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THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF CO-ETHNIC MIGRATION

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THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF CO-ETHNIC MIGRATION^{3,1}

This paper investigates the discursive construction of co-ethnic migration in German society. Taking a biographical study on ethnic Germans from the former Soviet Union as a starting point, the author traces co-ethnic immigrant pathways in German society and analyzes the legal frameworks, institutions, and organizations encountered by these migrants. The author employs a critical discourse analysis approach to texts relating to a camp where newly arriving immigrants live and undergo registration. The article proposes a new way of researching discursive construction, using biographical interviews as a starting point for identifying “localities of discourse” which are important to the group in question. Such an approach allows us to find relevant sources of discourse in a way that is grounded in empirical material, and subsequently to account for which discourses are appropriated by members of certain social groups, such as co-ethnic migrants. The article thus builds a bridge between biographical sociology and critical discourse analysis, using the former as a point of departure for framing the selection of materials for implementing the latter. The article makes a methodological contribution by introducing the concept “locality of discourse” as a bridge between biographical sociology and critical discourse analysis. The author also makes an empirical contribution by examining a border transit camp in Germany as a “locality of discourse” and showing how the camp informs our understanding of the place of co-ethnic migrants in German society.

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Keywords: co-ethnic migration, repatriation, German migration policy, critical discourse analysis, borders.

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Introduction

This study combines biographical methods in sociology with critical discourse analysis to tackle the issue of co-ethnic migrant identity construction in Germany. The aims of this study are threefold. Firstly, the author aims to bring biographical sociology and critical discourse analysis into methodological dialog with one another in order to produce a mixed method approach to migration studies. This is done in order to approach empirical material from two sides: from the side of structure (institutions, organization, discourse) and from the side of individual agency and experience (the migrants themselves, their biographies, narratives).

The approach of mixing the two methods brings us to the second aim of the study: to methodologically develop the concept “locality of discourse.” The term refers to a site of importance for individuals, where discourses relevant to their identity are produced and reproduced. This concept is born out of the combination of biographical analysis and critical discourse analysis and borrows from translocal migration studies. The article will show how the concept can be helpful in migration studies today.

The third aim of the study is to make an empirical contribution to studies of migration through narratives and discourse: here, the study tackles the phenomenon of the German transit camp as a site where discourses are produced and reproduced and subsequently appropriated by the migrants that go through this camp. The German transit camp is treated here as a site of importance for co-ethnic migrant biographies. Analyzing the inner workings of the camp and its effect on the migrants that pass through it will bring to light the mechanisms through which certain official discourses make their way into individual identity and family history narratives of the people the camps host. This analysis will thus reveal ideological agendas of the German state with regard to migration, the German state’s conceptualization of the German border, and the official definitions of inclusion and exclusion.

In their study of ethnic return migration policy in Asia and Europe, John D. Skrentny, Stephanie Chan, John Fox and Denis Kim define “co-ethnics” as nationals or

non-nationals of a nation-state who are perceived to have ties to the nation-state in question by blood or ancestry, i.e. “ethnic ties” (2007, 794). A nation-states policies towards such a group define boundaries of “us” and “them;” any preferences based on ethnicity is understood in this paper as a category of “practice of nationhood” (Brubaker 1994).

The study focuses on the case of Russian-Germans in Germany. An important pillar of Germany’s migration and citizenship policies rests upon the idea of ethnic German belonging to the German nation-state, manifested in a migration policy that gives preference to co-ethnics. This policy allows ethnic Germans, i.e. those with blood ties to Germany, to repatriate to Germany and receive German citizenship and additional social benefits. The policy is aimed first and foremost at citizens of former communist countries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet states who are of German descent. The initial set of laws framing repatriation policies and citizenship policies of Germany, developed in West Germany in the 1950s by Chancellor Konrad Adenauer’s administration, included both East German citizens and “Russian-Germans” residing in the Soviet and Eastern bloc states. The term “Russian-Germans” (*российские немцы*) refers to a group of people of ethnic German descent whose ancestors had migrated to the Russian Empire from Germanic lands in the eighteenth century. There are approximately 2.4 million Russian-German repatriates in Germany today (or 4 million people, if one counts non-ethnic-German family members).² This group is the focus of this study.

Co-ethnic migration (or repatriation) as a form of migration was largely ignored by social scientists until the late 1970s, when the one-way permanent migration paradigm began to make way for more nuanced attention towards complex migrant pathways (Gmelch 1980, 135). Work on co-ethnic migration over the past several decades has not resulted in the emergence of more integrated or systematic approaches to the topic. Not all states use the same terminology to refer to this phenomenon and terminology in academic literature varies across disciplines. Repatriation can be called “co-ethnic migration” (Muenz and Ohlinger 2003) “return migration” (Cassarino 2004, 253), “ethnic

