonn government took over this position and institutionalised the immigration process.[17] Soviet Jews were able to enter the FRG under the concept of the *Kontingentflüchtling* (quota refugee) without having to prove that they were threatened by individual persecution.[18] The 'return' of Jews to the country of the Holocaust was not only understood as a great symbolic act, but the reunified Germany also harboured the central hope that through emigration the ageing Jewish communities of the Federal Republic would be demographically stabi-

274597/spaetaussiedler-heimkehrer-vertriebene-russlanddeutsche-im-spiegel-bundesdeutscher-gesetze (30.01.2024).

14 Until 1992, the legal designation for this migration group in the Federal Republic was *Aussiedler*. After the War Consequences Settlement Act at the beginning of 1993 came into effect, it turned into *Spätaussiedler*. For the history of this legal category and the Federal German admission policy until 1989, see: Panagiotidis, Jannis: Staat, Zivilgesellschaft und Aussiedlermigration 1950–1989, in: Oltmer, Jochen (Ed.): Handbuch Staat und Migration in Deutschland seit dem 17. Jahrhundert. München 2015, 895–929.

15 Cf. Panagiotidis, Jannis: Geschichte der Russlanddeutschen ab Mitte der 1980er Jahre. In: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. 18.07.2017. URL: https://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/russlanddeutsche/249842/geschichte-der-russlanddeutschen-ab-mitte-der-1980er-jahre (30.01.2024).

16 Cf. Volkskammer der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik: Antrag aller Fraktionen der Volkskammer der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik zu einer gemeinsamen Erklärung der Volkskammer. 12.04.1990. In: Webarchiv des Deutschen Bundestages. URL: http://webarchiv.bundestag.de/volkskammer/dokumente/drucksachen/100004.pdf (30.01.2024); cf. Panagiotidis, Postsowjetische Migration (cf. n. 6), 48 f.

17 Cf. Panagiotidis, Jannis: The Unchosen Ones. Diaspora, Nation and Migration in Israel and Germany. Bloomington 2019, 275–277.

18 'Quota refugees' are refugees who can immigrate to Germany as collectives without having to go through an individual asylum process. An example of this are the Vietnamese boat people who, as persecutees of the Vietnam War, were granted collective status as refugees; cf. Belkin, Dmitrij: Jüdische Kontingentflüchtlinge und Russlanddeutsche. In: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. 13.07.2017. URL: https://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/kurzdossiers/252561/juedische-kontingentfluechtlinge-und-russlanddeutsche (30.01.2024).

lised and thus 'rejuvenated'. In this context, however, Jews were only recognised by the German side as quota refugees if they were marked as 'Jews' in column five of their domestic passport, which every Soviet citizen possessed.[19] Immigration was subject to an ethnic-national component. Since in the USSR people were primarily listed as Jews if they had a Jewish father, but according to halachic religious law were only recognised if the mother was Jewish, it was not possible for thousands of Soviet Jews to join German Jewish communities, as these regarded them as non-Jews.[20]

The migration process of the Jewish quota refugees is thus very similar to that of the *(Spät-)Aussiedler* since both minorities were able to enter Germany under the parameters of ethno-national affiliation. Both groups had suffered from the actions of the Germans in World War II, which is why Germany saw it as its historical obligation to help these two Soviet minorities. Their immigration was intended to be understood primarily as an act of 'reparation', considering how both nationalities suffered during and after World War II.[21]

With the attack of the Wehrmacht on 22 June 1941, all Russian Germans were placed under collective suspicion and around 900,000 of them were deported from the European to the Asian part of the USSR as a precaution. There they were interned in 'special settlements' and obliged to perform forced labour. At the same time the Autonomous Volga Republic (created in 1924)[22] was dissolved in August 1941 on the orders of Iosif Stalin (1927–1953).[23]

The special settlements were not dissolved until 1956, and in 1964 the USSR Supreme Soviet (partially) rehabilitated the Russian Germans by rendering the accusation of collaboration with the enemy as groundless; in a decree that was not accessible to the public. These political actions occurred under Stalin's successor Nikita Khrushchëv (1953–1964).[24] However, it was only in 1972 that this ban was lifted under Khruschëv's successor Leonid Brezhnev (1964–1982). As a result, most of the Russian Germans continued to live in Siberia and Central Asia, where they were often excluded from various educational opportunities.[25] Since the negative prejudices against Ger-

19 The Russian word *nacional'nost'* is often translated as 'nationality' and was a category from the domestic passport. It should be noted that the word *nacional'nost'* means less a civic definition of nationality than an ethno-social one. Perhaps 'ethnonationality' would be a better translation, see further: Panagiotidis, Postsowjetische Migration (cf. n. 6), 29 f.

20 Cf. Belkin, Jüdische Kontingentflüchtlinge (cf. n. 18); for a more detailed illustration of this topic see also idem: Germanija. Wie ich in Deutschland jüdisch und erwachsen wurde. Frankfurt/M. 2016.

21 Cf. Panagiotidis, Postsowjetische Migration (cf. n. 6), 42–57.

22 For a detailed account of the history of the German Volga Republic see also: Krieger, Viktor: Rotes Deutsches Wolgaland. Zum 100. Jubiläum der Gründung der Wolgadeutschen Republik. Eine populärwissenschaftliche Darstellung. Düsseldorf 2018.

23 Cf. idem, Kolonisten (cf. n. 5), 90–140.

24 Cf. Dietz, Barbara: Zwischen Anpassung und Autonomie. Rußlanddeutsche in der vormaligen Sowjetunion und in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Berlin 1995, 52–57.

25 Cf. Eisfeld, Alfred: Nationalitätenpolitik gegenüber der deutschen Minderheit in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis zur Perestrojka. In: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. 18.07.2017. URL: https://www.

mans persisted in most of the Soviet population, thousands of Russian Germans made their way to the homeland of their 'ancestors' during *perestroïka* and *glàsnost'*. When the possibility of emigration presented itself in the 1980s and 1990s, most of the Russian Germans took advantage of this opportunity.[26]

At the same time, the life of the Russian Germans was much more ambivalent than some members of the group, as well as the representatives of the German government, portrayed it. The Leonid Brezhnev era brought about a major change.[27] The Soviet leadership tried to unite society behind it by raising the standard of living, thus giving the socialist system new legitimacy. This led to a shift away from the Stalinist practice of collectively punishing ethnic groups, resulting in a normalisation of policy towards Germans that allowed them to establish themselves as part of post-war society by, among other things, moving to the larger cities or marrying Russians. In a sense, they became "normal Soviet citizens".[28]

The situation was similar for Soviet Jews. Although 2.5 million of them were murdered during the Holocaust, and some 2.8 million Jews survived the war – many of them serving in the Red Army – they were marginalised by the state.[29] The notion that they were the main victims of the National Socialist war of extermination was, however, deliberately pushed into the background by Soviet propaganda; with the suffering of the 'entire Soviet people' being emphasised instead.[30] Although anti-Semitism subsided in the post-Stalinist period, the propaganda against the imperialism of the state of Israel remained.[31] Nevertheless, urban Jews in particular assimilated into the Soviet majority society and became strongly secularised. Others opted for emigration, which intensified from the 1960s onwards. Often these emigrants (also called *refuseniks*) struggled for decades to leave the country, until Mikhail Gorbachëv took power and liberalised the migration regime of the USSR.[32]

The fact that the Russian Germans and Jewish quota refugees immigrated to the FRG under better conditions (e. g., state support for language classes) than other mi-

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bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/russlanddeutsche/250039/nationalitaetenpolitik-gegenueber-der-deutschen-minderheit-in-der-sowjetunion-von-1917-bis-zur-perestrojka (30.01.2024).

26 Cf. Dietz, Anpassung und Autonomie (cf. n. 24), 53–88.

27 For an overview of the current state of historiography on the time of Leonid Brezhnev, see Belge, Boris; Deuerlein, Martin (Eds.): Goldenes Zeitalter der Stagnation? Perspektiven auf die sowjetische Ordnung der Brežnev-Ära. Tübingen 2014.

28 Kindler, Robert: Einflüsse und Prägungen: die Russlanddeutschen in der Sowjetunion. In: Informationen zur Politischen Bildung 340 (2019): (Spät-)Aussiedler in der Migrationsgesellschaft, 20 f., here 20.

29 Cf. Panagiotidis, Postsowjetische Migration (cf. n. 6), 30.

30 On Stalin's anti-Semitic policies towards the Soviet Jewish population in the war and post-war period, see also, among others: Grüner, Frank: Patrioten und Kosmopoliten. Juden im Sowjetstaat 1941–1953. Köln-Weimar-Wien 2008.

31 Cf. idem: Sowjetbürger, Religionsgemeinschaft, nationale Minderheit. Juden und jüdisches Leben in der Sowjetunion. In: Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte 16 (2021), 40–47, here 46 f.

32 Cf. Buwalda, Petrus: "They did not dwell alone". Jewish Emigration from the Soviet Union 1967–1990. Baltimore 1997, 5–27.

grant groups meant that the West German population had inflated expectations of these new citizens from the Soviet Union. The official narrative of the Kohl government – that it was mainly 'German brothers and sisters' who were in need and Jewish migrants who would 'save' Jewish life in the Federal Republic – also created an expectation that the post-Soviet immigrants could hardly fulfil.[33]

The initial positive sentiment towards newcomers in Germany shifted as annual immigration from the USSR exceeded 200,000, with most migrants lacking German language skills and any understanding of Jewish religious life. This influx led some Germans to perceive the immigrants not as 'Germans and Jews' escaping state discrimination, but rather as 'Russians' drawn to the Federal Republic's material prosperity. As the challenges of integrating these new citizens became apparent, the German public's attitude, particularly towards the *(Spät-)Aussiedler*, turned more sceptical.[34]

There was a widespread impression that many were attracted to Germany not because of national discrimination in the USSR, but for more material reasons. The common belief was that these new residents, unfamiliar with the German language or practices of Judaism, were motivated more by Germany's higher living standards – symbolised by good sausage and chocolate – than by a desire to return to their ancestral homeland.[35] Accusations of materialism were quite common, especially since Russian Germans and Jewish Quota Refugees often saved substantial amounts of money to purchase homes or cars for their families – often just a few months or years after they came to Germany.

In the following years, however, Russian-speaking migrants acquired a much more positive reputation. The stories of 'criminal Aussiedler youths' faded into the background; instead, the Russian-speaking migrants turned into role models for successful integration.[36] But the crises of recent years show that prejudices against the Russian Germans had not completely disappeared and could easily be reactivated. For instance, the perceived affinity of post-Soviet migrants for the AfD (*Alternative für Deutschland*) party was attributed to their socialisation in the USSR, which supposedly fostered a heightened obedience to authority.[37] Russian Germans, in particular, faced accusations of both germanophilia and dual loyalty.[38]

After the 1990s, interest in the Russian Germans steadily ebbed in the media and in society until the Russia's war in Ukraine in 2014. In addition, the refugee crisis in 2015 once again generated negative headlines towards them. Debates about their under-

33 Cf. Panagiotidis, Postsowjetische Migration (cf. n. 6), 42–57.

34 For a description of the mood at the time, see newspaper articles such as: Der Wettlauf nach Westen. In: Der Spiegel. 21.10.1991. URL: http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13492070.html (30.01.2024).

35 Cf. Klingenberg, Darja: Materialismus und Melancholie: Vom Wohnen russischsprachiger migrantischer Mittelschichten, Frankfurt/M.-New York 2022, 29–31.

36 Cf. ibid, 58–60.

37 It is not only the Russian Germans who are affected by this. There is also a section of the AfD that deliberately tries to win over Jewish immigrants from the USSR as regular voters.

38 Cf. Klingenberg, Materialismus (cf. n. 35), 60.

standing of democracy, their affinities with right-wing parties such as the AfD, or their possible role in Russia's hybrid warfare dominated the media and public space.[39] Above all, the supposed closeness to the AfD, the alleged sympathies for Putin's Russia and their comparatively passive political participation in German politics compared to other migrant groups, raised doubts about Russian Germans' democratic sentiments. Their socialisation in the Soviet Union was often cited in debates as a reason for them being apolitical and instead longing for authoritarian structures.[40]

Nostalgia and freedom

Considering the life my partners had had in the post-Stalinist Soviet Union, I was quite surprised that many of them told me that they remember the period between 1960 and 1990 positively.[41] This may be partly because many of them remember their lives when they were children or young adults and feel nostalgia for that time. The cultural scientist Svetlana Boym describes nostalgia as follows: "At first glance, nostalgia is a longing for a place, but it actually is a yearning for a different time – the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams", and: "longing for a home that no longer exits or has never existed".[42] Boym distinguishes between two types of nostalgia: 'restorative nostalgia', which refers to the *nostos* – return home – and sees itself as a transhistorical truth; and 'reflective nostalgia', which focuses on the *algia* – longing – and emphasises the longing for home rather than the home itself.[43] While restorative nostalgia can serve as a basis for national or religious awakening, reflective nostalgia works on an individual level and in the interplay between the individual and society.[44]

Nostalgia also plays an important role for my interviewees whereby their memories of the old homeland always interact with the present and influence their everyday life in Germany. Although my interviewees have been living in Germany for a long time, they, like many citizens of the Russian Federation, still often feel nostalgic for the Soviet Union.[45]

39 Cf. Klimeniouk, Fleißige deutsche Opfer (cf. n. 8).

40 Cf. Panagiotidis, Jannis: Politische Partizipation von Russlanddeutschen. In: Informationen zur Politischen Bildung 340 (2019): (Spät-)Aussiedler in der Migrationsgesellschaft, 27–29.

41 Cf. the interviews with E. C. 23.06. and 19.07.2021, with R. G. 25.08.2021, with A. R. 20.07. and 25.08. 2021, with N. K. 28.09.2021 and with A. W. 27.07.2021.

42 Boym, Svetlana: The Future of Nostalgia. New York 2001, XV, XIII.

43 Ibid, XIII – XIX.

44 Cf. ibid, 41 – 55.

45 Cf. Casteel, James: Transcultural Memories among Russian-German and Russian-Jewish Migrants in Germany. Literature, Museums, and Narrations of the Soviet Past. In: Dönninghaus, Viktor; Panagiotidis, Jannis; Petersen, Hans-Christian (Eds.): Jenseits der "Volksgruppe". Neue Perspektiven auf die Russlanddeutschen zwischen Russland, Deutschland und Amerika. Berlin-Boston 2018, 179 – 205, here 184 f.

While nostalgia may partly explain my interviewees' favourable perspective of the post-Stalinist Soviet Union,[46] it is intriguing that they frequently associate their past with 'freedom'. According to their recollections, daily life in the Soviet Union felt unrestricted as they pursued their desires without feeling constrained by the state or society. It would be insightful to examine how their current experiences in Germany influence these memories and shape their present view of the USSR.

Despite the USSR's authoritarian nature under Brezhnev, with numerous restrictions on citizen rights, some interviewees nostalgically recall their lives as free.[47] The Russian-British philosopher Isaiah Berlin delved into the intriguing notion of whether one might feel freer in an authoritarian state than in a democratic one. Berlin's perspective on freedom was that it could exist separately from democracy, suggesting the possibility that an individual could experience greater freedom under autocracy than democracy. He elaborated this idea in his essay *Two Concepts of Liberty* (1958), where he wrote the following:

> "Just as a democracy may, in fact, deprive the individual citizen of a great many liberties which he might have in some other form of society, so it is perfectly conceivable that a liberal-minded despot would allow his subjects a large measure of personal freedom."[48]

For Berlin, it was plausible that people under authoritarian regimes might enjoy more freedom in certain respects than in democratic states. This is due to the pressures of majority rule and the enforcement of societal values and norms, which may compel minorities to conform.[49]

Berlin further differentiates between two types of freedom: 'negative' and 'positive' freedom, which are described as following: "Unlike negative freedom, which is the freedom from interference by others, positive freedom is the freedom of self-mastery, of rational control of one's life."[50] Berlin defines 'negative freedom' as the absence of external constraints that limit an individual, essentially the freedom from interference by others. In contrast 'positive freedom', according to him, is the autonomy to live one's life by one's own rules, essentially self-mastery and rational control of one's life.[51] Both concepts of freedom hinge on the ability of a person to make choices, with the preference for either form of freedom being a personal decision.[52]

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46 For detailed works that deal with nostalgia in the Former Soviet Union, see: Yurchak, Alexei: Everything Was Forever, Until it Was No More. The Last Soviet Generation. New Jersey 2005; Sullivan, Charles J.: Motherland. Soviet Nostalgia in the Russian Federation. Singapore 2022.

47 For a discussion of what kind of form of government the USSR specifically represented under Brezhnev, see: Belge, Boris; Deuerlein, Martin: Einführung. Goldenes Zeitalter der Stagnation? Perspektiven auf die sowjetische Ordnung der Brežnev-Ära. In: Idem, Goldenes Zeitalter (cf. n. 27), 1–36, here 1–15.