²http://www.bmi.bund.de/cae/servlet/contentblob/876734/publicationFile/55172/Migrationsbericht_2008_de.pdf [15.01.2013]

return migration” (de Tinguy 2003, 113). Scholars also disagree on whether a concrete set of policies in a given state constitute a repatriation program or simply allow for “privileged migration” – a debate that has arisen, for example, with regard to the Russian case (de Tinguy 2003, 112). Scholars studying repatriation tend to agree that repatriation is “not a unidirectional, homogenous movement,” but rather a process of “disjointed cultural and physical reconstruction” of models of belonging in which multiple actors participate (Flynn 2003, 185). Ethnic return migration has been mostly studied in isolated cases pertaining to particular nation-states. The most prominent works on German return migration include studies by Barbara Dietz and Peter Hilkes (1993), Klaus Bade and Jochen Oltmer (2003), Irina Mukhina (2007), Alfred Eisfeld and Otto Luchterhandt (2008), and, most recently, by Niklas Radenbach and Gabriele Rosenthal (2011, 2012). This is the first study to apply a combination of biographical methods and discourse-analytical methods to a case of co-ethnic migration, and this is also the first study to focus on co-ethnic migrants in a the context of a border transit camp.

The study is comprised of two parts. First, biographical methods are employed. This involves conducting in-depth biographical (narrative) interviews with Russian-Germans residing in Germany. A subsequent analysis of biographical interviews is conducted in accordance with Gabriele Rosenthal’s method of case reconstruction. The second stage of the study is based on the results of biographical analysis. The interviews are used to identify particular places mentioned by interviewees which are important for the process of identity formation or for their migration experience. Such sites can include places of gathering of Russian-Germans, cultural events, clubs, administrative offices regularly visited by the interviewees, etc., and in this article they are called “localities of discourse.” These localities are then visited; information about them is gathered and existing texts relevant to the sites are analyzed using a critical discourse analysis method based on Siegfried Jäger’s framework. This article focuses on one specific locality of discourse: a border transit camp in Germany.

Some authors from the field of biographical and identity studies have begun to address discourse and discourse analysis in recent years without directly engaging with the critical discourse analysis tradition. In most studies which combine biographical

methods with discourse studies, the term “discourse” is used in a broad sense, referring to ideological underpinnings of language use. Yet for their methodological rigor with regard to narrative and biographical analysis, the studies often leave their references to “discourse” methodologically unsubstantiated. Rixta Wundrak studied communities of Chinese migrants in Romania in a context of public discourses on Budapest’s China Town, thus combining discourse-analytical elements with ethnography (Wundrak 2013). Maria Pohn-Weidinger, in her work on women who cleaned up rubble in the streets following World War II, has addressed the biographical narratives of these women against a backdrop of the discursive construction of victimhood in Austrian society (Pohn-Weidinger 2014). In the Russian biographical studies tradition, Elena Rozhdestvenskaya has used discourse analytical approaches to address politicians’ autobiographies which lack narrative and are characterized by ideological self-positioning of the interviewee (Rozhdestvenskaya 2010). Willy Viehöver has stepped in from the discourse analytical paradigm and has attempted to combine the concepts of “narrative” and “discourse” in his works (Viehöver 2012). Yet biographical sociology and critical discourse analysis have largely remained isolated from each other. Though these recent studies have demonstrated that there is demand for a synthesis between biographical approaches and discourse analysis, no methodological dialogue has taken place between the two schools.

This article reflexively bridges biographical sociology approaches and critical discourse analysis with the use of the concept “localities of discourse.” The concept draws from transmigration and translocal migration studies and refers to a place (institution, area of gathering, club, organization, school, etc.) where discourses central to group identity are produced. Localities of discourse are identified during the biographical phase of the study, and subsequent critical discourse analysis is conducted at the localities in question, using all texts produced at the localities as sources. Working from biographical studies into critical discourse analysis methods through the concept of “locality” allows us to examine the interplay between individuals and their environments. This, in turn, can bring us closer to overcoming the structure-agency debate in a sociological study, addressing both sides of the dichotomy in an empirically grounded way.

Methods and methodology

At first glance, biographical methods in sociology on the one hand and critical discourse analysis on the other hand occupy opposite positions on the structure-agency spectrum. While biographical sociology assumes great agency on the side of interviewees and examines an interview as text, critical discourse analysis focuses on texts produced in specific institutional frameworks. In order to work with the two approaches together in one study, we must establish a link between them which does not compromise the fundamental groundwork of each methodological approach. For this I have chosen to use the concept “locality of discourse.”

The concept “locality of discourse” is derived from the biographical phase of the study, and subsequently drives and the critical discourse-analytical phase. “Locality of discourse” is an empirically grounded and methodologically oriented concept: it is operationalized during the course of biographical interviews, when interviewees identify specific localities which are socially significant for them, i.e. are related to a greater biographical phase and have a relational dimension (includes interaction with other people). After several interviewees mention the same locality and impart biographical meaning on it in their narrative, the locality is identified as a “locality of discourse” and sets the scene for the next empirical phase of the study, which employs critical discourse analysis. The researcher goes to the localities identified as “localities of discourse” and gathers texts relevant to the locality and produced at the locality. These texts can include posters on the wall, signs, statements by employees or officials at the locality, websites, and any texts produced and/or distributed at the locality. In this way, the very concept of “locality” forms the corpus of documents used for critical discourse analysis, circumventing the phase of sampling. The biographical phase and the critical discourse analytical phase of the study are, in turn, situated within dominant methodological approaches within each school.

The biographical method I have employed in this study stems from the German sociological tradition and is based on a qualitative analysis of biographical interviews. The method gained popularity in Germany in the 1980s and its practitioners often contextualize their work in the traditions of the Chicago School of the 1920s (Clifford

Shaw, Florian Znaniecki, William Thomas). Sociologists who have contributed important works to the development of this method include Fritz Schütze_ Gabriele Rosenthal, Ursula Apitzsch, Helma Lutz.

The method is comprised of two main parts. The first part includes biographical interviewing and the second part includes an analysis of the interview transcript and case reconstruction. I have based my approach in the methodological toolkit provided by Gabriele Rosenthal.

The biographical interview, according to Gabriele Rosenthal (Rosenthal 2014) is aimed at minimizing intervention from the side of the interviewer and stimulating a narrative³ from the side of the interviewee. The interview is, in turn, divided into two parts: the narrative block and a series of follow-up questions.

The first question or prompt in this methodological framework is always a question about the interviewee's life. In the case of my study I have formulated the first prompt as "please tell me the story of your life, starting with you ancestors, if you wish." The answer to this first question is called the "narrative block" and it should take up a significant portion of the interview. During the narrative block in response to the first prompt, the interviewer should not interrupt the interviewee or pose additional questions before the interviewee has not finished a long narrative with a concluding sign, such as a long silence or a statement like "well, that's it." Thus the narrative block is ideally a single coherent speech from the interviewee regarding her or his entire biography with no intervention from the interviewer.

During the second part of the interview the interviewee should pose questions in chronological order which also stimulate narrative (and avoid self-justification prompts) and are aimed at inducing more detailed accounts of parts of the biography with have either no been elaborated upon or seem important and deserve further attention.

After the interviews are conducted, they are transcribed and carefully read. Gabriele Rosenthal offers a methodological framework for a "case reconstruction" of each interview (in this context, a biography is called a "case"). A "case reconstruction" is

³ A "narrative" in this case is a story in which an event or sequence of events is described and in which several agents take part (Schütze 1987: 146). Other types of speech have been identified by Fritz Schütze and Gabriele Rosenthal as argumentation and description. Argumentation is a judgment or worldview declaration (Schütze 1987: 149). Description is a type of speech which is related to a static phenomenon and is not situated in a context of time passage (Kallmeyer, Schütze 1977: 201).

a historical description of events. The researcher must write out all biographical events and historical events relating to the time period and context in chronological order, which requires some historical research and a look into additional sources. Next to each verifiable event listed, the researcher must formulate a hypothesis relating to the event and the respondent. In the next stage, the researcher must identify key passages in the interview and carefully analyze them as text. These manipulations of the interview are aimed at comparing what is told with what has occurred, and to contextualize what has occurred within a web of other historical possibilities. Each case is used in order to formulate a “type” of respondent. After several case reconstructions a typology can be constructed.

Next, a critical discourse analysis is conducted with the second set of sources taken from “localities” of discourse, which were found based on biographical interview data. Discourse analysis is a research program in the social sciences which uses elements from linguistics and text analysis. Linguistic analysis of discourse includes studying how individuals interact using language and how they interpret linguistic codes (Brown 1983, iv). In linguistics “discourse” is defined as the ways in which sentences in speech or in text are connected and how the form meanings (Gee 2014,18). Linguistic analysis became important for social sciences in the wake of the linguistic turn and in the subsequently formed constructivist paradigm. Following this turn, language became key in studies of how political or social realities are constructed (Edelman 1985). Thus over the course of the 1980s social scientists began to address how discourses reflect power relations in politics and in society, and how power relations, in turn, reflect discourse (Wodak 1989). In the social sciences, the word “discourse” began to refer to “an assemblage of ideas, concepts, and categorizations through which meaning is allocated to social and physical phenomena,” which are produced and reproduced “in an identifiable set of practices” (Artiz and Walker 2011, 102).

This article uses a specific methodology called critical discourse analysis. Representatives of this paradigm have attempted to operationalize some of Michel Foucault’s ideas. Critical discourse analysis has been developed by scholars such as Siegfried Jäger, Florentine Maier, Ruth Wodak, Normal Fairclough, Teun Van Dijk, and Rainer Keller, among others. Critical discourse analysis addresses the role of discourses

in the reproduction of structures of power and domination (Van Dijk 1993, 249). Following this approach, “discourse” is defined as an institutionalized form of communication which regulates and reproduces certain social practices, and is thus a source of power (Link 1983, 60). Discourses thus not only reflect reality, but also construct reality (Jäger and Maier 2009, 36). Critical discourse analysis methods are usually applied to textual sources in the form of news or media resources, legal documents, historical documents, official announcements or speeches, etc.