48 Gray, John: Isaiah Berlin. An Interpretation of His Thought. New Jersey 2020, 6 f; for Berlins writing see also: Berlin, Isaiah: Freiheit. Vier Versuche. Frankfurt/M. 1995 (orig. 1969).

49 Cf. ibid.

50 Gray, Isaiah Berlin (cf. n. 48), 52.

51 Cf. ibid, 41 f.

Surprisingly, my interviewees expressed nostalgia not only for the USSR in general but particularly for Siberia (or Central Asia), which they recalled as spaces of significant freedom.[53] This observation leads to my empirical analysis, aimed at exploring how this sense of freedom, as associated with Siberia/Central Asia, is reflected in their memories, and influences their current understanding of freedom in contemporary Germany.

"In Siberia one was freer"

Two aspects struck me during the analysis of the interviews. Firstly, when the interviewees[54] explained what freedom is for them and how it manifested itself in the past in the USSR, this is significantly related to their current (or former) situation in Germany. My partners often remember positive aspects of their everyday life in the Soviet Union that they missed or lacked in Germany. Secondly, when my interviewees talked about freedom, it usually meant that freedom for them comes primarily when one is free *from* something. In most cases, they saw themselves as free because the state hardly interfered in their everyday life, so they were not forced to commit or follow actions that they opposed. This understanding of freedom not only reminded me of Berlin's concept of 'negative freedom', but also on his ideas on the relationship between freedom and democracy. In the following, I seek to unpack my research findings with the help of three examples.

Nature

My interviewees frequently talked about the nature of the land in Siberia and Central Asia, and the ability to enjoy it whenever they wanted. My Russian German respondent from Omsk, A. R. (*1983) for instance told me that, while being happy with her decision to immigrate to Germany, she misses the nature of Siberia above all else. As she explains:

52 Cf. ibid, 51f.

53 Cf. n. 41.

54 In the course of my dissertation project, I conducted sixteen narrative-biographical audio interviews between June 2021 and October 2022, eight with Russian Germans and eight with Jewish quota refugees in Lower Saxony and Bremen in Germany. Nine interviewees were women, seven were men. All but two interviews were conducted in German. Most of the interviewees came from Siberia or Central Asia. This paper concentrates on five interviewees who lived in Western Siberia or Kazakhstan. An additional research question may have been to ascertain whether those interviewees who lived in the European part of the USSR had similar experiences and a similar understanding of freedom, or whether there are differences that were significantly influenced by their location in Siberia/Central Asia.

> "Especially when it comes to leisure activities and the possibility of simply going somewhere in the forest, because there are a thousand forests that don't belong to anyone and a thousand lakes. And you can always do something without it costing much."[55]

For A. R., it is the vast open spaces of Siberia that allows her to experience freedom. The possibility of simply going into the wilderness and spending a few days in nature is not available to her in Germany, where she is living in a big city which has no large forest areas nearby. So, despite the strict lessons, she remembers her school days as a time when she had a lot of freedom as a pupil. The time spent in nature, which was often encouraged by the school, blurs into an experience of freedom that she cannot imagine in Germany.[56] In other words it is activities such as camping, barbecuing, or hiking that remained positive in her memory and shaped her childhood. This, she thought, was something that German children – including her younger sister who spent her entire childhood in Germany – lacked, not only because of a paucity of access to nature but also due to the many restrictions found in Germany.[57]

Similar thoughts were shared by my interviewee R. G., who was born to a Russian German family (*1981) close to Almaty, the capital of the Kazakh SSR. R. G. told me about their leisure time as follows:

> "In fact, we had, if you think about the area. It's actually quite beautiful nature. These are mountains. If you go to Almaty, you can even see the ice glaciers at the top. […] And near Almaty, I think 90 or 100 kilometres, there is a reservoir called, I'll tell you right now, Kapchagay. It was like a holiday by the sea, exactly. It's also huge and has a sandy beach. We also went there by car. It was also a popular destination."[58]

R. G. shares a similar view to A. R. For her, one of the best things about her childhood in Kazakhstan was the vastness of the land with its huge diversity. She, after only a few hundred kilometres of driving, could either feel like she was at the seaside or marvel at the mountains, while her family's village was more in a steppe-like environment. These different ways of enjoying nature shaped her childhood and still made the Kazakh landscape to be something magical in her memory.[59] This was also shown by the fact that – although she now lives in northern Germany – she still has many positive memories of Kempten, a town in the Allgäu where the family lived temporarily in the

55 Interview with A. R. 25.08.2021.

56 Cf. the interview with A. R. 20.07.2021.

57 E. g., regulations when it is allowed to swim in a lake. See as example: Kommunaler Schadensausgleich der Länder Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt und Thüringen: Versicherungspflicht für Badestellen und Naturbäder. URL: https://www.ksa.de/pdf/k664cd-hinweise-badestellen-a4.pdf (30.01.2024).

58 Interview with R. G. 25.08.2021.

59 Cf. ibid.

1990s. For her, Kempten, with its snow-covered mountains, resembled Almaty and created a feeling of warmth in an uncertain period of her life.[60]

Looking at both interviewees, it seems that their positive memories of nature in Siberia/Kazakhstan are strongly shaped by their lives in modern Germany. Both of my respondents miss the easiness of simply going into nature and enjoying time there. Not only do they have a feeling that the nature in Germany is lacking compared to that in Siberia or Central Asia, they often feel that in Germany one cannot simply enter a forest or lake without fearing that it might be private property and therefore forbidden to enter. In the USSR nobody cared about those rules, with everybody using the land as much as they liked it – at least that's how my interviewees remember and explain it. For them, the "lack of rules" creates a feeling that they had more freedom to enjoy nature in their old homeland than in Germany.[61] In a sense they view nature in the Soviet Union as public good, which every citizen could use for enjoyment, while in Germany nature is seen as private property, which only those who have the legal right to do so can enjoy. This is why, for them, the way nature is used in Germany is diametrically opposed to the way nature is used in the Soviet Union.

Another interesting remark about the vast landscape of Siberia was made by my interviewee N. K., who was born in Novosibirsk (*1954). She told me about her family history:

> "But my father, he moved to Siberia before the war, his parents moved to Siberia before the war, because well, they were a bit poorer. [laughs] And they recruited a lot in Siberia. There was a lot of land there. And that's why they went there."[62]

While the other interviewees saw the nature of Siberia/Central Asia as a place of freedom for N. K.'s family it was the opportunity to obtain a large amount of land to cultivate that they found attractive. Her father's family left their German village in Ukraine,[63] which was characterised by land poverty, in the hope of obtaining a larger piece of unused land in Siberia. Siberia's vast nature with its fertile soil acts as a place that promises freedom from the confines of the old village life and the chance of a better standard of living. Her father's family succeeded in building up a certain level of prosperity there, which was reflected, above all, in their improved living conditions. To have house of their own was a great luxury for many Russian Germans, and many saw it as the basis for a free life.[64]

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60 "And then we were sent from Friedland to Kempten. That's in the Allgäu, at the very bottom. It was also a beautiful mountain landscape. It also reminded us of Kazakhstan." Ibid.

61 Cf. ibid and the interviews with A. R., 20.07. and 25.08.2021.

62 Interview with N. K. 28.09.2021.

63 Cf. Dahlmann, Sibirien (cf. n. 2), 195–201.

64 Cf. the interview with N. K. 28.09.2021.

Materialism and its values

The topic of "having your own house", was of great importance for my interviewees and represented a significant part of their narrative. For example, N. K. told me the following about her family after they emigrated to Kazakhstan in 1965:[65] "Yes, I would say that we didn't have a bad life. We lived well and my father worked in the quarry and earned good money. So we already had our own house at home".[66]

Given that the Russian Germans were only released from the special settlements in 1956, her family was happy to own a house with a garden. On top of that, having a house on your own, could be considered a luxury given the housing problems in the USSR.[67] N. K. was incredibly proud that her family had a fancy house with a garden that could feed the family. According to her, the other families in the village admired her family's house, and a neighbouring Kazakh family bought it from them before they finally left the USSR in 1988.[68]

A similar remark was made by R. G., who told me that her family in Kazakhstan had "rebuilt their lives" because "they built a small house."[69] For her, this nice clean house was a symbol of the strength of her family, who had overcome difficult circumstances to start a new successful life despite their deportation. She proudly told me that her family's house was envied by other families in the neighbourhood, as well as the good jobs that her parents had in Kazakhstan, which together allowed them to live a prosperous life.[70]

In view of the deportation experience the Russian Germans went through, it is no wonder that for N. K. and R. G. a 'house of their own' is a symbol of freedom and of having their own domain, – and is diametrically opposed to the confinement and deprivation of freedom in the special settlements.[71] For both women, their own house, built after deportation and labour camps, stands for the resilience of their own family, who managed not only to overcome the tragedy initiated by the state, but even to re-

65 See the following for an overview of the everyday life of the Russian Germans after the deportation in Siberia and Kazakhstan: Eisfeld, Alfred: Leben und Kultur der Deutschen in der Kasachischen SSR nach der Deportation. In: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. 30.10.2018. URL: https://www.bpb.de/themen/migration-integration/russlanddeutsche/277018/leben-und-kultur-der-deutschen-in-der-kasachischen-ssr-nach-der-deportation/ (30.01.2024).

66 Interview with N. K. 28.09.2021.

67 The topic of 'housing shortage' is addressed by, among others: Goehrke, Carsten: Russischer Alltag. Sowjetische Moderne und Umbruch. Zürich 2005; for works that specifically deal with the topic of building houses in the USSR, see also: Meuser, Philipp: Die Ästhetik der Platte. Wohnungsbau in der Sowjetunion zwischen Stalin und Glasnost. Berlin 2015.

68 See on German-Kazakh relations in the Kazakh SSR: Der Göttinger Arbeitskreis e. V.: Geschichte und Kultur der Deutschen in Kasachstan = Istorija i kul'tura nemcev Kazachstana. Göttingen-Almaty 2017.

69 Interview with R. G. 25.08.2021.

70 Cf. ibid.

71 For further readings on the deportation of the Russian Germans, see: Eisfeld, Alfred: Die Deutschen in Rußland und in der Sowjetunion. Wien 1986.

gain prosperity and win the recognition of their neighbours. Interestingly both families have a slightly different history than many other Russian German families.[72]

After the special settlements were dissolved in 1955 many Russian German families moved to larger cities. In fact, from the 1950s onwards there was heavy internal migration, as Russian Germans were still forbidden to move to their European homelands. Within Siberia, Germans from Russia migrated to cities such as Omsk and Orenburg, which already had a strong German presence before the Stalinist deportations. Kazakhstan and Central Asia were also popular destinations due to the more favourable climate. Even when the Supreme Soviet allowed the Russian Germans to return to their European home regions in 1974, many preferred to remain in their new settlements before emigrating to West Germany in greater numbers in the late 1980s.[73]

R. G. and her family did not move to a larger city, preferring to live in proximity to Almaty. N. K.'s family even moved from Novosibirsk – the largest city in Siberia – to rural Kazakhstan. Both families did not believe that the Soviet State would help them to get their grandparents homes in Ukraine back, so they decided to do it on their own by migrating to rural Kazakhstan. There, far away from the big city, living in a multicultural environment with a low percentage of ethnic Russians, their families got well-paid jobs and successfully managed to build new houses, which drew the admiration of their non-German neighbours.[74] Here the Soviet state, with its discriminatory rules, seemed far away to them and did not disturb their everyday life.

But it was not only a 'house of one's own' that was seen as a luxury; some of my interviewees also regarded having a flat to be a privilege. A. W. (*1958), from northern Kazakhstan, told me: "I have now had a property. Three-room flat. Pretty much I was still young, 32, and I already had property and that was my flat. It wasn't bad. It was good actually."[75] After taking a well-paid job as a truck driver, he was able to rent an apartment for himself and his family in a medium-sized town in the north of Kazakhstan. In addition, the family had enough food and clothing and did not suffer from the sort of material hardship that was quite common in the shortage economy of the USSR outside of Moscow.[76]

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72 Cf. the interviews with N. K. 28.09.2021 and with R. G. 25.08.2021.

73 Cf. Eisfeld, Alfred: Leben und Kultur der Deutschen im Ural und Sibirien nach der Deportation. In: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. 30.10.2018. URL: https://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/russlanddeutsche/277189/leben-und-kultur-der-deutschen-im-ural-und-sibirien-nach-der-deportation (30.01.2024); for works that fundamentally deal with the topic of internal migration in the USSR, see also: Poljan, Pavel: Against Their Will. The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR. Budapest-New York 2004; Siegelbaum, Lewis H.; Page Moch, Leslie: Making National Diasporas. Soviet-Era Migrations and Post-Soviet Consequences. Cambridge 2023.

74 For example, R. G told me: "We were even in our street, or if you walked past the houses in the settlement, you could already see where there were German houses. They were particularly well-kept, particularly beautiful". Interview with R. G. 25.08.2021.

75 Interview with A. W. 27.07.2021.

76 Cf. ibid.

A. R. also expressed similar thoughts when she told me that life in Omsk – like in the rest of the country– had less to offer materially than Moscow. Nevertheless, she did not necessarily see this as a disadvantage, seeing certain advantages in not having lived in Moscow. When she talked about her childhood in the USSR, she told me:

> "But also, yes, my Soviet childhood was a very beautiful childhood, so I had everything, so we had a large flat, so I noticed from many who at least now did not come from Siberia, but possibly from Central Russia or from other republics, that it was not the case with many. That surprised me very much. In our region there were no problems at all, so everyone who made an effort had very good conditions at that time."[77]

A. R. told me that her family owned a large flat with three rooms in Omsk, which was an absolute luxury for her family of four. Over time, she got to know many people who faced different housing conditions. This was because there was a massive housing shortage, especially in central Russia – Moscow included – caused by post-war urbanisation, which the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) was never really able to solve during its time in power.[78]

Having her own flat in Omsk seemed to be a better deal in A. R.'s eyes than living cramped in a small flat in the capital, especially since her flat was in a larger flat block that had several playgrounds and thus offered enough opportunities for leisure activities, especially when she was a child.[79] Once they emigrated to Germany, one of the main priorities for my interviewees and their families was to get a job and – once they accumulated enough capital – a new house, as N. K. remembers it:

> "Yes, first of all, we didn't have a car for our big family. As I said, there were 36 of us in a bunch. We had an old car. Father bought it and then we always drove to Lidl and Aldi in Cloppenburg. That's where we did our shopping, and that's how it continued. Then later my husband went to work and then we bought a car. It was an Opel. At that time, it cost 2,000 DM, that's what we bought. Well, my husband had a driving licence. I didn't have one. I did this one. Then it went on like that."[80]

Thirty-six family members lived together in a house that was bursting at the seams. Because initially there was only one car available for the whole extended family, many of them were frequently dependent on public transport – which was often unreliable in the countryside.[81]

With her own car, she could go shopping independently without asking her father for the car or being dependent on public transport. After N. K. and her husband established themselves professionally in Germany, they bought their own house and a car. For them, this meant freedom, as they were neither dependent on the state nor on

77 Interview with A. R. 25.08.2021.
78 Cf. Goehrke, Russischer Alltag (cf. n. 67); Meuser, Die Ästhetik der Platten (cf. n. 67).
79 Cf. the interview with A. R. 20.07.2021.
80 Interview with N. K. 28.09.2021.
81 Cf. ibid.

their own extended family and thus had peace of mind.[82] She was able to recreate the life she had in the Kazakh SSR – having her own house with a car in a village – in a small rural town in Germany. Since she knows how much Russian Germans value their own house and has, for a long time, been involved in voluntary work to help other families, for example, apply for building permits so that they too can fulfil their dream of having a home.[83]

But what exactly are her (and my other interviewees) values in that regard? Ownership of a car and a house for one and one's family stood for independence and freedom. The fact that most Russian Germans and Jewish quota refugees had to live in reception camps like Friedland after emigration created a situation in which families were hardly ever on their own but were always surrounded by strangers.[84] If they succeeded in securing housing, which was typically rented accommodation found either through relatives or provided by the state via social benefits, they often encountered neighbours whose behaviours, such as excessive noise, were bothersome. Some initially stayed with relatives, but the close quarters and lack of space eventually made cohabitation challenging.[85]

In Germany, owning a house has become a coveted retreat, offering families privacy and respite from the common disturbances of apartment living, such as noisy neighbours. Homeownership allows for the freedom to host family and friends at one's leisure without concern for other tenants. Moreover, unlike tenants who may face housing insecurity if state-provided social benefits are reduced, homeowners enjoy a sense of security and independence.[86] This concept of homeownership aligns with Berlin's idea of 'negative freedom'. In one's own house there is liberation from neighbourly annoyances and the constraints of rental agreements. It is a personal domain where one sets one's own rules, finds refuge from intrusive relatives, and does not rely on state support. Owning a house – or similarly, a car – creates a personal space free from irritations, fostering the pursuit of personal interests.[87]

All four of my interviewees shared similar experiences. For their families, acquiring a house was a paramount goal after leaving Friedland. They spared no effort or expense, often forgoing luxuries like family vacations, to achieve the dream of homeownership.[88]

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82 Cf. ibid.

83 Cf. ibid; on the value that a house of one's own plays for Russian Germans, cf. Klingenberg, Materialismus und Melancholie (cf. n. 35).

84 Cf. Wallem, Gesine: Ankunft in Friedland. Das Grenzdurchgangslager als Erinnerungsort und Aufnahmeeinrichtung für russlanddeutsche Aussiedler und Spätaussiedler. In: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. 18.09.2018. URL: https://www.bpb.de/themen/migration-integration/russlanddeutsche/271947/ankunft-in-friedland/ (30.01.2024).

85 Cf. Boll, Klaus: Kulturwandel der Deutschen aus der Sowjetunion. Eine empirische Studie zur Lebenswelt russlanddeutscher Aussiedler in der Bundesrepublik. Marburg 1993, 157–163.

86 Cf. ibid.

87 Cf. Gray, Isaiah Berlin (cf. n. 48), 52.

88 Cf. Boll, Kulturwandel (cf. n. 85), 161.

Culture and politics

While some interviewees missed the material freedom they owned in the USSR, others connected freedom with other aspects. For my interviewee E. C. the topic of political freedom played an important role. She tried to explain to me why she believed that people in Novosibirsk could think politically more freely than in other parts of the USSR. In doing so, she concluded that the geographical distance to Moscow[89] could play an important role, which is why Novosibirsk was also chosen as the location for an entire academic quarter, rather than the capital. As she says: "They were afraid that the young academics would get too much of a sense of freedom in Moscow and Petersburg and Leningrad and that it would [interrupt] a bit… – intellectuals are always dangerous for totalitarian regimes."[90]

In her opinion, the KGB, which she saw as the dominant organisation in the USSR, feared that young scientists starting their academic careers during Khrushchëv's 'thaw'[91] would take advantage of the new atmosphere to postulate liberal ideas that would harm the regime's hold on power. For E. C. the academic city of Akademgorodok was built in faraway Siberia to protect the centres of power – Moscow and Leningrad – from the danger of liberal ideas. Because of the geographical distance,[92] the KGB hoped that the researchers' views would not reach the centre and cause unrest there.[93] Here, E. C. uses the narrative of Siberia as a place where 'the sky is high and the tsar is far away'.[94] E. C. could imagine that the geographical distance between the centre and the periphery ensured that parts of the population in Siberia were more likely to hold anti-government opinions than in central Russia, where Moscow's 'iron hand' was not far away. Her family is indeed a good example of this.

E. C.'s middle-class family from the academic milieu did not provide any party members and was critical of the government. Her older brother even went so far as to give lectures at the university in which he questioned the meaningfulness of the October Revolution. If one is to believe her most academics in Akademgorodok spent their

89 On the unique position of Moscow within Russia, see: Clowes, Edith W.: Russia on the Edge. Imagined Geographies and Post-Soviet Identity. Ithaka-London 2011, 19–43.

90 Interview with E. C. 19.07.2021; for a detailed description of the relationship between the Soviet state and the Intelligentsia, see: Beyrau, Dietrich: Intelligenz und Dissens. Die russischen Bildungsschichten in der Sowjetunion 1917–1985. Göttingen 1993; Shlapentokh, Vladimir: Soviet Intellectuals and Political Power. The Post-Stalin Era. Princeton 2014.

91 On the 'thaw' period in the USSR under Khrushchëv and its effect on society, see also: Laß, Karen: Vom Tauwetter zur Perestrojka. Kulturpolitik in der Sowjetunion (1953–1991). Köln-Weimar-Wien 2002.

92 The extent to which this reflects the political reality of the Soviet Union would need to be examined more closely.

93 Cf. the interview with E. C. 19.07.2021.

94 For a more detailed explanation of the phrase see Adler, Sabine: Daniel Beer "Das Totenhaus". In Fußketten und kahlrasiert nach Sibirien. In: Deutschlandfunk Kultur. 10.12.2018. URL: https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/daniel-beer-das-totenhaus-in-fussketten-und-kahlrasiert-100.html (05.02.2024). For a brief presentation of various Siberia images see also Gladkov, Geschichte Sibiriens (cf. n. 1), 7–9.

daily lives in a liberal environment, where they also listened to Western music and ridiculed the government at theatre performances. For E. C., the place remained untouched by Moscow, giving her family the freedom to decide whether to become politically involved or to ignore the issue and live their daily lives apolitically.[95]

A. R. shared a similar outlook on the situation. During our interview she expressed following thought: she could imagine that life in Omsk may be more pleasant than life in Moscow because of the geographical distance and thereby also 'political distance' from the government. So, she brought in the following train of thought:

> "But already the generation of my grandparents, who, yes, it was a completely normal life. And I can't think of anything now where they were restricted in their rights somewhere, or at least it wasn't like that in that part of Russia or the USSR, not as blatantly as perhaps in Moscow or somehow in central areas, where you were perhaps closer to the, yes, to the whole government and had to pay more attention. So I can also imagine now that many things arrive a bit differently in Moscow than somewhere far away, where you can't control people so much anyway."[96]

A. R. can imagine that it was easier to express thoughts critical to the government in Omsk than in Moscow or the surrounding area because the geographical distance ensured that the power of the Soviet state was less noticeable. Here, too, A. R. uses the narrative of Siberia as a place where "the sky is high and the tsar is far away".[97] The organs of power, in her eyes, were not able to guarantee Moscow's policy in Omsk on the ground. In a sense, for A. R., thoughts were freer in Omsk than in Moscow.[98]

The extent to which this reflects the political reality of the Soviet Union would need to be examined more closely, but it was not at all unusual for the elites of the non-Russian Soviet republics in the Brezhnev era to be quite capable of pursuing policies in their spheres of power that were independent of the centre, as long as they did not challenge Moscow's position as the leading power within the USSR. It is possible that this also applies to the Siberian part of the RSFSR (Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic).[99]

Nevertheless, both women had the impression that their families had built a successful life in Siberia despite their ethnic background. For example, E. C. recalled that despite the work restrictions (*numerus clausus*) imposed on Jews, her mother was able

95 Cf. the interview with E. C. 19.07.2021.

96 Interview with A. R. 25.08.2021.

97 Cf. n. 94.

98 Cf. the interview with A. R. 25.08.2021.

99 On political developments in the non-Russian Soviet republics under Brezhnev, see also: Grybkauskas, Saulius: Governing the Soviet Union's National Republics. The Second Secretaries of the Communist Party. Abingdon-New York 2021; Smith, Jeremy: Red Nations. The Nationalities Experience in and after the USSR. Cambridge 2013; Goff, Krista A.; Siegelbaum, Lewis H. (Eds.): Empire and Belonging in the Eurasian Borderlands. Ithaka-London 2019.

to study and get a job at a high school where she was highly respected by both colleagues and students.[100]

Despite everything, all the families of my interviewees seemed to stay away from politics as a matter of principle. E. C.'s middle-class family was in contact with party representatives through the university work of her parents and brother, but they managed to keep their distance, and nobody talked about politics outside the kitchen.[101] The families of my Russian German interviewees were generally even less interested in politics. Given the discrimination against Germans and Jews by the Soviet state and the general danger of dissident action, it was not surprising that the families of my interviewees took the liberty of being apolitical.

The theme of freedom of thought also played a role in E. C.'s everyday life in Germany. She shared the following impression she had of Germany in the 1990s: "I have to say, I experienced a bit of that here too in the last years of Kohl-Zeit. I could compare it purely emotionally. I also had the feeling that I don't get enough air here, that it all stands."[102] For E. C., who fondly remembers the 1960s and the 'thaw' that came with it – the time of her youth, the period under Brezhnev often referred to in historiography as stagnation – was a terrible period in her eyes, in which people were deprived of artistic and political freedom. The state forced much of the Soviet population back onto the party line. She had the feeling that there was also a mood of stagnation in Germany in the 1990s, especially on an organic level.

In her eyes, the 'intellectual-moral turn' (*geistig-moralische Wende*) announced by Chancellor Helmut Kohl ensured that the state tried to mold the opinions of the population, thereby restricting intellectual freedom. These developments reminded her of the 1970s and early 1980s in the USSR, when the Politburo dictated what the Soviet population should think. This led to intellectual progress in the country coming to a standstill. Although Germany is a democracy and there was also opposition to the Chancellor's policy, she had the feeling that Germany stagnated in many ways in the nineties and that the population suffered from political apathy.

Kohl's long tenure (16 years, 1982–1998) and his "provincial behaviour"[103] may have ensured that E. C. saw not only political, but also human parallels to Brezhnev. Above all, for her, democracy was about different thoughts being heard and allowed to compete freely with each other, so that each citizen could form his or her own opinion. Instead, she felt that both places – Brezhnev's USSR and Kohl's Germany – stifled intellectual discourse. To her, as an academic, this was one of the worst acts a state could commit. Her unfulfilled expectations meant that she became generally disillu-

100 Cf. the interview with E. C. 19.07.2021.

101 Cf. ibid. and the interview with E. C. 23.06.2021.

102 Interview with E. C. 19.07.2021.

103 Clough, Patricia: Was Kohl mir über die Deutschen beibrachte. In: Zeit Online. 17.06.2017. URL: https:// www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2017-06/helmut-kohl-altkanzler-erinnerungen-nachruf (02.02.24).

sioned with the political situation in Germany and as a result became less politically active, taking on a more passive role as observer.[104]

Most of my other interviewees were also disappointed by particular German policies, such as where certain academic degrees from the USSR not recognised in Germany. A. W. told me that his wife worked as a civil engineer in the USSR, yet her technical college degree (*Fachhochschulabschluss*), was not recognised in Germany, which in turn led to her working as a cleaning lady, which she understood as a career downgrade.[105] Yet these experiences were shared by other families who emigrated to Germany and were known to A. W.:

> "And that is the case for many people. Our many acquaintances, who we have worked with, who have also done training like this technical college degree and they all work very simple jobs. That's not very easy either. [long pause]."[106]

The fact that he and his wife's acquaintances' degrees were not recognised caused him sadness and disappointment, and his wife even suffered from depression for some time.[107] In fact, many Russian Germans and Jewish quota refugees had to take jobs that were not related to their work or that they felt were below their level, creating a sense of humiliation. This feeling of devaluation caused them to withdraw from social life as active participants and instead focus on their private lives.[108]

Although, unlike in the USSR, in Germany they had the opportunity to participate politically in public life by joining parties, associations or trade unions, most of my interviewees kept away from this kind of social engagement and basically seemed rather apolitical. Instead, after their release from Friedland, they all tried to find a job that would allow them to finance their own house as quickly as possible and thus create a retreat for themselves and their families where they could live undisturbed.[109]

Concluding thoughts

Looking at the statements made by my interviewees, it becomes clear that they remember their old life in a significantly positive way, despite their family history in Siberia/Central Asia. Many of them repeatedly mentioned that they felt 'freer'. This took on several different aspects: for them, freedom could be their own house close to Almaty (material freedom), a short trip to a lake (freedom in nature) or watching a theatre play

104 Cf. the interview with E. C. 19.07.2021.
105 Cf. the interview with A. W. 27.07.2021.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
108 See as example: Thelen, Raphael; Jung, Hannes: Die Russlanddeutschen von Groß Klein. In: Zeit Online. 19.08.2016. URL: https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2016-08/rostock-russen-deutsche-afd-sowjetunion-einwanderung/komplettansicht (30.01.2024).
109 Cf. Panagiotidis, Politische Partizipation (cf. n. 40).

critical of the party in Novosibirsk (political freedom). Taking Berlin's thesis of freedom in non-democratic states as a basis, it would be interesting to look further at the extent to which Siberia, or even Central Asia, as regions themselves played a role in the formation of my interviewees' understanding of freedom, or whether the Soviet Union as an autocratic state contributed to it. It would also be interesting to assess the role that their own family's history plays in the formation of their own image of freedom.

If one looks back at the reports that the Russian Germans and Jewish quota refugees received, it becomes clear that many of the behaviours that German society accused them of (e. g., materialism or political passivity) were influenced by their everyday life in the USSR. Yet the situation is more ambivalent if one looks, for instance, at the supposed (non-)participation of the groups in German political life. Most interviewees repeatedly state how important it is for them to have the freedom to express their own thoughts without having the fear of repression. At the same time, they made it clear in their statements that, for them, voluntarily renouncing political participation – which was partly possible in their hometowns – is also an aspect of freedom. Not participating in politics on their own initiative, because there is no state behind them that forces them to do so through control and rituals; also symbolises freedom in a certain way. In other words, the freedom to do what one wants, or not to do it.

Looking finally at the statements of my interviewees, one can see that their understanding of freedom was strongly influenced by their everyday life in the USSR and that they also held on to these ideas in their everyday life in Germany. What they perceived of as freedom in the USSR (e. g. walking in the forest or building their own house), they tried to maintain in Germany. For example, by trying to build your own house as quickly as possible in order to have a place for yourself and your family to retreat to. However, this was not possible in all cases. While they remember that in Siberia one could simply swim in a lake without causing conflict, in Germany there is a risk that you might break a law. This led to a rather paradoxical situation: while there are many laws in Germany that grant citizens a lot of freedom (e. g. freedom of expression), my interviewees find many of these laws to be restrictive, especially in comparison to the Soviet state, which gave its citizens a lot fewer guaranteed rights. However, in their memories, it affected them less in their everyday lives. Due to his supposed absence, my interviewees had the impression that they were allowed to do more in the USSR than in Germany, where there are laws for everything, making them feel more restricted in everyday life.

Thus, my respondents seem to understand freedom in a way that resembles Isaiah Berlin's concept of 'negative freedom'. They feel free when they are faced with as little interference as possible and can do what they want without restriction. Since, according to their memories, they experienced this kind of freedom in Siberia and Central Asia, they tried to maintain it in Germany too. This understanding of freedom may have caused confusion among parts of the German population, as many of them see freedom as an opportunity to truly express themselves and shape their lives according to their own wishes. The freer they are, the more options they have (e. g. the existence of different parties that offer more political choices), which is why this understanding

of freedom can be compared to Berlin's concept of 'positive freedom'. It is possible that these different perspectives on freedom lead to friction between Russian-German and Soviet-Jewish migrants (represented here by my interviewees) and parts of the German majority regarding the role of the former in German society.[110]

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110 It should be noted, however, that these are only the thoughts of my interviewees, the majority of whom have a German or Jewish background and a rural or small-town background, which leaves open the question of the extent to which this understanding of freedom is shared by other post-Soviet migrants or even within the families of my interviewees. It also should be noted that neither the German majority society nor the post-soviet migrants are a monolithic block, so it is likely that some German citizens' understanding of freedom is closer to 'negative freedom', while some post-soviet migrants understand freedom as something close to Berlin's 'positive freedom'. It would also be interesting for further research to analyse how 'negative' and 'positive freedom' interact with each other; cf. Berlin, Freiheit (cf. n. 48), 201–210.

Anna Tchintcharauli

Memories from the Detached Lands. Soviet Forceful Resettlement Policy in the Eyes of the Chechens, Ingush and Khevsurs (1940 – 50s)

Abstract: The history of the Soviet Union, its national policy towards different ethnicities, and especially forceful resettlements are generally attractive and popular topics for research. This paper, however, focuses on the lesser-known cases within the broader contexts of the exiles, examining specifically the forceful resettlement experiences of the Khevsurs, Georgian mountaineers, to the lowlands of Georgia, and the Chechen and the Ingush peoples, who were deported to the Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. While the official Soviet discourse on resettlement was predominantly propagandistic, this research aims to shed light on the unofficial histories and untold stories from different generations of the Khevsurs, Chechens and the Ingush. By analysing oral histories, this research presents experiences of exile of these groups, unveiling their complex generational memories of trauma and changes in life.

Keywords: Soviet time, Soviet forceful resettlement, resettlement trauma, resettlement history, Soviet history

Introduction

The Soviet Union, under Stalin's regime, has generated a lot of interest from historians. However, while much has been written about Stalin as a ruler and his role in the different processes of his time, including 'Korenisation'[1] and forceful resettlement policies, some specific events from the 1920s to the 1950s have not yet been sufficiently discussed. In the years 1952/53, the Khevsurs were forcefully resettled from the Georgian mountains to the lowlands, in the newly founded village of Gamarjveba[2] in the region of Shida Qartli and various villages in the Kakheti region. According to the official explanation, the resettlement of the Khevsurs was aimed at providing them with the benefits of Communism, such as proper education and the possibility to participate actively in Kolkhoz (collective farm) life.[3] The Chechens and the Ingush deportation from

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1 According to Claire Kaiser's definition, the so called 'Korenisation' was a part of National-building policy, targeting to cultivate the national cultures and identities among the different ethnicities. Cf. Kaiser, Claire P.: A Long Period of Peace. Dialogue with Tamar Keburia. In: Indigo. 05.10.2022. URL: https://indigo.com.ge/en/articles/xangrdzlivi-mshvidobis-periodi (16.01.2024).