I have followed the framework of critical discourse analysis developed by Siegfried Jäger, whose work is based on theories developed by Michel Foucault. In this study, I have circumvented Jäger’s steps for sampling and have created a sampling method of my own using biographical analysis as a starting point. Once interviews are gathered and analyzed based on the methods described above, particular places, or physical localities, which are important to interviewees are identified. Then sources for subsequent discourse analysis are found at those sites and in relation to them. For example, if several interviewees say that a community center in the northeast of Berlin is a place where they met many friends and thus found work, the researcher must go to this community center, gather brochures, take fieldnotes there, conduct participant observation during gatherings there, use text from their website and from interviews with employees to create a sample of sources for critical discourse analysis. This solves the problem of sampling within critical discourse analysis and creates a set of sources relevant for the study in a way that is integrated with the biographies of the individuals in question.

The idea of “locality of discourse” is closely related to methods particular to mobilities studies, known as “participant observation on the move” such as walk-alongs (Myers 2011), drive-alongs (Laurier 2010), being ‘mobile-with’ (Bissell 2009). These studies employ ethnographic methods which are mobile, but they do not engage with discourse analysis or critical discourse analysis as such. There are also some studies that unite the idea of “space” with the idea of “discourse,” thus analyzing discursive spaces where actor’s voices reside (Artiz and Walker 2011, 102). In my study, I build upon these approaches by introducing physical spaces where actors reside and make themselves heard as *sources* for subsequent discourse analysis.

I have followed the framework of critical discourse analysis developed by Siegfried Jäger, whose work is based on theories developed by Michel Foucault. Siegfried Jäger's work is in dialog with similar methodological frameworks developed by Ruth Wodak and Norman Fairclough. The critical discourse analysis method employed here, like the biographical method described above, is also cyclical in form: first a general characterization of all data is written out, then a corpus of textual documents is formed which is structurally analyzed according to basic textual characteristics. Then the data is coded in several rounds. In my third round of focused coding I determined the emerging categories that then drove my selection of typical discourse fragments, which I analyzed according to a list of questions also formulated by Siegfried Jaeger. Thus, the following steps were taken in the critical discourse analysis of text relating to co-ethnic migrants:

1. General characterisation of all data (list of sources and their importance)
2. Structural analysis of data selected for the corpus (Siegfried Jäger)
 - i. first round of word-by-word coding (Kathy Charmaz)
 - ii. second round of line-by-line coding for contextualization
 - iii. third round of focused coding - emerging categories determined selection of typical discourse fragments for further analysis
3. Detailed critical discourse analysis of typical discourse fragments (Siegfried Jäger)

The phase of structural analysis includes expanding upon the list of sources by noting structural elements of each source: date, type of text, format, authors, titles, sub-headings, font and design, visual elements such as graphs and pictures, a summary of the text, important quotes, sources of knowledge in the text (political science, medicine, media, etc.), collective symbolism, normative message, unique elements, political position, first impressions from the text. After such a description of each text, "typical fragments" which characterize other texts in the sample can be found. These typical fragments are then analyzed in the following manner:

Detailed Analysis of Typical Discourse Fragments (Jäger and Maier 2009, 55):

1. Context
 - a. Why was the article selected?
 - b. Who is the author? What is her position and status?
 - c. What are special areas of coverage of the author?
 - d. What was the occasion of the article?
 - e. In what section of the newspaper does it appear?

2. Surface of the text
 - a. What is the layout like? Pictures and graphs?
 - b. What are the headings and subheadings?
 - c. How is the article structured into units of meaning?
 - d. What topics are touched upon? (So what discourse strands is this a fragment of?)
 - e. How do these topics relate to each other and overlap (entanglements of discourse strands?)
3. Rhetorical means
 - a. What kind and form of argumentation does the article follow? What argumentation strategy is used?
 - b. What logic underlies the composition of the article?
 - c. What implications and allusions does the article contain?
 - d. What collective symbolism is used (pictures, caricatures, statistics)?
 - e. Idioms, sayings, clichés?
 - f. Vocabulary and style?
 - g. What actors are mentioned and how are they portrayed?
 - h. What references are made (eg to science or sources)?
4. Content and ideological statements
 - a. What concept of humankind does the article convey?
 - b. What concept of society does it presuppose?
 - c. What concept of technology?
 - d. What perspective regarding the future?
5. Other peculiarities
6. Discourse position and overall message.

This study is based on 30 individual biographical interviews, 8 expert interviews, 10 participant observations, and an analysis of publications relating to co-ethnic German migrants from the former Soviet Union, produced by organizations governed by and established for co-ethnic migrants in Germany. The section of the study concerned with the German transit camp includes one full work day of participant observation at the camp, 4 narrative interviews with co-ethnic migrant families at the camp, 2 interviews with asylum-seekers living at the camp, a 2-hour official tour of the camp, 2 interviews with employees of the camp, 2 interviews with residents of the town where the camp is situated, and an analysis of 4 monuments at the camp and of several texts relating to the camp and co-ethnic immigrants (their website, brochures for co-ethnic migrants distributed at the camp, newspapers for co-ethnic migrants distributed at the camp). The gathering of empirical data at the camp was informed by the 30 biographical interviews conducted with co-ethnic migrants from all across Germany, selected through a phase of

theoretical sampling (based on place of residence in Germany, country of origin, education level and level of engagement in politics), and a phase of deliberate sampling within the first sample (here the focus was on politically active respondents and politically inactive respondents). All of the respondents went through a border transit camp upon their arrival to Germany.