2 In Georgian it means "Glory".

3 Cf. Ubilava, Erekle: Khevsrebi sakhldebian Samgorshi [Khevsurs Are Settling in Samgori]. In: Komunisti 254/10 (1952), 4 f., here 4.

 https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111369204-008

their homelands to the Central Asian steppes in January 1944 is more widely known. This occurred when the State Defense Committee of the USSR[4] decided to organise special settlements in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan for inhabitants of the Checheno-Ingush ASSR. On the night of February 23rd, the forceful resettlement operation, code-named 'Chechevitsa', was initiated.[5]

A broad scientific discussion regarding the forceful resettlement of the Khevsurs has never taken place. Furthermore, while the forced resettlement of the Chechens and the Ingush has been studied by many scholars, the exploration of their memories in terms of trauma associated with forced resettlement remains equally not fully explored. Despite the fact that the Chechens and the Ingush and Khevsurs belong to different nationalities, and that the resettlement process was not identical, there is an intersectional point that allows us to discuss these two events in parallel. Firstly, there are the long-term historical-cultural relationships between the Khevsurs, the Chechens and the Ingush. Secondly, after the Chechens' and the Ingush deportation, the territory of the former Chechen-Ingush ASSR was placed under Georgian jurisdiction. This was part of a strategy to expand and defend the Soviet-Georgian border as far north as possible across the Caucasus range.[6] Thus, the Khevsurs almost became the eyewitnesses to the initial acts of deportation as well as to the Chechens' and the Ingush repatriation in their homeland, which began in 1957.

Concerning the Chechens and the Ingush and the pre-Soviet circumstances in their history, before 1940s, Communists arrested and punished well-educated young Chechens and Ingush, accusing them of protesting against local government injustices towards ordinary people. Such actions likely contributed to rising sympathies for local partisans known as Abreks, who escalated their opposition by taking justice into their own hands. The Soviets were likely aware of this trend and may have used it to justify the subsequent deportation of these people. Originally Chechen authors suggest a correlation between the Abreks and deportation asserting that, after the start of the Second World War and the German forces reaching the Caucasus, there were falsified documents and reports about the collaboration between the Germans and the Chechens.[7]

It is difficult to trace the ongoing discussions regarding the forceful resettlement of the Khevsurs, due to a lack of literature. However, local historiography focuses on two events that could be viewed as the unofficial reasons for the Khevsurs' forced resettle-

4 Cf. Gosudárstvennȳĭ Komitét OboRónȳ (GKO) [State Defense Committee (GKO)]. In: Bol'shaya rossiĭskaya éntsiklopediya [Big Russian Encyclopedia]. Vol. 7. Moskva 2007, 536.

5 Cf. Betalgir, Bulat: Operatsia Chechevitsa – 23.02.1944 [Operation Chechevitsa – 23.02.1944]. In: SovLab Blog. 23.02.2019. URL: https://archive.ge/ka/blog/68 (16.01.2024).

6 Cf. Kiladze, Simon: Sakartvelo Chrdilo-kavkasiashi: Klukhorisa da Akhalkhevis raionebi [Georgia in the North Caucasus: The Regions of Akhalkhevi and Klukhori]. In: Expert Club. 28.02.2014. https://web.archive.org/web/20160619090814/http://expertclub.ge/portal/cnid__13545/alias__Expertclub/lang__ka-GE/tabid__2546/default.aspx (16.01.2024).

7 Cf. Khangoshvili, Khaso; Pankeli, Davit: Abragebi [Abreks]. Tbilisi 2014, 57.

ment: the Khevsurs' rebellion in 1923 and the so-called 'Khevsurs case' in 1937.[8] In the latter, the Khevsurs, hoping to make their voices heard by independent states, wrote a letter of complaint to the US government and handed it over to a KGB agent, whom they mistook for an foreign photographer visiting their mountains. This incident led to strictly organised raids in Khevsurs' villages and the widespread repression of Khevsurs, including young and well-educated students in Tbilisi.[9]

This article explores the individual experiences surrounding the forced resettlement of the Chechens and the Khevsurs. It focuses on those memories which have continued from the period of their exile to the present, assessing both official policies and generational perspectives. The study delves into the 'history from below' – how ordinary people perceived their forced resettlements – contrasting them with official accounts. It examines the prominence of certain individual memories in generational discourse and the underlying reasons for them. Additionally, the article explores how these resettlements affected each group, their coping strategies, and the subsequent effect on their inter-community relationships. The aim is to understand how these experiences and memories are manifested and recounted across generations.

This article summarises the leading theories and main hypotheses around Russo-Caucasian relationships, focusing on the interactions between the Khevsurs and their Chechen and Ingush neighbours during the 1940s. Both of these help the reader to understand the main motivation and reasoning for these forced resettlements and to observe whether specific periods from these neighbouring relationships influenced subsequent chapters in their history, especially after the shared experience of forced resettlements.

The section on memory proposes a conceptual framework for analysing testimonies and oral stories of the Chechens and the Ingush and Khevsurs across different generational discourses. Thirty interviews were conducted, reflecting generational and territorial diversity, to represent the variations of these memories.[10] This includes the Chechens from European countries such as Germany, the Chechens from Grozny, the Chechen and Ingush communities in Georgia, the Khevsurs, who have been forcefully resettled in the Samgori Valley and Kakheti, and Khevsurs who were eyewitnesses to the repatriation of the Chechens and the Ingush. Meetings and depth-interviews were arranged beforehand, while in some cases, an expedition diary followed by a structured questionnaire was included. By comparing this data with the memories of other groups also deported in the 1940s,[11] it is possible to create a more comprehen-

8 Cf. Feikrishvili, David: 1924 Tseli. Shefitsulta razmi. Kakutsa Cholokashvili. Khevsureti [The Year of 1924. The Band of Sworn Men. Kakutsa Cholokashvili. Khevsureti]. In: Mematiane. 25.09.2020. URL: https://mematiane.ge/product-details.php?id=4817 (16.01.2024).

9 Cf. Arabuli, Shota: Khevsuretis Khalkhuri Istoria [Khevsurs Folk History]. Tbilisi 2006, 186–188.

10 In increasing numbers, as this research process is still in progress.

11 Cf. Campana, Aurélie: The Soviet Massive Deportations – A Chronology. In: Mass Violence & Resistance. 05.11.2007. URL: https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/soviet-massive-deportations-chronology.html (05.06.2023).

sive image of forced resettlement practices in the Caucasus and refine the characteristics of living memories for these two particular groups by observing individual reflections.

The analytical part of the study is divided into two thematic sections. The first- and third-parts present materials from the Khevsurs' self-testimonies about the resettlement, and living in the lowlands of Georgia, as well as the materials about the Chechens' and the Ingush deportation and repatriation. The second part features oral stories from different generations of those communities. It is important to distinguish between self-testimonies and oral stories in this research. In the context of the Khevsurs' memories, the term 'self-testimonies' is used to refer to eyewitness accounts, as the Khevsurs witnessed their neighbours repatriation as well.[12] A challenge arises from the fact that the author herself is a representative of the Khevsurs' community, which might lead to assumptions of potential biases. However, this affiliation also provides deeper insights and understandings of specific contexts in which narrators describe their experiences.

The final section will summarise the interview outcomes, include additional notes concerning the interviewing process, and conclude with observations regarding the predominant ways of remembering for each group.

Imperial-Caucasian, Soviet-Caucasian, and the Khevsurs-North Caucasians' relationships

Geographical boundaries and historical conditions have shaped the Caucasus as a homeland of ethnic and religious diversity among its native populations. Often described as the "literal and symbolic border between Europe and Asia, Christianity, and Islam",[13] the region is home to over 40 distinct ethnic groups, although these numbers were much higher before the Soviet repressions during early Stalinism. In 1926, under the USSR, there were 172 different ethnic groups or *narodnosti*,[14] but due to strict management, their number was reduced to 62 by 1939.[15]

These decreasing numbers were specifically the result of Stalin's foreign policy. There was a shift from the 1920s, when the self-consciousness of these nations was en-

12 Cf. Sauer, Michael: Selbstzeugnisse als historische Quelle. In: Geschichte lernen 26/156 (2013), 2–11, here 2.

13 Phillips, Allan: Preface. In: Krag, Helen; Funch, Lars: The North Caucasus: Minorities of a Crossroads. Manchester 1994, 5.

14 *Narodnost* – Russian synonym of Ethnicity.

15 Cf. Keburia, Tamar: The Path from Nationalism to Socialism – The Soviet National and Minority Politics in the Caucasus. Review on Goff, Crista A.: Nested Nationalism. Making and Unmaking Nations in the Soviet Caucasus. Ithaca/NY 2020. In: Platforma 2021 (URL: https://www.academia.edu/49583315/Review_on_Krista_A_Goff_Nested_Nationalism_Making_And_Unmaking_Nations_in_the_Soviet_Caucasus_Cornell_University_Press_2020_In_Georgian (16.01.2024).

couraged,[16] to repressive policies that started in 1936 and continued with deportations in the 1940 and 1950s. Claire Kaiser attributes this shift to the increasing ambitions of the Soviets to homogenise these different nationalities into the Soviet body with the aim of strengthening Soviet identity at the expense of national identities.[17] This differed from Lenin's nationalities policy, where self-determined nations could be united under a common social identity – into the 'Class'.[18]

The deportations in the 1940's are evaluated by Terry Martin as ethnic cleansing, which initially began between the years of 1935–38, primarily targeting nine nationalities.[19] However, for Claire Kaiser, the mass deportations seemed more like a border cleansing policy rather than strictly ethnic cleansing. She argues that besides homogenisation, the characteristic of these deportations was to refine the populations and define the territories, similar to Imperial Russia's practices.[20] Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, the Caucasus region appeared to be a multiethnic organism, "incompatible with the homogenising ambitions of Soviet nation-building."[21]

Over time, this incompatibility was expressed through expulsions within the region, regardless of ethnical or territorial affiliation – a clear example of such processes can be found in the years of establishment Bolshevik power in Georgia, when next to the Georgians, the Chechens from Pankisi Gorge were also involved in the rebellions of 1923, led by Kakutsa Cholokashvili, the leader of the '*shephitsulta razmi*' ('Sworn Men') guerrilla group.[22]

Resistance by the Khevsurs and North Caucasians against the USSR forces was not limited to 1923, but it can be regarded as fertile ground for reinforcing an old and stereotypical image of the mountainous Caucasians as 'savages' who could only be dealt with through military force, due to their refusal to live under state rules.[23] Creating this general image of the Caucasus and its people was important for the Soviets as it opened up possibilities to develop certain policies towards them. However, the so called 'savageness' was not the only determinant for policymakers. Religious belonging and the 'Adat'[24] were also important (if not the main) factors for these forceful reset-

16 I. e., support in publishing the books about the national histories.

17 Cf. Kaiser, Claire P.: "What Are They Doing? After All, We're Not Germans". Expulsion, Belonging, and Postwar Experience in the Caucasus. In: Goff, Krista A.; Siegelbaum, Lewis H. (Eds.): Empire and Belonging in the Eurasian borderlands. Ithaca/NY-London 2019, 80–94, here 80.

18 Cf. Martin, Terry: An Affirmative Action Empire. The Soviet Union as a Highest Form of Imperialism. In: Idem; Suny, Ronald Grigor (Eds.): A State of Nations. Empire and Nation Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin. Oxford-New York 2001, 67–90, here 68.

19 Cf. idem: The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing. In: Journal of Modern History 70/4 (1998), 813–861, here 815.

20 Cf. Kaiser, "What Are They Doing?" (cf. n. 17), 80.

21 Ibid.

22 Cf. Khangoshvili/Pankeli, Abragebi (cf. n. 7), 9.

23 Cf. Pohl, Otto: Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR 1937–1949. London 1970, 80.

24 Originally an Arabic term under the meaning of 'custom' or 'habit' which is used for describing indigenous traditions. It is apparent in the Caucasus, for example in the Georgian highlands Svaneti, Tush-

tlements. In Otto Pohl's view, Islam was considered the only direct reason for the forceful resettlements.[25] 'Russian Orthodoxy' posed an additional problematic factor for Russians in terms of their mission to spread education and culture over the Caucasus.[26]

As for religion, the importance of Adat can be concluded as the most common reason when discussing these two particular cases. In the case of the Chechens and Ingush, religious differences provided a fertile ground for the non-acceptance of some of the new cultural milieux from the Russian Empire. Similarly, Adat was seen to present another difficulty in dealing with the communities rooted in Adat traditions. Cornell E. Svante emphasises the significance of Adat in relation to power, stating that Adat, alongside religion, is one of the most significant elements in forming and strengthening identity.[27] Communities with strong identities did not align with the global process of cultural homogenisation and modernisation pursued by the newly established states. When commonly shared concepts were rooted in Adat, the possibility for further local cooperation remains, whether in the Imperial or Soviet context. Understanding this makes it easier to comprehend the Soviet State's fears of facing possible resistance from the mountainous provinces.

The discussion about the Adat in Muslim communities and its impact on Russo-Caucasian relationships, which began during the Imperial era, is also explored in Vladimir Bobrovnikov's articles.[28] He specially differentiates the shift in Imperial and Soviet politics towards Adat and Sharia. For example, he explains how Adat held primacy over Sharia during the Russian Empire, in contrast to the Soviet period. Additionally, he insightfully explains the reasons behind this policy shift:

> "While their [Soviets'] imperial predecessors sought to substitute the shari'a with customary law ('adat) to undermine a possible Islamic resistance, the early Soviet leaders fought against the 'reactionary 'adat regulations' and for the 'revolutionary shari'a'."[29]

Thus, it can be acknowledged that, despite its reactionary nature, the problematic aspect of Adat for the Soviets was that it represented an inheritance from the Empire. The new Soviet State could not adopt this inheritance, as it was perceived as the legacy of the Imperial era.

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eti, Khevsureti. Cf. Engelenhoven, Gerlov van: From Indigenous Customary Law to Diasporic Cultural Heritage: Reappropriations of Adat throughout the History of Moluccan Postcolonial Migration. In: International Journal for the Semiotics of Law 34 (2021), 695–721.

25 Cf. Pohl, Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR 1937–1949 (cf. n. 23), 79.

26 Cf. Kreindler, Isabelle: The Soviet Deported Nationalities: A Summary and an Update. In: Soviet Studies 38/3 (1986), 387–405, here 389.

27 Cf. Cornell, Svante, E.: Small Nations and Great Powers. A Study of Ethnographical Conflict in Caucasus. London 2001, 55.

28 Cf. Bobrovnikov, Vladimir: Islam in the Russian Empire. In: Lieven, Dominic (Ed.): A Cambridge History of Russia. Vol. 2: Imperial Russia. 1869–1917. Cambridge 2006, 202–223.

29 Idem: Shari'a vs 'Adat in Post-Imperial Lawmaking. Political Discourse on Shari'a Courts in Dagestan, 1917–1927. In: Annals of Japan Association for Middle East Studies 32/2, 33–67, here 40.

Furthermore, it is also important to describe the general nature of the interactions between the Khevsurs, Chechens and the Ingush in relation to Adat. These relationships varied over time: on one hand, there were examples of friendship and marriage; on the other hand, there were widespread conflicts, often led by sworn enmity.[30] This enmity typically involved incidents, or a series of incidents, where male members from each-other's community killed those from the other due to a commonly shared practice in particular Caucasian Societies.[31] Despite religious differences, the actual role of Adat in regulating these particular conflicts can be attributed to shared human-value systems – such as high regard for heroism, respect for elders and recognition of the opponent's dignity. The effectiveness of these values in resolving long-term generational conflicts is evident in various instances. Aleksi Ochiauri, for example, describes a well-organised system for resolving disputes between the Khevsurs from Arkhoti Valley and their neighboring Ingush from Ghilgho Valley. This system included scheduling meetings for ambassadors from each side, defining the location and sequence of speakers, and taking into account each-other's religion.[32]

Returning to the historical discourse about the deportation it is noted that, in addition to a high death rate during their journey due to the absence of logistics, approximately 1,806 victims were found locally in the Galanchozh region; including elders, women and children.[33] While living in the Central Asia, both ethnicities faced various difficulties, including economic and social challenges, which will be further discussed in the following sections.

When it comes to the Khevsurs' forceful resettlement it may, at first glance, seem like a natural migration process, driven primarily for economic reasons – namely the opportunity to access collective goods while living in the lowlands.[34] However, upon closer examination of the intensity of articles stressing on the importance of the Khevsurs' integration into the Soviet life before and after the resettlement, as well as the narratives presented in these articles, it becomes evident that this was rather part of Soviet propaganda, aimed to presenting their resettlement in a positive light. Some headlines such as: "Khevsurs Are Joining the Red Army",[35] "Khevsurs Are Becoming Party Members",[36] "Khevsurs Are Disapproving of Their Old Rules",[37] "Khevsurs in New Samgori",[38] illustrate this propaganda effort.