Results and analysis

Biographical data

The biographical phase of the study revealed that all interviewees have a dominant narrative which they present in the narrative part of the biographical interview. The dominant narrative, consistent across all generations and levels of education among interviewees, reads as follows:

“We were invited to Russia in 1762 by Catherine the Great; in 1941 we were all deported to the Asian part of the Soviet Union and enlisted in the Trudarmee (hard labor army); until our migration to Germany we often experienced discrimination as Germans in the Soviet Union.”

Yet after the first narrative part of the interview, upon answering further questions about family history, it became clear that interviewees’ family experiences often diverged (in all cases but two) from this initial story. The following are points which were systematically left out of the initial narrative by respondents:

- Grandparents had moved to Germany under the Nazi regime
- Their grandparents had fought in World War II on the side of the Nazis
- Their grandparents had fought in World War II on the side of the Soviet Union
- Their families had moved to Kazakhstan without deportations but due to climate, family or for the cheap land
- They spoke German at home
- They were not deported
- They held high positions at universities and were members of the communist party

The following fragment is taken from an interview with a 32-year old politically active young man, “Victor.” During the biographical case reconstruction of his interview and of a follow-up biographical interview with his mother, it became apparent that in the case of this family Victor’s great grandmother of had moved from the Soviet Union to Nazi Germany during World War II, and his grandmother had been born in Germany. After the war the great grandmother and her daughter had been deported back to the USSR. This was a point of silence in the family and it was possible to find out details about this chapter in their history only far into the biographical interview with Victor’s mother. Victor, in turn, had demonstrated a very strong version of the dominant collective narrative, implying over the course of the interview that the story he told held true for all other Russian-Germans. In the following passage, during the second part of the interview (in the questioning session) he describes how he first began to confront his own family history:

“First of all, I started asking my mom. She was surprised: ‘why is this topic bothering you?’ At first when I came to this organization [an government-funded organization called “Integration House Lyra”⁴ in Berlin] they gave me some information about this, and I was surprised that this kind of stuff even happened, because I didn’t know of any deportations, nothing. And I started to looking in this direction, to examine... First I found out a lot here [at the organization], and then after that I started asking my parents, because I started applying this to my family and I wanted to know what was there, how it was. I realized that my parents also didn’t know much about it because they were told very little. But my grandpa was still alive back then and I started asking him [...] He said, ‘what do you want?’ First of all he spoke in German, in this old Schwabian German. [...] He told me that he was in Crimea, he told me that during the

⁴ “Integration House Lyra” is a registered not-for-profit organization financed by the Job Center of Berlin. “Lyra” offers jobs to Russian-Germans on the secondary labor market, which means that it provides job opportunities for the unemployed in Berlin. This organization was founded in 1996 and is dedicated to “the successful integration of Germans from Russia and Russian-speaking immigrants” of all ages [<http://www.berlin.de/balichtenberg/politik/integrationsbeauftragte02.html>]. The organization provides consultations in Russian to Russian-Germans on questions relating to the labor market, job applications, applications for pensions and benefits, German courses, organization of events, and its employees help with accompanying new arrivals or non-German speakers to various ministries and offices. “Lyra” also has a choir group which practices in its building. In 2014 there were 13 employees working at “Lyra.” Their office is located in a building shared with other non-profits. On their walls hang posters with a short history of Russian-Germans with photographs of German villages in the Russian empire and on the Volga River in the USSR, photos of the hard labor army and of a demonstration in 1980 in Moscow against limitations imposed on Russian-German emigration from the USSR.

deportation he lost almost his entire family and he said that they came there, that's all. He didn't say anything else – he didn't talk about how hard it was, how they lived, he was also still little then...”

This passage shows that the young man began to problematize his family history in the context of confronting a collective history of a group to which he belonged. The pattern of first facing a collective narrative and then trying to find your own and fit it into the picture you have seen can be traced through all of the interviews with politically or socially engaged Russian-German respondents. In the case of politically or socially engaged respondents (those who hold positions in parties, who work at Russian-German organizations, who work on projects in the Russian-German community), the collective narrative is presented in interviews in a “stronger” form, meaning that they tell a coherent learned story and often insist that it is generalizable to other Russian-Germans. Respondents who were not socially or politically active demonstrated a “weaker” narrative, in that they typically did not insist upon its generalizability, and the historical narrative itself played a less significant role in the presentation of their autobiographies.

These findings led me to ask the question of where, how and by whom this dominant narrative is constructed. The interviews permitted me to identify where co-ethnic migrants go, what path they have taken in their migration and integration experiences, and what institutions they have come into contact with along the way. This brings me to the second phase of my study, one that focuses on places and institutions relevant to the Russian-Germans, the spaces in which they exist and the texts which they produce.

One of the localities which all Russian-Germans had interacted with and spent time in was the border transit camp, their place of initial registration (and, in some cases, first settlement for the first two to four weeks of their life in Germany). At the camp co-ethnic migrants would first come into contact with German officials. They would also receive their assignment to a place of residence and depart to a new home from there. For this reason, the camp is a major turning point in the lives of the co-ethnic migrants. The camp is described in the interviews as “one of the memories that stands out the most” (Victor, age 32). Often memories of the camp would spark emotional narratives: “there

was so much happiness there! There was! And warmth from people! I felt at home instantly. By God, I did. But then they brought us into the room. One room. I was outraged – everyone together, men! Women!” (Lorida-Ida, age 67). Another woman described how a feeling of respect for Germans she first developed in the camp stayed with her since: “...they would ask us to tidy up the dining hall after lunch... and when we would finish, they would always leave some sweets for us... this was very pleasant. They were thankful, and we were thankful. From the first camp somehow I had this feeling of respect for them. Even though I cried a lot there.” (Rosa, age 64). Another interviewee describes the impact the experience of the camp had on the life of her father:

“The first camp was a shock to my dad. When they gave us yogurt for free and we stood in line – that was such a humiliation, that they gave us something for free. For the old people it was humiliating. I also understood it – we had somehow gotten used to earning our bread ourselves, and here there was some kind of charity, they gave us 20 Marks [the old German currency]. Then they brought us to the Red Cross and we could take clothes – tennis shoes and other stuff. That was also a shock to my parents. And the bunk beds on which they put us. My dad would say, “it has come to this.” I mean, a person became a thing here. A person is put where he doesn’t want to be, he feels humiliated. It’s like soup that they give out in churches as charity – that’s how they perceived it. This help. Which the Germans probably genuinely wanted to give, but it looks humiliating for people who are used to working and earning for themselves and based on their achievements. I think this really hit my dad hard. Because he took forever to get his pension sorted. It took him two years to apply and to get it. And they kept asking, “How many people worked for you? You were a communist,” so that means they didn’t want people here who were ideological. They still don’t let people in today who served in the military – the military, officers... I think it did harm [that my father was a communist] – it made the whole process of application for a pension take so much longer. They kept asking for extra stuff. To prove this and that. And while you wait... And so exactly two years passed, and he didn’t get his pension. He died on May 23rd. And in June he got the notification that he got a pension. (Olga, age 57).

This passage reveals that the interviewee interprets her father's negative reaction to the camp as a foreshadowing of what was to come in his interactions with the German bureaucracy. Here, the description of the camp experience swiftly transitions to bureaucratic tasks and difficulties beyond the camp. This may be due to the fact that the initial documents for pensions and citizenship are filed at the camp, and decisions regarding migrant status (which affects employment and pensions) are made at the camp by officials who take into account interviews with newly arriving co-ethnic migrants. Thus the camp is associated by many with further biographical pathways in Germany after departure from the camp. For this reason, I have focused on the camp in the second phase of my study.

Locality of discourse: Transit Camp Friedland

The localities I have identified through my field work and interview analysis include the following: the embassies, consulates and “cultural houses” of Germany in the former Soviet Republics through which the co-ethnic migrants apply for repatriation; the border transit camps to which they arrive when they enter Germany; the offices of the Federal Office of Administration (*Bundesverwaltungsamt*); the “integration houses” in big cities, financed by the Federal Office of Administration and local Job Centers for the unemployed, which offer consultation services to co-ethnic migrants; the events which the “integration houses” organize for co-ethnic migrants; exhibitions dedicated to the history of co-ethnic German migrants.

In this study I have focused on the border transit camp Friedland as a particular locality of discourse. All Russian-Germans coming to Germany have gone through this camp or a similar camp upon undergoing the process of repatriation. Friedland is a camp in the very “middle” of Germany near the city of Goettingen which was originally set up by British allied forces in 1945 to accommodate German expellees and prisoners of war returning from Eastern Europe in a cow barn. Situated on a major railway route, the camp was on the border between the American, British and Soviet occupation zones.

A border transit camp today is a site where newly arriving co-ethnic migrants live for the first week or two of their stay in Germany, their new country of residence, where

they undergo medical examinations, file papers deciding their legal repatriation status, take initial integration courses, and receive their assignment to their future area of residence in Germany. The camp to which Russian-German co-ethnic migrants arrive today also hosts refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as illegal migrants who have been detained and are awaiting a decision as to their legal status in Germany. The camp examined here, camp Friedland, is a large institution at the heart of Germany which hosts up to 650 migrants from 11 countries at one time and has a medical center, a Catholic church, a Protestant church, a day care center, a youth center, a large cafeteria, rooms for the migrants, a museum, as well as offices of the Federal Office of Administration (*Bundesverwaltungsamt*), which deals with co-ethnic migrants, and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. This is the only remaining camp which receives co-ethnic migrants today.

The discourses found at the transit camp include themes of victimization of ethnic Germans in the USSR, a discursive link of ethnic Germans from the USSR to the experience of German prisoners of war in the USSR, the idea of a “return home” for all ethnic Germans, and the discursive juxtaposition of an unfree East with a free, democratic West. These themes are analyzed below.