30 Cf. Ochiauri, Aleksi: Mosiskhleoba da Chra-Chriloba Khevsuretshi [Blood Feud and wound in Khevsureti]. Tbilisi 2019.

31 I. e., the Svans.

32 Cf. Ochiauri, Mosiskhleoba da Chra-Chriloba Khevsuretshi (cf. n. 31), 364.

33 Cf. Betalgir, Operatsia Chechevitsa (cf. n. 5).

34 Cf. Ubilava, Khevsrebi sakhldebian Samgorshi (cf. n. 3), 4.

35 Kelenjeridze, Anton: Khevsurebi witel jarshi midian [Khevsurs Are Joining the Red Army]. In: Komunisti. 16.07.1939, 3.

36 Kutsia, Ivane: Khevsurebi sheridan partiis rigebshi [Khevsurs Are Becoming Party Members]. In: Komunisti. 04.11.1939, 4.

37 Furceladze, T.: Khevsurebi hgmoben dzvel adat-wesebs [Khevsurs Are Disapproving of Their Old Rules]. In: Komunisti. 16.07.1939, 4.

In summary, this discourse represents a small part of the larger developments in Caucasian-Russian relationships in both regional and local contexts. The following section will delve into the tangible ways in which this history has continued.

Traces of the memory – Theoretical and methodological framework

"To put it bluntly, we have nothing better than memory to signify that something has taken place, has occurred, has happened before we declare that we remember it", notes Paul Ricoeur while sketching the phenomenology of memory.[39] The focus of this section is to consider the generational memories of the Khevsurs, Chechens and Ingush in order to uncover the sort of recollections that they have deemed necessary to preserve. Applying Jan and Aleida Assmanns' research, two focal points of memories are examined: 1) generational memory, as oral stories and self-testimonies are collected from the different generations, they are opening the possibility to reveal the differences and similarities from the three generations of discourse, from the 1950s up to the present day and, 2) the collective memory as a form of cultural memory – this allows us to observe the practices of memorisation from individuals and trace their embodiment at the collective level, understanding how they persist in a re-embodied form within the collective body.[40]

As the paper aims to answer the question of how forceful resettlement trauma manifests in given cases and whether there are shared characteristics with other groups that experienced similar events, the memories of deported Crimean Tatars', analysed by Greta Lynn Uehling, are relevant to consider. In her analysis, the author highlights the main aspects of the Crimean Tatars' memories regarding their traumatic past, which serve as a fertile ground for collective action.[41] The sense of collective belongingness was closely linked to their collective actions, as deported Tatars established a "very specific ideological terrain from which to resist", driven by powerful patriotic sentiments.[42]

The example of Crimean Tatars is pertinent for comparison with both the Khevsurs and the Chechens and the Ingush. In the case of the Khevsurs, who were forcefully resettled within the country to the lowlands in the newly founded village of Gamarjve-

38 Shalamberidze, Otar: Khevsurebi akhal samgorshi [Khevsurs in New Samgori]. In: Stalinis Drosha. 26.11.1952, 3.

39 Ricoeur, Paul: Memory, History, Forgetting. London 2006, 21.

40 Cf. Assmann, Jan: Communicative and Cultural Memory. In: Erll, Astrid; Nünning, Ansgar (Eds.): Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook. Berlin-New York 2008, 109–118, here 111.

41 Cf. Uehling, Lynn Greta: Beyond the Memory. The Crimean Tatars' Deportation and Return. New York 2004, 135.

42 Ibid.

ba, Sandor Horvath's book provides an additional example. The book studies the everyday life of the inhabitants of Sztálinváros, a specially founded Hungarian city where 'rootless people' in the new society tended to maintain and strengthen their identity within the group. These two examples offer the possibility to differentiate the ways in which Chechens', Ingush and Khevsurs' memories worked and whether the mentioned tendency of building a group identity was similarly active among them.

The role of collective memory in constructing and shaping shared policies is another research question which deserves special attention as it pertains to the memorisation process, determining what should be remembered and what ought to be forgotten. According to David Rieff, collective memory can serve to foment or exacerbate anger and conflict at one moment in time and then, a few generations later, it may be perceived as harmless and used to pacify grievance.[43] In this context, this factor becomes particularly relevant in the historical discourse of the Khevsurs', the Chechens' and the Ingush relationships, with a focus on studying the controversial nature of these existing memories and its effect on present-day interactions. As neighbouring communities, the relationships between these two groups can be described as oppositional, with the instances of both friendship and enmity mostly caused by land owning, theft or personal issues. Most of the characteristics of the Chechens', Ingush and Khvesurs' relationships are reflected well in Vazha-Pshavela's poems,[44] where the Khevsur and Chechen characters Aluda[45] and Jokola[46] are rebelling against their own communities (*Temi*) as a consequence of their loyalty towards their sworn enemies, grounded by an appreciation of the enemy's dignity. The real background to these poems can be found when looking at local stories from the neighbouring communities of Shatili and Mitkho valley.[47]

The paper will now go on to analyse the likelihood of these changeable reflections around these examples of simultaneous enmity and friendship through the collected material data. Explaining the process of establishing self-testimonies as a source in historiography, Michael Sauer especially emphasises the benefits of this method over traditional historiography, which often faces gaps when studying particular processes and cases, including wartime or violence.[48] The scarcity of historical sources, particularly regarding the Khevsurs' forceful resettlement, was noted at the beginning of this paper. Additionally, as the Khevsurs were the eyewitnesses to the Chechens' and the Ingush repatriation, valuable information about the important characteristics of eyewitnesses' memories from the Khvesurs' generation alongside self-testimonies about their forceful resettlement, will be laid out in the following sections.

43 Cf. Rieff, David: In Praise of Forgetting. Historical Memory and Its Ironies. London 2017, 24.

44 Vazha-Pshavela is a pseudonym of Georgian poet, novelist and publicist Luka Razikashvili (1861–1912).

45 Vazha-Pshavela: Aluda Ketelauri. Tbilisi 2019.

46 Vazha-Pshavela: Stumar – Maspindzeli [Host – Guest]. Tbilisi 2019.

47 Cf. Chincharauli, Mikha: Shatili da Shatilivnebi [Shatili and villagers of Shatili]. Tbilisi 2008, 79–81.

48 Cf. Sauer, Selbstzeugnisse als historische Quelle (cf. n.12), 8.

Another methodological approach used as a guideline for the interviewing and analysing the material data has been that of 'Life-Writing'. This approach has proved helpful in understanding how to interpret the life narratives provided by the narrators and the significance of considering their 'selves' as embedded within the structures and groups they belong to.[49]

The Oral Histories and the technical part of the interviewing process was mainly conducted with structural questionnaires. However, in some cases, when narrators had to discuss their traumatic past, the researcher took a more passive role to allow them to express themselves freely. Paul Tompson explains this condition in Oral Histories methodology as the flexibility and willingness to show understanding in response to the narrators and their past, with "above all, the willingness to sit quiet and listen."[50]

The road to the "Bread Country"

"While looking at New Samgori, my grandpa and his brothers said to each-other – 'Let's go to Kakheti, they say there should be a Bread country'"[51] – recalls Martha. After getting married Martha settled in Shatili, although her origins are from Arkhoti and she grew up in Dedoplistskaro municipality. The narrator's family appears to be exceptional as almost all of the Khevsurs from the different valleys of Khevsureti were forcibly resettled in designated lowland areas. Khevsurs from Shatili and surrounding villages crossed the mountain range and reached Barisakho[52] from where they were taken to their destinations by trucks.[53]

Anton, 80 years old man, describes his first impressions when settling in Dedoplistskaro municipality in the following way:

> "I see the row of houses almost seventy. All of them were the same… We, 'Roshkions',[54] wanted to live next each-other. The same wanted the others. To be close to their villagers. So, we have settled, in those waterless areas, desert."[55]

The same environmental issues have been problematic in Gamarjveba. Shukia, being six or seven years by the time of forceful resettlement, remembers:

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49 Cf. Banerjee, Mita: Life Writing. In: Wagner-Egelhaaf, Martina (Ed.): Handbook of Autobiography/Autofiction. Vol. 1: Theory and Concepts. Berlin 2019, 336–341, here 340.

50 Thompson, Paul: The Voice of The Past. Oral History. Oxford 2009, 222.

51 Interview with Martha. Village Shatili. 23.09.2022.

52 A village in Piraketa Khevsureti. This was the nearest biggest village, from Tbilisi, from where it was easy to move to different directions.

53 Cf. the interview with Asmat. Village Shatili. 10.08.2022.

54 The Khevsurs from the village Roshka.

55 Interview with Anton. Village Ganakhleba. 05.12.2021.

> "There was the dusty place, full of sand, – a big field without water and trees. For washing, women used swamp water, – they were draining these swamps, sometimes saving the rain in buckets. Only faucet was located at Bulachauri street and Khevsur women secretly trying to take some at night."[56]

Khevsurs, remembering how other inhabitants, such as the "Meskhs"[57] and the "Tatars"[58], appeared from the village of Cheremi in the Kakheti region, soon surfaced in those areas as well. This brought forth the challenge of socialisation for the Khevsurs, alongside the existing environmental issues. Zelo, who was twelve years old at the time of the resettlement, recalls the poems of her young mother, who passed away after just the one year of the resettlement, "Once, Tatar women almost have beaten to our Ziola."[59] The entire poem contains many interesting facts about the resettlement process and reflects the authors perspective on the reality they faced:

> "'Go ahead, do not be late!'"–
> name – surname was asked,
> as lots of trucks filled the whole area once... –
> All the houses were just left –
> with all our belongings we were done.
> The road, like the road to hell,
> I prefer to go to the grave,
> before the day I went there...
> We were taken to Samgori,
> 'You have to be enlightened' –
> was said with glory..."[60]

The conflict between the Khevsur and Tatar women was not the only case – other examples of tensions have been found in the relationships between the Khevsurs and the Kakhetians,[61] where it becomes clear that the difficulties around socialisation were also a concern for Khevsur children. Dzila started her first grade at school alongside children from Cheremi village of Kakheti. When asking about her school years, besides the issue of poverty, she declares: "Almost everyone had conflicts, including children".[62] This was the reason why the Khevsurs and Kakhetians lived in different quarters (conditionally defined areas, without streets) and the same applied to the Tatars.[63]

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56 Interview with Shukia. Village Shatili. 15.09.2021.

57 Group of Georgians, who had also been deported to the Central Asia during the 1940s.

58 Term which was spread in Georgia to describe North Asian indigenous groups, now divided into different land and nationalities. The term is kept in an exact way, how it has been used by the Khevsur narrator.

59 Interview with Zelo. Village Gamarjveba. 11.09.2022.

60 Ibid.

61 Another ethnically Georgian group from the Eastern Georgia, Gurjaani municipality.

62 Interview with Dzila. Village Shatili. 10.08.2022.

63 Cf. the interview with Sayura. Village Gamarjveba. 20.07.2023.

Martha started school in Dedoplistskaro municipality. She remembers her feelings which she now evaluates as a kind of complex; the struggle not to be seen as strangers in the eyes of others' (locals). She mentions how she tried not to share her family habits with the teacher and other pupils and avoided using many of the Khevsurs' dialectical words while speaking with others.[64]

In the previous self-testimonies, the second-generation paradigm was evident, but for the first generation, mostly in their 60s to 80s or older, the forceful replacement appeared much harder, almost tragic. Some of them passed away shortly afterwards. Shukia remembers an old man, Aludia, from the village Shatili. During his farewell, he walked around the whole fortress with tears in his eyes three times. Aludia was the first to be buried in Gamarjveba graveyard.[65] Similarly, she remembers particular families which, while trying to return to their home villages in Khevsureti, have to stop at Jinvali because of a special 'Quarantine Zone' organised by the Soviets. Another narrator admits that her mother never spoke a word about the forceful resettlement until the end of her life, trying to avoid the topic altogether.[66]

Some of the narrators are worried about the fact that they could not properly maintain the Old-Khevsurs' traditions, unlike their fathers' generation who, from time to time, made efforts to meet each other wearing the traditional Khevsurs' clothing of *Talavari*,[67] as well as practicing some particular traditions, including commemorating practices for the deceased.[68] Nanuka especially remembers her father's emotions when hearing that they would have the possibility to visit their home village Shatili once again and could dress in the traditional way:

> "I don't remember whether it was the first 'Shatiloba' fest[69] if not, but there was a message from the director, addressed to me, stating that the old Khevsurs should wear traditional clothing for this event. I have found three or four pairs of Talavari, and my dad's happiness knew no bounds. He was almost flying."[70]

The way to the steppes and then…

Lots of materials have been collected and published about Chechen-Ingush journey to the steppes and their life in the Central Asian republics. However, when it comes to personal experiences, there are still many untold stories, especially among the

64 Cf. the interview with Martha. Village Shatili. 23.09.2022.
65 Cf. the interview with Shukia. Village Shatili. 15.09.2021.
66 Cf. the interview with Dzila. Village Shatili. 10.08.2022.
67 In Khevsur dialect it means the whole attributes of their traditional clothing.
68 Interview with Nanuka. Village Shatili. 17.09.2022.
69 The fest was founded by Eduard Shévardnadzé in 1983. Cf. Roshkidan arkhotisken gzas khevsurebi miazileben [The Road from Roshki to Arkhot is Covered by Ravines]. In: Kvirispalitra. 02.11.2015. URL: https://kvirispalitra.ge/article/26990-roshkidan-arkhotisken-gzas-khevsurebi-miacileben/ (16.01.2024).
70 Interview with Nanuka. Village Shatili. 17.09.2022.

young Chechens and Ingush. Makka is one of the young Chechens whose ancestor was fatally killed during the night of deportation, and retelling and remembering this story has been challenging even to this day. Nevertheless, these stories, deeply imprinted in their minds since childhood, should be passed down to future generations: "The elders tell these particular stories, which are not written in books, and we preserve them. Analogically, these histories will be transmitted to our offspring as well."[71] When asked if these stories are also shared during regular gatherings or friendship meetings, the narrator responds with a definite "yes" and further shares a playlist of music she listens to. She explains that what she loves most about this music are the lyrics of one song, as it tells the whole story about Chechen-Ingush deportation and their fate.[72]

As childhood memories always play a big role in shaping perceptions about historical events, one of the questions posed to a Chechen from Pankisi, whose family has lived in Georgia for a long time, was: "How and when did you realise what the deportation meant to your people?" on which she answers that, as they were hosting many Chechens and Ingush in Pankisi, the guests, while meeting with the locals (Chechens from Pankisi gorge), the first question to them was whether they had also been involved in deportation.[73] From this it becomes clear that the space for focusing on the idea of deportation was even present when it was a commonly shared fate for people under a particular ethnicity as a principal factor, even while defining the identity in the context of the 'inner group'.

When asking the narrators from the third and fourth generations to share the most important oral stories about the deportation, they mostly talked about the years after the deportation when the deported Chechens had to face family separation and poverty. Here are a few examples: The first narrator mentions the case of her grandma's cousin, whose younger sister was forcefully taken to an orphanage. Fortunately, her brother managed to find her and bring her back, and she grew up with the narrator's grandmother. The narrator notes that it was a fortunate ending because she knows of many others whose children were not returned to their families.[74] The second narrator's family has experienced a similar situation: His uncle was sent to Balkhash,[75] while his father, along with his little sister and parents, was sent to Qaraghandy:[76]

> "He [the narrator's father] was eleven when his parents passed away and he had to take care of himself and his little sister. From here started his continuous working experience to feed his little sister. Big brother they have not seen until the end of their life."[77]

71 Interview with Makka. Tbilisi. 19.06.2023.
72 Cf. ibid.
73 Cf. the interview with Malikka. Tbilisi. 24.01.2021.
74 Cf. the interview with Amiina. Berlin. 11.12.2022.
75 A city in Kazakhstan.
76 A region in Kazakhstan.
77 Interview with Akhmad. Berlin. 14.–16.11.2022.

The third narrator emphasises the poverty among deported Chechens in Kazakhstan, saying,

> "People were starving there. There was no food. My grandpa was working on the collective's tractor; secretly, he was puncturing the bags to take a little corn and give it to the people. They were starving."[78]

The same examples of extreme poverty and famine seem to be highlighted in the generational memories of the Ingush. One of the young narrators remembers a relative of hers, already an old man, who started smoking in his childhood years just in order to endure the hunger.[79]

While explaining the most widely used phrase from the deportation years among the deportees – "We won't cry, we won't break, we won't forget!" – the narrator from the fourth-generation answers: "That means that they have to be strong and not cry, but it doesn't mean that they forget about their past. We are living with this theme."[80] From the response, it seems that she stresses the fact that the phrase is still alive and not only concerned with the past. When asking the same question to the second-generation representative, he differentiates the ways of remembrance about the deportation and the reflections between different generations. She answers: "We have proved our dignity, and our answer was how we've been fighting for our independence during the Russian-Chechen conflicts in the 2000s. In the new generation, the ways are different – 'their weapon is their knowledge.'"[81] Regarding the Khevsurs resettlement and return to their home, as mentioned above, it was strictly controlled for the first two years but became possible after Stalin's death: "At first, my father and uncle returned there, for ploughing the rye then they have returned and take us with them, for the harvest."[82] Regarding the Ingush, Khamzat, who represents the fourth-generation, specifically admits the role of social media in remembrance of the past amongst his generation. In other words, that they use all ways to represent their past.[83] Another young Ingush expresses a kind of anxiety about the following: Even young Ingush, who have a desire to express their inner feelings about national history through art, face particular difficulties (religious, political) that limit this process. Otherwise, she admits, they could be much more active.[84]

78 Interview with Alik. Berlin. 28.11.2022.
79 Cf. Interview with Milana. Tbilisi. 15.05.2024.
80 Interview with Makka. Tbilisi. 19.06.2023.
81 Interview with Alambek. Berlin. 11.11.2022.
82 Interview with Kmara. Village Gamarjveba, 11.09.2022.
83 Interview with Khamzat, Tbilisi. 12.05.2024.
84 Interview with Leila. Tbilisi. 17.05.2024.

A cross-memorial context of deportation

While remembering his childhood, a 78 year-old man, Abika says:

> "This deportation [of Chechens and Ingush] is known for almost everyone. They were deported in one night. My grandma and mom, who were living there, often reminisced about their impressions while looking at the villages with empty houses, how everything was still untouched inside, even the bowls full of porridge with the spoons in them."[85]

Taia is a Khevsur woman, who has spent almost all her young years in the village of Kharta and, even after a marriage with a Khevsur man, continued living in the area, in the village of Falenike. Thus, she remembers the living there before Ingush repatriation and after:

> "Sometimes, my father gave a meal to the Abreks secretly. After their repatriation we had not lived together for a long time – we [Khevsurs] recognised their attitude for instance, when seeing us, by starting to talk in their own language with an unpleasant expression."[86]

The Khevsurs were the ones who left North-Caucasians' villages without any conflict, as often admitted by the Chechen and Ingush narrators during interviews and in the specialist literature.[87] Moreover, Malikka notes that the Khevsurs were the ones who fully realised the whole tragedy of deportation despite the regime and expressed it in the best way, as Gabriel Jabushanuri[88] has done:

> "I clearly remember my school years and the day when my father gave the paper of *Tsiskari*[89] to my mom and asked her to read it aloud. It was the first publication of Jabushanuri's poem about Stalin. It was incredible at that time and very touching. The Khevsurs became the translators of Vainakhs' [i. e. Chechens' and Ingush] tragedy for others, and it was not by accident."[90]

A little later, the narrator recalls her student years in Tbilisi, when a group of Khevsurs, Chechens and Ingush would often gather and organise meetings, including commemorative events for the 24th of February. These meetings would not be complete without Gabriel Jabushanuri's poetry. The narrator remembers her Khevsur friend,

85 Expedition diary by the author. Village Ganakhleba. 05.12.2021.

86 Expedition diary by the author. Tbilisi. 25.10.2021.

87 Cf. Khvakhadze, Aleksandre: Samezoblo [Neighborhood], 54 (URL: https://gfsis.org.ge/files/my-world/22/6.pdf [16.01.2024]).

88 Khevsur poet living in the Ghilgho Valley after the deportation of Chechens and Ingush. Most of his poetry recalls images of the deportation and his personal reflections about living in those areas.

89 A newspaper.

90 Interview with Malikka. Tbilisi. 24.01.2022.

Shota, with tears in his eyes while reading the poem: "Oh, the darkened sky of Ghilgho, give a pure tear to the orphan Auls."[91]

The continuity of the positive discourse in these relationships is found in the later literature, not only by the local authors. In the novel *Mtrebis Tsutisopeli* (*The Transitional World of the Enemies*) Shota Arabuli creates a picture of Kist the Ingush and Khevsur old men, who were highly compassionate despite being old-time enemies and expressed deep condolences for each-other's tragedies.[92]

Another interesting illustration of these examples is the poem by well-known Georgian poetess, Ana Kalandadze, called *To Berdeda.* In her dialogue with a Khevsur woman, Berdeda, the author asks her: Why does she commend the Chechens and the Ingush if they have filled the ground with their [Khevsurs] blood? To which Khevsur woman answers: "What are you saying, woman, they were brave."[93]

Conclusion

The study of the traumatic experiences in these particular cases can be expanded upon in further discussions, but the main characteristics of this trauma, as well as its transgenerational aspects, have been presented in the previous chapters. Before summarising the claims mentioned above, it is important to highlight some aspects of the interviewing process itself. Observing the narrators' self-reflections during the interviews revealed that both the Khevsurs and the Chechens and the Ingush were cautious about expressing personal emotions and attitudes towards the past. They avoided emphasising their difficult feelings or portraying themselves as victims. However, when discussing the experiences of others, the narrators were much more expressive, vividly describing situations they had not personally witnessed. This phenomenon should be considered in future works and could be interpreted as part of an ongoing trauma.

Discussing the results regarding the generational discourse among the Chechens and the Ingush, it appears that the youngest generation, like the previous ones, is still aware of their past, but their ways of expressing it differ. While the first generation, who directly experienced the past, emphasised a policy of not speaking openly and saving their words for the time when they return to their homelands, the generation born during or after the repatriation years no longer follows this approach.[94] In-

91 Jabushanuri, Gabriel: Hoi, Ghilghos Dagrublulo Tsao [Oh, the Darkened Sky of Ghilgho]. Tbilisi 1991. Full poem available in: Aura.ge. n. d. URL: https://www.aura.ge/101-poezia/9076-gabriel-jabushanuri--vedreba-mitovebuli-aulisatvis.html (16.01.2024).

92 Cf. Arabuli, Shota: Mtrebis Tsutisopeli [The Transitional World of the Enemies]. In: Bazieri. 30.12.2012. URL: http://www.bazieri.ge/publ/40-1-0-968 (16.01.2024).

93 Kalandadze, Ana: Berdedas – Lela Tsiklaurs [To Berdeda – Lela Tsiklauri]. In: Poetry Lovers' Community. n. d. URL: https://poetry.ge/poets/ana-kalandadze/poems/763.berdedas-lela-tsiklaurs.htm (16.01.2024).

94 Cf. the interview with Alambek. Berlin. 11.11.2022.

stead, they are more open-hearted in sharing familiar stories, whether from personal experience or stories passed down to them. They actively collect and exchange stories, a kind of knowledge transfer which they consider to be their weapon.[95]

Despite the Soviet propaganda, the generation of Khevsurs (who experienced forceful resettlement) mostly tended to hold onto their old habits, even in the lowlands. However, the next generation showed a different tendency, as they tried not to be perceived as strangers or mountaineers in the eyes of others. They tended to be much more socialised with the lowlanders and their life-style than the elders. To compare this with the current situation and observe the latest generation, we can see that the popularity of folklore and dialectic motives seems to be at the forefront of their writings and songs.[96]

It could be argued, therefore, that the first generation of the Chechens and the Ingush tended to suppress their reflections and instead became examples for other group members, helping them deal with everyday life issues, among other things. Consequently, after the deportation, the sense of understanding and belonging within the group became much more pronounced and insular.

The same can be said about the first generation of adult Khevsurs, not only in cases where they tended to separate themselves from other inhabitants, but also in instances where they tried to build new communities within the community by not mentioning their continued willingness to return to their home villages.

Regarding the additional question of living in distant lands and having the same experience. It seems that it has created for the Khevsurs, a fertile ground to highlight only the positive aspects of their past-time relationships with their neighbours. And it seems that the collective memory of the Khevsurs and the Chechens and Ingush has suppressed the remembrance of past difficulties and has created new ways of remembrance, in which early and recent memories are leading. Literature has played an important role in this process, and it highlights the process of loyalty and empathy in a linear continuity, from Vazha-Pshavela to Gabriel Jabushanuri.

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95 Cf. ibid.

96 I. e., the poems of Lado Tchintcharauli, Torrnike Narozauli, Temo Arabuli as well as the songs by the ensemble *Debi Gogotchurebi* (Gogotchuri Sisters).

Mariana Irby

Striving for Futures Past. Citizenship, Memory, and Central Asia-Russia Migration

Abstract: In previous decades, migration from the former Soviet republics in Central Asia has made Russia one of the top migrant-receiving countries in the world. As these mobilities exist within the boundaries of what was once one state, Central Asian migrant communities thus exist as 'diasporas' within the territory of a country in which they once held citizenship. For Central Asians, this marked a shift from fellow passport-holders to racially marked 'guest workers' in Russia, vulnerable to discrimination and exploitation. This article focuses on how the dislocations of migration – particularly the precarity produced by both experiences of racialisation in Russia and the instability of the contemporary remittance-dependent economy in Tajikistan – shape the meanings and sentiments ascribed to the Soviet past. I draw from 18 months of multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork between Russia and Tajikistan, one of the major sources of migrant labour to Russia and one of the most remittance-dependent economies in the world. I ethnographically explore nostalgia for a common framework of Soviet citizenship, or the nostalgic perception of a trajectory of progress towards interethnic harmony. Bridging anthropological literature on nostalgia and citizenship with recent theorisations of the role of affect in politics, I illustrate the lingering potentialities of bygone frameworks of citizenship with regard to notions of belonging. By focusing on the role of nostalgia, I argue for an ethnographically-grounded understanding of citizenship that attends to the embodied afterlives of political shifts and subsequent reconfigurations of belonging.

Keywords: citizenship, migration, race, memory, nostalgia

Introduction

The *jamoat* (district) of Komsomolabad is normally a three-hour drive from Dushanbe. On one particular day in May 2022, the journey took far longer; lengthy stretches of goat herds packed the winding dirt roads and rendered us periodically immobile. Komsomolabad's place name tells one story of how Soviet attempts to 'indigenise' Communist ideologies and institutions penetrated even the most remote expanses of the USSR's territory. Here, *komsomol,* the Soviet youth organisation that served as a stepping stone to the Communist Party, is tacked onto the Persian suffix *-abad* denoting 'dwelling' or 'place'.

Today, both the rural Soviet infrastructure projects of yore and the dark days of war that followed have receded into the past.[1] Now, a markedly different organisation between the state, labour, and its corresponding geographies has taken shape in rural Tajikistan. I was on my way to visit the childhood home of Firuza, a middle-aged woman born in Komsomolabad district in the late 1970s. Like most Tajiks, she formed

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1 The Civil War in Tajikistan (1992 – 1997) involved a power struggle between the Soviet-era elites (who eventually emerged victorious) and various opposition factions that formed the United Tajik Opposition.

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part of an extended familial network across Russia and Tajikistan. Firuza had recently left Tajikistan for Moscow, where her husband was working, in order to apply for a Russian passport: an increasingly common practice in Tajikistan.[2] Firuza's pensioner parents lived in her childhood home with their three daughters-in-law and many grandchildren; their three sons were all working in Russia at this time. This was my first time returning to their home after my first visit in the summer of 2021, and the first time I had been back since the reinvasion of Ukraine. After settling down, the first field notes I jotted down read: "No men around, husbands and sons are all in Russia. 'This person went off to Russia, that person went off to Russia…' They mostly talk about this, how much things cost, and the business of fellow villagers."

Dilnoza, the youngest daughter-in-law (*kelin),* had porcelain skin and a mouth full of gold teeth. So different was her life from mine that I would frequently forget that we were born in the same year, 1993. One night, when I came to sleep in her room, Dilnoza was arranging a nest of colorful blankets and sleep cushions (*kurpacha*) for me and her three children on the floor. As we chatted before bed, she eagerly showed me her most prized possessions, including her sequin-studded wedding dresses and other bedazzled accessories. Dilnoza grew up in a nearby village; she had moved in with her husband's family following her arranged marriage at age 19 to Firuza's youngest brother. Keen to show me a visual illustration of her life trajectory, she took out a box of family photographs and scattered them across her bed. "Here, [my daughter] Amina was in my stomach (*shekam da bud*)," she informed me as she pointed to a photo from her first year living with her in-laws. Dilnoza had not seen her husband in nearly ten months; he had left to work in Russia the previous summer, shortly after my first visit to the village. "I really would like to have another child when he gets back", she proclaimed with a wistful sigh. "Sometimes I think I want another girl, so Amina can have a sister. But a son would be good, too. We need men in Tajikistan, for the animals, for the land…. Men used to work on our land, but that was before Russia."

'Before Russia' (*pesh az Rossiia*) is a seemingly odd way to refer to Tajikistan's late Soviet past. But I encountered this framing often enough in rural Tajikistan that I consider it suggestive of how some Tajiks and Central Asians understand their positioning within a broader historical chronology.[3] Moreover, Dilnoza's comment illustrates how for many, it is *today* (rather than the Soviet era), where 'Russia' as a place, temporal

2 With 174,000 new citizens in 2022, Tajikistan was the second-largest source of new Russian citizens after Ukraine. Cf. Number of Tajiks Seeking to Get Russian Citizenship Growing Fast. In: Eruasianet. 10.02.2023. URL: https://eurasianet.org/number-of-tajiks-seeking-to-get-russian-citizenship-growing-fast (13.03.2024).

3 For other ethnographic observations about "before Russia" as a temporal marker in remittance-dependent regions of rural Central Asia, cf. Borisova, Elena: Locating the Good Life. Paradoxes of Migration in Post-Soviet Tajikistan. PhD Dissertation. University of Manchester 2021, 87 and Reeves, Madeleine: Border Work. Spatial Lives of the State in Rural Central Asia. Ithaca 2014, 105.

marker, and set of social realities has marked day-to-day salience. How does this shape the meanings and sentiments ascribed to the Soviet past?

In this article, I examine how in Tajikistan, the interrelated changes of 1) a structural turn towards an unstable, post-industrial free-market economy, 2) the spatial reorganisation of many sites of labour to urban Russia and 3) the loss of a more robust set of citizenship rights in the imperial centres have all impacted how Tajiks reconcile the Soviet past within a broader national narrative. I draw from this context to interrogate the interplay between nostalgia and reconfigurations of citizenship, topics that have received significant attention in the anthropology of the former Eastern Bloc. These works have almost exclusively focused on the case of Eastern Europe; scholars have demonstrated how new European citizenship hierarchies[4] – against a backdrop of widespread disillusion with the social and economic changes since the collapse of state socialism – have in some contexts shifted the locus of affective identification with a nationally authentic time to the late socialist period.[5] Drawing from the context of Tajikistan, I argue that the dislocations of the contemporary migration economy have produced similar reassessments of national authenticity. However, the overarching dynamics of citizenship in this case centre around the loss of a common framework of belonging, specifically the perception of an increasingly xenophobic environment in Russia. I argue for an anthropological understanding of nostalgia attendant to its range of affective manifestations in response to political conditions, particularly changes in citizenship regimes. I bridge recent theorisations of the affective dimensions of political life and with the anthropology of nostalgia to offer an ethnographically-grounded understanding of how past political configurations and ideologies of belonging continue to exert influence on the present.[6]

This paper draws from eighteen months of ethnographic research conducted in Tajikistan (in the capital Dushanbe and in a rural village in Komsomolabad district) and among Tajik migrant populations in urban Russia (in Moscow and Saint Petersburg). My research was designed to explore how new hierarchies of belonging emerge from and interrelate with Soviet notions of citizenship within these migratory patterns, particularly with regard to processes of racialisation. Labour migration between Central Asia and Russia – one of the largest migration corridors in the world – is a particularly generative context for reflecting on these concerns, as it constitutes a form of both international and postimperial migration, albeit on the territory of

4 Here, I am referring both to hierarchies within EU member states and in states where EU membership remains an aspiration.

5 Cf. Berdahl, Daphne: (N)Ostalgie for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things. In: Ethnos 64/2 (1999), 192–211; Klumbytė, Neringa: Memory, Identity, and Citizenship in Lithuania. In: Journal of Baltic Studies 41/3 (2010), 295–313; Nadkarni, Maya: Remains of Socialism. Memory and the Futures of the Past in Postsocialist Hungary. Ithaca-London 2020.

6 Cf. Laszczkowski, Mateusz; Reeves, Madeleine (Eds.): Affective States. Entanglements, Suspensions, Suspicions. New York 2018; Schwenkel, Christina: POST/SOCIALIST AFFECT: Ruination and Reconstruction of the Nation in Urban Vietnam. In: Cultural Anthropology 28/2 (2013), 252–277.

what was, relatively recently, a unified state. In other words, the breakup of the USSR and the forms of migration within it operate on significantly different planes than the diasporic, globalised contexts in which anthropologists have often situated their analyses of migration, citizenship, and the (post)-nation.[7] As I will illustrate with ethnographic material and the life histories of my interlocutors, nostalgia – as a range of affects and mode of narrating the past – serves as a way to bridge the different regimes of citizenship that an individual has experienced, either directly or indirectly (e. g. intergenerationally).