The camp as part of a border:

On the camp’s website and during the official tour, the camp is presented as a “door” between East and West, unfreedom and freedom, and this metaphor holds constant both in relation to the times of the Cold War and in relation to the situation today.

In the post-war period and during the division of Germany, the camp stood on the border between all four occupational zones. This was the border between East and West Germany, and in a larger sense between the Eastern bloc and the West. Now, as laws governing mobility have been overtaken by the EU, the “border” which separates Germany from the rest of the world have also moved to EU borders, and the rhetoric of “East versus West” has remained in the discourse surrounding the camp along new lines of demarcation.

During the tour of the camp, the tour guide also alluded to borders within Europe by stating that “migrants leave their countries to escape conflict, arrive to Italy or Greece, but it’s not far enough West for them, they want to come here [to Germany].” Here, we see that the East-West rhetoric is used with regard to EU countries through which asylum seekers pass, with Germany depicted as the most “Western” destination for people fleeing poverty, war, and unfreedom. The mention of Italy and Greece points to a hierarchy of borders depicted in the tour: the logic of the guide’s speech at the camp points to a construction within which migrants want to come to Europe, but do not want to stay in Italy or Greece, preferring Germany as a destination. In this construction, we see a multi-step legitimation of Germany as a beacon of freedom and as a destination: Germany is positioned by the guide in a hierarchy above the East and communism, above developing states as sites of conflict from which people flee, and above other countries (Italy and Greece) within Europe. Thus, the camp retains its symbolic place between East and West across historical epochs.

Friedland as the first place of arrival:

The tour of the camp and the internet resources related to it have pointed to the idea that borders change, yet the camp remains the “first place to go” for migrants. In all relevant text, the camp is continuously called “the first place of arrival” for asylum seekers, refugees and Russian-Germans. On one of the internet pages of the camp we see this word three times within two paragraphs.

In fact, this camp is only a bureaucratic “first place of arrival,” since physically migrants often arrive at an airport, go through border patrol, or arrive by boat to Italy or Greece, make a strenuous trip on foot through Italy and Greece. Others, such as one of the Russian-German families interviewed in the camp, go to their families’ homes for the first night of their stay in Germany before proceeding to the camp to file their documents. Thus the camp is the first place where migrants get registered as *legal* subjects; in this way we see that the discourse of the “first place of arrival” hints at the fact that a person is not a subjectivity until she or he has undergone registration in the German state

bureaucracy. Without papers one is not “in” Germany, rendering the migrant a subject merely insofar as the papers confirm her or his identity and right to be in Germany.

The construction of the passive migrant:

In both the tour and internet resources, the migrants always “are invited,” “are registered,” “are medically examined,” “are given pocket money.” Even with regard to the trip that some asylum seekers take, they “are brought *by* smuggling gangs” in the narrative of the tour guide of Friedland. In this vein, the words “wave” or “inflow” are often used in texts relating to the camp: “inflow of migrants,” “migrant wave.” We even see this manifested physically in the sculptures which are placed in Friedland. One of the sculptures shows a symbol of a scary and rugged East in the shape of one water basin, out of which water flows along a long bronze path westward, into another water basin symbolizing the West. Here, water is the passive migrant flow. This further underscores the passivity and anonymity of incoming groups.

The construction the German state as a home for ethnic Germans:

Importantly, the tour, website, placement of magazines, symbolic elements of the camp all emphasize the fact of Germans coming home. This solidifies the idea of an ethnic German nation-state as a destination for all ethnic Germans. In this way, the camp is a symbolic place of *freedom for Germans*.

In this context, the Russian-Germans occupy a peculiar spot: at first glance, they are categorized legally alongside two other legal categories, those of refugees and asylum-seekers. But upon further analysis, we see that in narratives of the camp the Russian-Germans actually occupy a symbolic place next to the prisoner of war returnees from the 1950s. This is the narrative that has been museified in the exhibition dedicated to the camp.

Thus, although the camp has taken on new functions as a place of temporary residence for asylum-seekers and refugees, it is the story of the ethnic Germans that comes to the forefront, is museified and depicted on photographs, is depicted in sculptures at the camp.

A glance at magazines dedicated to Russian-Germans:

At Camp Friedland on shelves in the waiting rooms there was ample reading material placed especially for the Russian-German audience. The literature included the magazine of the “Germans from Russia” Association, a publication called “A People on the Road.” Due to the fact that there were many copies of this publication at the camp, thus making it the most prominent and most often renewed reading material (the camp has a subscription and new issues are delivered there), I have conducted an additional analysis of one of the issues of this magazine from the month during which I conducted my fieldwork.

The magazine is about Russian-Germans and is published for Russian-Germans. Its focus lies on *people* who have migrated here in this way. During field work at the camp, issues from January and February 2014, as well as one issue from December 1995, were found in the waiting areas.

My analysis of the magazines has shown that there are three types of stories usually presented on its pages:

- Success stories,
- Volunteer stories of Russian-Germans helping with integration projects,
- Family histories which include stories of repression in the USSR.