For those with direct memory of the Soviet past who now live and work in Russia as racialised 'guest workers', memories of Soviet citizenship can both serve as a framework through which they make claims to belonging, while also serving as a painful reference point of the extent to which their citizenship has been eroded. Even for those who have no personal memories of the Soviet past, or who never migrated themselves, nostalgic ways of relating to the late Soviet past figure into their ways of thinking and relating to the present. Particularly in the remittance-dependent economies of Central Asia, one must account for the contemporary perception that it is often the *present* (compared with the late Soviet era), that involves more dislocations and disruptions that can challenge the perception of national sovereignty. For some Tajiks, today's transnational citizenship hierarchy lays bare crucial racialised distinctions between who has the right to belong and not, which in turn informs nostalgic assessments of the Soviet past, back 'when there was one passport' (*vaqti ki iak pasport bud*).

National authenticity, citizenship, and the politics of memory after socialism

In this section, I shall provide some conceptual and theoretical orientations surrounding nostalgia and citizenship. Memory, particularly as it relates to political subjectivity and nationalism, emerged as a popular topic in the humanities and social sciences by the end of the 20th century. This was in part a response to a growing societal fixation on documenting and commemorating the past, which scholars identified as sympto-

7 I do not mean to deny that the phenomenon of labour migration from Central Asia to Russia is one manifestation of the introduction of globalised free markets. Instead, I wish to emphasise some caution in applying the term 'diaspora' in this context of migration without considering the particular tensions between belonging and exclusion that exist, in this case, among those who live as racialised migrants within the boundaries of a country they had citizenship in prior to 1991. For anthropological approaches to migration, globalisation, and diaspora, cf. Appadurai, Arjun: Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization. Minneapolis 1996; Clifford, James: Diasporas. In: Cultural Anthropology 9/3 (1994), 302–338; Malkki, Liisa: Speechless Emissarie: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization. In: Cultural Anthropology 11/3 (1996), 377–404.

matic of broader cultural, historic, and technological changes.[8] Of course, the conditions of industrialised modernity had long fostered a changing relationship to time and practices of remembrance; memory had been a prominent theme in philosophy, literature, and nationalist imaginaries since at least the 19th century.[9] But by the turn of the new millennium, the unprecedented scope of human mobility and interconnectivity, paired with the increased rapidity of social and technological change, had produced an ever-increasing preoccupation with documenting, preserving, and reflecting on the past. This fixation on the past stems in part from postmodern shifts in the experience of time and teleology.[10] Moreover, the overall sense of disillusion – with enlightenment ideals, teleologies of progress, paradigms of development, and so forth – that undergirds postmodernist thought prompted an increased focus on revisiting and reassessing the past to include the voices of those who had long been written out of historical narratives.[11]

This broader political and cultural turn away from future-oriented utopian imaginaries has meant that idealistic yearnings for another time are increasingly directed towards the past. Nostalgia, as a set of cultural practices and emotive registers, is one manifestation of this changing relationship to futurity.[12] So too is it a reflection of the steady commercialisation of many facets of social life. Fredric Jameson situated what he calls the postmodernist "nostalgia mode" within practices of consumption and late capitalist logics that 1) pervasively exploit the profitability of familiar tropes and 2) capitalise on the fetishisation of supposedly more authentic pasts.[13] According to Arjun Appadurai, this nostalgia-driven consumerism forms part of a broader "social *imaginaire* built largely around reruns".[14] Nostalgia can also be understood as symptomatic of the social fabric that (post-)modernity produces. Kathleen Stewart notes how memories of an idealised past provide a sense of comfort and continuity amidst con-

8 Cf. Berliner, David: The Abuses of Memory: Reflections on the Memory Boom in Anthropology. In: Anthropological Quarterly 78/1 (2005), 197–211; Hirsch, Marianne: The Generation of Postmemory. Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust. New York 2012; Jameson, Fredric: Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism. Durham 1991.

9 Cf. Anderson, Benedict: Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism. New York 1991, 187–206.

10 Cf. Boym, Svetlana: The Future of Nostalgia. New York 2001; Huyssen, Andreas: Present Pasts. Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory. Stanford, 1 f. Huyssen notes that while we have an unprecedented array of tools and technologies to document present realities, those realities quickly become obsolete, dynamics that can produce a conflicting sense that there is both "too much and too little present at the same time" (ibid, 23).

11 Cf. Butalia, Urvashi: The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India. Princeton 2007; Spivak, Gayatri: Can the Subaltern Speak? In: Die Philosophin 14/27 (2003), 42–58.

12 Cf. Boym, The Future of Nostalgia (cf. n. 10); Davis, Fred: Yearning for Yesterday. A Sociology of Nostalgia. New York 1979; Stewart, Kathleen: Nostalgia – A Polemic. In: Cultural Anthropology 3/3 (1988), 227–241.

13 Jameson, Postmodernism (cf. n. 8), 20.

14 Appadurai, Modernity at Large (cf. n. 7), 30.

temporary feelings of alienation and social fragmentation.[15] However, the political ramifications of these widespread sentiments can take any number of divergent paths. As Svetlana Boym points out:

> "*Algia* – longing – is what we share, yet *nostos* – the return home – is what divides us. It is the promise to rebuild the ideal home that lies at the core of many powerful ideologies today, tempting us to relinquish critical thinking for emotional bonding. The danger of nostalgia is that it tends to confuse the actual home and the imaginary one".[16]

Nostalgia – particularly how it takes shape in the aftermath of political ruptures – occupies a prominent place in scholarship on the former Eastern Bloc. As Olivia Angé and David Berliner point out: "As much as the Holocaust has become a paradigm for research in memory studies, works on nostalgia are paradigmatically 'Eastern European'".[17] This is particularly true in the bodies of ethnographic research on the region, for both theoretical and methodological reasons. Firstly, ethnology itself has historic roots as a nostalgia-imbued practice, one preoccupied with documenting the vanishing ways of life in supposedly 'primitive' or 'exotic' societies.[18] These 'salvage ethnography' optics continue to inform anthropological methodology and knowledge production, particularly in the Eastern Bloc.[19] Moreover, by the end of the Cold War, the former Eastern Bloc offered particularly rich material for memory and nostalgia-oriented inquiry. In this region, ethnography offered a window into a bygone way of life, one long mythologised behind a near-impenetrable Iron Curtain, then quickly and unexpectedly rendered obsolete. Ethnographic accounts of socialist nostalgia also served to problematise triumphalist Western narratives of political transition, democratisation, and development, underscoring the phenomenon's emergence as a response to the turmoil, disorientation, and loss that also characterised the experiences of many after the end of state socialism.[20]

Understandably, these nostalgic visions of the past, and the topic of memory more broadly, figured into the renegotiations of citizenship taking place in the region, both on a personal and political level. The stigmatisation of positive associations with Soviet socialism and its impact on notions of citizenship forms part of the "memory-nationalism" – the officially prescribed ways of remembering and relating emotively to the

15 Cf. Stewart, Nostalgia (cf. n. 12), 227.

16 Boym, The Future of Nostalgia (cf. n. 10), XVI.

17 Angé, Olivia; Berliner, David: Introduction. Anthropology of Nostalgia – Anthropology as Nostalgia. In: Idem (Eds.): Anthropology and Nostalgia. New York-Oxford 2015, 1–16, here 1.

18 Rosaldo, Renato: Culture & Truth. The Remaking of Social Analysis. Boston 1989, 81.

19 Cf. Clifford, James: The Others: Beyond the "Salvage" Paradigm. In: Third Text 3/6 (1989), 73–78; Todorva, Maria: Remembering Communism. Private and Public Recollections of Lived Experience in Southeast Europe. Budapest 2014, 7.

20 Cf. Bloch, Alexia: Longing for the Kollektiv: Gender, Power, and Residential Schools in Central Siberia. In: Cultural Anthropology 20/4 (2005), 534–569; Ghodsee, Kristen: Red Nostalgia? Communism, Women's Emancipation, and Economic Transformation in Bulgaria. In: L'Homme 15/1 (2004), 33–46.

past – in the Baltics.[21] In the context of Hungary, Maya Nadkarni argues that "disavowing attachments to the stigmatised past has been the very condition for entering Europe, as both a political and administrative unit and a modernist fantasy of progress and future prosperity".[22] Thus, for Eastern Europeans, forms of positive identification with the socialist past can in some contexts represent a pushback to the perceived imposition of the terms and conditions of European citizenship, or as Dominic Boyer puts it, to "define and claim autonomy in the present".[23] But it is important to remain ethnographically attuned to the *range* of affects implicated in these processes. The "cruel optimism" of an always-out-of-reach European ideal informs *both* socialist nostalgia *and* a range of other emotions – shame, sadness, disappointment, and anger – that have fueled many of the restorational, ethno-nationalist "illiberal revolutions" in the region.[24]

As I have demonstrated in this section, affect and memory play a crucial role in the politics of citizenship and belonging. As mentioned earlier, many 'new European' citizenship models encourage or require a certain repudiation of the socialist past. But how do we understand the relationship between nostalgia, its broader related affects, and the renegotiations of citizenship and nationalism outside of the European post-socialist context? Moreover, while it seems that there has been significant attention to the *meanings* of nostalgia – that is, the stories it tells us about politics, memory, and nationalism – there seems to be less interrogation of the specific forms of affect at play. Such work is important in order to formulate an ethnographically-grounded account of the political ramifications of the emotions, attunements, and practices that get subsumed under the umbrella of 'nostalgia'. In the ethnographic material that follows, I will illustrate how renegotiations of citizenship manifest through nostalgic affects and reflections within one intergenerational, transnational family in the context of migration between Tajikistan and Russia.

Memory, migration, and citizenship in a Tajik *mahalla*

For several months in 2021 and 2022, I resided in a multigenerational family in Miasokombinat ("meat factory"), the colloquial name for a post-industrial area on the outskirts of Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan. As elsewhere in the city, the metonymic reference points for neighborhoods carry the names of Soviet-era industries that

21 Klumbytė, Memory, Identity, and Citizenship (cf. n. 5), 307.

22 Nadkarni, Remains of Socialism (cf. n. 5), 195.

23 Boyer, Dominic: From Algos to Autonomos: Nostalgic Eastern Europe as Postimperial Mania. In: Todorova, Maria; Gille, Zsuzsa (Eds.): Communist Nostalgia. New York 2010, 17–29, here 25.

24 I take the term "cruel optimism" from Berlant, Lauren: Cruel Optimism. Durham 2012 and the term "illiberal revolutions" from Kratsev, Ivan: Eastern Europe's Illiberal Revolution. The Long Road to Democratic Decline. New York 2020.

have significantly atrophied or disappeared entirely. In the *mahalla*[25] where I resided, narrow dirt roads wind around gated *havlis.*[26] Brightly-coloured *kurtas* adorn the bodies of women hanging carpets to dry, ecstatic shrieks of children echoing throughout. A mosque marked the central square area; at various points in the day, the streets would fill up with men heading home after *namoz,* or prayer time.

The melancholy (*azan*) punctuated daily routines with the Saidbekov family, who lived here in a three-generation family unit. I had met the two eldest daughters, Sitora and Aziza, in Russia in 2018, where they had moved upon completing their secondary schooling and both now worked. When I lived with the Saidbekov family for several months during the previous summer, the father Farhod was away in Russia as well, though I had made his acquaintance over the years through the grainy image of his daughters' video chats. When I returned in May 2022, Farhod was temporarily at home in Dushanbe; the invasion of Ukraine had led to a severe reduction in flights out of Russia and he was forced to leave his job. On the day I arrived, it was the end of Ramadan, marked by Eid al-Fitr (*idi ramazon*), the 'Holiday of Breaking the Fast'. The family was celebrating with a lavish spread (*dastarkhon*) of candies, baked goods, and neon-coloured soft drinks. These treats served as a centrepiece around which guests and household members laid on cushions and chatted.

The opulent aesthetics – sweets, bananas, and foreign soda – have become staples of Tajik festivities since the introduction of free markets. Paired with lavish spending on life-cycle events, these lavish displays of capital stand in contrast with the poverty of the country. The combination of the country's dismal availability of employment and opportunities, paired with the contemporary pressures towards decadent celebrations and visible consumption, partly explain why migration remains the most widespread source of income.[27]

Apart from celebrating Eid and my arrival, we were marking Farhod and his wife Firuza's imminent departure to Moscow. Their marriage and bond united very different strands of late Soviet-era modernity in Tajikistan. As their middle daughter Aziza once put it,

> "It's kind of hard to believe that they managed to find common ground [Rus: *obshchii iazyk*, lit. 'common language'] when raising us. You know, my mother is religious, my father is not… but he would never interfere when she read *namoz* [Muslim prayers] with us. They really let each other do their own thing."

Farhod and Firuza's differences went beyond religiosity, in fact they each occupied opposite ends of the spectrum when it came to rural/urban upbringings, as well as their levels of education, Russification, and cosmopolitanism.

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25 Broad term for a quarter or neighbourhood in the Islamic world.

26 Single-family houses that are common in Central Asia.

27 Cf. Borisova, Elena: "Our Traditions Will Kill Us": Negotiating Marriage Celebrations in the Face of Legal Regulation of Tradition in Tajikistan. In: Oriente Moderno 100/1 (2021), 147–171.

Firuza was a petite woman with a round, pleasant face and dark hair that she usually tied up in a *rumol* (headscarf), which would tumble down to her knees late at night when it was 'just us girls'. Firuza was what Tajiks call a *zani chaqon,* a 'do-it-all woman', adept at sewing, cooking, and maintaining a home both spotless and perpetually prepared for unexpected visitors. She was born in Komsomolabad in the late 1970s and had the classic rural Tajik childhood of the 1980s: the highly coveted treats of sunflower seeds (*semechki*) and Soviet soda (*limonad*), the right of passage of the red pioneer scarf, the occasional glimpses of the outside world through Russian-dubbed Soviet releases of Indian films. All of these fragments of late Soviet consumerism and modernity she recalled with great fondness. But the Soviet collapse marked the end of Firuza's childhood, both chronologically and emotionally. She stopped going to school around age 13, when fighting in the Civil War made it unsafe to do so. She then left her native village as a fifteen-year-old to marry Farhod, her half-cousin in Dushanbe, despite her mother Fotima's concerns about marrying her daughter off to a 'city boy' (*bachai shahr*) eight years her senior during the chaos of civil war. According to stories told by his daughters and multiple interactions I observed within the family, Farhod's mother was also less than thrilled about her son marrying a village girl with such limited education and very limited knowledge of Russian.

In a few days, Firuza would be joining her husband on a trip to Moscow, her first time venturing out of Tajikistan. Firuza was nervous about the trip. She fretted about leaving her home, her teenage daughter, her in-laws, and her *vatan* (homeland) behind. The objective of this trip was so that she could obtain a Russian passport in order to facilitate their transnational life; during the pandemic, the couple was forced to spend long stretches of time apart. Should borders be closed again because of COVID, Firuza would still be able to go to Russia. While there, if she were stopped by the police or needed to seek employment, a Russian passport would ensure security.

Farhod, her husband, was a different type of Tajik altogether. He had grown up in this house in Dushanbe in the 1970s and had finished a Soviet *uchilishche* (technical college) as an airplane mechanic. After marrying Firuza, Farhod built a new unit attached to his parents' house for his growing family. It bore the markings of his professional talents: round airplane windows graced many of its walls. While he had spent some of his adult life working in Tajikistan, the combination of low wages and paltry opportunities had led Farhod on many stints as a *tekhnik* (mechanic) in Russia. Through his work for various airlines, he had gained the opportunity to travel overseas on several occasions. Though he frequently spent time away, he related to his three daughters with great fondness and regularly took them to do activities unusual for Tajik girls, such as bike rides and mushroom hunts in the mountainous Varzob Valley outside the city.

Farhod had gone through the major channels of Soviet socialisation, including army service. He had also attended Russian-language schools in the capital and exhibited many Russified preferences and an urbane know-how related to alcohol consumption and socialisation. "Us Tajiks, we've always been the objects of experiments (*objekty eksperimentov*)," Farhod described as he set up a degustation of local Tajik cognac and

the whiskey I had brought as a gift from the Istanbul airport duty-free store. "For instance, our alphabet, we write our own language in Cyrillic, just like the Russians!" he pointed out as he measured liquor into the little crystal glasses that adorn the shelves of so many homes across the former Eastern Bloc.

As the evening went on, I took the opportunity to look at family photos with Farhod. There was a resigned wistfulness with which he gazed at the monochrome relics of his Soviet pioneer and *uchilishche* days, which offered a window into a bygone Soviet multiculturalism that exists only residually in today's Dushanbe. Farhod's notion of ethics and morality clearly bore the imprints of his late Soviet upbringing. Since obtaining Russian citizenship, he always voted for the Communist Party of Russia and remained notably invested in the discourses of Friendship of Peoples and interethnic harmony. But being treated as a second-class, racialised migrant worker in Russia had seemingly eroded his sense of faith in the longevity of these ideologies.