The January 2014 issue featured images which were exclusively portraits of Russian-Germans, save one image - a sculpture by a Russian-German sculptor of a woman in the *Trudarmee*, or hard labor camp. Importantly, this issue features two stories about Mennonites; the focus on the stories is their lamentation of the fact that they speak German and despite this are still considered to be “immigrants” from Russia in German society. Thus, the magazine exhibits a clear focus on ethnicity, integration, success of integration, and the experience of repressions of ethnic Germans in the USSR as a defining feature of their migration experiences and their choice to come to Germany. The following excerpt is a typical discourse fragment from the magazine A People on the Road:”

“Robert Huber’s favorite hobby is studying his family tree. [...] With Ludwig Huber’s migration 250 years ago a family history began. This is a history many [German] colonists share. Robert Huber, an eighth generation descendant, brought his family back to Germany. This is ten Huber generations.

“It has come full circle. I came back to the place where my family history began with Catherine’s [Catherine II of Russia] invitation,” said Robert Huber during an interview at an event held by the Hamburg chapter of the Compatriot Organization [of Germans from Russia] and the Hamburg Association of Germans from Russia at the Ethnographic Museum of Hamburg in November 2013. Thanks to Huber’s efforts the Compatriot Organization of Germans from Russia enjoys a very good reputation in the state Schleswig-Holstein. The past five years have been especially eventful: many events were actively supported and held. [...]”

(Source: Magazine “Volk auf dem Weg” (“A People on the Move”), January 2014, page 37. By Nina Paulsen).

In this excerpt we see the importance of a cyclical movement of an ethnic German coming back to the home his ancestors left centuries ago. We also see a clear generalization of Robert Huber’s family history to “a history many... share.” Embedded in this story is also its significance for the activities of the Compatriot Organization of Germans from Russia (an organization based in Germany). Thus in this short text we see a collective history, an ethnic-German centric conception of identity, the depiction of Germany as “home” for the Russian-Germans, and the importance of the individual story for the activities and funding of the group.

Conclusions

We have seen in our analysis of biographies of co-ethnic migrants that discourse informs their identity narratives and even provides language for them with the use of which they rewrite their family histories. They gather these narratives from certain places, or “localities of discourse,” which are shaped and governed by very specific ideologies of the German state. These ideologies include a focus on ethnicity and blood, on repressions in an unfree East, and on Germany as a home to all Germans. These

discourses are then appropriated into narratives, and the collective history myth dictated by the German state at localities of discourse takes the place of a unique family history in each co-ethnic migrants' presentation of themselves.

The biographical stage of the study has revealed that in addition to the camp, there are other localities of discourse important to co-ethnic migrants in Germany. They include the offices of the Federal Office of Administration (*Bundesverwaltungsamt*); the "integration houses" in big cities, financed by the Federal Office of Administration and local Job Centers for the unemployed, which offer consultation services to co-ethnic migrants; the events which the "integration houses" organize for co-ethnic migrants; exhibitions dedicated to the history of co-ethnic German migrants. The analysis has shown that most of these localities are indeed government-funded or have a close relationship with state offices which work with Russian-Germans. For this reason the messages disseminated in these localities often reflect the state's agenda with regard to a conceptualization of the place of Russian-Germans in German society. A preliminary analysis of these localities has shown that they reinforce the messages presented at the camp. The camp, in turn, is a concentrated case of state-produced discourses in that all of the discourses produced there are created and distributed by state officials.

This analysis has shown how discourses emerge and how they are reproduced in certain places and then appropriated by migrants. Such a study of biographies which give us clues as to where the discourses come from, followed by a "tracing" of migrant pathways to significant localities, and a subsequent discourse analysis of the localities, can serve as a model for further studies on other groups of migrants and their collective histories, narratives, identities.

The results of the study are significant due to the growth of population mobility in the world and the continued regulation of this mobility by nation-states. In this context, researchers and policy-makers must pay special attention to the institutions which regulate, enable, support, or prevent individuals crossing borders of nation-states. These institutions can include the UN, EU, as well national regulations and laws governing mobility, NGOs, border patrol sites themselves, airports, etc. These sites and institutions not only allow or prevent physical movement of people across borders, but they also produce the languages which enable or hinder individuals' relocations to new countries.

These languages define who is excluded, who is included, and who can find a new “home” in a new nation-state.

While individual mobility changes across the world based on a vast array of national legal frameworks, economic opportunities, situations of conflict, political instability, the institutions that govern migration are “sticky,” that is, they undergo reform more slowly than the processes they regulate. We must understand how these institutions work and what effects they have on individual migration experiences, how migrants interact with them and appropriate their languages, and what kinds of ideologies and hierarchies they reveal in the systems which produce them.

This study contributes to policy and scholarship on several levels: first of all, the study contributes to methods in the social sciences by suggesting a new way to approach migration. Secondly, the study contributes to theory by introducing a new concept, “locality of discourse.” Thirdly, by focusing on the German transit camp, the study allows us to identify the ideological constructions which prop up German migration and integration policies today. This, in turn, is generalizable to ways in which the migrant experience is shaped by similar institutions across nation-states worldwide.

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