Presently, Farhod had just managed to secure a lease for an apartment on the outskirts of Moscow, near his job at the airport. This had taken a lot of effort due to the reluctance of a string of landlords to rent him an apartment, despite his fluent Russian and Russian citizenship. Discriminatory housing ads stipulating that prospective tenants be 'Slavs' or of 'Slavic appearance' are one space in which minorities from non-European parts of the former Soviet periphery encounter significant barriers to social mobility. In Farhod's case, I had learned of these events from his daughter Aziza when I had been living in Moscow earlier that winter, but as I listened to Farhod describe his version of these barriers and struggles, I noted a tone of sheepish resignation.

> "[Farhod:] You know why it took me so long to find an apartment?
>
> [Mariana:] Because… um… [landlords] didn't want to rent to 'non-Slavs' (*neslavianie),* right?
>
> [Farhod:] It's a strange position to be in, things used to be much more friendly (*druzhno*) back when there was one passport. But even now, a [Russian] passport makes things easier. Actually, you need one."

Is Farhod's perception of "friendlier" interethnic relations in the USSR a memory or a fantasy? There is much to suggest that intercommunal relations in Soviet Dushanbe had many unequal dynamics; only one third of the city was populated by ethnic Tajiks, and it remained a predominantly Russian-speaking city throughout the Soviet period.[28] At best, Soviet discourses of supra-national brotherhood referred to and shaped the course of an existing trajectory of intercommunal harmony. At worst, they served to normalise unequal power relations between ethno-national groups within the USSR.[29] In one of the only qualitative studies on nostalgia in Central Asia, Timur Dada-

28 Cf. Bahovadinova, Malika: In the Shade of the Chinar: Dushanbe's Affective Spatialities. In: Focaal 90 (2021), 74 – 90.

29 For a comprehensive account of the tensions between dynamics of supra-national brotherhood and forms of racialized exclusion of Soviet citizens from the Caucasus and Central Asia, cf. Sahadeo, Jeff: Voices from the Soviet Edge. Southern Migrants in Leningrad and Moscow. Ithaca 2019.

baev, drawing from interviews with senior citizens in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan notes: "[...] interviewees listed multiculturalism as the USSR's greatest achievement and the *loss* of multiculturalism as their greatest regret concerning the collapse of the Soviet Union".[30] Notably, this is not necessarily nostalgia for the Soviet political system itself, but for what Kevin Platt refers to as the "late-Soviet model of relations between nationally defined societies in the post-Soviet region".[31]

However, in the context of migration to Russia, the relationship between the centre and periphery has taken on a new, particularly unequal form of citizenship. For Farhod, whose life history encompasses both the experiences of a multi-national childhood in Dushanbe and, presently, a racialised migrant life in Russia, nostalgia reflects more than a simplistic desire to return to the past. Rather, it represents a desire to align himself with elements of this bygone trajectory towards supra-national citizenship (i. e. seeking Russian citizenship, voting for the Communist Party of Russia, assessing intercommunal relations as more 'harmonious' during Soviet times). Here, nostalgia emerges as a set of emotive registers that *bridge* memory and fantasy. Within the context of political rupture and loss of belonging, real or perceived, the unrealised potentialities of the past form the basis of fantasies of an alternative present and future.

I observed various forms of nostalgia in the Saidbekov family, and the wide-ranging forms of affect through which it manifested. For Farhod's father, Muhammad, a longing for the Soviet past constituted a nostalgia for a time when the overarching political-economic structure presented less of a disruption to lifecycle events, kinship structures, and many aspects of cultural continuity. Farhod's father, who was sitting near us and occasionally joined in on our conversation, was born in 1940 and had been a Persian literature teacher in Soviet Dushanbe. Apart from two years of compulsory military service on Sakhalin Island in the Russian Far East, he had lived his entire life in Tajikistan. Farhod's father Muhammad struggled to adapt to his son and granddaughter's absences and had a tendency to get *ziq* (a Tajik word whose meaning encompasses a range of affects: sad, bored, lonely, or in a state of distressed longing).

In such moods, he had a tendency to put on 1970s Iranian records and croon along with the soulful melodies. But the most prominent feature of these nostalgic sentiments, in his case, centreed around 'Tajikness' and locality rather than Soviet ideals of belonging. In his happier Soviet days, he would teach Persian at a school in a nearby village, a time period that was documented in their family albums.[32] Today, Muhammad struggled to cope with aging amidst the protracted absence of the majority of his household family members. As these vignettes suggest, nostalgia takes many affec-

30 Dadabaev, Timur: Manipulating Post-Soviet Nostalgia: Contrasting Political Narratives and Public Recollections in Central Asia. In: International Journal of Asian Studies 18/1 (2021), 61–81, here 77.
31 Platt, Kevin: Russian Empire of Pop: Post-Socialist Nostalgia and Soviet Retro at the "New Wave" Competition. In: The Russian Review 72/3 (2013), 447–469, here 448.
32 The Tajik language is a dialect of modern Persian. I use the term 'Persian' to refer to Muhammad's teaching as he taught the literary version of the language, which draws from the broader Persian-language literary canon.

tive forms, and can respond to different political realities. How, then, can ethnographers best account for the various forms of affect-imbued remembrance that constitute 'nostalgia'? To this end, I turn to recent bodies of scholarship in political anthropology centring affect in theorisations of the state.

Nostalgia, affect, and citizenship

These works draw from a range of feminist, posthumanist, psychological, and post-constructivist approaches to emotive experience that fall under the broad category of 'affect theory' and anthropological accounts of the role of imagination and fantasy in the state.[33] Through these frameworks, anthropologists have sought to illustrate how the emotive bonds shape state-citizen relations and the contours of political life. Madeleine Reeves and Mateusz Laszczkowski argue that "the state should be understood [...] as constituted and sustained relationally through the claims, avoidances, and appeals that are made toward it and the emotional registers that these invoke."[34] This relational approach has much to contribute to ethnographies on the politicised registers of feeling and behaviour that often lose specificity when categorised as 'nostalgia' by illustrating how a range of emotions – wistful longing, anxiety, fear, sorrow, hope – come to be implicated in particular sites of state-citizen engagement.

Interestingly, literature on the anthropology of nostalgia and affect-attuned accounts of the state seem to have intersected little, despite both topics having a clear relevance to ethnographic studies of political life. Nostalgia, after all, straddles the realms of memory and fantasy, both crucial components in the formulation of nationalist imaginaries. On the one hand, scholars have pointed out that one cannot ascribe inherent political meaning to nostalgia, as it can ultimately exist within and reflect a variety of political presents.[35] But at the same time, nostalgia undoubtedly plays a role in politics; nostalgic political slogans such as 'Make America Great Again' – a Trumpist motto itself resurrected from the Reagan era – clearly tap into widespread grievances that find consolation and hope in these revanchist political visions, or what Svetlana Boym calls "restorative nostalgia".[36] Thus, it is worth granting careful attention to both the multifaceted affective momentum and the nostalgic visions of an idealised past that undergird many political

33 For affect theory, cf. Ahmed, Sara: Collective Feelings: Or, the Impressions Left by Others. In: Theory, Culture & Society 21/2 (2004), 25–42; Lutz, Catherine; Abu-Lughod, Lila (Eds.): Language and the Politics of Emotion. Cambridge 1993; Stewart, Kathleen: Ordinary Affects. Durham 2007. On imagination and fantasy in anthropologies of the state, cf. Aretxaga, Begoña: Maddening States. In: Annual Review of Anthropology 32/1 (2003), 393–410; Navaro-Yashin, Yael: Faces of the State. Secularism and Public Life in Turkey. Princeton 2002; Taussig, Michael T.: The Magic of the State. New York 1997.

34 Laszczkowski, Mateusz; Reeves, Madeleine: Introduction: Affect and the Anthropology of the State. In: Idem, Affective States (cf. n. 6), 1–14, here 1.

35 Cf. Nadkarni, Maya; Shevchenko, Olga: The Politics of Nostalgia: A Case for Comparative Analysis of Post-Socialist Practices. In: Ab Imperio 5/2 (2004), 487–519.

36 Boym, The Future of Nostalgia (cf. n. 10), 41.

movements, which can allow for an enhanced understanding of the popular support behind various political actors and proposals. After all, the generation of affect can at times prove a more powerful force in political movements than specific ideological tenets.

A potentially problematic aspect of extrapolating political meaning from nostalgic sentiments or practices is that the phenomenon can exist as one of many layers of emotive registers relating to a political past. This is perhaps especially true when it comes to histories that are highly contested. Certainly in the Soviet case, nostalgia can (and often does) coexist with more traumatic (or at the very least negative) memories, and various forms of narrating the Soviet past can be experienced and expressed by the same individual. Thus, nostalgic dispositions towards the Soviet past must never be taken in isolation, without considering these sentiments as one component of several coexisting interpretative frameworks.

Another major challenge that an ethnographer must confront in producing any sort of knowledge on nostalgia (or memory) is the amorphous nature of these phenomena, whose imprecise parameters can lead to murkiness in interpretation and analysis. The word 'nostalgia' itself is frequently used to describe behaviours, sentiments, and practices that are not necessarily related to fond recollections of bygone realities. At the same time, practices of commodification *can* play off of local nostalgic registers, offering important insights into shifting local perceptions of political histories. Anthropologists have shown how the reemergence of socialist-era food brands among Eastern Europeans – such as the 'renaissance' of Soviet sausage in Lithuania[37] or the revival of socialist-era soft drinks in Hungary[38] – represent reformulated valorisations of these products within today's vastly different political economy. Once deemed inferior to Western brands and symbolic of the material limits of what state socialism could offer its citizens, these products have now become emblems of local authenticity within a globalised market wherein local production and the consumption of culturally distinct brands have both diminished.[39] Here, it is not necessarily the consumerism itself, but the reevaluation of national authenticity in relation to the socialist past, that relates to widespread contemporary disillusionment with the fantasy of Europe.

In Tajikistan, and in the remittance-dependent regions of Central Asia more broadly, the reconfigurations of political economy have produced a perception that 1) the Soviet era was one of locality: local jobs, grounded kinship structures, a pre-globalised world and 2) that contemporary forms of racism and xenophobia have diverged from Soviet-era trajectories towards equality and supra-national citizenship. These renegotiated understandings of the past exist to some extent throughout the region, yet carries particular weight in a country as impoverished and as dependent on outbound labour as Tajikistan. Moreover, when considering questions of coloniality and reconfi-

37 Cf. Klumbyte, Neringa: The Soviet Sausage Renaissance. In: American Anthropologist 112/1 (2010), 22–37.

38 Cf. Nadkarni, Remains of Socialism (cf. n. 5), 15.

39 Cf. Bach, Jonathan: What Remains. Everyday Encounters with the Socialist Past in Germany. New York 2017.

gurations of imperialism, namely questions surrounding the extent to which 'Russia' (as an amorphous political and cultural force) shaped forms of personhood and subjectivity in Tajikistan, one must consider the widespread perception that this may be as strong today as ever. But perhaps more importantly, these dynamics must be taken into account when understanding the forms of affect that become embedded in certain conceptualisations of the past, and how these in turn inform coexisting and competing logics of belonging.

Conclusion

An anthropological understanding of citizenship highlights its processual and relational nature. In other words, it is often less productive to think of whether one *has* or *does not have* citizenship, but rather *when.* In which contexts does one's relation to the state or a given society allow for (physical or social) mobility, and when does it foreclose horizons? The collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent transformations in borders, institutions, and political economy left the boundaries between citizen/non-citizen suddenly unclear and fraught. In Tajikistan, the new migration economy – and the manifold changes in forms of personhood and belonging that it has enacted – exists within the same realm of what was once a sovereign territory. However, now the shared bureaucratic framework of citizenship no longer exists.

The new economic structures lead many to far-off Russian urban centres, a dislocation that to some degree permeates the lives of all Tajiks. Any account of Soviet memory, nostalgia, and ideological legacies in the region must take into account these shifts. For rural Tajiks who remained in villages in the Soviet era, these changes have been quite pronounced. Even for more Russified, urban Tajiks that underwent Soviet systems of socialisation, life in Russia now involves experiences of exclusion. These changes have contributed to the perception that the present day involves more dislocations and disruptions in local ways of being, and that those who migrate to Russia experience forms of racialised precarity. These realities conjure new meanings ascribed to the past, particularly with regard to notions of citizenship and belonging.

Ultimately, I demonstrate how anthropological accounts of citizenship should remain attentive to the political shifts that produce multiple understandings of belonging in the same individual. I do this by drawing from a context where the change in status from racially marked fellow citizen to racialized (and often perceived by association to be illegalised) outsider took place in a particularly rapid and sudden way.[40] Moreover, I argue for an understanding of the 'nostalgia' implicated in these processes that attends to the various affective forms that these ways of relating to the past can take. Nostalgic

40 For an anthropological account of how perceptions of illegal status inform processes of racialisation in Russia, cf. Woodard, Lauren: "As If I Were an Illegal": Racial Passing in Immigrant Russia. In: Cultural Anthropology 37/4 (2022), 653 – 678.

stances towards alternative forms of belonging and citizenship do not merely highlight the gap between current realities and the potentialities of an idealised past. Memories of good times, grounded in a mix of fact and fiction, retain an affective charge that animates how people interpret, make sense of, and act within present realities. Much of the anthropological literature on how processes of migrant racialisation, exclusion, and illegalisation take place focus on how encounters with the state produce these categories (i. e. that of an 'illegal migrant' deserving of vetting, stopping, or deportation).[41] What I have suggested in this article is that a more longitudinal approach to how these processes take place in the *longue durée* can better shed light on how citizenship regimes of the past continue to inform senses of self, history, and horizons of possibility.

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41 Cf. De Genova, Nicholas P.: Migrant "Illegality" and Deportability in Everyday Life. In: Annual Review of Anthropology 31/1 (2002), 419 – 447.

Anke Hilbrenner

Afterword

This short text represents not only an afterword to this Special Issue, it also serves as a welcome opportunity to consider the productive years of the research network *"Ambivalenzen des Sowjetischen"* (Ambivalences of the Soviet), that took off in 2020. During the first years of our research group we had to deal with the changes brought about by the pandemic. Research travel could not take place, conferences were cancelled or took place in virtual spaces. New forms of cooperation emerged from the crisis and new questions arose. In February 2022 the framework of our research changed radically again. Our projects were connected with the 'post-Soviet space' and this very concept had to be, and still is being, reconsidered.

The research network deals with the transition from late socialism to post-socialism in the biographies of migrants who lived in the Soviet Union as 'diaspora nationalities', and who took their Soviet experience with them into their migration societies. The initial thesis of the network was the observation that the groups 'Russian Germans' and 'Soviet Jews' constituted themselves as groups through the collective experience of repression, while on the other hand normalisation in the Soviet sense was part of the daily routine for the members of these groups. This Sovietisation as part of German everyday life was the subject of the more cultural-anthropological studies. One of the special features of the research network, which was funded by the Ministry of Science of Lower Saxony and the Volkswagen Foundation, was the cooperation between cultural anthropological and historical research projects, which not only pushed the boundaries of the disciplines in terms of content, but also in terms of methodology.

One contact zone for our transdisciplinary research was the struggle for concepts, which also plays a major role in this anthology. The concepts of 'diaspora' and the 'post-Soviet' were repeatedly discussed from all angles, from all participating disciplines and also as a result of changing research contexts. At the end of the duration of our research network, as in this anthology, we do not opt for a discursive commitment to a clear definition of the term, but rather appreciate the experience of how productive these discussions about the terms have been and will continue to be in the future.

History and Cultural Anthropology also inform this Special issue, not only in terms of discussing concepts, but also concerning its topics. Some articles deal with the past or with its memories, others with daily practices or perspectives. We started with Russian Germans and Soviet Jews, but in this Special Issue we gained perspectives of the Armenian diaspora, Russian speaking Latvians, Lithuanians or Chechens, Ingush and Khevsurs.

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This broadening of perspective corresponds to the call for ‘Decolonising Eastern Europe’, which has been resounding ever louder in the disciplines that deal with Eastern Europe in the humanities, at least since the Russian attempt to fully invade Ukraine in February 2022. The illegal invasion of Crimea in 2014 and the ongoing war in eastern Ukraine since then, but even more so the brutality of the current Russian war, have changed the way we think about our subject. The terms ‘Soviet‘ or ’post-Soviet‘ have been scrutinised for their analytical content in this anthology. As scholars of the space in which the Soviet empire ruled, we must also ask ourselves whether we have used the imperial content of the term critically enough, or whether the entire structure of “Ambivalences of the Soviet” is not affirmative of this appropriating meaning of the Soviet.

The ‘New Imperial History’, with whose assumptions we also examine the Soviet empire, has always contrasted the negative aspects of empire with its ability to deal with diversity in a more integrative way than competing models of society, such as the nation state. It was this aspect of sovietisation that we also focused on in our research approach by looking at how members of repressed minorities can achieve individual success and development. We must ask ourselves whether this basic assumption may have trivialised the history of violence in the Soviet Union, even after 1953. However, particularly in view of the current violence, it is clear that Soviet socialisation has a lasting influence on people that continues in other societies. We are therefore shocked to realize that our questions are more topical than ever, much more relevant than we ourselves knew in 2020.

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